



# Hampshire Bird Club, Inc. Amherst, Massachusetts

www.hampshirebirdclub.org

Volume 29, No. 1

## September, 2012.

Oh, g'day!

The board insists that I take a moment away from writing mocking letters to the Australian national swim team to send out the first bird club newsletter of the year.

The new bird club year begins as the fall migration begins to get into gear. Shorebirds are braving the beaches and tidal flats of the east coast in search of their wintering grounds. Nighthawks are migrating southward and, before we know it, the hawks, songbirds and waterfowl will join the parade. The club will be offering an eclectic mix of **monthly programs** over the next ten months, as well as **field trips for birders at all skill levels**, to destinations throughout the local region and even points further afield. Our newly-fledged **Education Committee** is spreading its wings to bring a love of birds and birding to the broader community. *We invite* you to take part in all this, and we *entreat* you to contribute to the club by **JOINING US IN MEMBERSHIP** or **RENEWING your MEMBERSHIP**.

Attached to this newsletter you will find the Membership Form, the Meeting Time Survey/Field Trip Release Form, and the RBA form. I hope some of it will be useful!

### THE ON-LINE NEWSLETTER PLUG

The membership forms asks you to select either “on-line” access to the newsletter this year, or the tried-and-true “hard copy,” delivered to you via the United States Postal Service. Of course, choose what works for you but, that said....

#### “Why choose “on-line?”

You can archive our publication digitally, without accumulating paper files, or print at home if you like. You reduce postage and printing costs for HBC, which keeps dues down for all of us.

#### “How does on-line access work?”

The newsletter is posted on the HBC website. Participants receive an email notification, whereupon they can 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 if I encounter technical difficulties?”

The system is pretty easy to use if you have email access, are accustomed to using the Internet and/or downloading content. 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 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.

#### “Do I get all newsletters on-line?”

Well, yes and no. Some newsletters (including the September edition) go out in paper form to all members to ensure universal reception and/or because of sensitive content. They are also posted on the Website, minus the private bits.

#### “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?”

Yes, please! 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.

## MEETING TIME SURVEY: Your Opinion Needed

The board has observed that some folks have been leaving our monthly program meetings while the presentation is still in progress. Assuming folks would prefer to see the program to its conclusion, it seems that, at least for some, our programs may be starting too late.

**Should we switch to a slightly earlier start time?** On the plus side, this would allow all of us to get home a little earlier, and this might mean the difference between attending and not attending for some members. On the down side, there may be some who cannot get to the meetings before the current start time of 7:30 p.m.

### How about starting at 7:00 p.m. instead of 7:30?

Since we are trying to make meetings as accessible as possible for ALL our members, it is essential that we have YOUR input on this. *On the back of the membership form (sharing space with our hallowed Field Trip Release form), there is a single-question survey on this subject. PLEASE take time to complete the survey when you complete your membership form.*

## NEXT PROGRAM

**Monday, September 10 at 7:30 p.m.**

**Marshall Iliff** sheds light on the emerging phenomenon of **eBird**

Immanuel Lutheran Church; 867 North Pleasant Street, Amherst.

On August 13, 2012, Liron Gertsman, aged 12, submitted the 100 millionth observation record to eBird. eBird is a real-time, on-line checklist program. It was founded in 2002 by Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology and National Audubon, and is already one of the largest and fastest-growing biodiversity databases in the world. eBird aims to record and make accessible the every-day activity of anyone who birds and is willing to submit data. Many birders routinely submit their daily observations, and it is now possible to do this from the field using mobile apps. eBird not only provides a potent database for use by ornithologists, land managers, and conservationists, but also offers powerful ways for individuals to better keep track of their own birding.

Like any relatively new technology, eBird can be a little daunting for those of us yet to embrace it. Marshall Iliff will attempt to dispel some of the strangeness and illuminate some of the potential wonders of this new tool. You can find out all you want to know about eBird at [eBird.org](http://eBird.org).

## COMING PROGRAMS

**October 15, 2012. John Nove.** A Tale of Two Scottish Isles: Adventures in Orkney.

**November 12, 2012. Don Kroodsma.** (Something vocal...)

**December 10, 2012. HBC Members.** Members' meeting.

**January 14, 2013. Chris Rimmer.** Bicknell's Thrush.

**February 11, 2013. Shawn Carey.** Shorebird Migration Hotspots.

**March 11, 2013. Joey Mason.** Kestrels.

**April 8, 2013. Joan Walsh.** Breeding Bird Atlas II – the Next Steps.

**May 13, 2013. David Spector?** (To be determined...).

**June 10, 2013. Mara Silver.** Swallows in the Connecticut River Valley

## FIELD TRIP REPORTS

### Mount Greylock. Sunday, June 3. (Rescheduled from June 2).

Carol and John Gabranski and Nidhin Joseph accompanied **David Peake-Jones** to the roof of the state. We headed off up-country on a very atmospheric Sunday morning, driving through rising wreaths of early fog as we climbed Route 2 toward North Adams. Starting up Notch Road, we warmed up with the songs of Blackburnian Warbler, Wood Thrush, Veery, American Redstart, Least Flycatcher, Eastern Wood Peewee, and a distant Swamp Sparrow speaking of water. American Goldfinches, Common Yellowthroats, Chestnut-sided Warblers, and a couple of Pileated Woodpeckers rounded out our lowland list. A little higher, and inside the park, there were Black-throated Blue and Black-throated Green Warblers, Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers, and a pair of Ovenbirds conspiring to keep us guessing about the position of their nest.

Proceeding on further, we were clearly coming to the high part of the reservation. The air was filled with the effervescent tinkling of breeding Dark-eyed Junco, and the Blackburnians we were hearing now were nesting in natural spruce. At the Saddleball Mountain trailhead we heard a **Swainson's Thrush** in the same place it has been for three seasons. Car-shuttling to the summit, we watched and listened to several pairs of **White-throated Sparrows** sporting amongst the low spruce, and found a remarkable Dark-eyed Junco nest only ten feet from the back door of Bascom Lodge, revealed only when one of the breeding pair seemed quite literally to disappear into the ground. Descending down the AT, we came across **Blackpoll Warblers** breeding in the stunted spruce less than 50 feet below the summit. Nidhin alertly realized that a **Blue-headed Vireo** was just too slow to be a Red-eyed, and we chanced across a glossy male **Purple Finch** feeding either a fledgling or a female.

Saddleball Trail proved to be a disappointment this year, except for the Red-breasted Nuthatch we heard here, inexplicably absent from its stronghold higher on the mountain. On the open landscapes around Jones Nose we had nice looks at **Indigo Bunting** and **Field Sparrow**. It was a gorgeous day, and it is hard to beat the sound and spectacle of birds against the stillness and big sky of the Bay State's highest peak.

David Peake-Jones



### Westover Air Force Base. Saturday, June 9.

Mary Lou and Jim Splain, Mary Alice Wilson, Nidhin Joseph, Mikkell Thorup, Timothy Corbin, David Peake-Jones and Lura Bieda accompanied **Bob Bieda** on a visit to the largest contiguous grassland in the north-east. We were not disappointed. A Prairie Warbler heralded our departure from the familiar woods of New England into the closest thing to a prairie in this neck of the woods. Our guide, Drew, tried in vain to begin giving us some of the fascinating history of land management on base, but he was repeatedly interrupted as we heard first a **Grasshopper Sparrow** at close range (it was carrying food and performing a distraction display!), then an **Eastern Meadowlark**.... All quite normal for a base naturalist but exciting enough for us to be pointing and exclaiming like school kids in a cell phone store.

Further into the grassland, things got even better. A few were lucky enough to see a likely **Sora** which flushed from an almost indiscernible wetland. We finally heard the querulous calls of displaying **Upland Sandpipers** and saw several individuals, both in their display flights and foraging on the ground. Uplands have a remarkable way of rearing up on their haunches IN FLIGHT (I know that stretches the imagination, but it is what they do) and they have a wonderful way of snapping their wrists at the end of the power stroke in flight. The developing day brought more meadowlarks, demonstrating not only their characteristic "spring of the year" songs, but also a peent-chatter style of call which I had never heard before. Lots more Grasshopper Sparrows, Savannah Sparrows, Field Sparrows, Willow Flycatchers, a singing **Orchard Oriole** visiting a nest, and a couple of encounters with a female American Kestrel. Rounding out the day, we had our first Indigo Bunting of the day as we returned to the cars.

On a not -so-happy note, Drew spoke about a number of threats to this unique and irreplaceable grassland habitat. Spotted Knapweed is invading the grassland, and has resisted efforts at biological control. Its rate of encroachment is quite frightening. Plans are also afoot to alter the mowing regime at the base in ways that might have profound implications for breeding birds.

However, troubling future notwithstanding, we were truly blessed with a marvelous glimpse of breeding grassland birds in their element. As always we thank Westover and our guide Drew for the opportunity.



The Crown of Maine report will be in the October edition

## COMING FIELD TRIPS

Please see the attached Fall Field Trip Schedule

## EDUCATION COMMITTEE

The Education Committee is really rounding into form. There were a number of community events last club year, and there's a lot on the slate for this year.

The committee is now accepting applications for scholarships to support youth up to 18 years in pursuing bird-related educational opportunities. The scholarship program is in its infancy, so we anticipate a lot of growth in this area.

Coming plans include a dawn chorus walk, possibly at the Fitzgerald Lake Conservation Area, birding-by-ear with Don Kroodsma, an Education Committee page on the Website, a possible bird-banding demonstration, more presentations by John Van de Graaff, and many other ideas.

If you want to participate in the Committee, contact any one of its members: **Janice Jorgensen, Scott Sumner, Jan Ortiz, Bruce Hart, and Tom Gagnon**. If you want to contribute financially to its work, you can do so via the membership form.

## BOARD

Board meetings of the Hampshire Bird Club are open to the membership and the general public. The next board meeting will be on Thursday, September 13 at 7:00 p.m. at the Hitchcock Center for the Environment, 525 South Pleasant Street, Amherst, MA.

### **Please Join or Renew Your Membership NOW** using this handy-dandy checklist

- Grab a hold of the enclosed membership form and choose your membership contribution for this year,
- Make a donation for the work of the Education Committee if you wish,
- Complete the Membership Form,
- The Meeting Time Survey, and the Field Trip Release Form,
- Check the "Bird Finding In Western MA" form (sign up for the Rare Bird Alert if you wish), and
- Mail the above forms (with your check if needed) to the club, or bring them along on Sept. 10.

**Please renew before October 1 by mail, or at the September meeting. Thanks!**

That's all for now.

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

David Peake-Jones, Editor

529 9541

[newsletter@hampshirebirdclub.org](mailto:newsletter@hampshirebirdclub.org)



**MEETING START TIME SURVEY  
(must be received by October 1 to count!)**

If monthly meetings were to start at 7:00 p.m. (half an hour EARLIER), I/we would be (please choose one response only):

- MUCH LESS LIKELY TO ATTEND (really don't like this idea)
- A LITTLE LESS LIKELY TO ATTEND (it would be a bit of a hassle)
- NO MORE OR LESS LIKELY TO ATTEND (doesn't matter)
- A LITTLE MORE LIKELY TO ATTEND (it would help a bit)
- MUCH MORE LIKELY TO ATTEND (really love this idea)

Comments (optional)

Thanks!

**RELEASE FORM: 2012-2013**

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 between August 31, 2012 and October 1, 2013.

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

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

Please print names:

**HAMPSHIRE BIRD CLUB, INC.**  
**FALL FIELD TRIP SCHEDULE, 2012**  
**2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. Published 8/27/2012**

*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

**\*Monday, September 17. 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. If hawks are moving, the trip could last until 3 p.m., but participants may leave earlier on their own. Bring lunch if you plan to stay, and dress for the weather. Call Tom (413-584-6353) for information and to register. Rain date – Sunday, September 18. (E)

**Saturday, September 30. Quabbin Reservoir: 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 to twelve participants, and to get meeting information. Rain date – Sunday, October 7. (M)

### OCTOBER

**\*Saturday, October 13. Saw-whet Owls.** Evening. Janice Jorgensen will join Strickland Wheelock and his 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 information will be available at the September meeting. This trip is limited to 12 participants and costs \$20 per person. 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, October 14. Connecticut Valley Sparrows.** Half day. David Peake-Jones will stomp around in some of the weedy fields in the east and west meadows of Northampton, looking for Little Brown Jobs and maybe some late warblers. Northampton Bowling Alley, 6:30 A.M. Contact David [newsletter@hampshirebirdclub.org](mailto:newsletter@hampshirebirdclub.org) (preferred) or 413 529 9541 to register. (E)

**\*Saturday, October 20. Coastal Rhode Island.** All day. Join Geoff LeBaron on this trip to Rhode Island to see what's flying along the coast. Meet at the Northampton Stop & Shop at 6:30 a.m. Call Geoff (413-2689281) to register as the date approaches. (E)]

**\*Saturday, October 27. Satan's Kingdom, Hell's Kitchen, and other more prosaically-named sites.** All day. Joshua Rose (413-835-0093) explores the northern reaches of the valley from Northfield to Turner's Falls. Meet at the Northampton Stop & Shop on King Street at 7:00 a.m. to organize carpools. (E)

## NOVEMBER

**\*Sunday, November 4. Berkshire Lakes: Southbound Waterfowl.** All day. Tom Gagnon goes to the lakes and ponds of western Massachusetts to find ducks and other migrating waterfowl. Meet at Stop & Shop on King Street in Northampton at 6:30 a.m. for carpooling (be sure to set your clocks back). Tom promises a donut stop at Bartlett's Orchard. (E)

**\*Saturday, November 10. Dead Creek WMA and Lake Champlain.** All day. Mike Locher (413-585-5864) and David Peake-Jones (413-529-9541) hope Snow Geese show up late this year and look for other seasonal specialties along the shore of Lake Champlain. Meet at Stop & Shop on King St. in Northampton at 5 a.m. for carpooling. (E)

**Friday, November 23. Cape Ann: Turkey Trot.** All day. Al Richards comes off the DL in style, leading his traditional trip to 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)

**Saturday, November 24. East Quabbin.** All day. Tom Gagnon and Larry Therrien lead their annual trip to the east side of the reservoir to look for water fowl and winter finches. 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 to twelve participants, and to get meeting information. (M)

## JANUARY

**Saturday, January 5. North Shore: Cape Ann to Plum Island.** All day. Bob Bieda goes east to the coast on his annual New Year's migration in search of wintering specialties like Eared Grebes, Barrow's Goldeneyes, Harlequin Ducks, Purple Sandpipers, and much more. Dress for cold weather. For meeting information call Bob at 413-527-2623. (E)

## Bird Sightings in Western Massachusetts

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](mailto:skhawk@comcast.net)

### To check various sources on the web:

Go to the HBC website: [www.hampshirebirdclub.org](http://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.

To join before October 11:

Fill in the form below. Return it with your membership form or turn it in at the Sept./Oct. meetings.

To join anytime:

Provide name/s and email address/es to the HBC Webmaster at [webmaster@hampshirebirdclub.org](mailto:webmaster@hampshirebirdclub.org)

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## Rare Bird Alert (RBA) Form: 2012-2013

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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) \_\_\_\_\_