



Hampshire Bird Club, Inc. Amherst, Massachusetts

www.hampshirebirdclub.org

Volume 29, No. 8

April, 2013.

Spring is in the air. Maple sugar season is winding down, big-box home improvement retailers are offering free workshops, the thrifty have already swapped out the snow tires (relying instead on prayer), and potholes are flirting shamelessly with our long-suffering front-ends (vehicular, that is). For those with leisure to venture into the outdoors, the lengthening days are bringing the long-dormant world around us to life. The skunk cabbage is up, pussy willows are in bloom, and buds have swelled to the bursting point.

In the wetlands of the valley, migrating waterfowl pause to rest and refuel: dabblers in the shallower sloughs, Wood Ducks in the wooded marshes, and mergansers in the open water. Red-wings and vultures are back, the first Tree Swallows are hawking insects, woodcocks are everywhere, and no doubt someone has already heard a phoebe. Grab the boots and get out there to enjoy it!

In this edition:

- **Programs and field trips**, (**Tom's hawk-watching** rescheduled to April 23, **Westover** to May 18),
- News of an **HBC Scholarship for Young Birders**,
- **Birding the Valley** (a Hitchcock program for young birders),
- **Introduction to Birding** (Hitchcock),
- Other **Hitchcock** and **Arcadia** Programs,
- News from the **Library** and **Nominating Committee**, and
- A few other odds and sods.

I hope you find some of it useful.

NEXT PROGRAM

Monday, April 8 at 7:30 p.m.

Joan Walsh contemplates **Breeding Bird Atlas II: The Next Steps**

Immanuel Lutheran Church; 867 North Pleasant Street, Amherst.

Joan Walsh has been watching and learning from birds since her first year as an intern on Great Gull Island in 1979. After five years working with Common and Roseate Terns on Great Gull, Joan moved on to study Wood Storks in east-central Georgia. The lure of seabirds brought her back to the shore: this time to the left coast. Joan studied a fantastic seabird colony in the Farallon Islands, and managed the Elephant Seal work on the islands. She then came back east to be Research Director at Cape May Bird Observatory, and to shepherd the first New Jersey Breeding Bird Atlas. Most recently, she has come back to her home state of Massachusetts to complete the second Breeding Bird Atlas for Mass Audubon.

Joan's life has all been about bird conservation, and becomes more so with every passing year. She is a travel junkie, yet lives in Concord, MA with her bemused husband, two ruffian sons, their cat Tiger, and a Golden Retriever; Micah Phelps.

COMING PROGRAMS

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

June 10, 2013. Joey Mason. Kestrels.

FIELD TRIP REPORTS

Saturday, March 9. Plum Island

Jesse Brownback, Carol & Jim Gabranski, Betsy Higgins, **Geoff LeBaron** as well as Dianne & Peter Wilkinson headed to the jewel of Massachusetts on the day after one of our major storms of the year. The weather was bright and sunny with lots of snow and strong NE winds in the morning, moderating during the afternoon. The tally for the day was 62 species.

Stops & Highlights:

1. **Joppa Flats:** Sunny skies, windy—and amazingly high water in Newburyport Harbor, completely covering the marsh right up to the road and Joppa property.
2. **Parker River N.W.R.:** A nice **Bald Eagle** on the dike at Hellcat, and a lovely if bird-free walk on the snow-covered boardwalk there, but our initial trek to the viewing platform at Lot 1 (where we were the last before everyone was shooed out due to the amazingly high tide and surf) was the most memorable thing of the day.
3. **Newburyport Industrial Park:** We found the spot and crabapple trees...but no Pine Grosbeaks.
4. **West Newbury and environs:** Cruising looking for the Cackling Geese, with no success—but a wonderful lunch stop at Dianne & Peter's house, highlighted by **Common Redpolls** coming in to their feeders just over our shoulders. Thanks guys!
5. **Cashman Park and Newburyport Municipal lot:** Great looks at surprisingly few sea ducks—but gorgeous **Long-tailed Ducks** and an amazing look at a **Red-necked Grebe** right below us from the walkway.
6. **Chain Bridge:** Fantastic views of amazingly pretty **Great Cormorants** in breeding plumage, plus unique looks at Common & Red-breasted mergansers. We were lucky to get in & out of the parking lot in between closures during testing of the swivel bridge!
7. **Salisbury Beach:** No crossbills or owls, but interesting views of an orbiting flock of **Dunlin**, one sentinel **Purple Sandpiper** on the breakwater, continuing enormous surf and the waterfowl exodus (mostly Long-tailed Ducks and Common Eider) through the channel from Newburyport Harbor. Lastly, a truly spectacular sunset.

Geoff LeBaron

Rhymes with Pigeon

A workman-like duck is the wigeon,
 Ostentatious? Oh, no, not a smidgeon.
 They dabble in muck
 And have clearly no truck
 With literature or religion.

Reports continue on Page 3 ►

Saturday, March 16. Connecticut Valley Waterfowl with Bob Bieda.

The trip started on an amazing note. As we were getting ready to leave the Stop and Shop parking lot at 7:00 am, with the sun just starting to rise, two large, dark birds lifted off from behind the MacDonald's across the street. They were **Black Vultures**. They flew in a half circle and landed on the roof of the Potpourri Plaza. There the male began a courtship dance around the female. With wings spread and curved he side-stepped a half-circle around her, first in one direction then the other. She must have been impressed because mating followed. Hard to top that!

From there we went to Arcadia. In the morning light we had about 150 Common Mergansers on the Oxbow, a few **Green-winged Teal**, **Ring-necked Ducks** and Wood Ducks in the marsh. Two of the Wood Ducks were perched in the trees near the road.

At Great Pond in Hatfield there were about 40 Green-winged Teal, 20 **Pintail** and a few Wood Ducks and Hooded Mergansers. We also observed two active Bald Eagle nests, one near Arcadia and one in Hatfield and an occupied Peregrine nest on Mt. Sugarloaf.

On the Turner's Falls power canal there was an immature **Ruddy Duck** and a **Pied-billed Grebe**. The grand finish at Barton Cove in Gill produced many Ring-necked Ducks, Hooded Mergansers and Common Mergansers, a single male Red-breasted Merganser (we almost had all three mergansers in a scope view at once) and two **Lesser Scaup**. There were also three **Iceland Gulls** present.

Bob Bieda

For Coming Trips, please see page 4.

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Scholarship for Young Birders!!

HBC is offering financial help for young birders who would like to attend a conference or camp. Applications for the HBC Education Committee Youth Scholarship can be made by or on behalf of anyone ages 12 to 18 who is, or has a family member who is an HBC member.

For further information, please email the HBC Education Committee:

education@hampshirebirdclub.org

A link to the scholarship application can be found on the HBC Homepage:

www.hampshirebirdclub.org/Application.

The scholarship is made possible entirely through the generous donations of HBC members.

NOMINATING COMMITTEE

It takes a lot of work to keep the Hampshire Bird Club flourishing, and we need people to help with this work. The good news is that you don't have to shoulder the whole burden yourself. There are a variety of things that need to be done, and you can ease into it gently. We will be announcing a slate of board members and officers for 2010-2011 in the May newsletter and voting on the slate at the May meeting. The Committee this year is chaired by Scott Sumner. If you, or someone you know, would like to serve on the board, please let Scott know: president@hampshirebirdclub.org, or (413) 256 5438.

COMING FIELD TRIPS

See also the Winter-Spring-Summer Field Trip Schedule.

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.*

***Sunday, April 14. 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)

Please note: this trip rescheduled from April 24

Tuesday, April 23. Spring hawk watching at Goat Peak. Half day. Tom Gagnon climbs the tower on Mount Tom State Reservation and looks for northbound raptors. Meet at the old park headquarters building at 9 o'clock for a 20 minute walk to the tower. Please call Tom Gagnon (413-584-6353) or email tombwhawk-at-aol-dot-com. (M)

***Sunday, May 5. Hilltown Ramble.** All day. Bob Zimmermann (rzimmermann-at-hampshirebirdclub-dot-org, 413-585-0405) and Dave Gross (dgross-at-hampshirebirdclub-dot-org, 413-253-2897) visit migrant spots from Cummington through Moran Wildlife Management Area, to Savoy, Plainfield and Hawley. Some hiking will be done. Meet at the Northampton Stop & Shop on King Street at 6:30 a.m. to organize carpools. (M)

Saturday, May 11. Quabbin Park and East Quabbin. All day. Tom Gagnon and Larry Therrien lead their annual spring trip to the eastern side of the reservoir. Participation is limited and you must be a member of the Hampshire Bird Club. To register, call or email Tom (413-584-6353) or tombwhawk-at-aol-dot-com. Please register with Tom early. (M)

Please note also that the Westover trip, originally scheduled in June, has been rescheduled to May 18.

A Miss Manners Minute!

(From the HBC Field Trip Guidelines)

Please call the trip leader at least a few days before the trip. It helps the leader plan the trip and you learn about any special arrangements or any change of plans.

Be **on time** at the meeting place. If you need to meet the group at the birding location, please offer to be early so the group can start promptly upon arrival. If you plan to leave the trip early, inform the leader in advance.

Carpooling is essential to allow the group to park when space is limited, reduce delays, reduce the likelihood of auto accidents and to reduce the chances of the group becoming separated. Carpooling from the valley is best. Carpooling once the trip location is reached is the next best option.

The participants (not the leader) are responsible for making all carpool arrangements.

OVERNIGHT TRIPS

Last Chance for Monhegan Island, 2013 with **Scott Surner** Memorial Day Weekend (Friday, May 24 to Monday, May 27)

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. 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 about the trip, contact **Scott Surner** (president@hampshirebirdclub.org; 413 256 5438). For cost information and/or to register, contact Mike Locher (fieldtrip@hampshirebirdclub.org; 413 585 5864)

An Actual Courtroom Conversation

Attorney: This myasthenia gravis , does it affect your memory at all?

Witness: Yes.

Attorney: And in what ways does it affect your memory?

Witness: I forget.

Attorney: You forget? Can you give us an example of something you forgot?

LIBRARY

The stork has delivered a couple of brand new editions to our collection. They are:

- *Bird Sense* by Tim Birkhead,
- *Peterson Field Guide to Moths of Northeastern North America* by David Beadle, and
- *Hawks in Flight, Second Edition. The Flight Identification of North American Raptors* by Dunne, Sibley and Sutton.

Also, we have new shelves in the Hitchcock Center. Check them out!

The HBC Library is located at the **Hitchcock Center for the Environment in Amherst.**

Hours are those of the Hitchcock Center:

9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. from Tuesday through Friday, and

9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. on Saturday.

The collection is catalogued on-line at www.hampshirebirdclub.org.

The library contains birding resources in various media, including field guides, bird-finding guides to almost every major birding destination in the U.S., and overseas, natural histories, periodicals and videos. Items can be signed out and borrowed for a period of up to one month, or longer by arrangement. Our librarian, **Henry Lappen**, is happy to bring items to meetings, if you give him a few days in advance. You can reach him at library@hampshirebirdclub.org or (413) 549 3722.

TWO HIGHLIGHTED HITCHCOCK COURSES

Birding The Valley

A Hitchcock Center Program for Young People

Dan Ziomek, Local Birder, Birding Radio Program Host

For young people ages 8-13

5 Saturdays 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m.: **April 20 & 27, May 4, 11 & 18**

Hitchcock Members: \$60/Non-members: \$75. Registration required.

Spring migration is the most exciting time of year to get out and see birds! Each week new species return from the south wearing their spring colors. Come explore some of the birding hot spots in the Valley. Beginners and knowledgeable birders are all welcome. Bring your own binoculars and a field guide if you have one. We will have binoculars available to borrow. Each week we will explore a different local site and meeting locations may vary. Heavy rain cancels a field trip.

AND

Introduction to Birding

A Hitchcock Center Program

Jan Ortiz and Katie Koerten

Evening Classes: Thursdays, 7-9pm, **April 25 and May 2**

Field Trips: Saturdays, 8:30-11am, **April 27 and May 4** (rain dates: April 28 and May 5).

Hitchcock Members \$55/Non-members \$70. Registration required.

Ever wonder what that bird is at your feeder? Curious about the birds you spot on your favorite walk? This beginner's class introduces the world of birding at a leisurely and comfortable pace designed for everyone, including those with and without disabilities. The only requirement is an interest in learning about birds. Field trips will be held at accessible locations such as the boardwalk at Larch Hill Conservation Area, or on the nearby Norwottuck bike trail. During the evening classes we'll cover topics such as the use of binoculars and spotting scopes, how a field guide is organized, and, of course, how to identify birds. Bring binoculars if you have them. Limited to 12 participants. Members \$55/Non-members \$70. Registration required

OTHER HITCHCOCK PROGRAMS

Citizen Science: Henry Street Salamander Egg Mass Survey: *Ted Watt*

A sunny afternoon in April, date determined by the weather.

Invasive Species Panel: A Community Dialogue: *Various Panelists*

Wednesday, April 3, 7-9 pm

Margaret Morse Nice, Pioneer Amherst Ornithologist: *David Spector*

Thursday, April 11, 7-8:30pm

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.

A HIGHLIGHTED ARCADIA PROGRAM

Conservation Challenges for Migratory Birds in the Northeast

Mitch Hartley, USFWS

Thursday April 4. 7:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.

The life history of most migratory birds includes epic journeys north and south each year, when they face constant and countless challenges to their survival. The impact of human society on the landscapes we share with birds and other wildlife are unmistakable. However, many things we rarely think about can have a major impact on bird populations, including where our cities are located, the windows of our houses, our pets, and whether our food and fiber is produced locally or imported from other countries. We will look at some of the environmental challenges facing migratory birds--including some you may not realize--and ways of working together to help address them.

OTHER ARCADIA PROGRAMS

Dance of the American Woodcock: *Alane Hartley, Russell Braen and others*

Park Hill Orchards, Easthampton. Sunday, April 7. 6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.

Bird Sounds: - Songs and Calls: *John Green and Patti Steinman*

Wednesday, April 10. 7:00 a.m. – 9:00 a.m.

Birding By Ear: *John Green*

Quabbin Park. Saturday, April 27, 7:00 a.m. – 9:00 a.m.

Graves farm. Saturday, May 25. 7:00 a.m. – 9:00 a.m.

Great Blue Herons and Bald Eagles: *James Sullivan and Patti Steinman*

Saturday, April 13. 3:00 – 6:00 p.m.

Birding By Canoe: *David McLain*

Saturday, May 4. 7:00 – 10:00 a.m.

*All programs require a fee unless otherwise stated. For more details of these and other programs go to www.massaudubon.org (select “Sanctuaries”, then “Choose a Sanctuary: Arcadia”) or call the sanctuary at the number below. To register for programs contact **Arcadia Wildlife Sanctuary**, 127 Combs Rd., Easthampton MA 01027. Telephone **(413) 584-3009**.*

Just Grouching

A percussive beast, the Ruffed Grouse,
Musicality rivaling Strauss.
His amorous thumping
He hopes will be trumping
All others, in search of a spouse.

That's all for this month.

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

David Peake-Jones, Editor

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