



Hampshire Bird Club, Inc. Amherst, Massachusetts

www.hampshirebirdclub.org

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Dear reader, we (or should I say “I”?) have reached the doldrums of the year. Our pretty warblers are enjoying warmer climates, there is precious little of what can only generously be called “sunshine” this time of year, and the editorial staff is feeling off its usual sharp thought processes. So what’s a commentator to do? I have an answer, thanks in most part to Sage Stossel, occasional cartoonist for the *Boston Globe* and whose work can be found at www.sagestossel.com. In the December 10, 2023, issue of the *Globe*, Ms. Stossel allowed AI to generate some of her cartoon panels. So I thought, “Why not ask AI to make some new logos for the HBC?” I did an investigation of available AI image generators, and found only one that was both reviewed and free: imagine.meta.com. There’s a reason that it’s free.

I gave the program the following prompt: “logo with pileated woodpecker, Hampshire Bird Club.” The results will no doubt haunt us for years should we decide to adopt one for a revised logo. The four results are



Aside from the fact that the text in the images appears to be a hybrid of Entish and WWII Code Talker, the first and third birds seem to be on fire, the second bird looks like it is headed to the gym, and the third and last birds appear to be high on crystal meth (look at the eyes). So much for free, AI-generated logos.

NEXT PROGRAM

Tuesday, January 9, at 7:15 PM

Scott Weidensaul presents

Motus: Migration Tracking’s New Frontier

Via Zoom

[Scott Weidensaul](#) is the author of more than two dozen books on natural history, including the Pulitzer Prize finalist [Living on the Wind](#) and his latest, the *New York Times* bestseller [A World on the Wing](#). Weidensaul is a contributing editor for *Audubon* and writes for a variety of other publications, including *BWD* and *Living Bird*. He is a Fellow of the American Ornithological Society and an active field researcher, studying Saw-whet Owl migration for more than 25 years, as well as winter hummingbirds in the East, bird migration in Alaska, and the winter movements of Snowy Owls through [Project SNOWstorm](#), which he co-founded.

In less than a decade, the [Motus Wildlife Tracking System](#) has revolutionized our ability to track even the smallest migratory animals across immense distances. The brainchild of [Birds Canada](#), and supported by more than 2,000 partners and collaborators, Motus has grown to a global network of almost 1,800 automated receiver stations in 34 countries that allows scientists to follow birds, bats, and even migratory insects. Scott Weidensaul, a founder of the [Northeast Motus Collaboration](#), which has installed more than 160 Motus stations in the mid-Atlantic and New England states, will discuss Motus’s extraordinary potential for conservation, what it’s already brought to light about migrants in this region, and where this exciting effort goes from here.

UPCOMING PROGRAMS

- February 13, 2024. 7:15 PM. Marco Valtriani. **Italy.**
- 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.** We hope.

BYLAWS REVISIONS

The HBC Board has voted to submit for member approval the following changes to the HBC bylaws. Changes to Article IV and Article XII are proposed. The purpose of the Article IV change is to respond to the recent move of the club's website to a platform that incorporates membership maintenance, including collection of annual dues. Rather than tracking missing dues by hand, the new system automates membership renewals. Members can renew at any time and the system will remind current members when their membership is about to expire. Thus, the need for a fixed membership start date of October 1 is no longer needed. The revisions to sections 4.1 and 4.2 reflect this procedural change. The Board voted to remove the first-year-free membership option that was introduced a few years ago. The new website makes such an option difficult to implement. The Board intends to encourage anyone interested in HBC membership to join the HBC regardless of financial constraints.

The change to Article XII reflects the ongoing need to employ online voting in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and increasing attendance at monthly meetings via Zoom. The current article spells out the requirement that votes for bylaws amendments must be held in person with a quorum of members present. Member meetings for the past few years have not met this quorum threshold. The revised language in Article XII permits online voting, applying the same quorum and majority requirements as are currently required to online votes. The Board's aim here is to align the club bylaws with actual club practice of the past few years.

The proposed language changes for the two articles are given below. Current language to be deleted is given in strikethrough. New language to be inserted is given in bold italic. Voting on these changes will commence online on the day after the January 9 club meeting and will be open for one week. Paper ballots will be available on request.

Article IV—DUES

4.1 Membership dues ~~for the membership year October 1 through September 30~~ shall be set by the Board of Directors of the HBC.

4.2 Dues will be payable ~~in September of each year~~ ***upon initial enrollment and annually on the enrollment anniversary date.***

4.3 ~~New members may join at any time. First time members joining and paying dues to the HBC after December 31 will be granted membership for the remainder of the membership year and all of the succeeding membership year.~~

Article XII—AMENDMENTS TO THE BYLAWS

12.1 A vote to amend these bylaws may be taken at any regular program meeting, provided that the proposed changes were introduced at the previous regular monthly program meeting. A quorum must be present (Article IX) and a two-thirds majority of those present will be required to approve any change. ***The Board may, at its discretion, conduct the vote online commencing the day after the end of the meeting described in the first sentence of this section and concluding on the seventh day thereafter. HBC members may vote via paper ballots mailed or delivered to the Membership Secretary no later than one week after the close of online voting.***

Customer: This coffee tastes like mud. Server: Well, it was ground just a few minutes ago.

Q: Are you still spending all your money on old Beatles records? A: Yes, and I need Help!

Q: Why did the air mattress cost more than the foam pad? A: Inflation.

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. Based on participant feedback, we have a new schedule! On the third Thursday of each month at 7 PM there will be a one hour online educational talk. Then, on the third Saturday, at 8:45 AM, there will be a two hour, in-person, beginner 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/2024bfe.

January 18, 2024, 7 – 8 PM: What Gear Do I Need? (Talk)

January 20, 2024, 8:45 – 11:00 AM: Fannie Stebbins Wildlife Refuge, Longmeadow (Walk)

2023 NORTHAMPTON (MANO) CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

Preliminary numbers for MANO's 89th Annual Christmas Bird Count have us at 86 species and 40,363 individual birds, down from last year by four species and more than 4000 individuals. We had over 250 field participants (about the same as last year) and over 30 yard/feeder watchers.

Thanks again to everyone who pitched in! It was fun, as always, despite challenging conditions...

On Sunday, December 17, we didn't luck into the gorgeous weather that other New England counts had the previous day. In fact, an oddly warm, severe winter storm blew in midday. We had a lot of open water (always a boon), but the morning was overcast with low visibility followed by light rain around 11:45 AM. Did the birds sense the coming storm and hunker down? Probably! Intense flooding plagued the Valley that evening and in days that followed. It was quite the storm.

Although the total number of individual birds was down, we hit count highs for a few species: 7 Green-winged Teals, 42 Buffleheads, 24 Bald Eagles, 7 Red-shouldered Hawks, 356 Red-bellied Woodpeckers, 28 Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers, 101 Northern Flickers, 7 Peregrine Falcons, 4 Eastern Phoebe, 65 Common Ravens, 381 Golden Crowned Kinglets, 747 White-breasted Nuthatches, 64 Brown Creepers, 317 Carolina Wrens, 26 Winter Wrens, 38 Red Crossbills, 1390 White-throated Sparrows, 592 Song Sparrows, and 5 Yellow-rumped Warblers. Of note in the data so far is that Great Horned and Eastern Screech Owls were found in excellent numbers this year (44 and 79, respectively) and a surprising highlight of the day was a Muscovy Duck in flight over Area 33 in Granby!

You can view the entire spreadsheet of species found on the count in all the areas at hampshire-birdclub.org/cbc/. The spreadsheet will continue to evolve as new data arrives.

The CBC team is still looking to expand and share the tasks. We need people willing to work with the Feeder Counters and participants, organize and conduct the Zoom meetings, write for the newsletter, and help with Excel in compiling birds and participant effort. Please email cbc@hampshirebirdclub.org about your interest.

Next year's CBC will fall on Sunday, December 15—a full moon! Please save the date! And for your further reading pleasure, below are the count details since 1999.

Year	Species	Number of birds
2023	86	40,363
2022	90	46,219
2021	88	44,735
2020	85	36,496
2019	83	31,583
2018	78	30,483
2017	85	34,849
2016	79	28,358

2015	87	33,023
2014	89	38,192
2013	87	38,943
2012	90	34,057
2011	83	34,001
2010	87	33,569
2009	78	37,394
2008	91	39,769
2007	85	30,299

2006	79	47,536
2005	84	31,684
2004	81	37,620
2003	83	30,384
2002	84	29,804
2001	82	39,807
2000	78	26,273
1999	91	46,674

EDUCATION COMMITTEE REPORT AND WORKSHOPS

The 89th MANO Christmas Bird Count was a great success! Thank you to all who participated. The results can be found on the Christmas Bird Count webpage on the Hampshire Bird Club website. Go to the drop down menu under “Events” and you’ll see the CBC page.

January 8, 7–8 PM. Do It Yourself with Brian and Lesley resumes via Zoom. Join us to find out where to go this month and what birds to look for. Share your sightings from November! You’ll find the link on the Education page.

January 16, 7–8 PM. Rehabilitating Birds with Judy Pasko. Judy, who runs Cummington Wildlife, will do a presentation about how she works with injured birds. She may also discuss her work with other wildlife species. You’ll find the Zoom link for this workshop on the Education page.

New member bird walks—open to all:

1. March 9, 2024, evening—exact time TBA—at Park Hill Orchard in Easthampton. We’ll look for woodcocks.
2. 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 education@hampshirebirdclub.org. **We are looking for new members!** If you would like to join the Education Committee, please email us.

CLASSIFIED ADS

Volunteer positions open As you know, our club is run entirely by volunteers. Over the past months, many volunteers have retired from their roles after many years (often decades!) of service to the club. This has left the club with vacancies that the board does not want to leave open for too long.

The most urgent positions that we need to fill are with the Field Trip Committee that currently has no members. We also have openings for Merchandise Coordinator (or Boutique Maven if you prefer), Social Media Publishers, Hospitality Committee, Publicity Coordinator...you get the picture.

So, if you've thought about getting involved with the club, now is the time to raise your hand. The board urges you to consider a position that interests you. You needn't be a birding expert and these positions typically take a couple of hours per month. A full list can be found at hampshirebirdclub.org/get-involved. Contact president@hampshirebirdclub.org if you are interested and willing.

Listen to the Birds by Don Kroodsma Don, a long-time HBC member and world-renowned bird song expert, has a new book out. *Listen to the Birds* is targeted at younger readers but can be enjoyed by anyone. Don has graciously donated several copies for sale by the club. If you are interested, you can read more about the book at donaldkroodsma.com/?page_id=2062 and then, if you would like to purchase one or more copies, you can order a copy on the HBC website at hampshirebirdclub.org/shop, or just let the boutique chair know at boutique@hampshirebirdclub.org. The cost per copy is \$20 for members.

MEMBERSHIP Q&A

Q: Why aren't you listing new members in the newsletter anymore?

A: Since we have moved to the new membership platform, all our members are new (to the system) this year. It would be an arduous manual task to sort those who are truly new from those who are not. Thus, for this year, we will have a blanket welcome. To the “really” new members, Welcome!. We’re glad to have you among us!

Q: Will you be mailing a Membership Directory in January as in previous years?

A: The short answer is no. One of the benefits of the new online membership platform is that the membership directory is always up to date and accessible online to all who have created online profiles and are logged in.

Only those who have given permission are included in the directory, and only basic information (name, town, email, phone) is provided.

Q: How do I access the membership directory?

A: Follow these instructions:

1. In your browser, go to hampshirebirdclub.org.
2. In the upper right corner, click on “**Log in**” if you are not already logged in. If you are logged in, skip to Step 5.
3. Type in your email address and password. If you've forgotten your password, click on “**Forgot password**” and a new one will be sent to your email address on file (there is no limit on how many times you do this!). If you haven't activated your profile, you will be prompted to do that.
4. Click the box to verify you're not a robot. This is a security feature.
5. You should end up on the Club home page. Click “**Members Only/Membership Directory**”.
6. You can search for a person to find someone specific.

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

A CHAT WITH MICHEALLE LARKINS

In mid-November I sat down for a chat with Michealle Larkens, who joined the HBC Board in June 2023. In this first part, Michealle talks about her job and hobbies, as well as her introduction to the HBC. In part 2, to appear later, she discusses her early interest in nature, as well as her take on the HBC.

Newsletter: What do you do when you are not out bird watching?

Michealle Larkins: What takes most of my time is work. I work in philanthropy with private foundations at Bank of America. They are mostly foundations that support health, education, and human services. I specialize in foundations that focus on older adults. The foundations are mostly in Massachusetts, but they are scattered across New England and the United States. I work with a lot of foundations, and one supports projects in western North Carolina, in Appalachia.

N: What does Bank of America have to do with charitable foundations?

ML: Bank of America is often the trustee for the foundations. In some cases we only manage the investments of the foundation. The accounts I work on were primarily established by donors from the early- to mid-1900s and appointed the Bank as the trustee.

As for other things I do, I enjoy listening to music. All kinds of music. I like to go to Tanglewood. I go to smaller music venues, too. One I recall was in the Valley and the music was Irish.

N: I know that you have a lot of connections to other bird clubs. How did you find the Hampshire Bird Club?

ML: I think it was in 2021 when we had some international students living at our house. The pandemic was still going on. I didn't want to go anywhere other than for walks in wildlife sanctuaries. I took the three Pakistani students living there with us on these walks.

One day I said, “Oh, do you wanna go to a wildlife sanctuary?” And they said that they were tired of going to the sanctuaries, and would I consider going somewhere different? They said they wanted to go to the mountains. I said “Okay” and I started looking online for where there might be bird trips in the mountains. There was one at Mount Tom.

As it turned out, Derek [Allard] was leading the trip. I registered and went for the 6:30 AM meeting time. I had to start at 4:30 in the morning because I was driving from the eastern part of the state. On the way I saw that I was going to be late, so I texted Derek and I said “I'm sorry I'm running late. Please just go ahead. Keep your phone and I'll text you when I get there.” Well, he waited. I was ten minutes late. He waited not just for the walk; he waited for the pre-walk talk and introductions of everyone. Right then I thought to myself how nice these people are.

Another thing was that he taught us. He asked if everybody knew how to use binoculars. I was fairly new to birding, but I thought I understood binoculars. But then he mentioned the adjustment for each of your eyes. I said, “Oh, I don't know how to do that.” He showed us about that, and I thought, “This group is so good!” And then there was the walk. I loved this sort of community. The people were really nice. That was a contrast with my experience with other bird clubs, though to be fair that was at the height of the pandemic. We were all still wearing masks, and people were staying away from each other. So maybe that had something to do with it.

N: You've been on the board now since June and you are one of the new board members. What's that been like?

ML: Everybody's nice, everybody's collegial. I do feel like I have to figure a lot of things out. We discuss things that I'm not familiar with. It is like I came to see a play, and I arrived in the middle. To be honest, I feel a bit jealous that everybody else on the board seems to have strong relationships. And they're

all really, really friendly with each other. So much so that they're dogging each other, you know.

As far as the meetings themselves go, they feel a little rushed. We schedule an hour for each meeting, and that keeps me from saying things at times because I am looking at the clock. I would like some of the discussion to be fuller than it is. Maybe we could institute subcommittees for specific items so that there could be additional discussion.

CONSERVATION COMMITTEE CORNER

This offering continues a series from the Conservation Committee.

State action protects imperiled birds

Massachusetts is fortunate to have a great variety of birds, owing largely to its diversity of habitats and its location along the Atlantic flyway. In a few hours Valley birders can drive from highly productive coastal ecosystems, cross through the floodplains and gentle hills of the interior, and bisect the Appalachian Mountains.

Despite this wonderful diversity, bird populations have experienced rapid and dramatic declines. The Commonwealth of Massachusetts has designated thirty bird species as Endangered, Threatened, or Special Concern, meaning that these bird species are either at risk, or may become at risk, of extinction. This state-level imperilment list is a glimpse into the broader plight of birds in North America. The *State of the Birds* (www.stateofthebirds.org) reports that three billion birds have been lost in the United States and Canada in the past fifty years. Several species in Hampshire County, examples being the Bobolink and Prairie Warbler, are predicted to lose an additional 50% of the population in the next fifty years.

More birds may be added to this list. An analysis by Mass Audubon identifies 43% of breeding birds in Massachusetts as Highly Vulnerable to climate change by the year 2050. However, it is not all gloom and doom. Bird conservation has had quite a few successes.

Efforts to restore eastern forests are stemming the loss of forest birds such as the Wood Thrush and Cerulean Warbler. Federal policy combined with local action has resulted in population gains for both dabbling and diving ducks. Technologies have emerged and are applied locally that benefit the science of bird conservation (e.g. Motus towers—see this month's meeting presentation description), breeding success (e.g. Common Loon nesting platforms), and reduced mortality (e.g. anti-reflection tape to reduce bird collisions with windows). Collectively, these examples highlight that a sustained focus and investment in bird conservation at the local level can produce real conservation gains.

The Hampshire Bird Club Conservation Committee is dedicated to taking steps towards meaningful, local conservation actions. If you have an interest in joining the committee, please contact the committee chair, Bob Zimmerman, at raz@umass.edu.

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.

Winter Birding Series—Thursdays, January 18; February 1, 15, & 29; & March 14, 7:00–8:30 PM

With which species should winter birders familiarize themselves? Ducks are sporting their colorful plumages, but there are fewer field marks when it comes to distinguishing the different grays of winter gulls. Raptors, including owls, are year-round favorites, but winter is an especially great time to look for them, due to their early breeding behavior. And nothing marks the conclusion of winter like the American Woodcock's elaborate, spellbinding aerial courtship dance. While you may need extra layers to explore the field this winter, you can practice winter bird identification from the warmth of your home in this online series.

The five sessions are available individually or as a series—January 18: Gulls; February 1: Owls; February 15: Winter Raptors; February 29: Winter Waterbirds; and March 14: American Woodcocks.

Winter Bird Photography—Wednesdays, January 24–February 7, 6:30–8:30 PM

This hands-on, online series is designed to hone your photography skills in the context of capturing beautiful images of birds. We will explore documentary, abstract, color, and black and white image-making. Appropriate for all skill levels, the instructor, Eduardo del Solar, will individualize lessons based on the skill set of each participant. Each week will include a two-hour online classroom session, weekly assignments to practice skills and strategies covered that week, and the sharing of three images from each assignment with the group for constructive feedback and reflection.

The instructor will use student work to demonstrate basic post-processing techniques, including integration of the digital flow, and processing and editing images using a raw converter such as Adobe Lightroom for publishing or printing. DSLR and Mirrorless cameras with full auto and manual functions and wide, telephoto, and close focus capabilities are ideal for this class. While all levels of skill are accepted in this class, all students need to be familiar with their camera functions. In addition to six hours of online instruction, each student will receive one hour of individual instruction via email, phone, video chat, or in-person instruction.

Hitchcock Center for the Environment

The following programs are offered by the Hitchcock Center in Amherst. Sign up online.

Owl Prowls with Dan Ziomek—Friday January 12 & Saturday, January 20, 6:30–9:00 PM

Have you been on an owl prow! It is a special treat in the heart of winter. Come seek out the Great-horned Owl on a winter (hopefully snowy) night with expert birder Dan Ziomek.

Winter Birds with John Green—Sunday January 28, 10 AM–noon

Have you gone on a nature walk with John Green? If not, you should, and if so, you should again! John has been studying, and marveling at, the nature of the Quabbin Reservoir area for well over 30 years. His amazement is contagious. Join John at the Quabbin to see what winter birds and other signs of wakefulness in winter you can find. Space is limited; please register now. Adventure East, collaborating with the Hitchcock Center, will provide snowshoes or microspikes, depending on weather conditions.

Maine Audubon

The following program is offered by Maine Audubon (maineaudubon.org).

Botany in a Winter—Wednesdays, January 3–March 27, 6:30–8:00 PM

Botany in a Winter is a free, weekly exploration of the plants of the Northeast, family by family, in taxonomic order, led virtually by Maine Audubon Field Naturalist Andy Kapinos. Over the course of thirteen weeks we will explore every vascular plant genus found in the Northeast and examine the identifiable traits common to each interrelated group. Each week we will focus on a clade of the evolutionary tree, covering between 150 and 400 species. While the programs are sequential and in taxonomic order, they can be attended individually. Those who attend every program will learn all the common groups of plants in the Northeast, and be ready to take this knowledge into the field just as the plants begin a new growing season. The structure of these programs is based on *Botany in a Day* by Thomas J. Elpel and *Flora Novae Angliae* by Arthur Haines. Details can be found at maineaudubon.org/news/events/botany-winter/. [Ed. note: Joseph, our crack newsletter proofreader, says that *Botany in a Day* is perhaps the most optimistic title that he has seen since *Gulls Simplified*. I have to agree with that.]

YOU EVER HAVE AS MUCH FUN WITH A BALL?

I came across this video last month. I had no idea what species it was, so I put the crack staff of the Belchertown Bureau on the identification task. He came back with a possible identification of the Gray-crowned Babbler, *Pomatostomus temporalis*. He also suggested some alternative common names for the bird: Dr. Jay Bird, Wilt Stilt, Wilson's Dribbler, and Larry Bird. I checked with our own Australia expert, David Peake-Jones, who agreed with the likely identification. He also suggested two more alternate common names: the Antipodean Hoop-oe or the Hopeful Roller. Check out the video and see what you think:

twitter.com/yoda4ever/status/1728893783683871030.

Spoil a good walk: go birding!

newsletter@hampshirebirdclub.org

Dave Gross, Editor