



Hampshire Bird Club, Inc.
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In this issue:

- the **next program** and **coming programs**,
- a **field trip** for the ages (the report is mediocre, the trip was not),
- **coming trips**,
- a **pelagic birding** opportunity,
- **Hitchcock** and **Arcadia** programs,
- **kestrel box** monitoring opportunities, and
- **Northampton Christmas Bird Count** results and a thank-you from the **potluck** organizers.

Hope you find some of it useful!

NEXT PROGRAM

Monday, February 13 at 7:15 p.m.

Dave Wiley follows Great Shearwater Migrations

Immanuel Lutheran Church; 867 North Pleasant Street, Amherst.

Weather-related cancellations announced via the HBC email list and local media.

In 2013, a group of researchers began studying Greater Shearwaters in the waters of Stellwagen Bank, just off the tip of Cape Cod. The researchers looked at where Greater Shearwaters tend to spend most of their time and looked for any links with the topography of the sea floor and the distribution of the sand lance, an abundant potential prey species. The researchers also looked at how Greater Shearwaters are caught by accident in gillnets in the Gulf of Maine and found interesting patterns in where this occurs. Dr. Wiley will also touch on what the scientists learned about the remarkable navigational abilities of these birds, which allow them to find their way across vast expanses of open ocean, and between the northern and southern hemispheres.

Dr. David Wiley's research has appeared in many scientific journals such as *Behaviour*, *Animal Behavior*, *Biological Conservation* and *Conservation Biology*. He is the recipient of numerous awards and honors including the Department of Commerce's Gold Medal for scientific leadership, an Ian Axford (Fulbright) Fellowship in Public Policy, a NextGov Bold Award for scientific innovation and the Society for Marine Mammalogy's award for Excellence in Scientific Communication.

COMING PROGRAMS

March 13, 2017. Chris Fisher. Images of South Africa.

April 10, 2017. Alyssa Rosemartin. The National Phenology Network.

May 8, 2017. Andrew Vitz. Bird Conservation In Western Massachusetts

FIELD TRIP REPORTS

Saturday, January 21. The Cape Ann Winter Ramble

Peter Gagarin, **Aiden Griffiths**, Carol Griffiths, **Devin Griffiths**, Lee Halasz, Mike Locher, Andrew Magee, David Peake-Jones and Al Richards set off from the Belchertown Common bright and early for a tour around this fabled north shore promontory.

Once in a while an HBC trip just clicks. The planets align, the storms happen just so, and an otherwise pleasant ramble can turn into a spectacular day. Who can forget the Poor Man's Monhegan trip some years ago when the group happened upon one of the biggest pelagic fall-outs in recent history on Plum Island? These things cannot be planned for, but when they happen they can be the experiences of a life-time. And so it was on this mild early winter day. The trip began conventionally enough at Jodrey Fish Pier in Gloucester. A nice selection of gulls and sea ducks were on hand to help us get acclimated, including an immature Iceland Gull which swept overhead as we arrived and then vanished amongst the moorings. Common Eiders and Red-breasted Mergansers were at their usual stations and a few scoters livened things up a bit. Al Richards has done this enough times to immediately spot the resident **Peregrine Falcon** surveying the harbor imperiously from a nearby spire. A Long-tailed Duck frolicked improbably in a little backwater. So far, so good. Ho hum.

The wide open spaces of the Bass Rocks shoreline were a bit more atmospheric. There were more scoters to mull over, and **Red-throated Loons** to disentangle from their more burly common brethren, but it was the little black and white things skittering along out beyond the surf zone that got us fired up. Most of us found ourselves wishing we could channel Rick Heil or some other vaunted sea-watcher for whom these distant blurs would be identifiable but, as the cumulative effect of eyeballs, expensive optics and rusty ID skills took effect, we started to hit our straps. One by one, closer birds in the (mercifully quite calm) surf zone gave up their gray-scale secrets to our blue-collar efforts. By the time we departed the Elks Club we had two (2) **Black Guillemots** and four (4) **Razorbills** to show for it!! Niles Beach yielded more sea ducks, Red-necked and Horned Grebes, and another Razorbill. At Front and Back Beaches in Rockport, we found **Harlequin Ducks** to add to the mix, yet one more Razorbill, and, bobbing at what would have been wading pool depth*, a nestle-in-your-hand little bundle of cuteness that is the Holy Grail of sea-watching in New England: **Dovekie**!! It was by now clear that we were part of an in-shore alcid extravaganza for the ages.

And so we rambled on and the coast, as it is wont to do, rewarded us in unforeseen ways. A routine bathroom stop in Rockport Harbor yielded two female **Northern Pintail** sitting (astonishingly) amongst a crown of shoreline Mallards. Granite Pier in Rockport had more Harlequin Ducks, two more Razorbills at absurdly close range, and an **adult Iceland Gull** which Andrew Magee picked out of the throng with nowt but his bins! From Loblolly Cove we tallied yet more Harlequin Ducks and, dismayed by the lack of alcids, the group stooped to terrestrial birding to try to pad the list, turning up a Cooper's Hawk and a Carolina Wren, amidst some more common fare. Cathedral Ledges played host to yet more Harlequin Ducks, two more Razorbills, another Dovekie, as well as a Red-throated Loon that had us dreaming of something more special for a few moments.

Andrew's Point, normally a banner stop, was strangely devoid of birds, so we hustled on toward Plum Cove, as the day began to go down in the west. The promised Barrow's Goldeneye was not in evidence there, but bobbing at speedo depth for the Polar Bear Club* was a Thick-billed Murre: the most astonishing look one is ever likely to get at this bird and Brant adorning the rocks.

*Alert and scientifically-astute readers may suspect an element of exaggeration in these depth estimates and may, in addition, question the legitimacy of bathymetric measurements made based on human bathing habits. All I can do in response is to blow you a literary raspberry and plead that I am just getting into the spirit of the times. Editor.

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Cape Ann Winter Ramble (continued)

As darkness fell, we adjourned to nearby (and unfashionable for birders) Lane's Cove in hopes of the elusive Barrow's Goldeneye. The Barrow's still had other places to be, but there, a mere silhouette in the quiet dusk, was an unmistakable dumpy little figure in the water mere feet from the breakwater. The less fleet-of-foot contented ourselves with this distant view of what we thought was our last Dovekie of the day, but the more agile and, it turned out, enlightened, of the group hot-footed it out along the breakwater for a closer look at this tiny visitor. Imagine their delight when a SECOND dovekie appeared alongside the first and the two exchanged a series of high pitched squeals, a sound witnessed by few people, and certainly by even fewer from land. A marvelous trip that will live long in memory....

Editors note: In what must have been a second storm-related incursion of Dovekies, or perhaps an extension of the one we witnessed, dozens were found on land on Cape Cod after a nor'easter on January 24th.

Wildcare Inc., a non-profit wildlife rehabilitation program in Eastham, MA, spearheaded efforts to rehab and release many of these birds. You can read a story about the effort at

<https://www.bostonglobe.com/metro/2017/01/26/tiny-arctic-birds-battered-storm-rescued-cape-cod/yRbnidFOzPzORsOB6ZliCN/story.html>. (Hmm. P'raps just google something simpler)

David Peake-Jones

COMING TRIPS

Saturday, February 4. Coastal Rhode Island. All day. Geoff LeBaron scours the shores of Rhode Island for winter ducks, marsh raptors, and other seasonal specialties on his annual all-day trip. Dress for the weather. Call Geoff (413-268-9281) to get information, to register, and get meeting information as the date approaches. (M)

Wednesday, March 15. Timberdoodles at the Abandoned Atkins Orchard. Evening. Join Jim Lafley on a ramble through the old Atkins Orchard on Sabin Street in Belchertown. Over the last 20 years this has been a good spot for observing the American Woodcock display along the edge of the orchard and the large open field. Also possible are flocks of migrating Robins; Great-horned, Barred, and Saw-whet Owls calling; Canada Geese settling in for the evening; and Whip-poor-wills a little later in the season. Come to see what's active on this evening walk. Meet at Jim Lafley's house, 28 Sabin St., Belchertown at 6 p.m. and take the quarter mile walk up to the old orchard for the show. (M)

PELAGIC BIRDING ON STELLWAGEN BANK

Seven Seas Whale Watch, Gloucester MA

Saturday, March 11, 2017

8 AM to NOON

Cape Ann Chamber of Commerce is planning their 6th Winter Birding Cruise in partnership with 7 Seas Whale Watch and many of the area's top ornithologists!

The trip will be visiting Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary, best known for its large concentrations of whales (Humpback and Finback especially) which attract tens-of-thousands of eager whale watchers each Spring through Fall. This trip will focus primarily on the pelagic birds of the bank, but there is the possibility of non-marine wildlife as well, including whales just returning from the Caribbean!

You can get detailed information about registration, pricing, schedule and more at

<http://web.capeannvacations.com/events/Winter-Birding-Boat-Trip-2778/details>

KESTREL BOX WATCH

Volunteers Wanted

Since 2013, Kestrel Land Trust has maintained and monitored 20 nest boxes in our region to help conserve their eponymous bird, which is in decline in our state. Hampshire Bird Club members have been crucial partners in this effort to provide nest sites and collect data on kestrels' breeding habitat selection and reproductive success. Our boxes have housed 51 chicks so far!

The trust is seeking volunteers for the 2017 season to monitor boxes on a weekly basis and report observations to them. The minimum time commitment is a total of one (1) hour per week (observation time may be broken into shorter periods) from March through May. If you would like to help, please contact Kestrel Land Trust at chris-at-kestreltrust-dot-org or 413-549-1097.

A representative from the trust will join us at the February program if you want to connect in person.

POTLUCK THANK YOU!

A note of appreciation to everyone who donated their wonderful cookies from the December Members meeting for the Northampton CBC Pot Luck Dinner that wasn't. Everyone was so generous: it is so comforting to know folks like you are so willing to assist in important projects like this.

Sincere appreciation to all. Our best wishes for a wonderful, healthy new year ahead — the “elves”, Sally, Helga, Jan, Janice, Mary Alice & Bill, Sue & Wayne. Thinking ahead to 2017 with safer weather!

HITCHCOCK PROGRAMS

Prowling For Owls: *Dan Ziomek*

with Dan Ziomek, local birder and naturalist

Saturday, January 28, 8pm-10pm

Saturday, February 11, 8pm -10pm

Saturday, March 4, 4:30am

Community Read

***The Sixth Extinction: An Unnatural History* by Elizabeth Kolbert**

In collaboration with Jones Library “On the Same Page—Amherst” program. Shared reading and five (5) evening programs with renowned environmentalists, including Elizabeth Kolbert.

January 31 to February 28. To learn more, please go to joneslibrary.org/onthesamepage

Amherst's Famous Spotted Salamanders: *Ted Watt*

Thursday, February 9, 6:30 pm. FREE. Please register.

Salamander Tunnel Maintenance

A weekend day – timing depends on weather conditions and snow cover.

Call or [sign up online](#) to be notified.

THE MESSENGER Film Screening

Thursday, March 16, 7pm. FREE. Please register.

Citizen Science: Red-Backed Salamander Population Monitoring: *Ted Watt*

Saturday, March 18, 10 am-noon. FREE. Please register

For details and registration for all Hitchcock programs, please contact the Hitchcock Center for the Environment, 845 West St., Amherst MA 01002. Telephone (413) 256 6006, or on the web at www.hitchcockcenter.org.

ARCADIA PROGRAMS

Arcadia Family Bird Fun

A monthly series focusing on various aspects of birding for all ages.
Saturday, Feb 11, 9:00 am – Noon.

Eagles at the Quabbin

Meeting at Quabbin Visitor Center
Saturday, Feb 11, 10 am - 1pm,

February Vacation Days

During the week of February 20.
See the Arcadia website.

For more details of and/or to register for all Arcadia programs, go to www.massaudubon.org. In the "Choose a Wildlife Sanctuary" pull-down menu, select "Arcadia".

*You may also contact **Arcadia Wildlife Sanctuary** direct at 127 Combs Rd., Easthampton MA 01027 or telephone (413) 584-3009.*

NORTHAMPTON CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT 2016

Participants in the 83rd Northampton CBC started their field observations about 7 am in rain and fog. Our intrepid owlers, some who began at midnight, had to deal with an icy rain as well. Despite these less-than-ideal conditions, the owlers tallied **54 Eastern Screech-**, **16 Great Horned-** and **3 Barred Owls**. One of the six young field birders taking part spotted and photographed a Snowy Owl -- an exciting find for the entire Northampton team. Despite difficult weather which reduced the number of participants and field time, **168 counters** took part and tallied **79 species**.

There were new high counts for Wild Turkey (200) and Merlin (6). Unusual species included **Red-headed Woodpecker**, **Ruby-crowned Kinglet**, **American Pipit**, **Pine Warbler** and **Snow Goose**. Though winter finches were scarce this year, a **Purple Finch**, a **Common Redpoll** and two **Pine Siskins** were found.

The complete (but unofficial) results are appended to this newsletter and the official results (including historical data) can be viewed in a variety of formats online at hampshirebirdclub.org/cbc/cbcforms/

The MANO CBC Compilers

That's all for this month. The Northampton Christmas Count results are attached to this newsletter and the Quabbin Count results will be included in March.

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

David Peake-Jones, Editor
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newsletter@hampshirebirdclub.org

Northampton Christmas Bird Count 2016 and Historical

High counts in bold

Unusual species in italics

(Name) = no recent records, hopeful...

Species	2016	High Year	High Count	Species	2015	High Year	High Count
Gr'ter Wh'-fr'ed Goose	0	n.a.t.		Bald Eagle (adult)	9	2015	13
Greylag Goose	0	n.a.t.		Bald Eagle (imm.)	3	2010	3
<i>Snow Goose</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2008</i>	<i>32</i>	Northern Harrier	10	2010	11
Brant	0	n.a.t.		Sharp-s'd Hawk	12	2007	22
Canada Goose	1,938	1999	7,977	Cooper's Hawk	29	2014	32
Cackling Goose	0	n.a.t.		Northern Goshawk	1	n.a.t.	
Mute Swan	14	2002	29	Red-s'd Hawk	cw	1957	4
Wood Duck	2	2010	19	Red-tailed Hawk	109	2014	187
Gadwall	0	2012	5	Rough-l'd Hawk	0	1989	12
American Wigeon	0	1999	10	American Kestrel	4	1974	31
Northern Shoveller	0			Merlin	6	2013	4
Am. Black Duck	162	1992	286	Gyr Falcon	0	n.a.t.	
Mallard	893	1994	1,338	Peregrine Falcon	7	2014	6
Northern Pintail	3	2014	54	American Coot	0	2014	1
Green-winged Teal	0	2015	3	Virginia Rail	0	n.a.t.	
Canvasback	0	n.a.t.		Killdeer	0	n.a.t.	
Ring-necked Duck	0	n.a.t.		<i>Wilson's Snipe</i>	<i>0</i>	n.a.t.	
Greater Scaup	0	n.a.t.		American Woodcock	0	n.a.t.	
Lesser Scaup	0	n.a.t.		Ring-billed Gull	132	2006	1,088
White-winged Scoter	0	n.a.t.		Herring Gull	9	1986	2,196
Long-tailed Duck	0	n.a.t.		Iceland Gull	0	n.a.t.	
Bufflehead	0	n.a.t.		Lesser Bl'-backed Gull	0	n.a.t.	
Common Goldeneye	103	1992	109	Glaucous Gull	0	n.a.t.	
Barrow's Goldeneye	0	n.a.t.		<i>Black-headed Gull</i>	<i>0</i>		
Hooded Merganser	52	2012	60	Great Bl'-b'd Gull	3	1994	367
Common Merganser	116	2012	227	Rock Pigeon	510	1988	2,778
Red-b'd Merganser	0	n.a.t.		Mourning Dove	1,905	1998	3,904
Ruddy Duck	0	n.a.t.		E. Screech-Owl	54	2006	82
Ring-n'd Pheasant	1	1960	196	Great Horned Owl	16	2014	68
Ruffed Grouse	0	1966	37	Snowy Owl	1	n.a.t.	
Wild Turkey	200	2010	187	Barred Owl	3	2012	19
<i>Red-throated Loon</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>n.a.t.</i>		<i>Long-eared Owl</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>2004</i>	<i>3</i>
Common Loon	0	n.a.t.		<i>Short-eared Owl</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>n.a.t.</i>	
<i>Pied-billed Grebe</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>n.a.t.</i>		N. Saw-whet Owl	0	2006	5
<i>Horned Grebe</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>n.a.t.</i>		Selasphorus sp.	0	n.a.t.	
<i>Do'-c'd Cormorant</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>n.a.t.</i>		Belted Kingfisher	14	2001	23
<i>(Great Cormorant)</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>nrr</i>		Red-headed Woodpecker	1	n.a.t.	
Great Blue Heron	0	2006	27	Red-b'd Woodpecker	172	2014	246
<i>Green Heron</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>n.a.t.</i>		Yellow-b'd Sapsucker	1	2007	22
<i>Turkey Vulture</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>n.a.t.</i>		Downy Woodpecker	237	2014	503
				Hairy Woodpecker	74	1974	192
				Northern Flicker	32	1998	77

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Northampton Christmas Count, 2016 (continued)

Species	2015	High Year	High Count	Species	2015	High Year	High Count
Pileated Woodpecker	231	2010	34	<i>Clay-c'd Sparrow</i>	0	n.a.t.	
Eastern Phoebe	0	n.a.t.		Field Sparrow	0	1982	58
Northern Shrike	0	1995	15	Vesper Sparrow	0	n.a.t.	
(White-eyed Vireo)	0	nrr		Harris's Sparrow	0	n.a.t.	
Blue-headed Vireo	0	n.a.t.		Savannah Sparrow	25	2000	46
Blue Jay	1,322	2014	1,722	Fox Sparrow	3	1943	20
American Crow	1,108	1997	5,836	Song Sparrow	194	1992	559
Fish Crow	cw	2008	6	Lincoln's Sparrow	0	n.a.t.	
Common Raven	12	2015	28	Swamp Sparrow	2	1992	23
Horned Lark	807	1993	2,504	White-t'd Sparrow	316	2009	1,008
Black-c'd Chickadee	1,251	2005	2,096	White-c'd Sparrow	7	2014	26
Tufted Titmouse	621	2006	894	Dark-e'd Junco (slate-col.)	2,318	2006	3,585
Red-b'd Nuthatch	16	1993	295	<i>Oregon Junco</i>	0	n.a.t.	
White-b'd Nuthatch	285	2015	644	<i>Pink-sided Junco</i>	0	n.a.t.	
Brown Creeper	8	1973	53	<i>Lapland Longspur</i>	0	1989	31
Carolina Wren	59	2014	175	Snow Bunting	11	1989	706
House Wren	0	n.a.t.		Northern Cardinal	640	2014	786
Winter Wren	1	2014	9	Indigo Bunting	0	n.a.t.	
Golden-c'd Kinglet	45	2001	332	Dickcissel	0	n.a.t.	
<i>Ruby-c'd Kinglet</i>	1	1973	6	Red-winged Blackbird	8	2008	304
Eastern Bluebird	199	2014	539	(Eastern Meadowlark)	0	nrr	
Hermit Thrush	1	2014	33	Rusty Blackbird	0	2008	100
American Robin	1,703	2013	9,899	Common Grackle	1	2006	501
Gray Catbird	3	2005	5	Brown-h'd Cowbird	6	2006	876
N. Mockingbird	92	1999	238	Baltimore Oriole	0	n.a.t.	
<i>Brown Thrasher</i>	1	n.a.t.		Pine Grosbeak	0	n.a.t.	
European Starling	5,732	1985	94,630	Purple Finch	1	1976	221
American Pipit	10	2015	129	House Finch	613	1994	2,215
(Bohemian Waxwing)	0	nrr		Red Crossbill	0	n.a.t.	
Cedar Waxwing	554	2007	2,194	White-w'd Crossbill	0	n.a.t.	
<i>Yellow-r'd Warbler</i>	0	2000	5	Common Redpoll	1	1959	1,069
<i>Pine Warbler</i>	1	n.a.t.		Hoary Redpoll	0	n.a.t.	
<i>Palm Warbler</i>	0	n.a.t.		Pine Siskin	2	1993	372
<i>Eastern Towhee</i>	0	n.a.t.		Amer. Goldfinch	649	2006	2,094
Amer. Tree Sparrow	452	1992	2,637	Evening Grosbeak	0	1969	3,000
<i>Chipping Sparrow</i>	0	1974	11	House Sparrow	2,420	1961	2,662

In the event of equal high years, the most recent is shown.

For High counts in 2015, the previous high count and year are shown.

n.a.t. = now and then. Recorded in fewer than five (5) years between 1999 and 2015.

Some species seen extremely rarely have been excluded in the interests of space.