



Hampshire Bird Club, Inc. Amherst, Massachusetts

www.hampshirebirdclub.org

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Dear reader, after the downer of a report last month about species being delisted from the Endangered Species Act list because, well, they are no longer, I thought it best to pass along some good news for the holiday season. In a recent article in the *Boston Herald*, there was news of the resurgence of Massachusetts' Piping Plovers. The altogether alliterative headline for the article tells the tale: "Piping plovers popping in Massachusetts: Researchers identify record year for the bird species." The gist of the story is that the number of nesting pairs of Piping Plovers in the state has increased from about 200 in 1986 to 1,145 this year. This is due in no small part to efforts by Mass Audubon with cooperation from local and state governments. Since about half of the worldwide population of Piping Plovers breeds in Massachusetts, this is all very good news.

A year after the 1986 start of the restoration effort for the plovers, the federal government captured all 27 members of the remaining wild population of California Condors and began a breeding program. By late last year, there were 561 California Condors in the world. The situation is tenuous but stable, and we now have condors flying wild once again in California and Arizona.

Do you remember Wisdom, the 72-year-old Laysan Albatross that I wrote about in the April 2021 issue? Well, she was spotted last December on Midway Atoll, but her long-time breeding partner, Akeakamai, did not arrive. Wisdom, who is the oldest known living wild bird, hasn't yet been seen this year, but it is still early for her to arrive at Midway. The best estimates suggest that Wisdom has flown over three million miles in her lifetime. The USGS has had to replace her leg band six times. One might note that Queen Elizabeth II's reign was from February 6, 1952, to September 8, 2022. Wisdom therefore was flying before the start and after the end of Elizabeth's record-setting longest reign of any other British monarch and longest verified reign of any female head of state in the world. Not too shabby for the old girl!

NEXT PROGRAM

Tuesday, December 12, at 7:15 PM

Annual Members' Meeting

Via Zoom

As is our club's tradition, the December meeting is for club members to show-and-tell their favorite pictures and tales of their birding exploits. This year the whole meeting will be on Zoom, so even if you live far from Hampshire County you can be a presenter! Have you ever wanted to talk to the club about something, but not felt like you had enough for a whole program? Did you take a birding trip recently and want to share a few photos? Do you want to tell people about your favorite birding spot, or favorite bird species, or favorite fellow birder? This is the meeting for you! Several club members get to share the night, each one talking for 10-15 minutes and showing a few slides (or not).

Our Program Chair Josh Rose is organizing the program. If you'd like to participate, email him at programs@hampshirebirdclub.org pronto!

UPCOMING PROGRAMS

- January 9, 2024, 7:15 PM. Scott Weidensaul. **Motus Towers.**
- February 13, 2024. 7:15 PM. TBA.
- March 12, 2024. 7:15 PM. Al and Lois Richardson. **Bhutan.**
- April 9, 2024. 7:15 PM. Ethan Clotfelder. **Tree Swallows and Chickadees.**
- May 14, 2024. 7:15 PM. Kurt Griffin. **Botswana.**
- June 11, 2024. Time TBA. **Club picnic.**

NORTHAMPTON CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

It's right around the corner! The Northampton (MANO) Christmas Bird Count (our 89th) will be held on Sunday, December 17. Plans are well underway, and we're hoping for another great count this year! We've developed strong Covid-workarounds, so we'll stick with the protocols that have kept everyone healthy over the last few years. Feel free to discuss this with your team leaders if you have any questions.

Speaking of safety, did you know that we notify the Police Departments in all 14 towns within the count circle? They appreciate knowing what all those folks walking and driving around with binoculars hanging from their necks are up to!

If you haven't yet joined a team, or signed up to be a feeder watcher or a yard watcher, it's not too late. The CBC is one the world's largest community science projects, and the MANO count is the **fifth biggest** in North America. *And it's fun!*

Let us know if you'd like to participate by sending us an email. Even if you don't join one of the count groups or don't have feeders, you can still count birds in your yard or take a walk around your neighborhood. We're delighted to welcome feeder-watchers and yard watchers along with new count participants, to explain how the CBC works, and to answer all your questions. As in years past, we'll have Zoom orientation meetings (how it all works, including filling out the forms) along with a Zoom compilation wrap up (information and links below in the Education Committee section).

Oh, no!!!! Bears!!!! Don't worry if you don't dare put up feeders. You can be a yard birder. How to be a yard birder? First, be sure your yard is in our count circle (Go to the CBC page on the HBC website and click on the Google map link under the "Northampton (MANO) Maps" header. Then type your address in the magnifying glass at the top left. The small red dot is your location. You might need to make the map smaller to see if you are inside or outside the count circle.)

To be a yard watcher

- Look out your windows for a minimum of 15 minutes three times on the 17th.
- Count and record the number and species of birds you see each time.
- Submit to the CBC the highest number of each species seen at any one time.
- Submit the total time your household spent checking your yard.

Please feel free to contact the MANO team to sign up or with questions at CBC@hampshirebirdclub.org.

FIELD TRIP DECEMBER 2023

Please contact leaders (if a phone number or email is listed) at least two days in advance of the trip to register, and if you have any questions. It's always wise to bring snacks and dress appropriately. If you want to keep a list of birds seen during the field trips, Mass Audubon has checklists for each of their sanctuaries and these can also be used as trip lists (see www.massaudubon.org/places-to-explore/wildlife-sanctuaries/arcadia/programs-activities/go-birding). Whether with or without a leader, please follow our guidelines for ethical birding (hampshirebirdclub.org/hbc-code-of-birding-ethics-and-conduct) and those on our website regarding field trips (hampshirebirdclub.org/field-trips/guidelines). Note that you need to complete the field trip waiver every time that you open or renew your membership in order to participate in HBC field trips.

Remember that we encourage carpooling. We ask that riders share costs with drivers as a matter of courtesy. The HBC recommends the current federal mileage reimbursement rate, shared by all occupants, but the rate for a vehicle is entirely up to the driver and passengers and should be determined before leaving.

Saturday, December 9. Hadley. 7:00 PM. Join Mike Locher to look for owls in the Hadley area. The trip will start at the Hadley Village Barn Shop and we will head out from there. We will be listening for Eastern Screech-Owl, Great Horned Owl, Barred Owl, and hope for a Northern Saw-whet Owl. Recordings will be used to locate owls. Birding will be mostly by car. Contact Mike (413-585-5864) for further details. (E)

Field Trip designations:

- (E) – Easy walking conditions, fairly accessible for most, usually flat terrain on improved trails or roads.
- (M) – Moderately difficult, more challenging trail conditions, short steep sections, longer hikes involved.
- (S) – Strenuous conditions, muddy or rocky trails, steep sections, difficult footing in part.

FIELD TRIP REPORT

November 8 trip to Unity Park and environs, Turners Falls.

On a cold and windy day, a small group of dedicated birdwatchers braved the elements to visit Barton Cove, Turners Falls Rod and Gun Club, and the Power Canal. A scope was definitely necessary to see the distant birds, which were few and far between.

At Barton Cove we saw a Bald Eagle trying to feed in the flotsam and jetsam trapped against the barrels while it was being harassed by American Crows. Canada Geese, Mute Swans, and Mallards drifted along the far edge feeding casually. A large raft of Ring-necked Ducks contained some Buffleheads as well as a Pied-billed Grebe on the perimeter of the group.

We moved on to the Rod & Gun Club where we saw a similar mix of geese, swans, Mallards, and a pair of Buffleheads, but were surprised by a Long-tailed Duck. A group of Dark-eyed Juncos were along the edge of the woods with an Eastern Bluebird, while a flock of House Finches and Goldfinches were hiding and feeding in the shoreline weeds.

At the Power Canal we saw a female Common Goldeneye and a Great Blue Heron.

Jim Lafley

EDUCATION COMMITTEE REPORT AND WORKSHOPS

Thanks to all who joined us for Dana and Bob Fox's fascinating Woodpeckers workshop. Anyone who joined late might not have heard that Bob Fox is one of the few people alive to have seen the Ivory-billed Woodpecker and the Imperial Cuban Woodpecker, both of which are now considered extinct.

The **89th MANO Christmas Bird Count** is the Education Committee's primary focus for December. It takes place on **Sunday, December 17.**

We will offer three pre-CBC Zoom workshops:

CBC Participants Workshop on Wednesday, December 6, 7:00–8:30 PM.

Everything concerning how to be part of this event: rare birds, signs on your windshield, common birds, and more.

CBC Feeder Watchers Workshop on Monday, December 11, 7–8 PM.

For both new and returning feeder watchers.

CBC Team Leaders Workshop on Wednesday, December 13, 7–8 PM.

Everything from signs on your dashboard to using eBird Trip Reports and rare bird sightings.

We will offer one post-CBC Zoom workshop:

Tally Party: 89th MANO CBC Results on Monday, December 18, 7–10 PM.

Share your stories and photos, and we will share the final numbers!

Go to the HBC Education Workshop page for more detailed descriptions and Zoom links for each workshop. They each have a separate link.

Questions? Please email Janice Jorgensen or Amanda Kallenbach at cbc@hampshirebirdclub.org.

The **Do-It-Yourself (DIY)** field trips with Brian and Lesley will resume in January. Enjoy the Christmas Bird Count!

New member bird walks —open to all:

- March 9, 2024, evening—exact time TBA—at Park Hill Orchard in Easthampton. We'll look for woodcocks.
- May 19, 2024, 7 AM at Fort River (Silvio O. Conte), focusing on spring migrants.

More details will be available on the Education webpage and we'll send emails.

Did you miss a workshop last year? Our recorded programs are available on the [Hampshire Bird Club website](#). You can find the links under PROGRAMS or on the EDUCATION page. Scroll down to the bottom of the videos page to find Education workshops. If you have an idea for a workshop, email us at [educa-tion@hampshirebirdclub.org](mailto:education@hampshirebirdclub.org). **We are looking for new members!** If you would like to join the Education Committee, please email us.

MARTIN NESTING AT FORT RIVER

The Hampshire Bird Club has generously agreed to support a project to attract Purple Martins back to nests again at the Conte Refuge at Fort River. For the past two years, the Martins have been driven away by House Sparrows, European Starlings, and Tree Swallows. After some research by Mary McKittrick and Theresa Gesing, it was decided to clean the nest gourds in the fall, erect Tree Swallow boxes in the area, and keep the gourd entrances blocked until the Purple Martins return to the area.

In the first step, after the federal paperwork was deftly completed by Mary McKittrick, a small group of volunteers worked with Jen Lapis of the USFWS to lower and clean the artificial gourds for winter storage. Jim Lafley joined Mary and Theresa at the site to do the cleaning. The gourds were fitted with foam plugs and stored in a garage on the site.

The group plans to do more research this winter to fine tune the effort. The next step will involve building Tree Swallow boxes that will be placed on poles around the area at an appropriate distance from the gourds. George Regmund, Jim Turcotte, and Jim Lafley have agreed to build and erect the boxes on the site.

In the spring the gourds will be installed and monitored regularly in order that the plugs can be removed once the Purple Martins arrive which is usually later than the other species. The aim is to have the competitors establish nesting sites away from the gourds and thus improving the nesting sites for the Martins.

The HBC has dedicated funds to purchase the materials needed to build the boxes and for the poles on which to mount the boxes. We will keep you informed about the project as it progresses.

Jim Lafley

MEMBERSHIP NEWS

Welcome to all our new members and thank you to all the members who have joined on the new website, activated their membership, and/or completed their online profile. You need to activate your profile to let us know your preferences, including accepting the field trip waiver, which is required to participate in field trips. To activate or edit your profile, first sign in on the club home page and then click on your name. You can make edits right there.

In past years we have mailed a membership directory in January, but we won't be doing that anymore, since the new website enables access to the directory, which is continually updated. The directory is always easily accessible on the website to members. To find it, make sure you are logged in on the website and then click on the "Members Only" tab and then the "HBC Member Directory" link.

Overall, the new website has greatly reduced the time needed to manage your membership, which is a great leap forward! I hope you've found it easy to use. As always, I'm available to answer questions.

Donna Lee Ubertalli, Membership Secretary, membership@hampshirebirdclub.org

UPCOMING EVENTS OF INTEREST

Arcadia Wildlife Sanctuary

The following program is offered by Arcadia Wildlife Sanctuary in Easthampton. Sign up online. More programs can be found at www.massaudubon.org/get-outdoors/wildlife-sanctuaries/arcadia.

Winter Birds and Bird Feeders—Saturday, December 2, 9 AM–noon

Bird feeding is a popular winter activity and a great way to learn to identify backyard birds. View an indoor presentation on the wintering birds of our area. Learn about the different types of bird feeders, what to put in them, and when to put out food. We will also discuss community science projects and what you can do to help birds thrive. After the indoor presentation we will head outdoors to look for birds. Fall is a great time to take a closer look at all the ways plants ensure their next generation successfully develops and thrives. We will explore the inner workings of seeds, nuts, berries, drupes, and more as we review how native plants prepare for winter and the subsequent spring in this online program.

Winter Birds—Saturdays, January 6, 20, & 27, 9–11 AM

How can you tell the difference between a House Finch and a Purple Finch, or a Downy Woodpecker and a Hairy Woodpecker? You'll learn how in this three-session series on the wintering birds found in the Connecticut River Valley.

Winter is the ideal time to learn to recognize the birds that utilize bird feeders, since there are fewer species than at other times of year, and we can see them more easily at feeders and when the trees are bare.

We'll be learning about all the birds found in our area and how to identify them by sight, sound, and behavior.

Each session will be held in person at Arcadia both indoors and outdoors.

Hitchcock Center for the Environment

The following program is offered by the Hitchcock Center in Amherst. Sign up online. More programs can be found at www.hitchcockcenter.org/programs/community-programs/.

Ice and Snow: The Cold Story—Tuesday, December 5, 6:30–8:00 PM with John Green

Winter is beautiful, and John Green's photos will remind you of that fact! Here in New England we are fortunate to have four distinct seasons, although, due to a warming climate, the annual temperature average may be higher now than in the past. In southern New England we still experience the influx of migrating birds and blossoming flowers in the spring; thunderstorms and rainbows during the summer; and colorful foliage, reverse bird migration, and leaf fall in the autumn. However, recent winters have been less dynamic than those we have experienced historically, landscapes are seldom totally transformed by snow cover, and waterways are rarely completely immobilized by icy conditions due to sustained frigid temperatures. Fortunately, John has been photographing wintry conditions dating back to the mid 1970s and this program, *Ice and Snow*, is the result of his love for the season of cold.

EDITORIAL ADVICE

For those of you who aspire to be the next exalted editor of the Hampshire Bird Club newsletter, here follow some points to keep in mind. The current editor always aspires to attend to these attributes.

How to write good: Editor's Edition

1. Avoid. Alliteration. Always.
2. Prepositions are not words to end sentences with.
3. Avoid clichés like the plague. They're old hat.
4. Comparisons are as bad as clichés.
5. Be more or less specific.
6. Writers should never generalize.
- Seven. Be consistent!
8. Don't be redundant; don't use more words than necessary; it's highly superfluous.
9. Who needs rhetorical questions?
10. Exaggeration is a billion times worse than understatement.
11. Be sure to not split infinitives.

Looking for your 2024 calendar? Make sure that it's in the Gregorian style:

Sunday – Greg
Monday – Ian
Tuesday – Greg
Wednesday – Ian
Thursday – Greg
Friday – Ian
Saturday – Greg

Spoil a good walk: go birding!

newsletter@hampshirebirdclub.org

Dave Gross, Editor