



# Hampshire Bird Club, Inc. Amherst, Massachusetts

www.hampshirebirdclub.org

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**October 2023**

Dear reader, do you have a black hole in your memory circuits? I sure do. As I get older, I find more and more that I lose the connection to my storage area for the names of people and objects. Those names seem to come and go like will-o-the-wisps and always disappear at the most inopportune times. But there are other names that have forever eluded my memory retrieval system. I wish I understood why.

One of those forever elusive names is for a particular, rather common bird species. I can recite all of its characteristics on demand, I instantly recognize it, I know its song and behavior. But I can't bring its name to mind. It's always been that way for me. Even as I write this, I can't get to the name without using a trick.

My trick is to think of a close relative of the bird with a name I can remember. How this works I cannot say, but it does allow me to alert my birding companions that I see the bird if they haven't yet noticed it. It takes a moment or two for me to get there, but I can always do it. My trick is to recall that the similar bird is a bit bigger than the one I can't recall and that the bigger one has an unusual common name that has something to do with rock and roll. The similar bird? It's the Bohemian Waxwing. So now, when you're out with me and there's that big flock of tufted birds eating berries, you will understand why it takes a moment for me to say "Cedar Waxwing".

## **NEXT PROGRAM**

**Tuesday, October 10, at 7:15 PM**

**Chad Witko presents**

### **National Audubon's Migratory Bird Initiative and Bird Migration**

Wesley United Methodist Church, 98 North Maple Street, Hadley; also via Zoom

*BYOB (non-alcoholic) to the meeting if you want a beverage*

The mission of the Migratory Bird Initiative is to secure the future of migratory birds in the Western Hemisphere by reducing threats and protecting critical places across the Americas in coordination with science, conservation, and policy partners. The Initiative brings together the latest spatial information on species distributions and movements across their annual cycles to identify priority areas for 458 species of migratory birds that regularly occur in the United States and Canada. The Bird Migration Explorer guides viewers to the heroic annual journeys made by over 450 bird species and the challenges they face.

Chad Witko is the Senior Coordinator of Avian Biology for the National Audubon Society's Migratory Bird Initiative. Before working at Audubon to help secure the future of migratory birds in the Western Hemisphere, Chad worked on various avian research, conservation, and education projects across the United States. A lifelong birder with strong bird identification and distribution knowledge, Chad has served as an eBird reviewer and seasonal editor for New Hampshire Bird Records. As an ornithologist, he is most interested in migration, patterns of vagrancy, and seabirds. As a birder, Chad believes in community engagement and is the founder of the Antioch Bird Club. He currently lives in southeastern Vermont with his partner and his daughter.

## **MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL UPDATE**

The club will be launching a new website, complete with new membership software, in October. All members will receive an email notification when the launch happens and at that point you will be able to renew your membership using the new system. The new website will also have a news section for keeping you in the loop more regularly than this monthly rag. It will also have a members-only feature so you can more easily connect with your fellow members away from the prying eyes of all those nasty web trolls. We will send a hard copy postcard as a reminder to renew your membership when all is in place and ready to go.

## FIELD TRIPS OCTOBER–NOVEMBER 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 (<https://massaudubon.org/get-outdoors/birds-birding/bird-checklists>). Whether with or without a leader, please follow the American Birding Association guidelines for ethical birding (<https://hampshirebirdclub.org/aba-code-of-ethics/>) and those on our website regarding field trips (<http://hampshirebirdclub.org/field-trips/guidelines/>).

*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.*

**October–November. Winsor Dam.** Larry Therrien will be hosting impromptu birding trips to Winsor Dam depending on weather conditions. We will update the posting on the HBC's website and HBC's Facebook and Instagram accounts the day prior to the trip if conditions look good for seeing migrating waterbirds at Winsor Dam the next day. Times will be dependent on weather conditions. A scope will be helpful for seeing birds on the reservoir. Conditions are often windy, rainy, and cold, so wear appropriate clothing.

**Sunday. October 8. East Meadows.** 7:30 to 9:30 AM. Join Aaron Hulsey and Hobie Iselin in Northampton to look for migrating sparrows and late warblers. The trip will involve easy walking on flat ground but may involve mud or wet grass, so wear appropriate footwear. We will meet at the gravel lot on the south side of the airport and carpool as there is limited parking in the meadows. Contact Aaron Hulsey at [thomas.hulsey487@gmail.com](mailto:thomas.hulsey487@gmail.com) to sign up or for more information. (E)

**Sunday. October 22. Quabbin Park—Hank's Meadow and Gate 52.** 7:30 to 9:30 AM. Join Greg Brown to look for late migrant songbirds and various winter ducks along the shores of Quabbin reservoir. Two miles (or less) of easy hiking on mostly flat terrain that is suitable for most folks. Bring good waterproof shoes or boots, binoculars, a spotting scope, a camera, and any other items that may be of use. Bring your own water and snacks. There are no toilet facilities at this location. We will meet at 7:30 AM at Hank's Meadow and explore the area by foot for about 2 hours. Contact Greg Brown at [gregorywbrown.music@gmail.com](mailto:gregorywbrown.music@gmail.com) to sign up or for more information. (E)

**Sunday. November 12. Dead Creek WMA and Lake Champlain Valley.** All day. Mike Locher heads north for the spectacle of hundreds of Snow Geese rising into the sun as a Rough-legged Hawk cruises by them. In addition to the geese and raptors, we'll look for ducks, grebes, gulls, and loons on Lake Champlain. Meet at Stop & Shop in Northampton (228 King Street) at 5:00 AM for carpooling. Bring a lunch if you wish (we'll stop for food) and bring a scope if you have one. Contact Mike (413-585-5864) for further details; there is no need to register, just show up on time. (E/M)

**Sunday. November 12. New Member Walk—Arcadia Marsh and Oxbow.** 8 to 10 AM. Members of the HBC Education Committee will lead a walk out to Arcadia Marsh and the Oxbow in search of migrating waterfowl. This is not a long walk and is on fairly flat terrain. We will meet at the Arcadia Wildlife Sanctuary visitor center parking lot. (E)

**Monday. November 25. Cape Ann or Plum Island.** All day. Join Scott Sumner on an all day trip to either Cape Ann or Plum Island where we will look for alcids, waterfowl, and more. We will depart at 5 AM and return in the late afternoon. The trip is limited to ten people. Contact Scott Sumner at [ssurner@aol.com](mailto:ssurner@aol.com) for more information and to register. (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.

## BIRDING FOR EVERYONE

The Birding For Everyone (BFE) program is geared toward beginner birders and those who, historically, have not been included in the birding community: people young in age, from underrepresented minority groups or who have disabilities that make birding difficult. A one hour online educational session (half presentation, half discussion) is held prior to a two hour, in-person bird walk at an accessible location. All events are free and open to the public. Please help spread the word! The online presentation requires no registration (check the HBC website for the Zoom link). Those interested in attending the walk can register at [bit.ly/2023bfe](https://bit.ly/2023bfe). Upcoming sessions are:

October 21, 2023 10–11 AM: Bird Feeders (Presentation)

October 28, 2023 7:45–10:00 AM Ashley Reservoir, Holyoke (Walk)

## EDUCATION COMMITTEE REPORT AND WORKSHOPS

The **Do-It-Yourself** field trips will resume in October with Brian Zylich and Lesley Farlow. The date and time for the web session will be sent via email.

### Upcoming workshops:

- Tuesday, Oct. 17, 7-8 PM—Birding Cape Cod with Chris Walz  
This workshop will introduce participants to some good techniques for identifying the family *charadriiformes* (shorebirds) as seen from the beautiful Cape Cod beaches.
- Tuesday, Nov. 15, 7-8 PM—Woodpeckers, Woodpeckers, and more about Woodpeckers with Dana and Bob Fox  
Come and hear Dana and Bob tell a fascinating story about the woodpecker family of birds. With 233 species in the world, they are found worldwide where trees are abundant. We will see how this family evolved, their special biology, and how they live in difficult locations. We have some curious stories about the most interesting species that might surprise you.

To register for a workshop visit the Education Committee page on the HBC website.

**New member bird walks** are open to all:

1. November 12, 8 AM at the Oxbow/Arcadia. We'll be looking for waterfowl.
2. March 9, 2024, evening, exact time to be announced, Park Hill Orchard in Easthampton. We'll look for woodcocks.
3. 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 out emails.

**Did you miss a workshop last year?** Well then, you are in luck. Our recorded programs are available on the [Hampshire Bird Club website](https://hampshirebirdclub.org). You can find the links under PROGRAMS or on the EDUCATION page.

Scroll down to the bottom of the page of videos to find Education workshops. <https://hampshirebirdclub.org/program-videos/>

If you have an idea for a workshop, email us at [education@hampshirebirdclub.org](mailto:education@hampshirebirdclub.org).

**We are looking for new members!** If you would like to join the Education Committee, please email [education@hampshirebirdclub.org](mailto:education@hampshirebirdclub.org).

## MEMBERSHIP NEWS

Welcome to new members who have joined us this month. We look forward to welcoming them in person at the upcoming membership meeting! Our newest members are Erin Sullivan (Easthampton); Kevin & Judy Mealey (Westfield); Michelle Park (Amherst); Devorah Levy (Northampton); and Jo Ellen Warner (Amherst).

Donna Lee Ubertalli, Membership Secretary, [membership@hampshirebirdclub.org](mailto:membership@hampshirebirdclub.org)

## CLEANING BINOCULAR LENSES

It is important to keep the lenses of your binoculars clean so they can operate properly and you can get the most enjoyment from them. Here are some simple instructions for cleaning your binoculars.

Keeping your lens covers on while not using your binoculars is important, especially the eye lens cover, also known as the rain guard or crumb guard. The eye lens tends to get the dirtiest and requires more frequent cleaning. I usually clean the eye lens about twice as often as the objective lens. Avoid overcleaning your lenses as every cleaning has potential for scratching the lens surface. I use my binoculars every day and usually clean them about once a month depending on how dirty they appear.

*Equipment required: Air bulb, lens cleaning brush, lens tissue, lens cleaner*

1. Use the rubber air bulb to blow air across the lens to remove any loose grit.
2. Lightly brush any remaining grit from the lens surface with the lens brush followed by another squirt from the air bulb. It is important to remove as much grit as possible before wiping the lens.
3. Wash your hands thoroughly to remove any dirt and oil. Take a lens cloth and form a mop by pulling the four corners together.
4. Hold the lens cleaner over the lens cloth mop and drip one or two drops onto the lens cloth. Do not put lens cleaner directly on the lens as it might penetrate under the lens.
5. IMPORTANT: Fog the lens with your breath and immediately wipe with a soft circular motion. This may leave streaks. If this happens, fog the lens again with your breath and use a new clean lens cloth mop with a soft circular motion to thoroughly clean the lens. Fogging the lens with your breath serves important purposes: it reduces the impact of the dry lens paper on the lens, shows where the streaking is located, and hydrates any dust that remains.

Jim Lafley

## CONSERVATION COMMITTEE CORNER

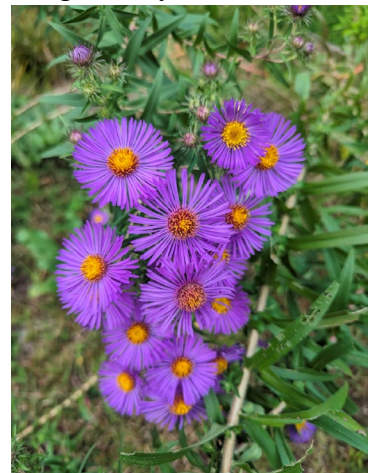
This offering continues a series from the Conservation Committee.

### Everyone can garden for birds (and other wildlife)

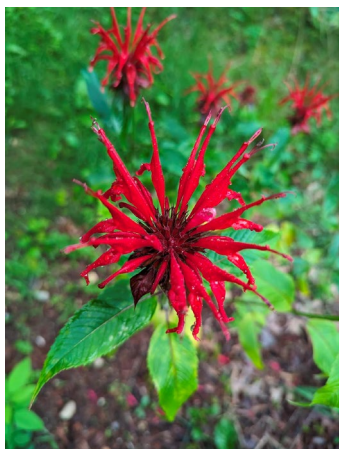
Gardening for birds can be time-consuming and research-intensive, but it doesn't have to be.

I first stumbled upon gardening as a way to attract birds to my yard when spring came last year and a bear tore down my bird feeders. Rather than wait for winter to come again and the bears to go back into hibernation, I learned that I could change what I planted in my yard to encourage more birds to visit even when I couldn't put my feeders out. Native plants offer native birds the fruits and seeds that they love to eat. They also serve as host plants for native insects (which birds also love to eat!). However, it can take a couple of years after planting for some plants to begin producing the foods that bring birds into our yard, so I started right away.

After doing a little research online, I found Native Plant Trust, which has a fantastic nursery for native plants located here in the valley. On their website, they have a tool to help you find native plants that will thrive in any part of your yard, and you can easily filter your search to find plants that attract birds! Rather than spending a lot of time planning out my garden (which is perfectly fine to do if you're so inclined), I created a list of several perennials that were easy to plant and were supposed to attract birds. I picked these up from the nursery, and then I simply looked at the plants' labels to see what conditions they prefer in order to find them a suitable spot in my yard. Some plants went into already established flower beds, and I ended up converting a section of lawn into a pollinator garden to hold the others. This year, I added several native shrubs to my yard and even more perennials. I will be the first to admit that my gardening style is somewhat haphazard. It generally involves browsing the garden shop and adding all of the plants with a bird on the label to my cart, leaving me to find a place for them once I get home. However, this means that I don't get stuck in the planning phase, and slowly but surely it gets results.



New England Aster (*Symphyotrichum novae-angliae*)



Scarlet Beebalm (*Monarda didyma*)

I first noticed a difference when my perennials began to flower and hummingbirds buzzed around my yard, feeding at my Scarlet Beebalm and Coral Honeysuckle. Also present were an astounding array of dragonflies and butterflies that were attracted to my Swamp Milkweed, Northern Spicebush, and many types of goldenrod. Recently, I've had Chipping Sparrows, Carolina Wrens, Gray Catbirds, Eastern Towhees, Song Sparrows, Northern Cardinals, Blue Jays, Eastern Phoebe, three species of vireos, and mixed flocks of warblers, chickadees, and titmice all foraging in my yard.

As my garden evolves I continue to learn more about gardening for birds. Birds need water and cover, as well as food. I try to incorporate plants that produce food for birds to cover all seasons of the year. I learn to identify the plants already in my yard and remove invasive species (which often have little to offer our native wildlife) so I can replace them with more beneficial alternatives. Gardening for birds can be a lifetime endeavor, and the learning never ends, but it doesn't have to be difficult to start.

**Resources:** [Native Plant Trust PictureThis - Plant Identifier](#) [Cornell Gardening for Birds Course](#)

Reflection offered by Brian Zylich, HBC Conservation Committee Member

## SAVE THE DATE

Mark your calendars for the finest Christmas Bird Count on December 17, 2023 in Northampton, Amherst, Hadley, and other towns. This CBC is our 89<sup>th</sup>. We will have 36 teams covering our CBC circle. We have feeder watchers, car birders, and team members of all ages. You can participate for a few hours or all day. You can even get up at 2 AM and listen for owls in your neighborhood. All is possible.

All are welcome. If you have yet to participate, it is time to join the fun. Do you have to be an excellent birder? No. You will be counting with others. More news about signing up for the CBC will come in the November newsletter. But if you have questions just send them to [cbc@hampshirebirdclub.org](mailto:cbc@hampshirebirdclub.org).

## GOOD NEWS FROM MASS AUDUBON

This week, Governor Maura Healey made history by becoming the first Governor in the United States to declare official state biodiversity targets. Mass Audubon has been advocating to protect the diverse species and ecosystems of Massachusetts for decades, and we're incredibly grateful to Gov. Healey for taking this first-in-the-nation action.

With nearly 3,000,000 acres of forest, 1,500 miles of coastline, 2,522 square miles of state ocean waters, and a vast network of rivers and critical wetlands, Massachusetts is rich in biodiversity. But each year, land development, pollution, invasive species, and other factors threaten an increasing number of the species that call our state home. On top of that, climate change is disrupting every ecosystem in Massachusetts.

That's why it's crucial that we commit to protecting the plants and animals of Massachusetts as they face more and more threats every year. Gov. Healey's biodiversity targets do just that, and we're committed to working with her administration to ensure that we achieve our goals for nature.

Show your support for nature by sending a quick email to Gov. Healey to thank her for standing up for biodiversity! You can find a link to make the task easy at the Mass Audubon [website](#).

I went to my twin grandnephews 11<sup>th</sup> birthday party last week. Here are two jokes that the 11-year-olds told.

1. We just tried a new restaurant that serves clowns. We think the food tasted funny.
2. Q: Why didn't the skeleton cross the road? A: He had no guts.

## UPCOMING EVENTS OF INTEREST

### Arcadia Wildlife Sanctuary

The following programs are offered by Arcadia Wildlife Sanctuary in Easthampton. Sign up online. More programs can be found at [www.massaudubon.org/get-outdoors/wildlife-sanctuaries/arcadia](http://www.massaudubon.org/get-outdoors/wildlife-sanctuaries/arcadia).

#### **Seeds, Nuts and Berries—October 4; 7:30-9:00 PM; online**

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.

Interested in learning more? This program is one part of a 4-session online Neighborhood Naturalists Series. By registering for the series, you get access to all 4 sessions for the price of 3. You do not need to register for other sessions, or the full series, to enjoy this one.

#### **Birding for Beginners—October 7, 14, and 21; 8–10 AM for all**

Are you new to birding? Join naturalist John Green who especially enjoys working with beginning birders. You'll learn how to use and adjust your binoculars, what to look for in a field guide, and tips for spotting birds by listening to their songs and calls and watching for behavioral clues. Bring binoculars and a field guide if you have them. We have a few binoculars to lend if you don't.

#### **Parking Lot Birding—October 15; 8–10 AM**

The Arcadia parking lot is a surprisingly good place to look for birds. With the edge of the woods on one side and an open field on the other, we see an unusual mix of woodland and open country birds. Bring your binoculars, a chair, and coffee or tea if you choose—we won't be going far.

### Great Falls Discovery Center

#### **Migration Week: Bird Walks with Zeke Jakub**

**October 12 – 15**, One-hour programs each day at: 6 AM, 7 AM., 8 AM, 9 AM, 10 AM, 11 AM, 1 PM., 2 PM, 3 PM, and 4 PM.

Many birds we see during fall migration are flying south to Panama! Join ornithologist Zeke Jakub of Conservación Panamá for one or more FREE hour-long birdwatching adventures. The walks introduce you to these fabulous migratory birds along the Connecticut River. Learn about conservation research and actions, including what you can do. The programs are for ages 14 and up. Bring binoculars and a bird field guide if you have them, dress for the weather, and wear sturdy shoes. Space is limited; register at 413-863-3221.

**Thursday, October 12, Mt. Sugarloaf State Reservation**—Meet at the top of Mount Sugarloaf in South Deerfield (300 Sugarloaf St.) at the observation tower. Park at the bottom and hike up or drive to the top and park for free (let DCR staff know you are here for the birding program). The park road opens at 9:00 a.m.

**Friday, October 13, Canalside Rail Trail**—Meet at the parking lot in East Deerfield off McClelland Farm Road.

**Saturday, October 14, Migratory Way**—Park in the lot at the intersection of G and 15<sup>th</sup> Streets in Turners Falls at the gate to Migratory Way.

**Sunday, October 15, Barton Cove**—Meet at Barton Cove Camping and Day-Use Area, 82 French King Highway, Gill, about one mile east of the Discovery Center off Route 2. Park at the day-use area parking lot.

## MEET PEANUT, THE WORLD'S OLDEST CHICKEN

This I heard on the very day that the September issue of this fine publication went to press. I would have included it then. If you didn't catch this on NPR's *All Things Considered* on August 30, then you really do need to listen to the podcast about Peanut. It's only four minutes long. Come on, you've got the time. Here's the link: [www.npr.org/2023/08/30/1196875233/meet-peanut-the-worlds-oldest-chicken](http://www.npr.org/2023/08/30/1196875233/meet-peanut-the-worlds-oldest-chicken).

Spoil a good walk: go birding! [newsletter@hampshirebirdclub.org](mailto:newsletter@hampshirebirdclub.org)

Dave Gross, Editor