



Hampshire Bird Club, Inc.

Amherst, Massachusetts

www.hampshirebirdclub.org

Volume 27, No. 2

October, 2010.

October brings shortening days, welcome rain, and sometimes phenomenal movements of birds heading south. The meadows and other habitats in the valley play host to an ever-changing host of migrants at this time of year. We have seen the massive hosts of Broad-winged Hawks, swirling like eddies into a funnel, gradually ebbing away to the south, we are now seeing the tail end of the song-and shore-bird migrations, and soon, we'll be watching the waterfowl making their own way south.

It's a time for the determined and aesthetically-minded birder. Gone are the gaudy, singing males of spring, and in their place, eclipsed adults and ratty-looking juveniles, seeking nothing more than a surreptitious retreat to warmer climes. Gone is the riotous extravaganza of new life we see in May, and in its place, the valley gently sheds its summer finery for the bare bones of winter. At this time of year, we have to search hard in unlikely places. We must brave the potato trucks in the meadows, seeking out the smallest puddles, for the avian jewels that gleam in the muddy shallows, and we must distinguish the silhouettes of falcons and accipiters against the crystalline blue horizons of the fall.

In this edition:

- our **next program** on October 18 (introduction on page 2),
- **field trip reports** and **coming trips**,
- the **HBC Field Trip Policy and Guidelines**, and
- a few other tidbits. I hope you find some of it useful!

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS!!!!

The HBC season is now well underway and memberships are now overdue. If you wish to join for the first time this year, or have yet to renew, please do so at or before the October meeting. Membership forms can be downloaded at the HBC website, and will be available at the October meeting.

NEWSLETTER AVAILABLE ON LINE

Last year, over half our members read most of the newsletters on-line!

This creates important savings in printing and postal costs for the club, and reduces the wear and tear on the editorial staff. It's really rather simple! For each month from October through June, on-line recipients receive a reminder email when the newsletter is posted, and read/download it via a link at the HBC Website. If this turns out not to work for you, a simple communication to the Membership Secretary will return you to the comforting world of the paper newsletter. **If you want to continue with the on-line newsletter, or try it for the first time, please check the box on this year's membership form.**

Thank you!

COMING PROGRAMS

(This month's program is introduced on Page 2).

Nov 8, 2010. Josh Rose. Birds of the Lower Rio Grande Valley.

Dec 13, 2010. Members' Meeting. Members Slide Show.

Jan 10, 2011. Joanna Bailey-Hodgman & Jo Miles Shuman. Birds in the Poems of Emily Dickinson.

NEXT PROGRAM

Monday, October 18 at 7:30 PM

Sam Fried discovers **Winter Birds of Florida**

Immanuel Lutheran Church; 867 North Pleasant Street, Amherst.

Traveling along the east coast of Florida from St. Augustine to the Everglades, I visited some of the best birding spots in the state and came up with a bundle of excellent photographs of our feathered buddies that make Florida their winter home, as well as a few rarities. Sit back and enjoy the splendor of Florida's winter wildlife.

Sam Fried is a Past-President of Hartford Audubon Society. He has published hundreds of photographs and over 50 feature articles published in field guides, books, newspapers and magazines worldwide, including *National Audubon*, *Birder's World*, *Bird Watcher's Digest*, *Birding* and *Living Bird Quarterly*. Sam wrote several chapters of the *Insight Guides* book on birding in North America, published by *The Discovery Channel* and is now a golf and fishing writer as well! As if the foregoing were not enough, Sam founded *Flights of Fancy Adventures, Inc.*, a birding, photography, natural history and golf travel company offering trips to North, Central and South American destinations.

Sam has seen 738 bird species in North America, and photographed 717 of those!

FIELD TRIP REPORTS

Saturday, August 7, 2010. Knightville Dam (Huntington, MA).

Betsy Higgins, Ann Lombard, Helga Beatty, Sally Hills, Leslie Hoffmann, Nidhin Joseph, David Peake-Jones

The day featured blue skies, low humidity, gentle breezes, and a very respectable number of birds.

Knightville Dam, built along the Westfield River, fills only in the spring. By early summer, the basin is open and dry save for the lovely and meandering river. Soon thereafter, plants spring up with great vigor to coat the valley floor. Unfortunately, these include a whole series of invasive species such as Japanese Knotweed, Black Swallow-wort and a little known but scary newcomer called Chocolate Vine (*Akebia quinata*). Even so, beauty persists. As summer begins to draw to a close, Joe Pye Weed has turned lowland areas into a sea of mauve. The river—featuring gentle rapids, a few natural beaches, some tempting-looking swimming holes, and numerous intriguing rock formations—winds placidly along, disturbed (on this morning) only by the strafing of swallows and Cedar Waxwings snapping up insects for breakfast.

As it happens, we were treated to this beautiful new birding spot courtesy of the Massachusetts Breeding Bird Survey. Located in Huntington, Knightville Dam is one of the blocks that Betsy Higgins has been surveying for the past several years. Our first stop at the lip of the basin featured a woodland border and an impressive view of the flood plain before us. We found American Redstart, Black and White Warbler, Yellow Warbler, Common Yellow Throat, Gray Catbird, Cedar Waxwing, Baltimore Oriole, Rose-Breasted Grosbeak, American Goldfinch, Blue-Headed Vireo, Red-Eyed Vireo, Ruby-Throated Hummingbird, Alder Flycatcher, Least Flycatcher, Willow Flycatcher, and two **Green Herons** (likely juveniles) perched on a snag.

Moving further down into the basin, we were treated to the aerial antics of Tree, Bank, and Barn Swallows, and spied a hawk perched atop a dead tree. After much consideration (and thanks to the bird finally revealing its tail in full spread), we determined that this was a **Broadwinged Hawk**—one of three spied that day and the first of two excellent looks at this same raptor.

Back on the road, we crossed a small bridge over a fingerlet of the river in order to get a better look at it. Here we spied a male Indigo Bunting, disturbed the—in MY opinion—rather hysterical boundary issues of a Belted Kingfisher [☺], and were chided by the raucous calls of American Crows.

Returning to the main road, we drove north along the basin to a parking area for the 6 mile-long East Branch Trail connecting the Knightville Dam flood plain with Chesterfield Gorge. The trail loosely follows the path of the Westfield River, through a variety of habitats. Highlights of this stage included the guttural rasps of a Common Raven, the spotting of another unidentified accipiter, 2 Black-Throated Green Warblers, soaring Turkey Vultures, 2 **Spotted Sandpipers**, and the somewhat distant but persistent calls of what Betsy was later able to confirm was a **Yellow-Billed Cuckoo**.

Other birds seen and/or heard during our trip included Rock Dove, Downy Woodpecker, Flicker, Black-Capped Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, White-Breasted Nuthatch, Northern Cardinal, Blue Jay, Eastern Towhee, Eastern Kingbird, and last but not least, a female **Bobolink**. Our morning's species count came to 42 plus the unidentified accipiter. Speaking for the group, our thanks go out to Betsy for sharing her new-found birding spot with us. I predict that, in the months and years to come, Knightville Dam will become a frequent destination for a growing number of HBC-ers.

Leslie Hoffmann



Saturday, August 21, 2010. New South Beach, Chatham.

Bob Bieda, Sue Emerson, Sally Hills, Helga Beatty, Andrew Magee, David Peake-Jones.

We were blessed with a beautiful day as we motored out of Outermost Harbor marine and sped off parallel to New South Beach toward our drop-off point. As we approached the southern end of the beach, we were reminded of the eternally shifting landscape in this part of the world. We could see that the channel which existed as recently as two years ago between South Monomoy Island and the beach is now entirely silted in, and South Monomoy is now effectively part of the mainland.

Alighting on the sandy beach, now much quieter than it was when boats could use the now closed channel to the ocean, we started out to the south, exploring several bays with a scattering of shorebirds. These included good numbers of **White-rumped Sandpipers**, who obligingly posed with their smaller and stockier brethren, allowing us the comforting (but all too fleeting) impression that we could actually tell the difference! We found our largest aggregations of shorebirds at what is now a cul-de-sac at the isthmus between South Monomoy and New South Beach. We were delighted to discover at least 220 **Red Knot**, many still with the apricot breasts of their breeding plumage on the shore of South Monomoy. This would be a great number even during the traditional height of their migration in July, and to find these beleaguered creatures in this abundance so late in the season was just fantastic. Close by, we found at least four **Hudsonian Godwits**, and two **Marbled Godwits**, plying the water with their rapier-like bills. A **Black Tern** loped by overhead, and we caught glimpses of an immature male Northern Harrier stalking the dunes.

Moving back along the beach, we found a scarcity of shorebirds, but the usual suspects were certainly present, from the diminutive and warmly colored Least Sandpipers to the peripatetic Sanderlings, Semi-palmated Sandpipers, and lanky Greater Yellowlegs. Ruddy Turnstones were unusually abundant, and we enjoyed the boisterous antics of several families of **American Oystercatchers**. Whimbrels strolled in and of the dune grass and terns were in abundance, in all stages of maturity, including good numbers of slender-billed **Roseate Terns** with their long tails and pale backs. We found another Black Tern, and amongst the hosts of burly gulls was a perky **Bonaparte's Gull** which allowed us a brief perusal before vanishing. Unable to resist the lure of the ocean, we slogged across the dunes to the ocean beach at one point, and were told by a birder who had been there some time that we had just missed watching a whale, remarkably close inshore, tail-slapping for some ten minutes. We had heard this sound from the inshore side, but had failed to understand its significance. We caught a few glimpses of two **Humpback Whales**, more sedate now, swimming amid a myriad of curious boaters.

We also spied several **Wilson's Storm-Petrels** and a couple of **Manx Shearwaters** skimming the wave tops close inshore, but there was no sign of the Great White Shark which has been frequenting these waters for much of the summer.

After the traditional death march towards the end of the day, we managed to arrive at the boat pick-up right on time, and were soon enjoying a variety of unhealthy fare at the Cream and Kone. You just can't have a bad day on New South Beach, and we left well satisfied.

David Peake-Jones



September 18, 2010. East Meadows.

Bob Bieda, Howie Foerstein, Jan Lamberg, Mary Lou Splain, Andria Wolf, Arn Krugman, Juliana Vanderwielen, Betsy Higgins, David Peake-Jones.

Our little caravan wended its way into the meadows at the very civilized time of 7:50 AM. At this early stage of the day there was a light northerly breeze, and the story of the early morning was a series of **American Kestrels**, an **Osprey**, and at least three **Merlins** migrating determinedly over the cornfields. One of these paused close to us in a tree, to our great delight. We made our way over to the business end of Hockanum Road, and then picked our way along the ORV highways of the meadows, which gradually gave up their secrets. At least two **Lincoln's Sparrows** gave meager glimpses to a few of us, by contrast with several **Swamp- and White-throated Sparrows** which were much more accommodating.

At Hockanum Ponds we saw a Green Heron devour a frog, and took a moment to speculate over a curious looking raptor, which turned out to be a Red-tailed Hawk with no belly band. We found an **Indigo Bunting** doing a tremulous post-breeding version of its song, and already having shed most of its breeding splendor for the starting chestnut of the fall. Likewise, there were several **Scarlet Tanagers** looking distinctly yellow, Blue-headed and Warbling Vireos (the latter still singing avidly), Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, and a couple of Belted Kingfishers. There was a scattering of warblers, including a **Connecticut Warbler**, seen by only a couple of people despite a determined stakeout.

By the time we returned to the cars in late morning, we had tallied 50 species. Not an easy day's birding, but, as with most things, the rarity of the rewards only makes the experience all the richer. Oh, and by the way, here is an excerpt from Tom Gagnon's log from Goat Peak that same day: "*Broad-winged hawk: 5106.*" WOW!

David Peake-Jones

COMING TRIPS

(Please see also the Fall Field Trip Schedule)

Friday, October 29. Saw-whet Owls. Evening.

Janice Jorgensen and Sue Emerson will join Strickland Wheelock and crew at Lookout Rock in Northbridge, MA for an evening of netting and banding Saw-whet Owls. Visitors help check the nets for owls every 45 minutes, then observe as crew members weigh, measure, and band the owls. Visitors often participate in releasing the owls. Bring a camera to record a great evening in the outdoors and, with luck, an owl or two. More info. will be available at the September meeting. This trip is limited to 12 participants and costs \$20. For information and to register call Sue Emerson (413-584-6736) and to reserve a place send a non-refundable check for \$20 payable to "HBC" to Janice Jorgensen (HBC; 150 River Drive; Hadley, MA 01035). (E)

Sunday, November 7. Berkshire Lakes: Migrating Waterfowl. All day.

Tom Gagnon goes to the lakes and ponds of Berkshire County to find ducks and other migrating waterfowl. There may be a side trip to Blueberry Hill if hawk-watching conditions seem favorable. Meet at Stop & Shop in Northampton at 6:15 a.m. Call Tom (413-584-6353) to register and get more information. (E)

HITCHCOCK PROGRAMS

Fall Birding Trip. Plum Island Region: *Scott Sumner*

Saturday, October 30, 5:30 a.m. An all-day trip carpooling from the Hitchcock Center.

The Sixth Annual Larch Hill English Style X-Country Classic

A Benefit for the Larch Hill Collaborative.

Saturday, October 30, at the Bramble Hill Farm, Amherst (adjacent to the Hitchcock Center).

Falconry Up Close: *Chris Davis,*

Sunday, November 7, 10 to 11:30 a.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.

OTHER GROUPS WHO ARE ALL ABOUT BIRDS.

This list focuses on groups who provide programs and/or field trips on birds and birding in Massachusetts, and list these on active websites. Addresses given are those for current programs and/or trips. Only monthly programs or special events are listed here (****).

Arcadia Sanctuary. Easthampton, MA. Field Trips/Programs.

Programs/trips at www.massaudubon.org/PDF/newsletters/Arcadia_117.pdf

Cape Cod Bird Club. Brewster, MA. Field Trips/Programs. www.massbird.org/ccbc

Programs held at 7:30 PM at Cape Cod Museum of Natural History, 869 Rte. 6A, in Brewster, MA.

*****October 11, 2010. Herb Raffaele - "Paradise Lost? Not yet!: Saving the Caribbean's Birds."*

Brookline Bird Club. Brookline, MA. Field Trips. www.brooklinebirdclub.org

Athol Birding and Nature Club: Athol, MA. Field Trips/Programs. www.millersriver.net/events/index/html

[Programs at](#) Millers River Environmental Center: 100 Main Street, Athol, MA 01331. Ph 978 248 9491.

*****October 13 at 7 PM. Weasels.*

Allen Bird Club: Springfield, MA. www.massbird.org/allen

Meetings held at the Tolman Wing of the Springfield Science Museum (The Quadrangle).

Hoffmann Bird Club. Berkshire County, MA www.hoffmannbirdclub.org/events/html.

Meetings at 7 p.m. in Pittsfield or Lenox, MA. Check website for monthly location.

*****Tuesday, October 12. Paul Siefert (UMass). N. Pacific Albatrosses*

*****Tuesday, November 2. Richard Prum (Yale). Birds as Dinosaurs.*

CHRISTMAS COUNTS

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 Northampton count culminates in a pot luck and compilation session at the Hitchcock Center in Amherst 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!

Believe it or not, there is also a count in the Quabbin region for those who want better birds and cushy weather!

Mark These Dates!!

Northampton Count: Sunday, December 19.

Quabbin Count: After Christmas, exact date to be finalized).

This will give you enough time between the two counts to start and finish your Christmas shopping, and to return all the ghastly gifts the other side of the family gave you!

*For further information, watch coming newsletters, or contact **Mary Alice Wilson** (413 549 1768; mwilson@k12.phast.umass.edu, Northampton Count) and **Scott Sumner** (413 253 5999; ssurner@aol.com, Quabbin Count)*

Checking Out Chickadees

We can't tell the difference between male and female chickadees just by looking at them. Not surprisingly though, the chickadees can!

Daniel Mennill and colleagues at the University of Windsor showed that the genders look significantly different if the viewer can detect UV light. Chickadees can do just that, and to them, males have significantly brighter white and gray areas, larger bibs, and a stronger contrast between pale and dark areas than do females.

According to Mennill,

"After a decade of working with these birds, I still can't distinguish a male from a female, or a high-ranking from a low-ranking male, even if I'm holding them in my hand. However, the spectrometer uncovers things that are hidden to our eyes. Birds' eyes are so superior to ours that we expect that they pick up on these differences readily."

Source: Cornell University: "All About Birds" www.allaboutbirds.org

That's all for this month. The Field Trip Policy and Guidelines follow on the next two pages.
Until next month, talk softly and carry a big scope!

David Peake-Jones, Editor
529 9541

newsletter@hampshirebirdclub.org

HAMPSHIRE BIRD CLUB, INC.

FIELD TRIP POLICY: 2010-2011

1. Field trips are an essential activity of the Hampshire Bird Club, Inc. (HBC). They are an important way to increase members' interest in and knowledge of birds, birding, and bird habitat. Field trips are announced in the HBC newsletter, on the website and at monthly meetings.
2. Each year, all HBC members are asked to sign the HBC Release Form. Minor children (under 18) must be accompanied by a parent/guardian or another adult who has written authorization to be responsible for the child's care and conduct. Please request a form from HBC if you want to authorize another adult to accompany your child.
- 3 The HBC conducts two different types of field trips: Day Trips and Overnight Trips.

Day Trips are planned by the Field Trip Committee, who prepare the schedule and select leaders. Day Trips generally do not require extensive planning by the trip leader. No costs other than travel (see #4 below), meals, and incidental fees will be involved. If requested to do so in the newsletter, participants must call the trip leader in advance to express interest in the trip. This allows the leader more flexibility and the opportunity to change the trip itinerary should that seem desirable. Day trips are open to both HBC members and non-members unless restricted to members by the host site.

Overnight Trips (2 or more days, reasonable driving distance) are planned by the Field Trip Committee and approved by the HBC Board at least 3 months in advance (see #5 below). Such trips generally require more planning by the trip leader, including, for example, arranging for lodging and travel. Participants will be charged an amount equal to actual predetermined costs (including liability insurance) plus a prorated amount to cover reimbursement of the leader's expenses (see #5 below). All fees, including the trip deposit, shall be paid to the HBC Treasurer. In the event of a cancellation, if the vacancy can be filled, the trip fee will be refunded, less a 10% processing charge. If the vacancy cannot be filled, the trip fee will be refunded, with the following exceptions:

- a) the portion of the trip fee that covers a share of the leaders costs,
- b) the portion of the fee that covers the insurance charge, and
- c) any portion of the fee which has already been paid to another party and cannot be recovered by the club.

Any excess fees remaining after costs have been met will be refunded, unless they are less than ten dollars per person, in which case they will revert to the HBC treasury. Overnight trips are open only to HBC members who have signed a release form and who have completed a medical information form.

4. The HBC Board recommends that passengers reimburse owners of vehicles used on HBC trips for costs associated with vehicle operation. The maximum recommended reimbursement is the federal government employee mileage reimbursement rate, rounded down to the nearest 10 cents, plus tolls and parking to be shared equally by all persons in the car including the driver. The participants (not the leader) are responsible for making carpool arrangements.

Continues on Page 2 ►►

5. Leaders of Overnight Trips shall:
 - a. Submit a trip plan to the Field Trip Committee, which must be approved by the Board at least 3 months in advance of the trip. The plan should describe in writing the nature of the trip as completely as possible. Include an itinerary, estimated cost, conditions of lodging and lead time needed for reservations, roughness of terrain, pace of the trip, extra costs not covered by the fee, date of deposit and final payment, date after which fee is not refundable, and provide a list of any specialized items that participants should take on the trip. Repeat trips led by the same leader need only submit necessary changes to the previous plan. The Board can waive the 3-month planning time if there is a special birding opportunity.
 - b. Consult with the membership secretary before the trip to make sure that all participants have signed the HBC Release Form and obtain a signed Medical Information Form from each participant.
 - c. Be reimbursed for all costs associated with planning (i.e. long-distance calls, postage), lodging, and transportation during the trip. The maximum reimbursement for automobile travel shall be one quarter of the costs incurred by a single vehicle under clause 4 of this policy.
 - d. Upon return, provide the HBC Board with an itemized account of all income and expenses related to the trip including receipts for major expenses.
6. The Field Trip Chair will send all participants in overnight trips the Field Trip Evaluation Form and a Medical Information Form. The completed evaluation form, to be returned to the Field Trip Chair, will help the Field Trip Committee plan future trips and provide feedback for leaders. Participants should give their signed Medical Information form to the trip leader prior to departure.
7. Leaders of both Day and Overnight Trips are asked to submit a Trip Highlights Report to the newsletter editor for publication in the next HBC newsletter.
8. HBC may ask professional bird touring organization to organize trips further away than the Overnight Trips. All responsibilities for planning the trip and all liability will be assumed by the touring organization. Such trips must be approved by the Board at least 6 months in advance.

Hampshire Bird Club, Inc.

Field Trip Guidelines for New Field Trip Participants and Drivers: 2010-2011

Field trips are one of the best ways to help the Hampshire Bird Club, Inc. (HBC) achieve its purpose: "to help its members and the general public enjoy birding and to educate them about birds, bird watching and bird habitats."

While these Guidelines are written primarily for new HBC Participants and Drivers, we hope that everyone will review this document, the ABA's Principles of Birding Ethics, the HBC Field Trip Policy, and the HBC Release Form.

All Participants:

1. Most trips described in the newsletter ask you to call the trip leader in advance. Please do so. It helps the leader plan the trip and you learn about any special arrangements or any change of plans.
2. Check with the leader before bringing children on a trip. Many of the trips are not appropriate for children. (All minor children (under 18) must be accompanied by a parent/guardian or an adult who has written authorization to be responsible for the child's care and conduct. See the Field Trip Policy for more information.)
3. All HBC members are asked to sign the HBC Release Form each year. If you did not receive a copy, please contact the Membership Secretary or check the "Join" section of the HBC Website
4. Be on time at the meeting place. If you plan to leave the trip early, you must inform the leader in advance.
5. Be prepared with binoculars, appropriate clothing (including protection from ticks), food and water. Assume the weather will be more extreme on the trip than at home and prepare accordingly.
6. Do not bring pets.
7. HBC encourages participants to carpool, both to reduce the environmental impact of the trip and to make the trip as safe as possible for all participants. We ask that the cost (presently \$0.50/mile plus tolls and parking) be shared equally among the driver and all passengers. You should estimate the probable cost of the trip so that you will be able to reimburse the driver at the end of the trip. The participants (not the leader) are responsible for making carpool arrangements.
8. HBC always encourages new birders to participate in trips. It is the responsibility of all trip members, leader and participants, to help new birders learn both identification techniques and bird observing skills.
9. All participants are responsible for their own safety. Use common sense if you feel that any part of the trip is too arduous for you. Always check with the trip leader if you have any questions or medical concerns about the trip.

Drivers:

1. It is the responsibility of the car owner to meet all registration, insurance, and inspection regulations.
2. Please fill up your tank before the trip and set your odometer at the beginning of the trip.
3. If the trip is going to caravan, follow common sense rules to make sure no one is put in danger or lost.
 - Stay in the same order so that you know which car is in front of you and which car is behind you.
 - If the car behind you is stopped by a light, pull safely to the side of the road so that you can wait until that car catches up.
 - If you are driving the car or cars catching up with the group, slow down so that the lead/stopped cars can pull in front of you.
 - It is a good idea for all caravan drivers to have their lights on.
4. Always have a description of the next major stop from the trip leader so that, should the caravan become separated, you can join the group at the next major stop.