



Hampshire Bird Club, Inc. Amherst, Massachusetts

www.hampshirebirdclub.org

Volume 31, No. 10

June, 2015.

NEXT PROGRAM

Monday, June 8 at 7:15 p.m.

Mario Cohn-Haft asks What's So Special About Amazonian Birds?

Immanuel Lutheran Church; 867 North Pleasant Street, Amherst.

The Amazon is the world's largest tropical wilderness area. It has the highest diversity of bird species, the largest rivers and the most new species discovered in recent years. It is, without question, one of the greatest biological wonders of the world. But what's the reason for all these superlatives? What makes the Amazon different from other tropical rainforest areas? We will explore the ecological and evolutionary significance of being on the equator, of huge expanses of unbroken wilderness, of monstrous rivers, of climatic constancy and subtle habitat differences for the formation of one of the most marvelous and least-studied avifaunas known.*

Mario Cohn-Haft was born and raised in western Massachusetts (Northampton and Williamsburg), where an early love of nature and wild places eventually led to a career in ornithology. A member of HBC as a teenager, Mario went on to study biology at Dartmouth College, where he got hooked on both boreal forests and, thanks to a foreign study program, tropical rainforests too. After brief forays as a "bird slave" on research projects from California to Canada and eventually Brazil, he got his Master's and Ph.D. degrees in southern Louisiana, at Tulane and LSU respectively. He is currently Curator of Birds and Staff Scientist at the Brazilian National Institute for Research in the Amazon (INPA), in Manaus, Brazil, where he has studied Amazonian birds since 1987. But he sneaks back up to the family home in Williamsburg as often as possible.

*I bet there will be some groovy pictures too. . Ed.

COMING PROGRAMS

Good things take time and great things usually involve some uncertainty. So it is with the program for next year.

There will be a great slate for next year. It will have ten programs. The presenters are likely to range, as always, from some of our very own local faves to high flyers from all over the country.

It's just that, well, just at this moment, we are not sure who they will be.

Rest assured that while the rest of us are whiling away the hours in our hammocks, Geoff LeBaron will be laboring to bring about the coalescence of this nebula of possibilities into a gleaming constellation of programs to dazzle and enlighten us. No pressure, Geoff!

So let's all relax and await the unveiling in the next newsletter.

Oh, but DO mark your calendars for the FIRST program of the new year. Owing to a perfect storm of scheduling issues, the "September" program for 2015 will be held on Monday, August 31.

FIELD TRIP REPORTS

Mitch's Way and Skinner State Park, Hadley. Saturday, May 9.

Josh Rose led a walk that included riparian birding along the Fort River floodplain, mountain birding on Mount Holyoke and support for local agriculture at Barstow's Creamery. A good day by any-one's yardstick.

At Mitch's Way, the highlight was probably having both species of waterthrushes singing simultaneously (even if we didn't actually see either one). The sheer abundance of Baltimore Orioles was astounding. Josh eBirded 18 but we were seeing and hearing them constantly, including one little swale where we saw 6 males all at once, so the real total was probably something much larger (somehow we didn't see a single Orchard Oriole though). Wood Thrushes were also surprisingly abundant, and Rose-breasted Grosbeaks as well (but the orioles outnumbered both combined). A pair of Yellow-throated Vireos put on a nice show near the gate; at the far end of the road, a swirl of swallows include Bank-, Tree- and some astonishingly tame Rough-winged-. In between we saw a Solitary Sandpiper, two Green Herons, a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, a Fish Crow, a Common Raven being chased by a trio of American Crows, and lots more.

We finished walking Mitch's Way around 11 AM and decided to visit Skinner State Park. We had planned only a short walk here but wound up spending over 2 1/2 hours and traipsing about 3/4 of the way up Mount Holyoke. We added several species here that we had missed at Mitch's Way, most notably Worm-eating Warbler, one of the two usual target species at Skinner. Other additions to the day's list included Blackburnian Warbler, Winter Wren, and Hermit Thrush. At one point we thought we might be hearing Cerulean Warbler, the other usual Skinner target, but ultimately decided that the song was coming from either a Northern Parula or Black-throated Blue Warbler.

By then it was 2 PM and we were good and ready for lunch, so we headed to Barstow Creamery, just outside the park. We ate outdoors on the patio and observed 16 bird species over our corn chowder, quiche, and chocolate peanut butter chip ice cream, including Bald Eagle, Killdeer, and Barn Swallow. In all, we tallied 77 species including 77 warblers, four (4) thrushes, four (4) vireos and four (4) flycatchers.

Josh Rose



Wentworth Farm, Amherst. May 30

Josh Rose led this walk, inadvertently competing with the first annual Pioneer Valley Birding Festival, which was scheduled for the same day after this walk was planned and announced.

The group saw Green and Great Blue Herons, Belted Kingfisher, Barn Swallows, Brown Thrashers, a singing Blue-winged Warbler, and a quick flyover by a pair of Orchard Orioles. The heard-only list included Least- and Willow Flycatchers, Veery, and a faint, distant Yellow-billed Cuckoo. We also witnessed something I had not seen before: a group of Chimney Swifts drinking - repeatedly dipping down to the surface of the pond to scoop up water on the wing.

We saw little evidence of migration but plenty of breeding! We saw nest construction, nest occupation, or food being carried by a number of species including Cedar Waxwing, Baltimore Oriole, Eastern Kingbird, Eastern Bluebird, Tree Swallow, House Wren, and Song Sparrow. Three of the Song Sparrows that we saw were individually marked with color bands, courtesy of a squad of research assistants from Jeff Podos' lab at UMass. In fact, the enthusiasm for breeding went beyond the birds: a Snapping Turtle was crawling through the grass several meters from the edge of the pond, and a 2-foot-long Sea Lamprey was squirming around in a riffle just upstream of the footbridge over the Fort River.

Josh Rose

Grace Robson Wildlife Sanctuary, Westfield. Sunday, May 31.

Tom Gagnon, Margaret Halbeisen, **Mike Locher**, David Peake-Jones and Mary Lou Splain went in search of Hooded and Cerulean Warblers in this much-neglected birding area west of Westfield. Arriving at the trailhead on Reservoir Road, we parked at the gate and walked in along the closed section of the road through beautiful mature riparian woodland. We gradually toted up a nice collection of birds, mostly by song, including Black-throated Blue Warbler, Wood Thrush, Hermit Thrush, Veery, American Redstart, Black-and-White Warbler, lots of Ovenbirds and Pine Warbler. An insect-like trill bespoke our one **Worm-eating Warbler** for the day and a number of Blackburnian Warblers sang inscrutably from the impossibly high white pines that soared skyward at intervals. A Sharp-shinned Hawk flashed through the dark woods, perhaps portending doom for at least some of the forest birds we were hearing. We paused at the cell phone tower to listen, but found no signs of either of our targets here.

Continuing up the road, we came to the foot of the tiny reservoir where the trail crosses Moose Meadow Brook. A pair of Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers were foraging madly about, carrying food to a nest hole right over the trail. As we paused here, a non-descript small bird flitted momentarily into view in the roadside vegetation. Tom got just enough to spark his interest and for ten minutes we were engrossed in trying to get better looks at what was actually a pair of birds. Both disappeared immediately into the higher canopy and steadfastly refused to reveal any more of themselves. We had enough to conclude that the female was, indeed, a **Cerulean Warbler** and this would be all we had to show of the target species for the morning.

Hooded Warbler is a species that seems to be gradually inching its way into Massachusetts from the south and, though they have been reliably reported from this area for some years, our experience demonstrated that the species is far from a ‘gimme’ even here. We had to content ourselves with a morning full of possibilities and hope for the future.

David Peake-Jones

COMING TRIPS

Saturday, June 6. Westover Air Force Base. Half day. Bob Bieda hosts 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 and registration is now closed.. (E)

***Sunday, June 7. Knightville Dam.** Half day. Betsy Higgins and Marcia Merithew explore Knightville Dam for spring migrants and local residents. Call Betsy (413-586-7585) for details. Meet at 7 a.m. at the John F. Kennedy Middle School (100 Bridge Road; Florence, MA). (E)

Saturday, July 11. Milford Point and Sherwood Island. Full day. Aidan and Devin Griffiths head down to southern Connecticut to find Piping Plovers, American Oystercatchers, terns of various sorts, and many other coastal specialties. Contact Devin at (413-323-8417) for meeting details and more information. (M)

Wednesday, July 22. Bobolinks and Baltimore Checkerspots. Half day. Tom Gagnon leads us to look for birds and butterflies at the Bullitt Reservation in Ashfield and Conway (399-401 Bullitt Road, Conway – do not attempt to drive the impassable North Poland Road to get there), a 265-acre old New England farm now managed by The Trustees of Reservations. The farmhouse is now open to the public as a showcase for energy-efficient technologies that work for New England homeowners. We will explore some of the many fields and trails. There should be plenty of Bobolinks and gorgeous Baltimore Checkerspots. Restrooms available. Contact Tom (413-584-6353 or tombwhawk-at-aol-dot-com) for meeting information and to register for the trip. (M) Directions follow.

Directions to Bullitt Reservation

From points South

- 1) From I-91, Exit 24, take Route 5 North.
- 2) After 1.1 miles, turn left onto Route 116 West.
- 3) Drive West on 116 approx. 10 miles through Conway and into Ashfield.
- 4) Turn left onto Bullitt Road. Proceed approx. 1 mile to driveway and white buildings on right where road turns sharply left. Note: Do not try to take the impassable North Poland Road to Bullitt Road.

From Points North

- 1) I-91 South to Exit 25.
- 2) Turn West on Rt 116, then follow steps 2-4 above.

FALL FIELD TRIP SCHEDULE Leaders and Ideas Wanted

Just like Geoff, there is no summer break for Mike Locher. Our long-suffering field trip chair will be toiling to put together the Fall Field Trip Schedule. If you have trip ideas, ESPECIALLY if you are prepared to LEAD these trips, please contact Mike (fieldtrip-at-hampshirebirdclub-dot-org; 413 585 5864) as soon as possible. The schedule goes to press in mid-August.

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

The Dawn Chorus: *Don Kroodsma*

Saturday, June 6, 2015 4:15 a.m. (Yup, that's when it all begins)

Mass Audubon's Graves Farm, Williamsburg, MA

Meet in the parking lot, one hour before the sun rises.

Join us as we listen to the world awake, or join us when the spirit moves you, as we will be in the area listening until 9 a.m., or whenever all participants have departed, whichever happens first. We will listen with unaided and aided (parabolic reflector, headphones, etc.) ears, recording whatever we hear so that it is available for possible later study indoors (but not the same day). Bring a chair.

If you plan to gather with us, register DIRECT with Don Kroodsma (dekroodsma@yahoo.com) in advance, as we may adjust the meeting place depending on bird activity. Expect an informational email from Don by Friday, June 5 at 6 p.m.

Co-sponsors: **Hampshire Bird Club Education Committee,**
Mass Audubon Connecticut River Sanctuaries,
Allen Bird Club

Further information: Bruce Hart, bhart2000@aol.com, 584-4176

THANK YOU, SALLY

It is finally happening (not that anyone looked forward to this (except perhaps, Sally herself).

For as long as I can remember, Sally Hills has chaired the refreshment committee, which is to say that, month-in and month-out, she is the one who has patiently coordinated the efforts of our many willing volunteers to provide refreshments at meetings. It takes some work and Sally has earned a rest.

So here's to you Sally! Next time you sample the fare at an HBC meeting it will be strictly for your own enjoyment, not to check for freshness.

Thank you for all your efforts and the pleasure they have brought to so many over so many years.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

“Throw the bums out” is a storied part of the American political tradition, but it just does not seem to apply to the HBC. Rather, the HBC has enjoyed, shall we say, considerable “continuity” on the board over a number of years. At the AGM on May 11, the following were elected to serve for the 2015-2016 season.

President: Scott Sumner

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

Any resemblance to the board from last year is purely actual.

REFRESHMENTS FUTURE

Chairperson needed

Thank you to those who have expressed interest in helping coordinate refreshments for HBC. We do need someone to actually take the plunge and offer to be the Refreshment Chair. This is where the rubber meets the road, or, perhaps, where the brownies meet the plate. If you can be this person, even for a single season, please let the refreshment committee know. You can reach them at refreshments-at-hampshirebirdclub-dot-org.

We are coming down to the wire, folks, as August 31 approaches. Will the table be bare?

Color-Banded Birds

During the recent pioneer Valley Birding Festival, Nestwatch color-banded a series of birds at Arcadia. They would be delighted to hear from you if you observe any of these color-banded birds in the field. Here is the list of birds and the color bands they are wearing. I have not listed the number on the aluminum band, since the notification if you have the bird in hand would be the standard listed on the band.

SPECIES	LEFT LEG	RIGHT LEG
Gray Catbird	Black	Aluminum/Pink
Gray Catbird	White	Blue/Aluminum
Gray Catbird	Red	Aluminum/Green
Gray Catbird	Aluminum/Yellow	Blue
Gray Catbird	Aluminum/Yellow	Pink
Black-Capped Chickadee	Yellow	Pink/Aluminum
Song Sparrow	Red	White/Aluminum

If you observe one of these birds, please contact:
Neighborhood Nestwatch Springfield
email: springfield.nestwatch@gmail.com; 413 545 5447.

THE FIRST ANNUAL PIONEER VALLEY BIRDING FESTIVAL

The event went off at the Fort River division of the Conte Wildlife Refuge and at Arcadia Sanctuary on Saturday, May 30.

Jim Laffley was a primary organizer of this audacious event, which drew together a wide range of environmental organizations to provide a great series of programs for families.

Here are some of Jim's preliminary comments on the event.

"I think our first effort at a festival went fairly well. We got a lot of positive responses during and after the event.

We got a report of almost 100 attendees at Fort River and about 300 at the Arcadia site.

We had a great turnout of members to volunteer and attend the event."

Jim and all those from HBC who contributed to this ground-breaking event deserve our congratulations for the effort they contributed and the great response from the community.

The organizing partners will be meeting soon to consider the future of the event. Stay tuned!

That is all for this year.

We continue to have Field trips scheduled throughout the summer (see 'Coming Trips').

The next program is on Monday, August 31.

Look for details in the next newsletter, scheduled to hit news-stands early- to mid-August. At this time we will also be asking for your membership renewal with its attendant transfer of wealth to our worthy non-profit. We trust you will be receptive. Until then, this publication takes a break.

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

David Peake-Jones, Editor
529 9541
newsletter@hampshirebirdclub.org

P.S. I hope you all understand just how difficult it was for me to spell "Aluminium" **WRONGLY** on no fewer than **SEVEN** occasions for this newsletter. I am nursing a stiff drink while trying to recover.