



**Hampshire Bird Club, Inc.**  
**Amherst, Massachusetts**  
www.hampshirebirdclub.org  
Volume 34, No. 7  
**March, 2018.**

In this edition:

- The **next program** and **coming programs**,
- **Field trip reports** and **coming trips**,
- **Conservation Survey** results,
- **Massachusetts Birders Meeting**, **Bird-a-thon** and **Bird Festival** reminders, as well as
- **Hitchcock** and **Arcadia** programs. Also, a few other odds and ends.

I hope you find some of it useful!

**NEXT PROGRAM**

**Monday, March 12 at 7:15 p.m.**

**Dave Wiley** delves into

**Migration of Greater Shearwaters on Stellwagen Bank and Beyond**

Immanuel Lutheran Church; 867 North Pleasant Street, Amherst.

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

**Great Shearwaters**, named for their habit of gracefully trailing a wing tip through the waves, spend their lives at sea, coming to land only when they nest in giant colonies on the tiny Tristan Da Cunha Islands, almost exactly midway between southernmost Argentina and South Africa. When winter comes to the southern hemisphere, they migrate more than 6,000 miles northward to the rich waters of Stellwagen Bank, five miles off Gloucester. Some of the long-lived birds that we see only during our summer have made the round trip between hemispheres for more than 60 years.

David Wiley, research director for the Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary, will discuss what we are learning from satellite tracking and other research on Great Shearwaters. Researchers have discovered vital connections between the biology of these birds, and that of the sand lance, their primary food. There are also intriguing inter-relationships between these peripatetic birds and humpback whales, which also spend the northern summer in waters in and around the sanctuary.

**Dr. David Wiley's** research has appeared in many scientific journals such as *Animal Behavior*, *Behaviour*, *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**

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

**May 14, 2018. Sam Fried.** Adventures from the Field.

**June 11, 2018. Lois & Alan Richardson.** Adventures in Papua-New Guinea.

## FIELD TRIP REPORTS

### Valley Waterfowl. Sunday, November 12, 2017

Bill Benner, Mike Locher, Dave Maxcy, Marianna McKim, Eric Morrisette, **David Peake-Jones**, Ruth Pullen, Tom Pullen and Joe Wicinski explored the scattered wetlands of the valley, along with some upland habitats. As the sun crept above the horizon, we left our meeting point and travelled first to Hadley Cove, which hosted only Canada Geese and Mallards. The Honey Pot, always too interesting to avoid, yielded a selection of songbirds, a few Hooded Mergansers on the river, a couple of Bald Eagles and a demure Coopers Hawk. Great Pond was unburdened by waterfowl, but a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker provided some light relief on Cow Path Road, and a raft of Black Ducks on the river at the Water Treatment plant masqueraded as much brighter birds, courtesy of reflected sunlight. At the Power Canal in Turners, eight **Common Goldeneye** gave us great looks. The Rod and Gun Club hosted a huge party of humans, an impressive raft of Mute Swans, and our first Ring-necked Ducks of the day. Barton's Cove hosted about 27 Hooded Mergansers, three **Lesser Scaup**, a string of Common Mergansers, a few more Ring-necked Ducks and some more Goldeneye.

The real fireworks took place, sadly, after the group had disbanded for the day. Joe, Bill and David learned through the wonders of the internet about a rare warbler that had been found around noon in the Honey Pot. Convinced this would be a wild goose chase, these three showed up for the second time in the same day at That's a Plenty Farm, and found a very cooperative **MacGillvray's Warbler** sporting in the bittersweet tangles. A truly bittersweet end to an absorbing day.

David Peake-Jones



### Owls. Saturday, December 2

**Mike Locher**, **David Peake-Jones** and seven other folks braved the dark of night in search of owls. We began by targeting **Eastern Screech Owls** which, as Christmas Count volunteers may know, are generally rather abundant in riparian habitats throughout the valley, most obviously in woodlands adjacent to the Connecticut River itself. We were not disappointed, turning up very responsive Eastern Screech Owls at all but one of our first four sites visited. A bonus **Great Horned Owl** added to the fun. Turning our attention to more challenging fare, we sought dense evergreen growth areas in the Leverett/Shutesbury areas. We heard two (2) distant **Barred Owls**. Perhaps the highlights of our evening were **Northern Saw-Whet** owls at two different sites, each responding to our auditory prompts with the extraordinary array of snarls, whines and shrieks for which they are known.

David Peake-Jones



### Cape Ann. Sunday, January 14, 2018 (rescheduled from the day before)

**Devin and Aiden Griffiths** plus five other resilient souls got out of the cars at Jodrey Fish Pier full of anticipation, and tried to ignore the hostile cold that instantly began eating into fingers, toes and faces. This always-productive spot yielded 14 species including 22 gorgeously pastel **Long-tailed Ducks**, Surf and White-winged Scoters. Of course, there HAD to be a large raft of scaup on the water and there ensued the inevitable attempts to unravel the secrets of crown shape. Eventually, we settled on 46 Greater Scaup and 7 Lesser Scaup. Two **Peregrine Falcons** surveyed the harbor from the clock tower, and two Fish Crows were present, just to justify their names. However, with extremities succumbing to that dangerous kind of pain that presages more serious issues, we quickly retreated to the cars and made a run for the nearest Dunkin' Donuts, where warm beverages were ingested. From the furthest aisle at the pharmacy across the way we laid in a supply of hand warmers which, for this reporter, were the difference between birding and hiding in the car for the rest of the day.

(continues next page) ►

### Cape Ann. January 14 (continued)

Eastern Point played host to 19 species, including a gorgeous collection of Gadwall at close range a bevy of bright Bufflehead and our first Horned Grebes of the day. A **Bonaparte's Gull** did a circuit of the enclosed cove right in front of us, as did an immature **Iceland Gull**.

Departing Eastern Point, past frozen Niles Pond, we began to skirt Niles Beach. It is here that I must pay tribute to a remarkable piece of birding. As we crawled (in cars) along the beach road trying to warm up and idly glancing at the scattering of sea ducks off the beach, the Griffith mobile came to a sudden halt.

Something about the hue of the brake lights bespoke events of great moment, and sure enough, Aiden Griffiths popped out of the vehicle and flung out an arm. It turned out that, in a group of female eiders close to shore, one had the definitive dish-shaped face, short bill, pale lores and upturned gape of a different species. Yep. Mr. Griffiths junior had identified a **female King Eider** in a group of Common Eiders from a moving car. We mortals can only genuflect in awe.

Fired with new-found enthusiasm and diligence, we enjoyed the spectacular surf and the sweeping vistas of Bass Rocks briefly, but without adding to the species count. However, en route to Pebble Beach, Griffiths senior decided to get in on the act, spotting a dark-morph **Rough-legged Hawk**.

Rockport Harbor again provided a winter refuge for an unlikely **Northern Pintail**, probably one of the same birds that wintered there last year, and another Iceland Gull soared lazily over Back Beach. Cathedral Ledges played host to a wonderful group of 21 **Harlequin Ducks** and a suspiciously slender loon that we were unable to get a good handle on. At Andrew's Point, we found another 30 Harlequin Ducks, a fly-by **Red-throated Loon** and a nice range of other things, but no kittiwakes, for which we had hoped.

As the day began to go down in the west, we swung by the succession of sheltered coves on the northern side of the cape, including Plum, Folly and Lane (in no particular order). Nice views of the water in late afternoon light but no new birds of note.

David Peake-Jones



### Hampshire Bird Club. Fast Food Consumption Count. Winter Coastal Category

Trip	# participants	Number of fast food items logged	Calories (per participant)	Sat. Fat ( g per participant)	Sodium (mg per participant)
Coastal Rhode Island. 2/4/2017	15	Not recorded	414.0	7.6	670.0
Cape Ann 1/14/2018	7	18	871.0	13.4	825.8

In the second fully documented year of this count, we can see the Cape Ann, 2018 trip thoroughly outpacing the pedestrian performance of the Rhody's in every category assessed. This can be attributed to

- The brutal temperatures which prevailed during the Cape Ann jaunt this year and active promotion of the count by the Cape Ann leader, and
- Excessive (and surreptitious) consumption of "real" food on the Rhode Island trip by folks who, it appears, may also have declined to report eligible consumption to the count compiler.

Though rarities were sparse this year, the single biggest calorie contributor was an innocuous-looking turkey sandwich from an outlet that began with neither M nor DD, weighing in at a respectable 640 calories.

Consumption padding by the newsletter editor, though undoubtedly present, can be discounted from the results since it was constant between the two trips.

Hampshire Bird Club FFCC Coordinator

## COMING TRIPS

**Saturday, March 3. Winter Coastal Rhode Island.** All day. Geoff LeBaron leads his annual winter trip to a great area for ducks, gulls, and seabirds. Contact Geoff (413-268-9281) to register and get meeting information. (M).

**Tuesday, March 13. QDMB: Alexandra Dawson Conservation Area.** Morning. Mike Locher scans the river for ducks. Bring a scope, if you have one. Meet at the eastern parking area (North Lane, Hadley) at 6:30 a.m. (E)

**Saturday, March 17. Connecticut River Waterfowl.** Half day. Mike Locher seeks out the ducks and geese migrating up the Connecticut River to their breeding grounds. We may work the south and east (Coolidge Bridge, Holyoke Dam, Quabbin); or more to the north (Hadley Cove, Great Pond, Turner's Falls Power Canal, and Barton's Cove), depending on the prevalence of ice. Contact Mike for more information (413-585-5864 or [fieldtrip@hampshirebirdclub.org](mailto:fieldtrip@hampshirebirdclub.org)). Meet at the Hadley Village Barn Shops, (41 Russell St., Hadley) at 7 a.m. (E/M)

**Wednesday, March 21. Fort River Refuge.** Morning. George Regmund, Ted Gilliland, and Leslie Hoffman lead the first spring walk into the refuge. The entire Fort River Trail is fully accessible, including boardwalks and occasional benches for resting. Meet in the lower parking lot at the refuge (69 Moody Bridge Road, Hadley) at 8:00 a.m. (E/M)

**Saturday, April 7. Fort River Refuge.** Morning. George Regmund and Leslie Hoffman look for early migrants, hangers-on, and residents. The entire Fort River Trail is fully accessible, including boardwalks and occasional benches for resting. Meet in the lower parking lot at the refuge (69 Moody Bridge Road, Hadley) at 7:30 a.m. (E/M).

**Sunday, April 8. Ashley Reservoir: Early Warblers.** Half day. Mike Locher (413-585-5864 or [fieldtrip@hampshirebirdclub.org](mailto:fieldtrip@hampshirebirdclub.org)) looks for early migrants like Pine and Palm Warblers, Ruby-crowned Kinglets, and Louisiana Waterthrushes. Meet in the Holyoke Elks parking lot (250 Whitney Ave.), near Exit 15 ("Holyoke Mall") off Rt. 91 at 7 a.m. Contact Mike (413-585-5864 or [fieldtrip@hampshirebirdclub.org](mailto:fieldtrip@hampshirebirdclub.org)) for more information. (E/M with one optional S section).

## CHRISTMAS COUNTS

**Little known fact about all the data for all the CBCs in the world.**

The National Audubon CBC site has all the CBC histories available to all. You can download the entire MANO history since 1934 to learn what birds were seen in the first count, how many people participated and then how MANO has grown.

Go to this National Audubon webpage <http://netapp.audubon.org/CBCObservation/> and select what you want to do. Historical or Current Year information is typically available. (Current year is not yet operational as CBCs are still entering data).

Janice Jorgensen, [cbe@hampshirebirdclub.org](mailto:cbe@hampshirebirdclub.org)

Just a little flashback to the days when our beloved Sally Venman edited this newsletter..  
*Why wouldn't the policeman get out of bed?*  
*Because he was an undercover cop!*

## LIBRARY

The collection is catalogued on-line at [www.hampshirebirdclub.org](http://www.hampshirebirdclub.org).

The library contains birding resources in various media, including field guides, bird-finding guides to almost every major birding destination in the U.S., and overseas, natural histories, periodicals and videos. Items can be signed out and borrowed for a period of up to one month, or longer by arrangement.

The collection is accessible at the Hitchcock Center or the Environment, where you can peruse the stacks and/or take out items during Hitchcock open hours. Alternatively, you can contact our librarian, **Henry Lappen**, and ask him to bring specific items to a meeting for you.

You can reach him at **(413) 549 3722** or **library-at-hampshirebirdclub-dot-org**.

## Conservation Survey Results

A simple three question survey was sent out electronically and by paper in January to Hampshire Bird Club (HBC) members asking for opinions on the club getting involved with bird and bird habitat conservation.

131 members responded (55%) which is an exceptionally good response for surveys of this type. Results for the questions were:

Survey Question	Responses as Percent		
	Yes	No	No Opinion
Would you be in favor of HBC supporting conservation of birds and bird habitats?	95.4%	2.3%	2.3%
Would you be in favor of HBC representatives supporting the Association of Massachusetts Bird Clubs of which we are a member when they take a position on an issue related to bird or bird habitat conservation?	90.4%	0.8%	8.8%
Would you be in favor of the Board of HBC choosing to contribute funds to support bird and bird habitat conservation?	92.0%	3.2%	4.8%

HBC membership appears to be strongly in favor of the club supporting conservation of birds and bird habitat be it as a club purpose, in supporting the AMBC or in financial support of such efforts.

## Bird-a-thon 2018

**6:00 PM Friday, May 11 to 6:00 PM, Saturday, May 12**

As with the event last year, the Connecticut Valley Sanctuaries team will again be concentrating on Hampshire County, so think about local areas you would like to cover. I will be mailing more information to those who participated in recent times within the next few weeks. For those who may be new to the bird-a-thon, you can get more information at [www.massaudubon.org/birdathon](http://www.massaudubon.org/birdathon)

Our 20+ teams did very well last year in terms of numbers of species recorded, especially given that we stayed closer to home in acknowledgement of the need to minimize the carbon footprint of the count. Our success, in turn, provided a great financial boost for Mass Audubon's Connecticut River Valley Sanctuaries' climate change activities. Thank you again for those efforts, and I hope you and our new teams do even better this year!

Chuck Horn

**26<sup>th</sup> Annual Massachusetts Birders Meeting**  
**Highlands and Islands of New England: a Bird's Perspective**  
**UMass Boston**  
 Campus Centre Ballroom  
 100 Morrissey Boulevard, Boston, MA  
**Sunday, March 11, 2018**  
**8:00 am–5:00 pm**

High elevation habitats—including regional “sky islands”—and low-lying coastal islands provide unique habitat for a suite of breeding, migrating, and wintering birds and exciting birding opportunities.

The 2018 Birders Meeting will feature the ecology of these habitats and their significance to birds and birders. Speakers include **Victor Immanuel, Sarah Morris, Keenan Yakola, Kent McFarland, Chris Rimmer** and **Geoffrey Wells**.

Lunch can be purchased as an option during registration and numerous vendors will be plying their wares at the event. Go to : <https://www.massaudubon.org/get-outdoors/birds-birding/birders-meeting> or enter “Massachusetts Birders Meeting” into your search engine to register and for more information.

**DON'T MISS THE**  
**Fourth Annual Family Bird Festival**  
**Saturday, May 5: 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.**  
**Arcadia Sanctuary**  
**127 Coombs Road, Easthampton, MA 01027**

Join environmental organizations from around the Valley for the Fourth Annual Family Bird Festival. The event features:

- Morning **bird walks** at Arcadia led by members of the Hampshire Bird Club,
- **Live birds of prey** with Tom Ricardi (shows at 11:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m.),
- **Bird-watching tips,**
- **Bird-feeding information,** and
- **Activities** for all ages.

Sponsors include the Hampshire Bird Club, Mass Audubon, Springfield Naturalists Club and SWCA Environmental Consultants

### **NOMINATING COMMITTEE**

The Nominating Committee will be officially appointed at the March meeting, but we can spill the beans on its composition in this humble publication. The committee this year includes Mike Locher (chair), Marcia Merithew and Scott Sumner. They will be charged with finding replacements for any existing board members who choose to leave the board at the end of this year (June, 2018). If you have interest in serving on the board, please contact Mike at [fieldtrip@hampshirebirdclub.org](mailto:fieldtrip@hampshirebirdclub.org).

## HITCHCOCK PROGRAMS

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

Sundays once per month beginning in March, 9 am-12 pm. Fee.

### **Spring Birding Class:** *Scott Sumner*

Wait List Only

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

Thursday March 14, 7-8:30 pm

### **Morning Nature Walks for Seniors:** *John Green*

Thursday, March 15, 9 am-11 am. Fee

### **Edible Perennial Gardening and Landscaping:** *John Root*

Thursday, March 22, 7-8 pm. Fee

### **Attracting Pollinators Workshop:** *Tom Sullivan*

Evening Talk: Thursday, April 5, 6:30-8:30 pm . Fee.

Design Charette for Hitchcock Gardens: April 7, 9:30 am-12:30 pm. Fee.

### **Woodcock: Skydancer:** *Dan Ziomek*

Friday, April 6, 8-10 pm (weather date: April 13). Fee.

### **Rich Earth Institute: Urine Nutrient Reclamation Project**

Saturday, March 10, 11 am-12 pm. FREE

### **Get the Buzz on Electric Vehicles:** *Sally Pick*

Tuesday, April 10th, 7-8:30 pm. FREE

*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).*

## ARCADIA PROGRAMS

### **Botanical Drawing series**

Starts March 5, 1:30-4:30 pm

### **Arcadia Family Bird Fun**

March 10, 8:00-10:00 am

### **Climate Change: Nature Solutions**

March 17, 9:00 am-12:00 noon

### **Dance of the American Woodcock**

March 17, 6:00-8:30 pm

### **Ducks**

March 24, 9:00am-1:00 pm

**Big Night**, our popular enchanted family evening March 31. Sign-up for 45 minute walks between 5:30 and 7:15 pm.

*For more details and/or to register for all Arcadia programs, go to [www.massaudubon.org/arcadia](http://www.massaudubon.org/arcadia). You may also contact **Arcadia Wildlife Sanctuary** direct at 127 Combs Rd., Easthampton MA 01027 or telephone (413) 584-3009.*

## Firehawks of the Australian Bush

*“I have seen a hawk pick up a smouldering stick in its claws and drop it in a fresh patch of dry grass half a mile away, then wait with its mates for the mad exodus of scorched and frightened rodents and reptiles”.*

(Waipuldanya of the Alawa, an Indigenous Australian people from Arnhem Land in the Northern Territory, Australia. From I, the Aboriginal. Douglas Lockwood, 1988).

One step at a time, the idea that only humans use tools is being torn down. It has been a long time since we recognized that chimpanzees use sticks to extract termites from their nests. It is even old news that chimps and Caledonian Crows, which use sticks in a similar fashion, can manufacture these tools, manipulating the size and shape of the tool for maximum effect.

For a time, the firewalls (no pun intended) between human and other-animal intelligence were thought to be language and the use of fire. Now one of those bright lines is getting blurry.

Fire is an integral and inescapable part of Australian ecology. It has long been observed that predators, especially raptors, congregate ahead of an advancing fire front, preying on the multitude of small mammals and reptiles that flee in front of the flames. It is also well known that Aboriginal Australians, like many other indigenous people, have a cultural tradition of using fire both to assist with hunting in the short term and to rejuvenate and diversify the biota of Australian landscapes.

Recently, researchers have documented the active and apparently purposeful dispersal of fire by birds of prey. Bonta and others (2017) in a paper entitled *“Intentional Fire-Spreading By “Firehawk” Raptors in Northern Australia,”* found that Black Kites, Whistling Kites and Brown Falcons may pick up smoldering sticks from the area of a fire front, and drop these over unburned areas over half a mile away. This behavior has been referred to even in the research literature at least as far back as 1970. However, the authors are quick to point out that fire-spreading by birds has been known to Aboriginal Australians for many thousands of years. Waipuldanya said he thought his people may have learned fire-spreading from the birds.

I am not aware, as I write this, that any animal other than *Homo sapiens* is yet known to make fire (without human aid). I wonder if this distinction too, may be found wanting at some point in the future.

Reference (The scholarly one)

Intentional Fire-Spreading by “Firehawk” Raptors in Northern Australia.

Mark Bonta, Robert Gosford, Dick Eussen, Nathan Ferguson, Erana Loveless, and Maxwell Witwer  
[Journal of Ethnobiology](#) Dec 2017 : Vol. 37, Issue 4 Special Section: Birds II, pg(s) 700- 718

Reference (for the rest of us). <https://blogs.crikey.com.au/northern/2011/06/28/birds-of-the-week-firehawks-of-the-top-end/> (or just type “firehawks of the top end” into your search engine).

That’s all for now.

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

David Peake-Jones, Editor

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