



Hampshire Bird Club, Inc. Amherst, Massachusetts

www.hampshirebirdclub.org

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May, 2014.

Oh, g'day. Taking a break from icing my feet after a weekend of birding to pen a few lines for the bird club. Seems like anyone who has been out this week-end will tell you that the floodgates have finally opened. After a week of (literal) flooding and seemingly interminable dampness, the weather finally allowed birds to move and both Saturday May 3 and Sunday, May 4 were some of the best birding I can remember in the valley. I am sure you have your own stories to tell about first-of-the-year encounters and, perhaps, iconic moments in your own birding life.

The spring fervor struck me with force at about 9:30 on Saturday morning, when I finally attained the top of Goat Peak, after walking up from the Stone House with nary a bird to be heard amongst the still-leafless deciduous woods of the lower Mt. Tom ridge, and the increasingly skeletal remnants of the proud hemlock forests which once clothed the ridge. A bit late for hawks, actually, and I only went because I had missed the only good broad-wing days this spring and wanted to at least have a peek at the stragglers. There were a few hawks: 67 Broad-wings between 9:30 and about 12:30, to be precise, but I had a hard time focusing on them. Instead I found myself mesmerized by a continual flow of migrating warblers sifting through the budding tops of the hickories around the tower, and pelting along above the tree-tops in loose groups of up to ten birds. The only time I have seen anything like it was at Higbee Beach on Cape May during the fall migration. I estimate roughly 550 warblers passed within 200 yards of the tower during the 3 hour period, of which I could positively identify only about 150 (Yellow-rumps). Based on the species breakdown of those that stopped in the tree-tops, at least 95 percent of the unidentified were also Yellow-rumps, all trying to make up for lost time in the frantic push to get to the boreal. Amongst the ten percent was a beautiful male Blackburnian Warbler which stopped for a few minutes in the closest hickory.

What I love the most about birding is that, in spite of our sloth and crowded lives, understanding of the miracle of life forces itself upon us almost every time we venture out with our binoculars. I will be on the tower on the first weekend in May from now on, sore feet notwithstanding.....

NEXT PROGRAM

Monday, May 12 at 7:15 p.m.

Joan Walsh presents Birds and Agriculture

Immanuel Lutheran Church; 867 North Pleasant Street, Amherst.

Joan Walsh is best known to us as the coordinator of the second Massachusetts Breeding Bird Atlas for MassAudubon. Those who have heard her speak will attest that she is no fainting violet, and will, I am sure bring her own brand of humor and passion to the question of how our agricultural communities can not only find a way to co-exist with birds but actively promote the health of bird populations. I have no doubt there will be a role for us, as birders, to play in this vital effort!

COMING PROGRAMS

June 9, 2014. Steve Kress. Puffins and Other Seabirds.

FIELD TRIP REPORTS

April 12, 2014. Ashley Reservoir.

I had originally thought to compose a poem as my trip report. Something like:

*On the twelfth day of April,
The weather was warm.
In the trees around Ashley,
The kinglets did swarm.*

*The Pine Warblers warbled
In the tops of the trees.
A lone Northern Harrier
Floated by on the breeze.*

*The tails of the Palm Warblers
Waived up and down.
And while a rhyme here seems easy,
I defy anyone to fit Louisiana Waterthrush into this
meter.*

*Or Pileated Woodpecker,
Or especially Yellow-bellied Sapsucker.*

And so I gave up on the poem. But the day was great. There were nine of us who walked around the reservoir, and it was truly a beautiful spring day after our long winter. Among the highlights, there were lots of warblers (Pine and Palm) and kinglets (Ruby-crowned and Golden-crowned) in the trees around the water, an Eastern Towhee at the Elks Club parking lot, a lone Common Loon, a Greater Yellowlegs feeding near some Wood Ducks, and over the railroad tracks, one **Louisiana Waterthrush**, a pair of Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers, a Winter Wren (heard), and a pair of Pileated Woodpeckers. The weather seemed ideal for raptor migration, but aside from one Northern Harrier, a Sharp-shinned Hawk, and two birds that we needed Tom Gagnon to identify, hawks weren't moving over the reservoir. In all, we tallied 48 species of birds (an all-time high for me on this trip), 3 reptiles (Common Garter Snake, Northern Water Snake, Painted Turtle), and 2 amphibians (Spring Peeper and American Green Frog).

Mike Locher

The editor would like to thank Mike, not only for his sterling leadership on this marvelous birding day, but for establishing a new standard of literary achievement, measured against which my menial prose may seem faintly respectable. Ed.



Look Park. Sunday, April 13.

Marcia Merithew, David Peake-Jones and some other folks braved the Route 9 Rotary (with the no apparent loss of life) and headed into Northampton's premier rec. and leisure location in search of early season migrants. The forecast sunny skies and warm temperatures were temporarily obscured by clouds and rain, but all the more tantalizing for their promised appearance. Despite the murk and cold, we found the still-bare trees alive with kinglets of both varieties, a goodly smattering of Palm and Pine Warblers and Chipping Sparrows, as well as a couple of recently arrived Yellow-rumped Warblers, hinting at the avalanche of neotropicals soon to descend upon our valley.

The Mill River was a hotbed of frantic duck activity. Several pairs of Common Mergansers zoomed frenetically up and down river, as did one couple of Hooded Mergansers. A pair of Wood Ducks tried unsuccessfully to look disinterested in a patently homey hole in a sycamore, and a couple of Bluebirds prospected for a nest-site in, of all things, a natural cavity! After a good long while peering at what we think was a possum butt poking out of a tree hole behind the pines theater, we made our way out of the park, enjoying a farewell look at a Pine Warbler by the ornamental pond at the gate. In the gathering warmth and clearing cloud, we made our way back to early April domesticity, none the worse for wear.

Ed.

Patience is a quality we value in the person behind us, but not in the person in front of us.

Notice Board, Hampshire College.

Mitch's Way. Saturday, May 3.

Sue Emerson, Juliana Vanderwielen and Josh Rose birded Mitch's way and environs on a pleasant Saturday morning. En route Josh and Sue took the scenic drive down Moody Bridge Road, past the Fort River Division of SOCNWR. One Kestrel was perched right near the corner with Maple Street, and Sue saw another near the nest box further down the road. I heard a few Bobolinks, my first of the year, singing amid the more abundant and noisier Red-winged Blackbirds on the hill, and a Warbling Vireo (also first of year) singing closer to the old stables.

We were actually distracted at first by the spectacular wildflowers of the place, particularly the massive hordes of Trilliums. But eventually we realized that the trees were alive with warblers and other migrants. We had seen or heard 10 warbler species by the time we left, including Chestnut-sided, a few Blue-winged, a group of Palm, Ovenbird, American Redstart, and Parula; plus Least and Great Crested Flycatchers, a few Baltimore Orioles and Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, a Hermit Thrush, lots of Cedar Waxwings, and plenty more. We crossed paths briefly with Larry Therrien and Jacob Drucker, who had seen a few more warbler species that we had missed, and showed off a photo of a Worm-eating. Sue had to leave a bit early; just after she parted from us, the sun peeked through the clouds, a Bald Eagle soared over, and a kettle of a dozen Broad-winged Hawks almost instantly coalesced above the eagle! I love spring migration...

Josh Rose

COMING FIELD TRIPS

See also the Winter-Spring-Summer Field Trip Schedule (3rd Edition)

Available at www.hampshirebirdclub.org

*On Tuesdays in May, there will be informal birding walks through the former Bri-Mar Stables grounds (now part of the Fort River Division of the Silvio O. Conte NWR).

May 6, Janice Jorgensen, 7 a.m.

May 13, Bob Bieda, 7 a.m.

May 20, Al Richards, 6:30 a.m.

May 27, TBA.

All walks meet at the Stables parking area (69 Moody Bridge Road, Hadley). (E)

Saturday, May 10. Quabbin Park and East Quabbin. All day. Tom Gagnon leads his 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 participate. To register, contact Tom (413-584-6353 or tombwhawk-at-aol-dot-com). Please register with Tom early. (M)

Sunday, May 11, Orchard Hill +/- Sylvan Woods. Half Day. Dave Mako leads a stroll through these popular migration hotspots on the UMass campus. Meet at 7 a.m. in the north-westernmost parking lot for the Orchard Hill Residential Area via Orchard Hill Drive. Contact Dave (412-665-2999 or massmakos-at-yahoo-dot-com) for more info and the donut count. (E)

Thursday, May 15. Mount Holyoke. Half day. Tom Gagnon leads a hike up Mt. Holyoke in search of Cerulean Warblers and other migrants. Plan to stop along the way to look at some of the flora of Mt. Holyoke. Meet at 7 a.m. at the gate of Mt. Holyoke. For information call Tom (413-584-6353) or email tombwhawk-at-aol-dot-com. (M)

Saturday, May 17. Bartholomew's Cobble. All day. Mike Locher travels southwest to the unique habitat of Bartholomew's Cobble. Grassland birds in the fields and woodland migrants in the forests around the cobble. Also wildflowers unique to the area. Meet at Stop & Shop on King Street in Northampton at 6 a.m. and bring a lunch. Call Mike (413-585-5864) for further details. (M)

***Sunday, May 18. Mount Auburn Cemetery.** All day. Sharon Dombeck and Stephen Baker explore one of the premier migrant traps within the greater Boston area. On the way home, time and interest permitting, there will be a stop at Great Meadows in Concord. Meet at the Hitchcock Center (525 S. Pleasant St., Amherst) at 5:30 a.m. and bring a lunch and snacks. Contact Sharon or Stephen (413-268-7021) for details and to register. (E)

***Saturday, May 24. Hilltown Ramble.** All day. Bob Zimmermann (rzimmermann@hampshirebirdclub.org, 413-585-0405) and Dave Gross (dgross@hampshirebirdclub.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 31. Fort River Division of Silvio O. Conte NWR (Bri-Mar Stables).** Half day. Josh Rose enjoys one of the best Bobolink shows in the area, hopes to find a few breeding and migrating warblers and sparrows, and enjoys the refuge's newly built boardwalks and observation decks. Optional continuation to the Honeypot, possibly after lunch and ice cream at Cook Farm. Meet at 6:30 a.m. at the stables (69 Moody Bridge Road, Hadley). Any questions, contact Josh (413-835-0093 or opihi-at-mindspring-dot-com). (E)

Saturday, June 7. Westover Air Force Base. Half day. Bob Bieda and Mike Locher host the HBC's annual trip to 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)

OVERNIGHT TRIPS

Mount Mansfield. Bicknell's Thrushes in Vermont.

Tuesday, June 17 – Wednesday, June 18.

Mike Locher

You must be a member of the Hampshire Bird Club to go on this trip.

Mike Locher and representatives from the Vermont Center for Ecostudies will look for **Bicknell's Thrush**, **Blackpoll Warbler**, **Sandhill Crane** and **Black-billed Cuckoo**, amongst other species in the area of Mount Mansfield.

We will leave the valley early on the first day and bird through the Champlain Valley on the way north, stopping in the area of Dead Creek WMA, in Addison, Vermont, and hoping for breeding Sandhill Cranes in the area of Bristol Pond, Vermont. Upon arrival at Mt Mansfield, we'll check into accommodations in the village of Stowe, and make a late afternoon visit to the banding and research area before retiring for the evening. The second day will begin before dawn as we meet our VCE guides and travel up the mountain for a morning at the banding station, hoping to encounter Bicknell's Thrush and other species of the high altitude fir forests. We will check out of our lodgings around the middle of the day and proceed home, with the possibility of some stops along the way.

Participants will book and pay for their own accommodation and meals. Mike is compiling a list of accommodation options and can share them with you. The club will ask participants to pay a fee to cover the leader's accommodation and travel, club insurance, and a contribution to the work of the VCE. This cost is likely to be in the range of \$40-50, and the overall cost (depending on accommodation availability and choice) is likely to be in the range of \$225 – 275 per person. Please contact **Mike Locher** (fieldtrips-at-hampshirebirdclub-dot-org); 413 585 5864 if you are interested.

The Crown of Maine

Thursday August 7 through Monday, August 11

Leaders: Geoff LeBaron and Bill Sheehan (of Woodland, ME, our local expert).

You must be a Hampshire Bird Club member to go on this trip.'

Excitement is building for this summer overnight trip, and wonderful weather has already been ordered! The registration window is closing in JUNE, so ACT NOW!!

Target bird species will include boreal forest specialties around New Sweden (**Black-backed- and American Three-toed woodpeckers, Yellow-bellied and Olive-sided flycatchers, Gray Jay, Philadelphia Vireo, Tennessee-, Bay-breasted-, Cape May-, and Blackpoll warblers**, etc), wetland, grassland, and shrub-land species around Presque Isle and Aroostook N.W.R. (nesting **Redhead** and **Ruddy Ducks** amid a myriad of other waterfowl, **American Bittern, Upland Sandpiper, and Mourning Warbler**), and possibly **Spruce Grouse** among other boreal species in the Maine North Woods. We also hope to encounter wonderful wildflowers, intriguing large mammals, (editor not included) and the boreal dawn chorus.

HBC Cost Estimate: Participants will pay HBC a trip fee of approximately \$90, depending on how many people sign up. Additional costs include lodging, meals and transportation. The cost may drop by up to \$20 as more people sign up.

Additional Costs:

Accommodation

Look to be spending between \$220 single room or shared \$260 for the four nights for accommodations at the most affordable motel: Russell's in Caribou. Prices will be higher if Russell's is full. See also "Further Information."

Transportation

We will travel independently to- and from Caribou, Maine. The round trip is approximately 1,000 miles, and we will add an additional 250 miles or so per car while we are up there. Again, to keep costs down, it's important to car-pool and share costs, which will depend on your vehicle and the number of people you share with. See also "Further Information."

Food and Sundries

Individuals will be responsible for all food costs during the trip, though Bill has a delightful habit of laying on coffee and snacks in the field. Breakfasts in-motel (fridges, microwaves etc. in all rooms) or at local convenience stores. Sack lunches/restaurants for lunches. Dinners will be at home-style restaurants in Caribou. See also "Further Information."

Further Information

A detailed trip description is posted on our Website: www.hampshirebirdclub.org/trips.

You may also contact Geoff LeBaron: programs@hampshirebirdclub.org; 413 268 9281.

Registration. Registration is open. Contact Mike Locher at fieldtrip@hampshirebirdclub.org or 585 5864.

Payments and Cancellations

To ensure your place, you need to register and pay the HBC trip fee (approx. \$90) BY June 30.

At least six (6) people must have PAID by this date for the trip to take place. Fourteen (14) is the maximum trip capacity. Trip fees may be partially or fully refundable after April 30, depending on the circumstances. Full details are available in the trip information on our Website or from the Field Trip Chair.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The **Annual General Meeting** of the **Hampshire Bird Club Incorporated** will be held on **Monday, May 12, 2014** at the **Immanuel Lutheran Church** (867 North Pleasant Street, Amherst) at **7:15 p.m.** The meeting will immediately precede the May program.

The agenda for the meeting is to elect the Board of Directors for the year from May 12, 2014 to May 12, 2015.

The **Nominating Committee** comprises:

Bruce Hart (Chair), (bhart-at-hampshirebirdclub-dot-org; 584 4176)

Jan Ortiz (jortiz-at-hampshirebirdclub-dot-org; 549 1768), and

Marcia Merithew (mmerithew-at-comcast-dot-net; 584 8874)

The committee has prepared the following slate of nominees, which is subject to change prior to and at the AGM.

President: Scott Surner

Vice-President/Program Chair: Geoff LeBaron

Treasurer: Stephen Baker

Membership Secretary: Sue Emerson

Communications Secretary: Sharon Dombeck

Board Members at large:

Bruce Hart

Mike Locher

Jan Ortiz

David Peake-Jones

Josh Rose

Jaap van Heerden

Hampshire Bird Club WELCOMES and encourages other nominations for ANY and ALL of the above positions. These may be sent to any member of the Nominating Committee or presented from the floor at the Annual General Meeting. At-meeting nominees must be present at the meeting so as to verify their consent.

Next Board Meeting

The next meeting of the HBC Board will be held at the Hitchcock Center in Amherst on Thursday, May 15, at 7:00 pm.

Not that I'm Preaching....

The Eastern Screech Owl isn't screeching,

For a more fitting name p'raps beseeching.

It whinnies and will

On occasion just trill.

But to say that it's screeching is reaching.

That's all for this month.

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

David Peake-Jones, Editor

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