



Hampshire Bird Club, Inc. Amherst, Massachusetts

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There seems no end to the string of natural calamities we have endured in the north-east this year. I sincerely hope that, as you read this, you have heat and light in your home, water flowing from your faucets, and have not sustained major damage to life and limb from the latest manifestation of nature's.....

I was going to say "wrath," until I realized that the clichéd term "nature's wrath" is hardly correct. Nature is no more showing anger in the course of an early snowstorm than she is being benevolent in the course of a gently sunny fall day. (I hope we can let my use of "she" in reference to nature stand for now). However, there certainly seemed to be some malevolent force at work as we watched and heard limbs from the massive silver maple two doors down come crashing, one by one, to the ground, taking down power lines as they went, and listened to similar sounds echoing up and down the street throughout the night of the storm.

It was interesting to muse on how the birds may interpret the vagaries of climate. I wonder whether the tropicbirds and petrels so cruelly cast upon shore during Irene had any sense of being singled out or mistreated. Ironically, as I began the forlorn task of clearing up the remnants of my willow trees, there were quite a few White-throated Sparrows larking about in the neighborhood's largest brush pile who seemed quite cheerful about the whole thing, perhaps feeling the equivalent of having won the lottery!

Anyway, and idle musing aside, I hope you will enjoy good birds this fall and that we can be spared any more climatic fireworks for a little while, at least!

NEXT PROGRAM

Monday, November 14 at 7:30 PM

John Cecil looks at Important Bird Areas from Top to Bottom

Immanuel Lutheran Church; 867 North Pleasant Street, Amherst.

Should bad weather force a cancellation, it will be announced on WHMP 1400 AM radio.

John Cecil is Director of the Important Bird Areas (IBA) Program for the National Audubon Society, where his responsibilities include working with Audubon staff and partners to identify and conserve the most important places for birds throughout the U.S. In addition, John is the current chair of the U.S. Shorebird Council and is Audubon's representative on the U.S. National Ramsar Committee. Before joining Audubon in 2001, he worked for several state wildlife agencies, including two years with the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission's Non-game Wildlife Program. John received an M.S. in Biology from the University of North Carolina at Wilmington and a B.S. in Wildlife Management from Frostburg State University in western Maryland. Through his professional and academic experiences John has been involved in conservation activities benefiting a wide variety of wildlife including freshwater mussels, American Alligators, Bog Turtles, Southern Appalachian and Allegheny Woodrats, Northern Flying Squirrels, Wood Ducks, Mottled Ducks, Peregrine Falcons, Piping Plovers, Wilson's Plovers, songbirds and numerous colonial waterbirds. John's conservation and birding interests have led him to travel extensively throughout the U.S. and the Americas.

In a recent contest in the *Washington Post*, readers were asked to provide evidence for the notion that English nouns, like German ones, should be assigned a gender. Look for some of their submissions on the next few pages!

COMING PROGRAMS

Dec 12, 2011. HBC Members and Friends. The Members' Meeting.

Jan 9, 2012. Geoff LeBaron. Panama and Costa Rica.

Feb 13, 2012. Scott Sumner. Birding Alaska.

FIELD TRIP REPORTS

Northampton Meadows. Saturday, September 25

Three hardy souls threw caution into the wind, along with the forecast, and joined **Scott Sumner** for a morning of birding in the East & West Meadows. The rains from the night before put down a number of shorebirds in the recently-plowed fields. After navigating a few large pools we made it out past the end of the runway and found our first shorebirds of the day. Highlights in the East Meadows included **(6) American Golden-Plovers** –molting adults and juveniles, **(18) Killdeer**, **Spotted Sandpiper**, **(6) Least Sandpipers**, **(1) Pectoral Sandpiper**, and a beautiful **Buff breasted-Sandpiper**. Other meadow notables were **(5) Blue-winged Teal**, **Osprey**, **Northern Harrier**, **Peregrine Falcon**, **(3) American Pipits**, **(27) Savannah** and **(3) Lincoln's Sparrows** rounded out the early morning.

By late morning we migrated across Rte. 5 to the West Meadows, our goal was to scan another field that had been pretty good for shorebirds the week before. Unlike the shorebirds in the east meadows (fairly vocal) the west meadow birds were very quiet and harder at first to locate. After a while we came across six species and were treated to excellent views of **(5) Semipalmated Plovers**, **(3) Killdeer**, **(2) Solitary Sandpipers**, **(2) Semipalmated Sandpipers**, **(8) Least Sandpipers** and **(6) Pectoral Sandpipers**. Other highlights included **Double-crested Cormorant**, **Bald Eagle** and an **American Kestrel**.

Scott Sumner

Cumberland Farms IBA. October 8, 2011.

Scott Sumner, **Nidhin Joseph**, **Donna Rickerby**, **Carol** and **John Gabranski** and **David Peake-Jones** made the long journey to this fabled south-eastern birding destination on an absurdly benign fall Saturday. Many of us westerners have little or no familiarity with the area, but it is well visited by our eastern brethren, and for good reason. Leaving our vehicle at the edge of the fields, we made our way on foot between alternating fields of weeds and corn toward the interior. Things were quiet early, and only Scott's keen ear picked out the **Swamp Sparrows** chipping from weedy depths to either side and **Bobolinks** cavorting overhead. Along the weedy edges of mown hayfields, we had an embarrassment of **Savannah Sparrows**, and several distant **Northern Harriers** hunted a wet swale.

Moving further in to the manure pile, we found more sparrows, including a couple of **Lincoln's**, and found a dead tree serving as a roost for many swallows, resting between foraging flights. After painstaking work we found **2 Bank-**, **10 Barn-**, and **1 Northern Rough-winged** individual amongst the multitudes of **Tree Swallows**. We spent some time admiring two **Least Sandpipers** and a couple of **Lesser Yellowlegs** in a puddle but, with the day hotting up and the birds quieting down, we decided we had done all we could for the day. Back at the cars, we were saddling up to head home when a **Sandhill Crane** casually cruised over our heads and disappeared in the direction of the interior fields. Off we went, helter-skelter back to the manure pits and watched this gorgeous creature meander about over the fields for a time, before soaring up and out of sight to the north.

We found ourselves back at the puddle, which since our departure had attracted **White-rumped Sandpipers**, **Pectoral Sandpipers**, **Semi-palmated Sandpipers** and **American Pipits** in addition to the earlier birds. They were extremely tolerant of our approach and put on quite a shorebird clinic, of which we made good use. The crane made a surprising encore before we departed and, after an interesting but unproductive journey around the greater fields, we set off home.

David Peake-Jones

Coastal Rhode Island. October 15, 2011.

Geoff LeBaron, Nancy and Denny Baker, Ron Bussian, Larry & Joan Duprey, Betsy Higgins, Andrew Magee, and Al Richards toured our petite southern neighbor on a windy but dry day. Here, mercifully free of editing niceties, are the highlights.

Avondale Farm Preserve, Westerly: windy and blustery, with birds hunkered down. Hard to find sparrows or any landbirds, but one gaggle contained frustratingly fleeting views of **Philadelphia Vireo** and **Orange-crowned Warbler**. Good raptor show!

Misquamicut: no sparrows and only one egret—a Great—but a tremendous flock (5000++) of Tree Swallows enveloped us with amazing sights and sounds!

Ninigret N.W.R.: Lunch in the parking lot, lots of wind, and birders returning from Sandy Point reported no gulls or any other birds. We saved our efforts for Trustom, but stumbled upon two Common Ravens in Charlestown.

Firehouse Pond, Charlestown: a Wood Duck, an elusive Pied-billed Grebe, a couple of American Wigeon, and the biggest, baddest Cooper's Hawk we'd ever seen.

Trustom Pond N.W.R.: amazingly few landbirds (though we did scrounge up two **Blackpolls** among a gaggle of Butterbutts), but a nice assortment of waterfowl greeted us at Osprey Point, including a distant **Cackling Goose** and five Snows among hundreds of Canadas, a bevy of Ruddy Ducks, and both Lesser and Greater Scaup. Plus a fantastic Marbled Orb Weaver spider that Larry picked up!

Matunuck area: another flock of Canadas included five more Snow Geese, plus not one but **two** adult **Lesser Black-backed Gulls!** Maybe one of these was our old friend from Ninigret in past years....

Richmond Turf Farms: nothing awaited us in the turf fields and we couldn't get down the flooded road into Peckham Farm for sparrows, so made a beeline for Pt. Judith.

Point Judith: despite the parking area at the point being posted as "Closed—No Trespassing" we walked in (with a constant parade of locals) and were treated to a blustery, exciting view of the crashing waves and dramatic sunset. Flyby Forster's Terns were our only "seabird" catch, but the sunset was incredible.

Geoff LeBaron

COMING TRIPS

***Week of November 14-18. Connecticut.** $\frac{3}{4}$ day. Henry Lappen leads a new trip looking for unusual species in our southern neighbor. In the last few years, these have included Calliope Hummingbird, Northern Lapwing, Fork-tailed Flycatcher, Barnacle Goose, and more. The actual date depends on weather, birds, and Henry's schedule. Call Henry (413-549-3722) well in advance to register, or to get more information. (E)

***Saturday, November 19. Cape Ann/Plum Island.** All Day. Join Scott Sumner for a pre-Thanksgiving trip to Cape Ann and Plum Island. Work off those Thanksgiving calories before they happen. Call Scott (413-256-5438) for meeting time. The trip will leave from Sumner Heating at 60 Shumway Street St. in Amherst. (M)

Sunday, November 20. Quabbin Reservoir II. All day. If you thought the first trip was good, wait until you go on the sequel. Tom Gagnon and Larry Therrien go back to the Quabbin, and this time, the birds don't stand a chance. You must be a member of the Hampshire Bird Club to participate. Participation is limited, so call Tom early to sign up (413-584-6353). (M)

"Kidneys" should be a female noun, because they always go to the bathroom in pairs.

HITCHCOCK PROGRAMS

Deep Energy Retrofitting Your Home: *Bick Corsa*

Sunday, November 6, 2-4 p.m. Free.

Photographing Larches: *John Green*

Saturday, November 12, 9-11 a.m. (Rain Date: Sunday, November 13. Fee.

Further Adventures of an Invertebrate Explorer: *Charley Eisenman*

Tuesday, November 15, 7-9 p.m. Fee.

White Nose Syndrome and Our Bat Populations: *Ann Froschauer*

Thursday, November 17, 7-9pm. Donation requested. (All donations go to research the white nose syndrome.)

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.

STATE OF THE BIRDS 2011

Documenting Changes in Massachusetts Birdlife.

- Get your (free) copy at the November HBC meeting
- Read the results of all your work; the report uses data from the many years of Christmas Count and the Massachusetts routes in the USGS Breeding Bird Survey, and the first four years Breeding Bird Atlas.
- Take a copy home to read yourself - and then, if you don't want to keep it (but you probably will), pass it along to a birding friend, your local library, land trust, or school.

Thanks

“Hammer” should be a male noun because it has evolved little over many centuries.

DOCUMENTING RARE BIRDS

In the course of the recent Massachusetts Breeding Bird Atlas field work period, a number of rare marsh birds have been seen and well-documented in Massachusetts. These include Least Bittern at Post Farm, as well as both Least Bittern and King Rail at Belle Island Marsh. I want to remind birders of the importance of submitting Rare Species Observation forms to the **Massachusetts Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program**. NHESP has very few field staff, and therefore relies upon good records from the birding and naturalist community.

This is an easy and effective way of having a direct conservation impact on the rare species that you're seeing in any part of the state.

A properly documented observation will result in regulatory protection of the species and its habitat under the **Massachusetts Endangered Species Act**, and will also inform conservation and management decisions on both the local and statewide level. However, if rare bird sightings are not documented with NHESP, the site cannot receive legal protection under the Endangered Species Act. From a legal perspective, it's as if the bird was never seen.

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A list of the state's rare species can be found here:

http://www.mass.gov/dfwele/dfw/nhosp/species_info/mesa_list/mesa_list.htm

A link to the rare species observation form can be found at the bottom of this page:

http://www.mass.gov/dfwele/dfw/nhosp/species_info/report_rare_species.htm

Some especially under-reported species include American Bittern, Sora, Whip-poor-will, and Mourning Warbler.

I don't mean to preach, but I do want to get the reminder out - your submitted records really do make a big difference. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

Chris Buelow: NHESP Restoration Ecologist, Hardwick, MA.
dryoptera@yahoo.com - www.eastquabbinbirdclub.com

“Conservative-voter” should be a female noun because they get more right every time you turn around.

CHRISTMAS COUNTS

If you want to contribute to one of the most important (and certainly the largest) research efforts into bird distribution world-wide, the Christmas Count may be for you. There are several counts in this region every December, and HBC plays a key role in the Northampton and Quabbin counts.

Every December, we get together to count all the birds in a **BIG** circle around some point in Hadley. 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.

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

Christmas Counts!!

Northampton: Sunday, December 18.

Jan Ortiz, 413 549 1768, jtortiz@aol.com, OR

Janice Jorgensen, 413 585 0145, janicejorgensen@charter.net

Quabbin: Saturday, December 31.

Scott Sumner (413 253 5999; ssurner@aol.com)

“Shoes” should be a male noun because they are generally unpolished and may often be found with their tongues hanging out.

That's all for this month.

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

David Peake-Jones, Editor
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