



Hampshire Bird Club, Inc. Amherst, Massachusetts

www.hampshirebirdclub.org

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March, 2011.

It is March, and already yawning potholes and nervous-looking ice-fishermen hint at the approaching thaw. I thought I had better take a short break from following the all-important exploits of Charlie Sheen to get the newsletter out, and I had an idea for an editorial this month. Now let me see. Oh, yes, I wanted to rail about the increasing prevalence of.... Wait a second. Cell phone is beeping. Incoming text.....

(aside, muttering) Well I don't know. Why didn't you ask me that during the staff meeting... Get back to it later.

Well, where was I? Ah, yes. It seems you can't go a few minutes lately. Hold on.

(aside) What now. Friend me on what book? Seems like we always used to go fishing *WITH* friends. Now it seems we are phishing *FOR* friends. Seems like we should reverse-copyright the word friend as a culturally significant and endangered *NOUN* with particular significance to the indigenous people of *EARTH* and stop these tech-savvy aliens from using it in their proprietary schemes for world domination.

So, as I was saying, it is getting more and more difficult to...

(aside again) Oh my goodness! Are you serious? OMG they are so cute at that age. Yes, by all means send me another thirty photographs of the whole unspeakably funny episode: my existing portfolio of your delightful offspring is at least three days old.

Well, you know, now that it comes to it, I can't recall what I had on my mind. However, regardless of the stream of electronic "tweets" that intrudes unceasingly upon our peace-of-mind, there is soon to be some real twittering going on out in the woods and fields of our beloved valley. I suggest we switch off the digital tyrants that lurk in our pockets and go birding!

Please note that a revised and much-improved **Winter-Spring-Summer Field Trip Schedule** accompanies this newsletter.

NEXT PROGRAM

Monday, March 14 at 7:30 PM

Don Kroodsma listens in on **Our Favorite Birds**

Immanuel Lutheran Church; 867 North Pleasant Street, Amherst.

At a meeting in the not-so-distant past, Don Kroodsma surreptitiously circulated amongst the assembled aviophiles, collecting the identities of our favorite birds. I have a funny feeling he will be re-introducing us to the songs and behavior of these old friends we *thought* we knew (in his inimitable style, of course).

Don Kroodsma discovered birds during his last semester in college, back in 1968, and that summer learned how to tape record them. For a Ph.D. at Oregon State, he studied where and when young Bewick's wrens learn their songs. He then spent eight years at Rockefeller University before coming to UMass, Amherst in 1980. Forty years of birdsong pretty well sums it all up—first in an academic setting and publishing in obscure scientific journals, now free and at large, writing for a broader audience and sharing the joy of birdsong (and sonograms, of course).

COMING PROGRAMS

April 11, 2011. Shawn Carey. The Gulf of Mexico Oil Catastrophe.

May 9, 2011. John Kricher. Speciation of Birds in the Neotropics.

June 13, 2011. David Spector and John Van de Graaff. Words and Birds.

FIELD TRIP REPORTS

Coastal Rhode Island. Saturday, February 26. 2011.

Participants: Geoff LeBaron, Harvey Allen, Larry and Joan Duprey, Betsy Higgins, Nidhin Joseph, Andrew Magee, David Peake-Jones, Elaine Pourinski, Judy Smith, Mary Lou Splain, Chris Yerlig.

Perhaps to stave off the seasonal affective delusion that we might never go birding again, the group above set out on a relatively pleasant day for the coast of Rhode Island. We first cruised the “tony” environs of Watch Hill, where we espied a massive raft (potentially thousands) of Brant at the limits of visibility.

Misquamicut and Weekapaug were amazingly bird-free but for a tantalizing Rorschach alcid which we more-or-less reckon was a **Thick-billed Murre**.

Ninigret N.W.R. was eerily quiet, with barely a song-bird to be found. We did scare up a Northern Flicker, some Yellow-rumped Warblers, and three individual birds notable for the superb views they offered: the friendly neighborhood **Lesser Black-backed Gull**, a superb and acrobatic **Red-throated Loon** at close range, and a beautiful **Red-shouldered Hawk** which held court in a roadside tree.

In the surf at Charlestown Breachway, we found a nice complement of Horned Grebes in the shallows, and several lovely **Long-tailed Ducks**. At Moonstone Beach we had lovely looks at close red-breasted Mergansers in superb late afternoon light, plus a sprightly **Pied-billed Grebe** and a beautiful **Rough-legged Hawk**.

We rounded out the day with a long haul to the mysterious and always unpredictable Sachuest Point. Though **Harlequin Ducks** were not numerous this year, and were initially well-hidden, we were eventually rewarded with some nice looks at a few, along with a raft of Purple Sandpipers. Searching along the cove for a Green-tailed Towhee (not to be found) we came across a large complement of Sanderling scuttling about on the beach. As if to make up for the absence of owls at this normally owly spot, we were astounded by the peenting of at least three VERY improbable **American Woodcocks**, which were our last birds of the day and displayed about us in the gathering dusk at the visitors center.

David Peake-Jones, from notes by Geoff LeBaron

COMING TRIPS

Please see the enclosed REVISED edition of the **Winter-Spring-Summer Field Trip Schedule**.

Sallymeandering

The Wit and Wisdom of Sally Venman

“As part of the HBC information gathering and dispensing service, your secretary is always on the lookout for enrichment items that may have been missed by you, the membership. In that light, I offer the following which will be of special interest to those born between March 21 and April 19:

“In 1967, the longest flight by a chicken, 302 feet, was accomplished by a hen born under the sign of Aries. And, in 1955 – an Aries python provided the only known case of a snake devouring a whole pig. Keep this in mind if Aries is your sign and if the Guinness Book of World Records is your goal. The wild and crazy Aries animals are everywhere.”

April. 1995

SIGN UP NOW FOR

Monhegan Island, 2011.

Memorial Day Weekend (Friday, May 27 to Monday, May 30)

You can see the spring migration almost anywhere, but if you have ever wanted to steep yourself in the glorious warblers of May, while losing yourself in the gentle rhythms of an idyllic island, Monhegan is for you.

During the spring, migrant songbirds moving northward up the Atlantic seaboard are sometimes pushed out over the ocean by storms, and have to fight their way back toward the safety of land. Monhegan Island lies about twelve miles off the coast of Maine and is often a haven for exhausted birds to recuperate before resuming the perilous journey northward. 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.

To sign up and/or for a cost estimate: contact the Field Trip Chair:

Mike Locher (fieldtrip@hampshirebirdclub.org; 585 5864)

To learn more, contact one of the leaders:

Betsy Higgins (hignik@comcast.net; 586 7585), or

Andrew Magee (andrewfmagee@gmail.com; 586 1509).

Sallymeandering

“And a few more reminders for your calendar, compliments of your full-service Secretary. The month of May is National Asparagus Month! May 3- Pete Seegers 72nd birthday. May 8 – the first unassisted triple play in 1898 – AND – Ostrich mating season begins; May 12 – Mother's Day; May 22 – Toothpaste tube was invented just 99 years ago; May 25 – Babe Ruth hit his last home run (#714) in 1935; May 27 – Memorial Day; June 4 – 42nd anniversary of the day that Dick Tracy married Tess Truehart after an 18 year engagement. HAPPY BIRD SEARCH”

May 1991.

Cornell Lab Young Birders Event

August 11-14, 2011. Ithaca, New York

The Young Birders Event aims to bring together teenagers (students who will be sophomores, juniors and seniors) with a passion for birds who are interested in pursuing a career with birds. The young birders will meet people who have successful careers that involve birds in a variety of ways from ornithological researchers to tour leaders, to audio specialists and computer scientists. High-school-aged young birders need to apply by mail by April 15, 2011. Ten young birders will be selected and notified in late May. Please share this information with any young birders you know!

For further information and application materials, go to: ebird.org/content/ebird/news/YB2011.

HITCHCOCK PROGRAMS

Please note: The Spring Birding course with Scott Sumner is already in progress.

Introduction to Birding: *Jan Ortiz*

Classes: Wednesdays, April 27, May 4, 11, Thursday, May 19, 6:30-8 p.m.

Field Trips: Saturdays, April 30, May 7, 14, 21, 7 a.m.-noon

Members: \$90/Non-members: \$105. Pre-registration required.

Bark: Get to Know Your Trees: *Michael Wojtech*

Saturday, May 7, 9 a.m.-noon. Fee.

Salamander Tunnels Maintenance Day: *Ted Watt*

A Saturday in March to be determined by weather.

Please call 413-256-6006 or email us at hcenter@crocker.com and we will contact you when the date is scheduled.

Residential landscape Design Course: *Melinda Reid*

Saturdays, March 19, 26, April 2, 9, 16, 9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Fee.

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.

Sallymeandering

Three friars opened up a small florist shop to raise funds for the poor. Since everyone liked to buy flowers from the men of God, a rival florist across town thought the competition was unfair. After they repeatedly refused his pleas to close down, the opposing florist hired Hugh McTaggart, the roughest and most vicious thug in town to “persuade” them to close. Hugh beat up the friars and trashed the store, whereupon the terrified friars finally shut up shop, proving that **Hugh, and only Hugh, can prevent florist friars.**

Breeding Bird Atlas

Atlas Workshop: What is the best way to spend my time in this last year?

Monday, March 28, 7-9 PM, Arcadia Wildlife Sanctuary Headquarters, Easthampton

How can topographic maps and satellite photos help find species? How do I get the most information from the block’s species list? What are some techniques for finding the elusive species? What are some techniques for upgrading species to that CO (or at least PR) category?

To make this workshop more helpful (and fun), please let Mary Alice (548-9078, mwilson@umassk12.net) know that you are coming so that we will be analyzing the blocks you will be working on AND tell her what you would like to learn – what your own questions are. Please do this soon so the planning committee (Bob Bieda, Betsy Higgins, Chuck Horn, Geoff LeBaron) can gear up for the world’s greatest workshop.

Welcome New Atlasers: Join us for this final year. (It will be another 25 years before the next atlas.) If you get organized now, you can come to the March 28 workshop ready to sling jargon with the best of them. Contact Mary Alice (548-9078, mwilson@umassk12.net) NOW.

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 (****).

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.
 ******March 14, 2011. Gina Nichol - “Hummingbirds: Feathered Gems”**

Athol Birding and Nature Club: Athol, MA. Field Trips/Programs. www.millersriver.net/events/index/html
 **** **Wednesday, March 9. 7:00 – 8:30 p.m.**

The Sudden and Unexpected Decline of Massachusetts Bats: Dr. Thomas French
 At Northfield Mountain Recreation and Environment Center.

Breeding Bird Survey Volunteer Needed.

Amherst Breeding Bird Survey, now in its 22nd year, is looking for one volunteer for 2 short routes (3 sites each). Surveys are done between June 1-June 17, beginning each survey between 6 and 7 AM (5 minutes at each stop, 5-10 minute walk between sites).

For more information, contact Mary Alice Wilson (mwilson@umassk12.net, 548-9078).

Please note: the Amherst Breeding Bird Survey should not be confused with the MA Breeding Bird Atlas.

Gleanings from the Scientific Literature

OK, this one has nothing to do with birds, but it is mind-blowing enough to include anyway!

Imagine a cheap sci-fi flick in which aliens parasitize people, cause them to climb trees, and then use the decomposing bodies as factories to produce millions more aliens!

Well, the people are actually rainforest carpenter ants, and the aliens are fungi of earthly origin, but in other respects, reality is as strange as fiction.

Several species of *Cordyceps* fungi have been found in Brazil whose spores infect the bodies of carpenter ants, and, via psycho-active chemicals, induce them to climb into rainforest vegetation, and fasten themselves in position in the foliage. The ants then die, and their bodies become spore factories for the fungus, which uses the decomposing tissue to generate millions of spores for up to a year.

Chemicals from this genus of fungi have been known to science for some time and have a variety of uses in medicine. Thankfully, the side effects do not appear to include the types of impacts seen on the ants.

*“Hidden diversity behind the Zombie-Ant fungus *Ophiocordyceps unilateralis*: Four new species described from Carpenter ants in Minas Gerais, Brazil.”* By Harry C. Evans, Simon L. Elliot, David P. Hughes. *PloS One*, Vol. 6 No. 3, March 2011.

Source: www.wired.com/wiredscience

That’s it for this month.

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

David Peake-Jones, Editor
 529 9541

newsletter@hampshirebirdclub.org

Hampshire Bird Club, Inc. Revised Winter-Spring-Summer Field Trip Schedule, 2011.

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 also the "Field Trip Guidelines for Participants" (September newsletter or on the Website).

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

MARCH

***Sunday, March 20. Connecticut River Waterfowl II.** Half day. Mike Locher travels from Holyoke to Turner's Falls looking for any waterfowl that Josh missed migrating through the valley along the Connecticut River. Call Mike (413-585-5864) for information, or just meet at the Hadley Elementary School parking lot (on Route 47, about a mile north of the Route 9 intersection) at 7 a.m. (E)

APRIL

***Sunday, April 10. Ashley Reservoir: Early Warblers.** Half day. Mike Locher (413-585-5864) looks for early migrants like Pine and Palm Warblers, Ruby-crowned Kinglets, and Northern Waterthrushes. Meet in the Friendly's parking lot, near the Holiday Inn, close to Exit 15 ("Holyoke Mall") off Rt. 91 at 7 a.m. (E)

***Sunday, April 17. Bullitt Reservation.** Half day. In a new trip for the HBC, Mary Alice Wilson explores a reservation along the Conway/Ashfield line. Contact Mary Alice (413-548-9078) as the date approaches for meeting information. (E)

MAY

***Sunday, May 1. Early Migrants.** Half day. Betsy Higgins (413-586-7585) looks for migrants, starting around Look Park in Northampton. Meet at 6:30 a.m. in the parking lot of the JFK Middle School on Bridge Road in Northampton. (E)

Saturday, May 7. East Quabbin Reservoir. All day. Larry Therrien leads the HBC's annual trip to the east side of the reservoir, looking for spring migrants. You must be a Hampshire Bird Club member to attend this trip, which is limited to 15 people plus the leader. Call Tom Gagnon (413-584-6353) to register no later than April 15. (M)

Sunday, May 8. Return to Greylock Glen. All day. Mike Locher cleans up the two blocks the HBC busted last spring, looking for nesting waterfowl and other species we didn't get before. Contact Mike (413-585-5864) as the date approaches for meeting information. (M)

Sunday, May 15. MacLeish Field Station, Northampton. Half day. In a new trip for the HBC, Bill Benner explores a newly-opened property run by Smith College. Call Bill (413-320-4422) as the date approaches for meeting information. (E)

Monday, May 16. Mount Holyoke. Half Day. Tom Gagnon hikes up Mt. Holyoke looking for birds (think Cerulean Warbler), wildflowers, and perhaps a few butterflies. Meet at the LOWER parking lot at 7 a.m. Call Tom (413-584-6353) after May 10. (M)

Friday, May 20. Rails and Marsh Birds. Evening. Tom Gagnon looks and listens for Virginia Rails, Sora Rails, and Marsh Wrens. Meet between Stop & Shop and Liquors 44 in Northampton at 6 p.m., then the group will proceed to the Bike Path. The walk ends at dusk. Bring insect repellent. Call Tom (413-584-6353) for information. (E)

Saturday, May 21. Plum Island. All day. Geoff LeBaron looks for migrants and residents at one of Massachusetts' premier birding locations. Call Geoff as the date approaches for meeting time and information. (E)

Saturday, May 28. Mount Auburn Cemetery, Watertown, MA. $\frac{3}{4}$ day. David Peake-Jones will visit this historic and beautiful garden cemetery which is also a fabled migrant trap. Call David (413-529-9541) to register. (E)

Friday, May 27 – Monday, May 30. Monhegan Island. Overnight trip. Betsy Higgins and Andrew Magee lead 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) for information, and Mike Locher (413-585-5864) to register. (E/M)

JUNE

***Thursday, June 2. Holyoke Fish Ladder.** Half day. Tom Gagnon reprises his trip to the Holyoke Fish Ladder to look for birds and fish. (Last year the group saw seven species of fish and eels.) To carpool, meet at the Park & Ride parking lot near the Three County Fairgrounds in Northampton at 11:30 a.m., or else meet the group in Holyoke. Bring a lunch, if you want one. Call Tom (413-584-6353) for information. (E)

Saturday, June 4. 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) at least two weeks ahead of time to register and check on the date and time for meeting. (E)

Saturday, June 11. Hammonasset Beach State Park, CT. All day. Betsy Higgins goes to the coast of Connecticut to find sparrows, rails, and other seaside denizens. Call Betsy (413-586-7585) for meeting time and place as the date approaches. (E)

Sunday, June 12, Blockbusting in Stephenton 4. All day. Contact Mike Locher (413-585-5864) to venture into utterly unbirded territory (at least as far the Breeding Bird Atlas is concerned). There should be opportunities for both hikers and drivers. (M)

JULY

Saturday, July 30. New South Beach (Early). All day. David Peake-Jones will look for Red Knots and other early shorebird migrants. We'll be walking a long way over wet sand. Bring sun protection, water, food, and \$20 for the boat ride. Call David (413-529-9541) to register. (M)

AUGUST

Saturday, August 27. New South Beach (Late). All day. Bob Bieda leads birders in their quest for late shorebird migrants, including Curlew Sandpipers and Marbled and Hudsonian Godwits. Bring a lunch, a jacket, and \$20 for the boat ride. Note: the date may change depending on the tides. Call Bob (413-527-2623) to register. (M)

SEPTEMBER

***Saturday, September 10. Knightsville Dam.** Half day. Betsy Higgins repeats her trip to Knightsville Dam WMA. This is a rich habitat where almost anything could turn up. Call Betsy (413-586-7585) for meeting details. (E)