



**Hampshire Bird Club, Inc.**  
**Amherst, Massachusetts**  
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In this, our last edition of 2015-2016, we have:

- the introduction to this month's **program**,
- some engaging **trip reports** on the spring offerings, including high drama in Maine,
- the remaining **trips** of the summer,
- **election results** (no, not THOSE election results),
- your call to think about the **Fall Field Trip Schedule**, and
- some **Hitchcock** and **Fitzgerald Lake** programs.

We hope you find some of it useful.

**NEXT PROGRAM**

**Monday, June 13 at 7:15 p.m.**

**Mike Braun** looks at a **Bird on the Brink: The Story of the Red Siskin**

Immanuel Lutheran Church; 867 North Pleasant Street, Amherst.

**The Red Siskin**, a beautiful red and black songbird of northern South America, became endangered due to many decades of intense trapping for the cage-bird trade, which continues today. Discovery of a previously unknown population of these birds in 2000 rekindled hope for its survival in the wild. This talk will review the curious history of the siskin's endangerment, the scientific data needed for its recovery, and the comprehensive conservation action plan being implemented to bring about its recovery in the complex natural and political landscape of South America. More information on the Red Siskin Initiative may be found at [www.redsiskin.org](http://www.redsiskin.org).

We are arguably in the midst of the greatest mass extinction in the history of planet earth, caused by the exploding human population of planet earth and the wide variety of ways in which we affect other species. Efforts like the Red Siskin Initiative are attempts to stem the loss of species, one creature at a time.

**Mike Braun** grew up in Houston enthralled by the natural wonders of the Texas Gulf Coast and Hill Country. He began birding in high school, and roamed Texas and Mexico with family and friends of the Texas birding community. His love of nature led him to study science as an undergraduate at Cornell University, and to pursue a doctorate on the evolutionary genetics of birds at Louisiana State University. After postdoctoral studies at the National Cancer Institute and a year on the faculty of the University of Cincinnati, Mike moved to the Smithsonian Institution where he founded the Laboratory of Molecular Systematics. His research employs genomic tools to explore the evolutionary relationships, diversification processes and conservation biology of birds and other organisms. Mike has led bird tours to North and South America since his days in graduate school, and loves to share his knowledge of nature and science with others. He lives in Washington DC

**COMING PROGRAMS**

In preparation. Stay tuned.....

## FIELD TRIP REPORTS

### **Mt. Holyoke. May 21.**

On May 21, **Mike Locher** led six other birders up to the heights of Mt. Holyoke and, for once, the birds cooperated\*. All told, we tallied 32 species, including the much-coveted **Cerulean Warbler** (two males singing near the upper parking lot, and what was probably a third on the road below). We also got good looks at a **Worm-eating Warbler** near the summit, and a nice sampling of other migrants: **Swainson's Thrush** (posing on the road for all to see), **Indigo Buntings** (now regular at the summit), **Baltimore Orioles** (including a first-year male collecting nesting material), a single **Blackburnian Warbler**, several **Rose-breasted Grosbeaks**, many **Scarlet Tanagers**, uncountable Ovenbirds and Red-eyed Vireos, and the local Common Ravens sounding off near the main gate. Pink Lady's Slippers and Columbine were in bloom near the summit, and a single Red Eft\*\* was spotted.

Mike Locher

*\*This harsh indictment of our feathered friends could use a little softening. I think we should acknowledge that, throughout recorded history, there may have been one or two occasions when the birds have been somewhat cooperative. ed.*

*\*\*Again, let's stick to the facts. Marital status of the eft is indeterminate and none of our business. ed.*



### **Knightville Dam. Sunday, May 22 with Betsy Higgins**

On Sunday, May 22, eight of us made our way to Knightville Dam in Huntington. While we did not find anything out of the ordinary, we did find many of the local breeders, including Bank Swallow, Common Merganser, Spotted Sandpiper, Yellow-throated Vireo, as well as Willow-, Alder- and Least Flycatchers. We enjoyed looks at some of the more colorful of our local species including Indigo Bunting, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Baltimore Oriole, Yellow Warbler and more, and heard **Black-billed Cuckoo** and Barred Owl. We found nests of Least Flycatcher, Tree Swallow, Grackle (feeding young), American Redstart, and Song Sparrow. All good, but the highlight of the trip for me was the **porcupine** trundling across the parking lot at the top of the dam! A nice day, nice birds and as always, great company.

Betsy Higgins



### **Monhegan Island. May 20 to 23 with Scott Surner**

The Hampshire bird club trip to Monhegan Island was met with outstanding weather and a great flow of birds! The trip actually began on Friday at Weskeag Marsh just thirty minutes from Port Clyde. I had alerted members of the group that a male **Ruff** had been found there the day before our trip. As luck would have it, we arrived on Friday to get great looks at the Ruff along with several stunning male **Northern Shovelers**, **Green-winged Teal** and a handful of **Least Sandpipers**. After that it was off to catch the boat, especially since it was the only boat of the day! We learned later during the trip that the Ruff was not seen after Friday! We took advantage of a very calm crossing to tally 7 Surf Scoters, **Razorbill**, many Black Guillemots, 3 **Common Murres**, **Northern Gannet** and 4 Bald Eagles on the trip from Port Clyde.

Once we got everyone checked into the Trailing Yew, we headed out for some nice afternoon birding. Both Friday and Saturday were quite busy on the Island. Sunday was noticeably quieter, but a new wave of birds arrived Monday. There was nothing rare, but we had great looks at a number of warblers, Orioles (Baltimore & Orchard), Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, Indigo bunting, Scarlet Tanager and more. Perhaps the most unusual birds on Monhegan were some elusive **Clay-colored Sparrows** and a slightly more cooperative **Lark Sparrow**.

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► Monhegan Island (continued)

We also made a trip out to Eastern Egg Rock on the Hardy Boat. We were delighted to find out that there are about 140 nesting pairs of **Atlantic Puffins** now nesting on Egg Rock, along with 2,000-3,000 pairs of Laughing Gulls, and three species of Terns (Common, Roseate and Arctic). During our 45 minute trip circling the Island we easily had 50-60 Puffins, 2 Razorbills, 60-70 Black Guillemots, and many Laughing Gulls (if you ever wondered where they got their name....spend a few minutes at a Laughing Gull Colony). We also had all three Terns, 4 Ruddy Turnstones, about 20 Purple Sandpipers, and a few Common Loons.

We ended the trip with 102 species. Some of the noteworthy items that I haven't mentioned included **Great Cormorant** and **Sora** (three birds calling all night throughout the weekend, driving the islanders that live near the marsh crazy)! We also had **American Woodcock** (3), a large owl species encountered by a couple while hiking in the interior of the Island, and a **Merlin** dashing through the village bent on murder on several occasions. There were a few flycatchers, including Eastern Wood-Pewee and Least-, four species of Vireo, including Philadelphia-; a **Ruby-crowned Kinglet**, (one) **Swainson's Thrush**, and 18 species of warblers. The most common were Black & White (20+), Common Yellowthroat (50+), American Redstart (60), Northern Parula (50+), and Magnolia (30+). The numbers of the other warblers were lower, but still gave everyone awesome looks. These included **Bay-breasted**, Blackburnian, Yellow, Chestnut-sided, Blackpoll, Black-throated Green and **Canada**. Besides the Clay-colored- and Lark- Sparrows, we also had really nice looks at White-throated-, Savannah- and Lincoln's Sparrows at Donna Cundy's feeding station. Also a good number of **Pine Siskins** at her thistle feeder.

Certainly one of the highlights, if in fact not the highlight for everyone on the trip came as we were returning to Port Clyde. The morning boat coming in the other direction had observed a **Humpback Whale**. This was the first time in the last 7-8 years of crossings where the boat captain had seen one. Despite doubting that we could repeat the feat twice in one day, we were staggered to see a spout dead ahead 15-20 minutes into the return trip. Observers out on the bow observed the whale ahead for several minutes, and everyone was trying to keep an eye on where it was heading. As we continued heading to Port Clyde the Humpback would surface and show us his/her fluke and then disappear and then come up again and then dive. This happened a few times and then we lost sight of the Whale....ok, perhaps show over, right....not yet.

Everyone was still hoping for another or even a slightly closer view, when all of a sudden the whale came right up next to the port side of the boat and appeared to be on a collision course with the Elizabeth Ann!!! The captain alertly cut the engines and avoided a disaster. Everyone got amazing looks at this animal and I've sent of a couple photos of the fluke hoping we might be able to identify this particular Humpback...stay tuned.

Scott Sumner



**Westover Air Force Base Grasslands. Saturday, June 4 with Mike Locher.**

As a moist, foggy morning quickly gave way to a hot and muggy day, Hampshire Bird club joined the Allen and Brookline clubs at Westover Air Force base for a rare look inside the gates at the north-east's premier grassland. The base was kind enough to lay on a bus for us, and even to get another one at short notice when the first was too small for the assembled multitudes. After boarding, and a quick rest stop at a visitor's center, we set off around the perimeter road, parking by the firing ranges for a walk out into the middle of the expansive grassland. There was action aplenty immediately. Several Field Sparrows were spotted in the shrubby areas near the road, and a chorus of jangling Bobolinks and more elusive insect-like trills could be heard from the interior meadow.

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► Westover AFB (continued)

Over the next two hours, the three clubs intermingled in the meadow. **Grasshopper Sparrows** were everywhere, often teeing up helpfully on emergent weeds and throwing back their heads to sing. **Bobolinks** frolicked and sang exuberantly in every direction, and it was not long before we also heard “Spring of the Year” calls from breeding **Eastern Meadowlarks** (along with their more common but under-known territorial chatter). But, of course, the real treats were displaying **Upland Sandpipers**, buzzing us overhead with their curious fluttering flight, landing and running about in the grass, and filling the air with their gorgeous, plaintive cries. By the time our hosts began signaling for us to return to the bus, we had recorded (conservatively) at least two dozen Bobolinks, 14 Grasshopper Sparrows, 14 Eastern Meadowlarks and six (6) Upland Sandpipers. We had a brief extension to the old cranberry bog on base, where we got some last looks at meadowlarks and a couple of **American Kestrels**, before saying goodbye to the base for the year.

The Westover grasslands are a jewel in the north-east that is right on our doorstep. The base is working hard to protect these grasslands from the ever-present threats from invasive species, and also working diligently to manage the grasslands in a way that allows breeding birds to survive and thrive. Our deepest thanks to Jack Moriarty, base PR liason, who made our visit possible and who is working actively to allow access for birders and, more importantly, researchers. Also thanks to Colonel Bishop, who accompanied us and is clearly a friend to birds and birders. We should all keep our eyes on Westover in the news and do all we can to make sure that conservation interests remain in focus in the management of these grasslands.

## The FALL FIELD TRIP SCHEDULE

We have had a fantastic line-up of spring offerings and after a brief quietus over the summer, I, for one, will want to savor the fall migration just as much (albeit with the confusing fall plumages to contend with). Mike Locher will be tossing and turning through the hot summer nights dreaming of the creative and out-of-the-box trip ideas that could make the difference between a ho-hum fall field trip schedule and a crackerjack set of trips to remember. You, dear reader, hold the key. If you can come up with an innovative idea for a fall trip, especially if you can lead it, contact Mike and help bring the FFT schedule to fruition.

## COMING PROGRAMS

**\*Monday, June 6. Fort River Refuge.** Morning. George Regmund and others seek out warblers, vireos, orioles, and other migrants at the Fort River Refuge. Contact George (413-255-0628) for information. Meet at the main refuge parking area (69 Moody Bridge Road, Hadley) at 7:30 a.m. (E/M)

**Wednesday, June 15. Montague Plain: Whip-poor-wills.** Evening. Al Richards searches the unique habitat around the Montague Plain for whip-poor-wills and other local specialties. Meet at Al’s house (7 South Main St., Sunderland) at 7:30 p.m. Contact Al (413-665-2761) for further information. (E)

**\*Saturday, June 25. Fort River Refuge.** Morning. George Regmund and others seek out warblers, vireos, orioles, and other migrants at the Fort River Refuge. Contact George (413-255-0628) for information. Meet at the main refuge parking area (69 Moody Bridge Road, Hadley) at 7:30 a.m. (E/M)

## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

SuperPACs, attack ads, spurious voter fraud, voter disenfranchisement, gerrymandering, dark money and CRAZY PEOPLE were all mercifully absent from the HBC Annual General Meeting on May 16, right before the May program. In a process notable for its civility and lack of drama, the following were elected to carry the club through the 2016-2017 year. (see next page).

## The Board: 2016-2017

**President:** Scott Sumner  
**Vice-President/Program Chair:** Geoff LeBaron  
**Treasurer:** Stephen Baker  
**Membership Secretary:** Lissa Ganter  
**Communications Secretary:** Sharon Dombeck  
**Board Members at large:**

Bruce Hart  
 Mike Locher  
 Carol Mardeusz  
 David Peake-Jones  
 Josh Rose  
 Jaap van Heerden.

These folks will officially take up the cudgels right after the June program.

## HITCHCOCK PROGRAMS

**Explore the Hitchcock Center's New Grounds:** *Pete McLean and Ted Watt*

A bio-blitz event.

Saturday, June 18, 9 a.m.- noon. Fee.

**Wildflowers at Cave Hill:** *Nancy Goodman*

Saturday, June 12, 9 a.m.-noon. Fee.

*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](http://www.hitchcockcenter.org).*

## FITZGERALD LAKE CONSERVATION AREA PROGRAMS

**Beavers at Nightfall:** Gini Traub

Friday, June 17: 7:00-8:30 pm

Cooke Ave. entrance (at the former Moose Lodge; park to the right)

Call (413) 584 6788) with questions

**Butterfly Walk:** *Tom Gagnon*

Wednesday, July 6: 10:00 am to noon (rain date: July 7), North Farms Rd. entrance.

Contact (413) 584 4176; [bhart2000@aol.com](mailto:bhart2000@aol.com) with questions.

**Summer Hike to the Dam:** *Connie Parks*

Sunday, July 17: 10:00 am to noon

Cooke Ave. entrance (at the former Moose Lodge; park to the right)

Call 413 268 3668; [SunkenScow@aol.com](mailto:SunkenScow@aol.com) with questions.

That's it until August when we fire up for the fall season.

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

David Peake-Jones, Editor  
 529 9541  
[newsletter@hampshirebirdclub.org](mailto:newsletter@hampshirebirdclub.org)