



**Hampshire Bird Club, Inc.**  
**Amherst, Massachusetts**  
www.hampshirebirdclub.org  
Volume 34, No. 5  
**January, 2018.**

In this edition:

- Our **next program** and the coming program schedule,
- **Field trip reports** and a **coming trip** in January,
- **Hitchcock programs**,
- Some suggestions on bird-finding in Mass. and a chance to sign up for the **Rare Bird Alert**, and
- Summary and provisional results of the **2017 Northampton Christmas Count**.

I hope you find some of it useful!

**NEXT PROGRAM**

**Monday, January 8 at 7:15 p.m.**

**Don Kroodsma** reflects on a coming challenge for listers:

**You Can't Count It Unless You Hear It**

Immanuel Lutheran Church; 867 North Pleasant Street, Amherst.

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

This program will help you adjust to the new guidelines that have been proposed to the ABA, which would require listers to have a good listen to each species before counting it. We'll wander about the continent, from New England across the midsection to the west coast, heading north from California to Oregon and on up to Alaska, choosing a few sample species with extraordinary voices. First up: the Black-capped Chickadee; later, Red-winged Blackbirds, American Robins . . . to birds who mimic, those who sing through the night, or sing in dialects, or sing from the nest, or sing with enormous variety . . . each species so special that a good listen elevates the soul, and the list.

After getting hooked on birds in college in the late sixties, **Don Kroodsma** attended graduate school at Oregon State University, asking a question about how Bewick's Wrens learn to sing. There followed 23 years during which Don taught at the University of Massachusetts, publishing copiously on the subject of bird song and becoming a leading international authority on the same. Since being (somewhat) liberated from the rigors of full-time teaching, Don published his groundbreaking "*The Singing Life of Birds*" in 2005 and several other books bringing insight into bird song to a wide audience.

For his lifetime of enquiry, Don has received the 2003 Elliot Coues Award (American Ornithologists Union) and the 2006 Robert Ridgeway Distinguished Service Award from the American Birding Association. Don was also recognized in 2014 by the Wilson Ornithological Society with the Margaret Morse Nice medal for lifetime contributions to ornithology.

**COMING PROGRAMS**

**February 12, 2018. Keenan Yakola.** Seabird Research at Seal Island.

**March 12, 2018. Dave Wiley.** Great Shearwaters on Stellwagen Bank.

**April 9, 2018. Shawn Carey.** A Wing and a Care.

## FIELD TRIP REPORTS

### Dead Creek Wildlife Management Area and Lake Champlain Valley, Vermont.

Sunday, October 29

Amanda Kallenbach, **Mike Locher**, Andrew Magee and David Peake-Jones made the now-annual HBC expedition to far western Vermont. We were blessed with an early sighting of **Rough-legged Hawk**, and Green-winged Teal. Eventually, we coasted down Route 17 from the Addison General Store, to find the goose viewing area enveloped only in low cloud and drizzle instead of the anticipated torrential rain. And there were **3,000 Snow Geese**.

In a testament to the triumph of hope over reason, we found various excuses to remain at the viewing area, including a **Peregrine**, several **Northern Harriers**, several confusions\* of American Pipits and a kaleidoscopic cluster of mixed blackbirds whirling in and out of a field of standing corn. Just as we finally resigned ourselves to heading out into the rain, a wonderful thing happened. About fifty of the Snow Geese (obviously the “movin’ and shakin’ contingent) made up their minds to get up and fly over our heads into a corn-stubble field to our north. With growing delight we watched the entire flock follow in groups of several hundred at a time. It was like being an aircraft enthusiast being invited to stand at the end of the flight deck on an aircraft carrier. Every detail of plumage and flight in intimate detail! But there was more delight to come. Having put down several hundred yards away, they then proceeded to steadily forage their way to within fifty yards of us over the course of the next hour. Thus it was that we spent an entire morning, longer than on any other trip in recent memory, enjoying unprecedented views of them feeding and squabbling good-naturedly with one another. We could even hear (for the first time, in my case), a muttering they make as they forage across a muddy field. It is low-pitched and very quiet, not unlike (but quieter than) the sound you hear when you get close enough to Common Eiders. What a treat!

As we typically do, we then adjourned from the refuge to poke around in the mysterious patchwork of farmland, marshes and muddy sloughs that make up the Champlain Valley. From the Stone Bridge we spied a Green-winged Teal and a **Greater Yellowlegs**, as well as an improbable pair of Peregrine Falcons racing overhead. At the confluence of Otter and Dead Creeks we counted over 100 Common Mergansers (apparently there was a merg convention that weekend) and a lonely Bald Eagle perched on a streamside snag. Button Bay, our first chance for open-lake birds did not disappoint. In addition to the usual complement of Horned Grebes we came up with a group of White-winged Scoters, multiple Common Loons, and, the highlight of the trip, a **Pacific Loon**. This highly active and petite bird led us on a merry chase, diving every few seconds and re-emerging elsewhere. It took over an hour of patiently gathering snippets of information and gradually overcoming our reluctance to make waves before we were willing to put our names to the ID. The Vermont Avian Records Committee will have to make its ruling for posterity, but we know what we saw.

The “trench-work” of the trip came at Pantown Road crossing where, with the weather beginning to deteriorate, we came across a group of shorebirds on a muddy flat, obscured by reeds. After trying several different vantage points, and, again, after painstaking group effort, we could confirm nine (9) **Black-bellied Plovers**, three (3) **Dunlin**, and five (5) **White-rumped Sandpipers**.

Finally, from Potash Bay and the Tri-town Water District, we took a last stab at lake birds in failing light and increasing rain. We were able to add good numbers of **Bonaparte’s Gull** and some Black Scoters to the tally before turning our damp bodies for home.

*\*I have just made “confusion of pipits” my personal collective noun for this species. The term seems to encapsulate both their (apparently) random dashing about in the late fall landscape, and also my abilities with respect to their identification. DPJ*

David Peake-Jones



## **Plum Island and Environs. Saturday, November 4, 2017.**

Peter Allison, Jesse Brownback, Pat Eagan, Betsy Higgins, Leslie Hoffmann, Andrew Magee and Lynne Shapiro headed for the jewel of Massachusetts birding under the guidance of **Geoff LeBaron**. A crisp but relatively mild day made for enjoyable birding.

The group spent some good time at Lot 1 of the Parker River N.W.R., which included nice looks at **Horned Larks** and **Snow Buntings** in the dune-field, and a gaggle of Black-bellied Plovers on the beach. A surprise **Stilt Sandpiper** graced the salt pannes, along with a fly-over **Lapland Longspur**. A late **Lesser Yellowlegs** was in evidence at “the wardens,” as was a **Chipping Sparrow**. The fun continued at Hellcat Swamp, where a very late **Red-eyed Vireo** eked out an existence in the brush, along with a couple of Ruby-crowned Kinglets. Lot 7 played host to a bunch of **Semi-palmated Sandpipers**, more Black-bellied Plovers, spectacular **Snow Buntings**, a nice assortment of sea ducks and distant, diving **Northern Gannets**.

HBC continued a long and nefarious tradition of law-breaking at the Newburyport Waterfront Park, running afoul of local parking authorities. With the sunlight winding down, the party crossed to Salisbury Beach State park, observing a **Peregrine Falcon** devouring a pigeon on the Newburyport Bridge along the way. The salt-marsh mudflats off the boat ramp yielded a staggering **three Hudsonian Godwits** and a gorgeous family of **Brant** out in the mouth of the Merrimack. More subtle fare included Betsy’s **Ipswich Sparrow** ( it is a subspecies of Savannah Sparrow). Owls were absent or not playing this day, so all that was left to do was to admire a beautiful sunset.

Other birds which would have wowed me, but which Geoff merely mentions in passing, are **150 plus American Wigeon**, **15 Long-tailed Ducks**, **45 Greater Yellowlegs** and **75 Red-throated Loons!** Ho hum!! Just another boring day at Plum Island.....

The Editor, from Geoff’s notes

## **COMING FIELD TRIPS**

**Saturday, January 13. The Second Annual Cape Ann Winter Ramble.** All day. Aidan and Devin Griffiths go to the chilly shore to look for ducks, alcids, gulls, and all the other good birds of winter. Dress for the weather (many layers). Meeting time is 6 a.m.; contact Devin (413-323-8417) for the place, or further information. (M)

Please note that the **Winter-Spring-Summer Field Trip Schedule** will be published in the **February** newsletter.

**Please let Mike Locher know as soon as possible if you can contribute to our field trip program by leading or co-leading a trip between February and August of this year!!!**

## **NORTHAMPTON CHRISTMAS COUNT**

The **84<sup>th</sup> Northampton Christmas Count** took place on **Sunday, December 17, 2017**. The final tally was not the most impressive in number of birds or species (85) but there were many unusual sightings, including a new count species (**American Wigeon**) and a number of **new high counts**. There is one species ID pending. **183 people took part**. Thirty-three counted from a comfortable chair with feeder views but most dressed for and took to the field on a sunny but cold morning. The afternoon brought clouds but still, thankfully, little or no wind. We were pleased to welcome **two first time owlers** and **three new young people** to the Count. Our dedicated owlers found four species including a **Short-eared Owl** but most notable was a new high count of **108 Eastern Screech-Owls**.

Janice Jorgenson and Jan Ortiz, compilers.

## CHRISTMAS COUNT THANK YOU'S

Janice Jorgensen and Jan Ortiz once again brought the whole thing together with gusto. Area leaders and volunteers made traipsing about in the winter landscape a creative and productive endeavor, the Hitchcock Center allowed us use of their wonderful new space for the compilation. John Green and Josh Rose endured technical glitches with grace while compiling the results. HBC members donated the wonderful spread of hot food, salads, snacks and dessert to which we have become accustomed (and for which I am personally VERY grateful). Finally, **Susan Emerson**, having wheedled, cajoled, and, word has it, even bribed our membership to donate for the potluck over so many years, announced that she is handing over the reins as potluck coordinator to some (as yet unknown) successor. **THANK YOU, Sue!!**

## HITCHCOCK PROGRAMS (selected)

### **Nature All Year Study Club 2018**

Sundays once per month, 9am-12pm (some class times may vary depending on topics). Fee.

### **Buds, Leaves and Global Warming: What 8 years of data collection tells us about phenology trends at Belchertown High School:** *Louise Levy (MA Conservation Teacher of the Year*

Thursday, January 11, 7-8:30 pm.

### **Butterflies of the World:** *John Root*

Thursday, February 1, 7-8pm (snowdate-Feb. 15). Fee.

### **Prowling For Owls:** *Dan Ziomek*

Friday, January 26, 8pm-10pm

Saturday, February 17, 8pm -10pm

Youth 8 and older welcome with an adult. Fee.

### **Attracting Pollinators at Hitchcock: What Plants Where?** *Tom Sullivan of Pollinators Welcome, Montague*

Saturdays, February 3, 10, 17, 10am-12pm. Fee.

### **Spring Birding Class with Scott Surner**

Classes: 4 Wednesdays 6:30pm-8pm

Weekend Field Trips: February 10-June 10 see online for all dates. Fee.

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



That is all for this month. Attached are:

- the **Hampshire Bird Club Field Trip Policy**, and
- the full (but provisional) results of the **2017 Northampton Christmas Count**.

The **Winter-Spring-Summer Field Trip Schedule** will appear in the February newsletter.

That gives you more time to contact Mike and volunteer to lead a trip!

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

David Peake-Jones, Editor  
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**HAMPSHIRE BIRD CLUB, INC.**  
**FIELD TRIP POLICY**  
**Last Amended February 2, 2012.**

1. Field trips are an essential activity of the Hampshire Bird Club, Inc. (HBC). They are an important way to increase members' interest in and knowledge of birds, birding, and bird habitat. Field trips are announced in the HBC newsletter, on the website and at monthly meetings.
2. Each year, all HBC members are asked to sign the HBC Release Form. Minor children (under 18) must be accompanied by a parent/guardian or another adult who has written authorization to be responsible for the child's care and conduct. Please request a form from HBC if you want to authorize another adult to accompany your child.
- 3 The HBC conducts two different types of field trips: Day Trips and Overnight Trips.

**Day Trips** are planned by the Field Trip Committee, who prepare the schedule and select leaders. Day Trips generally do not require extensive planning by the trip leader. No costs other than travel (see #4 below), meals, and incidental fees will be involved. If requested to do so in the newsletter, participants must call the trip leader in advance to express interest in the trip. This allows the leader more flexibility and the opportunity to change the trip itinerary should that seem desirable. Day trips are open to both HBC members and non-members unless restricted to members by the host site.

**Overnight Trips** (one or more nights, reasonable driving distance) are planned by the Field Trip Committee and approved by the HBC Board at least 3 months in advance (see #5 below). Such trips generally require more planning by the trip leader, including, for example, arranging for lodging and travel. Participants will be charged an amount equal to actual predetermined costs (including liability insurance) plus a prorated amount to cover reimbursement of the leader's expenses (see #5 below). All fees, including the trip deposit, shall be paid to the HBC Treasurer. In the event of a cancellation, if the vacancy can be filled, the trip fee will be refunded, less a 10% processing charge. If the vacancy cannot be filled, the trip fee will be refunded, with the following exceptions:

- a) the portion of the trip fee that that covers a share of the leaders costs,
- b) the portion of the fee that covers the insurance charge, and
- c) any portion of the fee which has already been paid to another party and cannot be recovered by the club.

Any excess fees remaining after costs have been met will be refunded, unless they are less than twenty dollars (\$20) per person, in which case they will revert to the HBC treasury. Overnight trips are open only to HBC members who have signed a release form and who have completed a medical information form.

4. The HBC Board recommends that passengers reimburse owners of vehicles used on HBC trips for costs associated with vehicle operation. The maximum recommended reimbursement is the federal government employee mileage reimbursement rate, rounded down to the nearest 10 cents, plus tolls and parking to be shared equally by all persons in the car including the driver. The participants (not the leader) are responsible for making carpool arrangements.

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**5. Leaders of Overnight Trips shall:**

- a. Submit a trip plan to the Field Trip Committee, which must be approved by the Board at least 3 months in advance of the trip. The plan should describe in writing the nature of the trip as completely as possible. Include an itinerary, estimated cost, conditions of lodging and lead time needed for reservations, roughness of terrain, pace of the trip, extra costs not covered by the fee, date of deposit and final payment, date after which fee is not refundable, and provide a list of any specialized items that participants should take on the trip. Repeat trips led by the same leader need only submit necessary changes to the previous plan. The Board can waive the 3-month planning time if there is a special birding opportunity.
  - b. Consult with the membership secretary before the trip to make sure that all participants have signed the HBC Release Form and obtain a signed Medical Information Form from each participant.
  - c. Be reimbursed for all costs associated with planning (i.e. long-distance calls, postage), lodging, and transportation during the trip. The maximum reimbursement for automobile travel shall be one quarter of the costs incurred by a single vehicle under clause 4 of this policy.
  - d. Upon return, provide the HBC Board with an itemized account of all income and expenses related to the trip including receipts for major expenses.
6. The Field Trip Chair will send all participants in overnight trips the Field Trip Evaluation Form and a Medical Information Form. The completed evaluation form, to be returned to the Field Trip Chair, will help the Field Trip Committee plan future trips and provide feedback for leaders. Participants should give their signed Medical Information form to the trip leader prior to departure.
7. Leaders of both Day and Overnight Trips are asked to submit a Trip Highlights Report to the newsletter editor for publication in the next HBC newsletter.
8. HBC may ask professional bird touring organization to organize trips further away than the Overnight Trips. All responsibilities for planning the trip and all liability will be assumed by the touring organization. Such trips must be approved by the Board at least 6 months in advance.

## Northampton Count 2017 and Historical: Provisional ONLY

High counts in bold

*Unusual species in italics*

(Name) = no recent records.

Unusual species found this year

Species	2017	High Year	High Count	Species	2017	High Year	High Count
Gr'ter Wh'-fr'ed Goose	0	n.a.t.		<b>Bald Eagle (adult)</b>	<b>14</b>	2015	13
Greylag Goose	0	n.a.t.		<b>Bald Eagle (imm.)</b>	<b>3</b>	2010	3
<i>Snow Goose</i>	<b>4</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>32</b>	Northern Harrier (adult)	4	2010	11
Brant	0	n.a.t.		Northern Harrier (imm.)	4	na	na
Canada Goose	6,186	1999	7,977	Sharp-s'd Hawk	15	2007	22
Cackling Goose	0	n.a.t.		<b>Cooper's Hawk</b>	<b>37</b>	2014	32
Mute Swan	0	2002	29	Northern Goshawk	1	n.a.t.	
Wood Duck	0	2010	19	<b>Red-s'd Hawk</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>1957</b>	<b>4</b>
Gadwall	0	2012	5	Red-tailed Hawk	151	2014	187
<i>American Wigeon</i>	<b>1</b>	<b>1999</b>	<b>10</b>	Rough-l'd Hawk	0	1989	12
Northern Shoveller	0			American Kestrel	4	1974	31
Am. Black Duck	199	1992	286	Merlin	4	2016	6
Mallard	383	1994	1,338	Gyr Falcon	0	n.a.t.	
Northern Pintail	2	2014	54	Peregrine Falcon	6	2016	7
Green-winged Teal	0	2015	3	American Coot	0	2014	1
Canvasback	0	n.a.t.		Virginia Rail	0	n.a.t.	
Ring-necked Duck	0	n.a.t.		<b>Killdeer</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>n.a.t.</b>	
Greater Scaup	0	n.a.t.		<i>Wilson's Snipe</i>	0	n.a.t.	
Lesser Scaup	0	n.a.t.		<i>American Woodcock</i>	0	n.a.t.	
White-winged Scoter	0	n.a.t.		Ring-billed Gull	140	2006	1,088
Long-tailed Duck	0	n.a.t.		Herring Gull	2	1986	2,196
Bufflehead	0	n.a.t.		<i>Iceland Gull</i>	0	n.a.t.	
<b>Common Goldeneye</b>	<b>112</b>	1992	109	<i>Lesser Bl'-backed Gull</i>	0	n.a.t.	
Barrow's Goldeneye	0	n.a.t.		<i>Glaucous Gull</i>	0	n.a.t.	
Hooded Merganser	61	2014	92	<i>Black-headed Gull</i>	0		
Common Merganser	113	2012	227	Great Bl'-b'd Gull	1	1994	367
Red-b'd Merganser	0	n.a.t.		Rock Pigeon	648	1988	2,778
Ruddy Duck	0	n.a.t.		Mourning Dove	1,710	1998	3,904
Ring-n'd Pheasant	3	1960	196	<b>E. Screech-Owl</b>	<b>108</b>	2006	82
Ruffed Grouse	0	1966	37	Great Horned Owl	35	2014	68
Wild Turkey	64	2016	200	Snowy Owl	0	n.a.t.	
Red-throated Loon	0	n.a.t.		Barred Owl	2	2012	19
Common Loon	0	n.a.t.		<i>Long-eared Owl</i>	0	2004	3
Pied-billed Grebe	0	n.a.t.		<i>Short-eared Owl</i>	<b>1</b>	<b>n.a.t.</b>	
Horned Grebe	0	n.a.t.		N. Saw-whet Owl	0	2006	5
<i>Do'-c'd Cormorant</i>	0	n.a.t.		Selasphorus sp.	0	n.a.t.	
(Great Cormorant)	0	nrr		Belted Kingfisher	10	2001	23
Great Blue Heron	8	2006	27	<i>Red-headed Woodpecker</i>	<b>1</b>	<b>n.a.t.</b>	
Green Heron	0	n.a.t.		Red-b'd Woodpecker	226	2014	246
Turkey Vulture	0	n.a.t.		Yellow-b'd Sapsucker	19	2007	22
				Downy Woodpecker	361	2014	503
				Hairy Woodpecker	99	1974	192
				Northern Flicker	57	1998	77

Northampton Christmas Count 2017 and Historical. Page 2 of 2

Species	2017	High Year	High Count	Species	2017	High Year	High Count
<b>Pileated Woodpecker</b>	<b>43</b>	2010	34	<i>Clay-c'd Sparrow</i>	0	n.a.t.	
Eastern Phoebe	1	n.a.t.		Field Sparrow	2	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.		<b>Savannah Sparrow</b>	<b>46</b>	2000	46
Blue Jay	1,465	2014	1,722	Fox Sparrow	1	1943	20
American Crow	2,623	1997	5,836	Song Sparrow	332	1992	559
Fish Crow	2	2008	6	Lincoln's Sparrow	0	n.a.t.	
Common Raven	21	2015	26	Swamp Sparrow	6	1992	23
Horned Lark	669	1993	2,504	White-t'd Sparrow	838	2009	1,008
Black-c'd Chickadee	920	2005	2,096	White-c'd Sparrow	2	2014	26
Tufted Titmouse	629	2006	894	Dark-e'd Junco (slate-col.)	2,413	2006	3,585
Red-b'd Nuthatch	4	1993	295	<i>Oregon Junco</i>	0	n.a.t.	
White-b'd Nuthatch	397	2015	644	<i>Pink-sided Junco</i>	0	n.a.t.	
Brown Creeper	13	1973	53	<i>Lapland Longspur</i>	0	1989	31
Carolina Wren	71	2014	175	Snow Bunting	82	1989	706
House Wren	0	n.a.t.		Northern Cardinal	579	2014	786
Winter Wren	5	2014	9	Indigo Bunting	0	n.a.t.	
Golden-c'd Kinglet	160	2001	332	Dickcissel	0	n.a.t.	
<i>Ruby-c'd Kinglet</i>	<b>3</b>	<b>1973</b>	<b>6</b>	Red-winged Blackbird	76	2008	304
Eastern Bluebird	271	2014	539	(Eastern Meadowlark)	0	nrr	
Hermit Thrush	4	2014	33	Rusty Blackbird	17	2008	100
American Robin	1,233	2013	9,899	Common Grackle	67	2006	501
<b>Gray Catbird</b>	<b>5</b>	2005	5	Brown-h'd Cowbird	6	2006	876
N. Mockingbird	104	1999	238	Baltimore Oriole	0	n.a.t.	
Brown Thrasher	0	n.a.t.		Pine Grosbeak	0	n.a.t.	
European Starling	5,740	1985	94,630	Purple Finch	0	1976	221
American Pipit	1	2015	129	House Finch	910	1994	2,215
(Bohemian Waxwing)	0	nrr		Red Crossbill	0	n.a.t.	
Cedar Waxwing	858	2007	2,194	White-w'd Crossbill	0	n.a.t.	
<i>Yellow-r'd Warbler</i>	<b>3</b>	2000	<b>5</b>	Common Redpoll	0	1959	1,069
<i>Pine Warbler</i>	0	n.a.t.		Hoary Redpoll	0	n.a.t.	
<i>Palm Warbler</i>	<b>4</b>	<b>n.a.t.</b>		Pine Siskin	0	1993	372
<i>Eastern Towhee</i>	0	n.a.t.		Amer. Goldfinch	766	2006	2,094
Amer. Tree Sparrow	490	1992	2,637	Evening Grosbeak	0	1969	3,000
<i>Chipping Sparrow</i>	<b>1</b>	1974	<b>11</b>	House Sparrow	2,163	1961	2,662

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

For High counts in 2017, the previous high count and year are shown.

**n.a.t.** = now and then. Recorded in fewer than five (5) years between 1999 and 2017.

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