



Hampshire Bird Club, Inc. Amherst, Massachusetts

www.hampshirebirdclub.org

Volume 21, No. 5

January, 2005

With the Christmas Count now in the books, it's worth reflecting on this most tangible reflection of citizen-science at work. Counting can be a frustrating and sometimes apparently arbitrary process, especially for unusual or scarce species. We did not, for example, hear either of the two known pairs of Great Horned Owls on the campus at Hampshire College. How should one feel about the demise of the Green Heron the day after the count? Just how many of those umpteen thousand crows and starlings were double-counted?

Despite all these things, I can't think of an aspect of birding that is more personally rewarding. Data is data. Zero is as important as twenty. Having reduced my feet to a pair of bloody stumps through the frozen fields of the western flank of the Holyoke Range, I can now say with certainty that there were at least three Golden-crowned Kinglets along that four-mile stretch. These brave, tiny creatures eking out a living in the frozen woods, and coming to investigate a strange intruder in their territory are irrevocably recorded in the annals of the Christmas count. Not to mention that a G-cK at ten feet is worth the price of participating in the Christmas Count on its own. I felt blessed to have seen them and those three little hatch marks in my crumpled notebook are worth a thousand blisters. I hope you all feel the same.

PROGRAMS

*Programs are held at **Immanuel Lutheran Church, 867 North Pleasant St. in Amherst.** Should bad weather force a cancellation, it will be announced on WHMP 1400 AM radio.*

This Month

Monday, January 10 at 7:30 PM

Mark Lynch and Sheila Carroll with "Birds of the Blackstone National Corridor"

Mark Lynch is an ecological monitor, teacher and trip-leader for the Broad Meadow Brook Massachusetts Audubon Society sanctuary in Worcester. He and **Sheila Carroll** are currently organizing systematic surveys of water birds and nighthawks in the Blackstone National Corridor and developing an annotated species list for this unique National Park. Mr. Lynch is the book review editor for the journal "*Bird Observer*," and a founding member of the Massachusetts Avian Records Committee. He was a regional editor and contributor to the new "*Bird Finding Guide To Western Massachusetts*." Mark is a long time (32+ years) teacher and docent at the Worcester Art Museum. He hosts a weekly interview program of arts and sciences: "*Inquiry*," on WICN (90.5FM), which is webcast around the world.

Coming Programs

February 14. Daniel J. Klem. "Glass: A Bird Conservation Issue"

March 14. Margaret Rubega. "Eating at the Interface of Water and Land"

April 11. Geoff LeBaron. "From Kamchatka to Katmai: An Incredible Journey"

FIELD TRIPS

Reports

Four people joined **Harvey Allen** for his **monthly sweep of the valley** on December 8th during which we discovered 25 species. Our first stop was the famous yard in Leverett where a juvenile **Red-headed Woodpecker** has made regular appearances. When we arrived a Wild Turkey had usurped the woodpecker's favorite feeder, but, after the turkey was chased away, the woodpecker made its appearance. We had very close looks at this handsome bird. Next stop was the canal in Turner's Falls. There was a nice view of a female **Barrow's Goldeneye** with its bright yellow bill. We also saw two **Northern Pintail**, an **American Widgeon**, and several Common Goldeneye. On the Gill side and at Barton's Cove we found Ring-necked Ducks and a Greater Scaup amongst a raft of Canada Geese. A formation of five common mergansers flying by was a fitting end to our outing.

Elissa Rubenstein

Coming Trips

Please see the attached "Winter-Late Summer Field Trip Schedule"

CHRISTMAS COUNT

Another Christmas Count is in the bag. I hope all the rest of you who stomped around all day on some very frozen ground found it as rewarding as I did. Despite what seemed to be a rather drab winter for birds leading up to the count, there was a goodly tally of unusual species, and a lot of high counts.

Special thanks to Jan Ortiz who was responsible for the weather this year. The last folks leaving the compilation could have used another snow-free hour of driving, but that was probably asking too much. Thanks also to the Hitchcock Center for hosting the potluck and compilation, to Scott Sumner, John Green and David Gross for the compilation, and to everyone for getting their forms and rare bird reports in so quickly.

Unusual Species Recorded This Year

Species	Number
Green Heron	1
Greater White-fronted Goose	2
Snow Goose	2
Northern Pintail	a few
Ring-necked Duck	5
Bufflehead first time on count)	1
Red-breasted Merganser	2
Merlin	3
Peregrine Falcon	4
Long-eared Owl	3
Western Kingbird (count week only)	1
Gray Catbird	1
Brown Thrasher (count week only)	1
Clay-colored Sparrow	1
Vesper Sparrow	1

(Christmas Count continues over→)

High Counts

The species in this table were recorded more frequently this year than in any previous year. Some have already been referred to under “Unusual Species.”**

Species	High Count (this year)	Previous High Count
Great Blue Heron	11	9
Hooded Merganser	30	28
Red-tailed Hawk	124	113
Eastern Screech Owl	79	60
Red-bellied Woodpecker	91	84
Downy Woodpecker	452	362
Pileated Woodpecker	26	23
Tufted Titmouse	633	583
White-breasted Nuthatch	478	391
Carolina Wren	83	36
American Robin	2926	2727
Northern Cardinal	649	528
Long-eared Owl	3	Less than 3
Bufflehead**	1	zero

Potluck Heroes!

Thank you to everyone who worked to make the annual Pot-Luck Compilation Supper such a success. **Sue Emerson, Sally Hills and Helga Beatty** coordinated the set-up and take-down. The list of food and drink contributors looks like this:

Anne Lombard, David Gross, Sally Hills, David Norton, Bruce Hart & Ilene Goldstein, Bill Bennet & Joe Wicinski, Merry Cushing, Tom Gagnon & Bruce Callahan, Sue Emerson, Shirley Hilborn, Helga Beatty, Elizabeth McAnulty, Janet Bissell, Scott Surner, Dennis McKenna, Ann Kearns & Mary Hockner, Dave Mako, Elissa Rubinstein, Bob Zimmerman, Kim Iwanoto & Dave Hastings, Jan Howard, Peg Army & Janice Doppler, Marcia Merithew, Lisa Rock & Pete Westover, Chris Ellison, Elaine Pourinski, and Mary Alice Wilson.

Sue describes herself as the ad hoc coordinator, and says:

“In 2005, we hope to see an even greater turn-out for the compilation supper. The Pot-Luck will really ‘take wing and fly’.”

Thank you all so much!!!!

** I debated about whether to put the Bufflehead in both tables, since this was the first time it has ever been recorded on the Christmas count and it is a mathematical truism that a bird occurring for the first time will also be recorded in greater numbers than ever before.

If I knew the first thing about mathematics, I would know that mathematicians have a more “mathy” term for a truism. This is rather ironic, since mathematicians are always harping on and on about how their discipline explores the absolute, dispassionate reality (i.e. truth) of the universe, yet they eschew the word “truism.” Mathematicians might also be saying that it is ironic that a man in whom the Australian education system invested considerable amounts of time and effort, not least in the area of numeracy, would choose to use his position as the editor of a two-bit foreign bird club newsletter to launch a petty diatribe against the mathematical profession. To this I would reply that:

- 1) once they started talking about matrices and differential calculus and imaginary numbers, math became a terrifying and deeply disempowering experience for me. This is part of the revenge process, and
- 2) I have no idea whether anyone actually reads this thing and am forced to resort to various forms of inflammatory behavior in an effort to get my first “letter to the editor.” So there!

Some Notes on the Count

Sadly, the Green Heron, which was in bad shape when counted on December 19, was found dead the next morning.

The Greater White-fronted Goose was seen by two teams in the morning. It was heading south near the front of a cohort of Canadas, apparently having to work double-time to stay in line. Observers said it was “yelling” rather than honking (perhaps for obvious reasons). This long-suffering bird was seen in the afternoon in (presumably) the same flock of Canada’s, heading in the opposite direction.

One group found 36 individual Eastern Screech Owls and another recorded 26.

Confused By all This Information About the CBC?

The official account of the count will be presented at the January 10 meeting, and will be mailed to any participants who are unable to make that meeting. A notebook with all the Northampton CBC counts since 1934 is located in the HBC library at the Hitchcock Center. The data are also available on-line (www.audubon.org/bird/cbc).

MANOMET WEIGHS IN ON BIRD DECLINE

In case you needed any more evidence, Manomet Observatory here in Massachusetts recently weighed in on the subject of long-term changes in bird populations. Manomet has been banding migratory birds in coastal Massachusetts for thirty two years. In “32 Years of Changes in Passerine Numbers During Spring and Fall Migration in Coastal Massachusetts” (*Wilson Bulletin* (Vol. 116, No. 1), published earlier this year, they find, as have other sources, a preponderance of species in decline. Amongst species wintering in North America and in deep trouble are Field Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, Purple Finch, Brown Creeper, Yellow-rumped Warbler, and Brown Thrasher. The authors of the study, Trevor Lloyd-Evans and Jonathon L. Atwood, attribute these declines primarily to habitat degradation on this continent.

They also corroborate the deteriorating fortunes of neo-tropical migrants, including Wood Thrush, American Redstart, Bay-breasted Warbler, Scarlet Tanager, Veery, Tennessee Warbler, Cape May Warbler, Last Flycatcher, and Yellow-bellied Flycatcher. These declines are more obviously attributed to the destruction of tropical rainforest.

(Source: Manomet Observatory website: www.manomet.org/naturereport)

BOREAL BIRDS: A NEW ON-LINE RESOURCE

The **Boreal Songbird Initiative** is a coalition of groups who have recently begun drawing attention to the value and tenuous future of the vast boreal woods of North America. You can visit their Website at www.borealbirds.org.

The initiative publishes an on-line guide to the birds of the boreal woods. This is available via a link at the address above, or directly via at www.borealbirds.org/boreal_species_sub-home.html This reference gives accounts of the life histories of boreal birds, adding greatly to the accounts in field guides by documenting both breeding and non-breeding behavior, distribution, and habitat.

HITCHCOCK PROGRAMS

MARINE FISHERIES: *Francis Juanes, Oceanography Professor at UMass*
Sunday, January 16, 1 - 3 p.m.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN PANAMA: *Ariana Wohl*
Thursday, January 20, 7 p.m.

LIVING WITH WILDLIFE: GRAY FOX IN OUR MIDST: *Mark Elbroch*
Friday, January 21, 7 p.m., Slides and Talk
Saturday, January 22, 9:45 a.m. - 3 p.m., Tracking in the Field

TREE KANGAROO CONSERVATION IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA: A COMMUNITY-BASED APPROACH: *Lisa Dabeck, Rhode Island Zoological Society*
Wednesday, February 2, 7 p.m.

WINTER TREE AND SHRUB ID: *Brayton Wilson, UMass Professor Emeritus*
Saturdays, February 5 & 12, 9 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

RETURN OF LARGE MAMMALS: *Nick & Valerie Wisniewski, Walnut Hill Tracking*
Monday, February 7, 7 p.m.

USING SCIENCE TO SHAPE PUBLIC POLICY *Joseph Larson, UMass*
Tuesday, January 25, 7 p.m.
Held at the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Hadley

For details and registration for all Hitchcock programs, please contact the Hitchcock Center for the Environment, 525 South Pleasant St., Amherst MA 01002. Telephone (413) 256 6006, or on the web at www.hitchcockcenter.org.

HUNTERS STEP UP

A Pittsfield man was convicted on November 4 in federal court for the fatal shooting of a Bald Eagle in Cheshire, Massachusetts just over a year ago. The conviction followed investigations by Massachusetts Environmental Police and USFWS, and rested heavily on the testimony of fellow hunters who witnessed the incident.

(Source: MassWildlife News)

LIBRARY

HBC has a substantial library at the Hitchcock Center in Amherst. **Hours** are 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. on Tuesday through Friday, and 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. on Saturdays. Items can be signed out and borrowed for a period of up to one month, or longer by arrangement. **Henry Lappen** is happy to bring items to meetings, given a few days notice! Call him at (413) 549 3722.

CONSERVATION

*If you are interested in conservation of birds and birding habitat, you may like to share information and effort with others in the club. **Anne Lombard** is our **Conservation Chair**. She is looking for ideas on how we can contribute to the conservation of species in our area. Contact her at (413) 586 7509, or aslombard@comcast.net*

HBC Directory September, 2004

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

David Peake-Jones, Editor
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HAMPSHIRE BIRD CLUB, INC.

(Partial) WINTER-SPRING-SUMMER FIELD TRIP SCHEDULE, 2005

This first part of the Field trip Schedule is attached to the January On-line Newsletter. The Field Trip Committee is in the process of modifying the first-published schedule to eliminate a scheduling conflict. The part of the schedule produced here is correct. We will make sure you get the rest of the schedule when the corrections have been made. Apologies for the inconvenience.

Please register with the trip leader(s) and check this schedule's information when a phone number is given. The Field Trip Chair, Michael Locher (413-585-5864), is always looking for new trip ideas and leaders. The Hampshire Bird Club recommends carpooling whenever possible, and suggests that all riders share equally the per-car cost of \$0.30 per mile, as well as tolls and parking. See also the "Field Trip Guidelines for Participants" (September newsletter or on the Website).

Some trips have been marked with an asterisk (), which indicates that they are good trips for beginning birders. All trips have been coded as Easy (E) or Moderate (M) to give a rough indication of the pace and/or terrain. However, check all information with the trip leaders.*

JANUARY

Saturday, January 8. North Shore: Cape Ann to Plum Island. All day. Bob Bieda will lead intrepid birders to the coast to look for Eared Grebes, Barrow's Goldeneyes, Harlequin Ducks, Purple Sandpipers, and much more. Dress for cold weather. For meeting information call Bob at 413-527-2623. (E)

Saturday, January 15. Winter finches. Three quarters of a day. Shirley Hilborn (413-253-6462) will lead birders looking for winter finches in Western Massachusetts. Meet at the Hitchcock Center at 8:00 a.m. (E)

Wednesday, January 19. Midweek half day in the Connecticut River Valley. In the midweek series, Harvey Allen (413-253-7963) will show birders some of his favorite birding locations around the area. Meet at 8:00 a.m. on the corner of Rt. 116 and Bay Road, Amherst, across from Atkin's Farm. Call for more information as the date approaches. (E)

Saturday, January 22. Coastal Rhode Island. All day. Geoff LeBaron (413-268-9281) will head to the hot-spots of Rhode Island. Dress for cold weather. Meet at the Northampton Bowl at 6:45 a.m. (E)

FEBRUARY

Saturday, February 5. South Coast: Plymouth and Falmouth. All day. Al Richards leads this annual trip to Southeastern Massachusetts. Past highlights have included Yellow-breasted Chat, Redhead Duck, Rough-legged Hawk, and both Long- and Short-eared Owls. Dress warmly. Call Al (413-665-2761) for the time and place to meet. (E)

Wednesday, February 16. Midweek half day in the Connecticut River Valley. Harvey Allen (413-253-7963) will go where the birds are. Meet at 8:00 a.m. on the corner of Rt. 116 and Bay Road, Amherst, across from Atkin's Farm. Call for more information as the date approaches. (E)

MARCH

Saturday, March 5. Plum Island. All day. Geoff LeBaron (413-268-9281) will seek out late winter specialties like Rough-legged Hawks, Barrow's Goldeneyes, Glaucous Gulls, and Snowy Owls. Dress warmly. Meet at the Northampton Bowl at 6:45 a.m. (E)

MARCH (continued)

Wednesday, March 16. Midweek half day in the Connecticut River Valley. Morning. Harvey Allen (413-253-7963) will go where the birds are. Meet at 7:30 a.m. on the corner of Rt. 116 and Bay Road, Amherst, across from Atkin's Farm. Call for more information as the date approaches. (E)

Saturday, March 19. Connecticut River Waterfowl. Half day. Mike Locher (413-585-5864) will scour the river and neighboring ponds from Hadley to Turner's Falls for migrating ducks and geese. Expect scenic detours. Call for details as the date approaches. (E)

APRIL

***Sunday, April 3. Woodcocks.** Early evening. Mike Locher (413-585-5864) will look for displaying American Woodcocks, and then try to call out some owls on the way home. Meet at 5:30 p.m. at Mitch's Marina on Route 47 in Hadley. (E)

Saturday, April 16. Ashley Reservoir: early warblers. Half day. Bob Bieda (413-527-2623) will beat the bushes for Pine and Palm Warblers, Broad-winged Hawks, Ospreys, and Ruby-crowned Kinglets. Meet at the Holiday Inn parking lot, Exit 15 ("Holyoke Mall") off Route 91 at 7 a.m. Call to register. (E)

Wednesday, April 20. Midweek half day in the Connecticut River Valley. Harvey Allen (413-253-7963) will go where the birds are. Meet at 7:30 a.m. on the corner of Rt. 116 and Bay Road, Amherst, across from Atkin's Farm. Call for more information as the date approaches. (E)

***Saturday, April 23. More migrants.** Half day beginner's trip. Betsy Higgins (413-586-7585) looks for waterthrushes, in addition to other warblers and neotropical migrants. She'll start at Look Park in Northampton. Meet at 6:30 a.m. in the parking lot of the JFK Middle School on Bridge Road in Northampton. Call for further details. (E)

Saturday, April 30. Graves Farm. Half day. Anne Lombard (413-586-7509) and Shirley Hilborn (413-253-6462) will guide birders through Graves Farm, looking for migrants and local specialties. Meet at the Hitchcock center at 6:30 a.m. (E)

(Partial Schedule Ends)



Hampshire Bird Club, Inc.

Amherst, Massachusetts

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Volume 21, No. 6

February, 2005

Some birds just feel different. At the end of the coastal Rhode Island trip, our group was faced with the choice of whether to proceed to the east and all manner of possible coastal ducks, including Harlequins, or return to Ninigret Park for the possibility of seeing one of two reported Short-eared Owls. Without too much argument, we found ourselves propped against the cars in the twilight at Ninigret, scanning the brushy edges of the old runways. Right on cue, a ghostly form appeared in the fading light. The bird didn't seem to fly as much as to be suspended in the dusk. Its long wings and slender body created uncanny buoyancy, as though there were a wire attached to its back, controlled by some celestial puppet master. Stiff, shallow wing beats produced a totally improbable picture of ease and grace. It glided to and fro amongst the white birches of the Ninigret runways with a deceptive sense of leisure, belied by a sudden bank and drop into the snow. That spelled the end of one small mammal, and at least one other would be wrenched from its snowy safehouse before the end of the evening.

Short-eared Owls are now only winter visitors in most of our region, breeding locally only on Nantucket. There was something mournful about this bird, eking out a lonely living so close to the abodes of men, in this fortuitous, unkempt refuge. Here's to messy grasslands and all they bring us!

PROGRAMS

*Programs are held at **Immanuel Lutheran Church, 867 North Pleasant St. in Amherst.** Should bad weather force a cancellation, it will be announced on WHMP 1400 AM radio.*

This Month

Monday, February 14 at 7:30 PM

Daniel Klem with "Glass: A Bird Conservation Issue"

Staggering numbers of birds die after colliding with glass windows. Daniel Klem will examine the implications of this mortality for bird populations in North America and possible strategies to reduce these impacts.

Daniel has a Ph. D. in Zoology from the University of Southern Illinois. He currently teaches Ornithology and Conservation Biology at Muhlenberg College in Allentown, Pennsylvania. He has published extensively on various topics, including raptor migration, distribution of pelagic birds in the western Atlantic Ocean, and the conservation implications of bird-glass collisions.

Coming Programs

March 14. Margaret Rubega. "Eating at the Interface of Water and Land"

April 11. Geoff LeBaron. "From Kamchatka to Katmai: An Incredible Journey"

May 9. Susan Roney Drennan. "Pacific Albatross Biology and Conservation"

FIELD TRIPS

Reports

After delaying a day for bad weather, **Bob Bieda** led birders to **Cape Anne and Plum Island on Sunday, January 8**. We began at Niles Beach near Gloucester, where we searched in vain for the Eared Grebe. We did find Common Goldeneye, a nice group of Gadwall and assorted other sea ducks. On the frozen ice of Niles Pond we discovered a beautiful immature **Iceland Gull** standing quietly with several hundred assorted gulls and ducks, including a rather surprising **Ring-necked Duck**. There were also lovely looks at Bonaparte's Gull and a flying **Glaucous Gull**.

We thought the Granite Pier in Rockport would offer only gorgeous views of a small group of **Harlequin Ducks**, but eventually a duck with a beautiful slaty blue head materialized between the breakers. This reticent **King Eider** had eluded the group ahead of us and they greatly appreciated our communication to have another shot at it. After a rather inexplicable lack of birds at Andrew's Point, we moved on to Plum Island. Local intelligence allowed us to locate a beautiful dark female **Snowy Owl** just beyond the salt pannes. A **Rufous-sided Towhee** and a **Hermit Thrush** surprised us from the thickets by the Highway Depot. Near the rocks down toward the furthest tip of the island, we ummed and aahed over a female Goldeneye with a pale bill, only to have it mercifully upstaged by a cruising **Merlin**.

Cruising through Salisbury Caravan Park in the gathering twilight, the car in back asked via walkie-talkie for clarification of a hesitation on the part of the front-runners. Rather calmly, Al Richards replied, "Well, there was a short-eared that just flew away from the top of a tree, but I think Chris (Ellison) is onto another one."

There was indeed another **Short-eared Owl** sitting on a dead snag overhanging the edge of the saltmarsh. We watched it for a good quarter of an hour at close range before it finally decided to go look for dinner, which we were also happy to do. A fine day was had by all.

David Peake-Jones



On **Saturday, January 15**, a small but stalwart group of birders assembled at the Hitchcock Center, ready to go find **winter finches**, with the help of **Shirley Hillborn**. A quick poll (as opposed to a Redpoll) was enough to determine that there were, in fact, virtually none anywhere in the region anyone could think of. We determined instead to make a free-flowing tour of the valley in search of whatever might, in fact, be there. Our first stop was Harvey's brother's home in Shutesbury. We stood around for some time enjoying a very interesting group of Goldfinches and Bluebirds, while watching for the appearance of the **Red-headed Woodpecker**. After almost an hour it actually showed up, and is now quite a splendid sight in almost full breeding plumage. While we waited, a single **Pine Siskin**, alertly spotted by Dave Mako, justified the title of the trip. There was also a nice Red-breasted Nuthatch visiting the same feeder.

After some creative navigation northward, we arrived at the Turner's Falls Airport, where a beautiful Bald Eagle sported overhead. There was also a small flock of Horned Larks. The canal at Turners was still largely open. In addition to several nice Common Goldeneye, we were astounded to see a gorgeous male **Canvasback**. We made our way through the back-blocks of Montague encountering at least one fascinating flock of Tree Sparrows, Juncos, and White-throated Sparrows along the roadside. We eventually found ourselves at the Northampton airport, watching a large flock of Horned Larks playing chicken along the airstrip. We were unable to find any other species amongst this cryptic group, but wended our way back to Amherst quite satisfied.

David Peake-Jones



On **Saturday, January 29**, **Geoff LeBaron** led the club to coastal **Rhode Island** to explore his old stomping ground. Geoff's Saturn led the way, followed by an embarrassing Green Ford Escort. Jim Marcum brought up the rear, presumably on the grounds that his giant SUV so deprived the atmosphere of oxygen as to make

passage of other vehicles through its wake impossible. The bay at Watch Hill was thoroughly frozen and birdless. We adjourned from there toward Misquamicut, coming across a superb adult Cooper's Hawk on station near a neighborhood feeder. On Atlantic Avenue, unusual snow cover had apparently deterred even the Snow Buntings from their usual haunts along the grassy verges of the road, but a Northern Flicker perched ornamentally on one of the summer cottages, and another Cooper's Hawk flashed past us on a hunting run. Hopefully the target was one of the numerous House Sparrows in the area, not the Carolina Wren seen briefly by Jim Marcum's crew.

Along the ice-encrusted shore at Weekapaug, we found several Brant, and a multitude of wintering Common Loons, occasioning Geoff to comment that this part of coastal RI typically hosts higher numbers of wintering loons than other parts of the New England coastline. There were also several Horned Grebes here, a species which is also well represented along this coast in winter. A Sanderling perched rather improbably on an icy rock in the surf. A small flock of Dunlin tore past, but not too quickly for Geoff to see their drooping bills. Amongst the Common Goldeneye in the bay were several interesting first year males, which resembled adult females in all respects, except that they had the characteristically male white spot on the face.

At the Weekapaug breezeway, the over-achieving Marcum group brought the rest of us to a grinding halt by observing a **Black-crowned Night Heron** sitting by the water's edge. While we looked at this superb specimen, there was a flurry overhead as a passing group of starlings was suddenly depleted by one. Said Starling had fallen prey to a **Peregrine Falcon**, which devoured it atop a light pole close by. Close examination of the saltmarsh surrounding the breezeway yielded two **Great Blue Herons**.

Entering Ninigret Park, we stopped to peruse a smallish buteo in a tree. This proved to be a beautiful **Red-shouldered Hawk**. It wasn't interested in the group of ten or so Horned Larks, eking out a living in a rare windswept patch of grass on the nearby playing field. On Ninigret Pond there was a spectacular aggregation of close to a thousand mixed ducks (mostly Bufflehead, with some Scaup, Hooded Mergansers, and Common Goldeneye with them). A **Rough-legged Hawk** made a distant and tantalizing appearance, flashing its dark wrists at us in the course of disappearing over the horizon.

At Charlestown Breachway we found Surf and White-winged Scoters, plenty of Common Eiders, and a REAL cool beach buggy with giant tires. Common Grackles seemed unconscionably at home in the treetops on the way to Moonstone Beach. Here we found a Northern Harrier harassing a young Red-shouldered Hawk in the marsh. The path to the shore from the parking lot ended in a four-foot cliff. The recent storm had simply lowered the beach by that much!

At Jerusalem, there was a Double-crested Cormorant, but neither here, nor at Galilee could we pick anything white-winged out of the packs of gulls. A Sharp-shinned Hawk flashed across the road as we departed Jerusalem, and we relocated it moments later, perched in the top of a tiny rose bush in the parking lot of Happy Jack's restaurant. It had cornered a Song Sparrow at the base of the bush, and tried to flush it from this refuge for several minutes. Eventually, the sparrow broke cover, and seemed destined for demise when the sharpie rather unsportingly plucked a spectating vole out of the snow, leaving the sparrow to fly free.

Raptors excepted, the day had been quite bland to this point. We gambled and went back to Ninigret Park in search of reported **Short-eared Owls**. An individual appeared right on cue and hunted in front of us (successfully, it turned out) for at least half an hour. The perfect end to a very good day!

Coming Trips

Please register with the trip leader(s) and check this schedule's information when a phone number is given. The Field Trip Chair (Michael Locher-413-585-5864, fieldtrip@hampshirebirdclub.org) is always looking for new trip ideas and leaders. The Hampshire Bird Club recommends carpooling whenever possible, and suggests that all riders share equally the per-car cost of \$0.30 per mile, as well as tolls and parking. See also the "Field Trip Guidelines for Participants" (in the September newsletter or on the Website).

***Monhegan Island**

Overnight Trip: May 27-May 30, 2005 (Memorial Day Weekend)

Most birding trips are strategic affairs. We pile in and out of vehicles at carefully selected locations, carefully tailoring our effort to maximize our chances of seeing one of the rarer members of the world's dwindling avifauna, or of intercepting one of those migrants who bless us ever so briefly with their presence. This is all well and good, but if you have ever wanted to steep yourself in the Spring migration, Monhegan is for you.

During the Spring, migrant songbirds moving northward up the Atlantic seaboard are sometimes pushed out over the ocean by storms, and have to fight their way back toward the safety of land. Monhegan Island lies about twelve miles off the coast of Maine and is often a haven for exhausted birds to recuperate before resuming the perilous journey northward. We will arrive on the island on the Friday of Memorial Day weekend, without vehicles, and immerse ourselves in the gentle rhythms of island life. We'll find migrant songbirds throughout the tiny village of Monhegan, sheltering in the numerous apple trees, picking through the sea-wrack on the town beach for sand-fleas, or even hiding in the lobster pots piled almost everywhere. Each day will bring fresh migrants to the island, and a storm could even produce one of the fallouts of birding legend.

When the birding slows down, we can venture off on any of the island's numerous walking trails to Lobster Cove, the stupendous seaward cliffs, the Seal Rocks (aptly named), or the Enchanted Forest. We'll stay at the rustic Trailing Yew, which will lay on breakfast and dinner each day, including a local lobster dinner. This is the perfect opportunity to slow down, REALLY learn the birds, and remember what life *should* be about. This trip is open only to members of the Hampshire Bird Club. For information, call Andrew Magee (586 1509) or David Peake-Jones (529 9541, davidpj@the-spa.com). To register (places assured by deposit only), call David.

Saturday, March 5. Plum Island. All day. Geoff LeBaron (413-268-9281) will seek out late winter specialties like Rough-legged Hawks, Barrow's Goldeneyes, Glaucous Gulls, and Snowy Owls. Dress warmly. Meet at the Northampton Bowl at 6:45 a.m. (E)

Wednesday, March 16. Midweek half day in the Connecticut River Valley. Morning. Harvey Allen (413-253-7963) will go where the birds are. Meet at 7:30 a.m. on the corner of Rt. 116 and Bay Road, Amherst, across from Atkin's Farm. Call for more information as the date approaches. (E)

Saturday, March 19. Connecticut River Waterfowl. Half day. Mike Locher (413-585-5864) will scour the river and neighboring ponds from Hadley to Turner's Falls for migrating ducks and geese. Expect scenic detours. Call for details as the date approaches. (E)

***Sunday, April 3. Woodcocks.** Early evening. Mike Locher (413-585-5864) will look for displaying American Woodcocks, and then try to call out some owls on the way home. Meet at 5:30 p.m. at Mitch's Marina on Route 47 in Hadley. (E)

QUABBIN CHRISTMAS COUNT

The Quabbin C.B.C. took place on Saturday, Jan 1 under extremely delightful conditions. Temperatures ranged from 30-48 degrees, clear skies, stiff southwest breeze and zero snow cover. In general- running water was open, beaver ponds, coves and smaller bodies of the Quabbin watershed were frozen or mostly frozen, the main body of the reservoir was wide open. Sixty-four species were tallied along with twelve species of mammals.

Species	Number	Species	Number
Common Loon	6	Horned Grebe	6
Red-necked Grebe (4 th record)	1	Canada Goose	3
Black Duck	48	Mallard	107
Green-winged Teal (3 rd record)	1	Bufflehead	2
Common Goldeneye	49	Hooded Merganser	27
Common Merganser	137	Bald Eagle – 10 adult, 9 immature	19
Sharp-shinned Hawk	2	Cooper's Hawk	1
Northern Goshawk	1	Red-tailed Hawk	27
Golden Eagle	1	Ruffed Grouse	15
Wild Turkey	149	Ring-billed Gull	133
Herring Gull	125	Greater Black-backed Gull	14
Rock Pigeon	184	Mourning Dove	204
Eastern Screech-Owl	1	Great Horned Owl	6
Barred Owl	6	Northern Saw-Whet Owl	6
Belted Kingfisher	3	Red-bellied Woodpecker (new high)	10
Downy Woodpecker	78	Hairy Woodpecker	28
Northern Flicker	1	Pileated Woodpecker	17
Northern Shrike	3	Blue Jay	283
American Crow	282	Common Raven	34
Black-capped Chickadee	902	Tufted Titmouse	156
Red-breasted Nuthatch	28	White-breasted Nuthatch	194
Brown Creeper	20	Carolina Wren	2
Winter Wren	2	Golden-crowned Kinglet	116
Eastern Bluebird	30	Hermit Thrush (2 nd record)	2
American Robin	384	Northern Mockingbird	9
European Starling	671	Cedar Waxwing	165
Eastern Towhee	1	American Tree Sparrow	129
Song Sparrow	11	White-throated Sparrow	19
Dark-eyed Junco	267	Northern Cardinal	54
Common Grackle	1	Brown-headed Cowbird	1
Purple Finch	14	House Finch	66
Common Redpoll	8	American Goldfinch	203
House Sparrow (new high)	1032		

Amongst the mammals recorded were five river otter, a mink, and a flying squirrel disturbed by one observer while kipping* in a bird-nesting box.

**Kipping*: Nothing to do with smoked herring, though from the same part of the world. To take a nap or short restorative sleep. Hence the protestation of the slumbering employee, rudely awoken, "Oh come on guv, I was just 'avin' a kip!"

Remembering Bill Schafer

Long-time HBC member **Bill Schafer** died on December 11, 2004 after a long battle with cancer. Bill had wide-ranging environmental interests, including old-growth forests, to which he was a frequent visitor, and conservation. Bill was a pivotal member of the Broad Brook Coalition, and was awarded their Volunteer Service Award in 2004. Birders will remember him as an enthusiastic member of the Hitchcock Center Spring Birding Class under Jan Ortiz for several years, a participant on many HBC field trips, and the leader of at least one trip to Trustom Pond in Rhode Island, near which he lived for a time. He participated with Bob Packard in the Northampton Christmas Count for several years.

Bill was known for his determination to see every bird as thoroughly as possible. Jan Ortiz recounts the following anecdote from a trip to Plum Island. Members of the (somewhat large) group were standing on the narrow boardwalk at Hellcat Swamp. From her position at the head of the column, Jan had located “a good warbler or two” in the surrounding trees, and the word of this discovery flashed back through the group. Bill was, uncharacteristically, near the rear of the line. Jan reports becoming aware of a commotion amongst the assembled birders, and says it looked like something was tunneling its way up the line, pushing some birders to one side, and some to the other. When the disturbance finally reached the front, Jan responded to a tug on her pant leg, and found that Bill had crawled on hands and knees through the entire group. Peering upward, he exclaimed something like, “This better be good!” and proceeded to locate the bird, as always.

Some of Bill’s last exploits with the club were to Monhegan Island in both 2002 and 2003. No one on either of those trips will easily forget the obvious battle Bill fought to stay ahead of his illness. Though clearly unwell and very tired at times, he showed up for most every walk, and was always characteristically near the front of the group. Thanks Bill, for the time you spent with HBC and for the enthusiasm you brought to our birding community!

LIBRARY

HBC has a substantial library at the Hitchcock Center in Amherst. **Hours** are 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. on Tuesday through Friday, and 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. on Saturdays. Items can be signed out and borrowed for a period of up to one month, or longer by arrangement. **Henry Lappen** is happy to bring items to meetings, given a few days notice! Call him at **(413) 549 3722**.

CONSERVATION

*If you are interested in conservation of birds and birding habitat, you may like to share information and effort with others in the club. **Anne Lombard** is our **Conservation Chair**. She is looking for ideas on how we can contribute to the conservation of species in our area. Contact her at **(413) 586 7509**, or aslombard@comcast.net*

Welcome New Members

Rebecca Baronoski: Belchertown
Charles (Chuck) Horn: Westhampton
Carol Trosset: Amherst

HITCHCOCK PROGRAMS

HOME CHEESE MAKING: *Ricki Carroll, New England Cheese Making & Supplies*
Sunday, February 13, 1 - 3 p.m.

WINTER TREE AND SHRUB ID: *Brayton Wilson, UMass Professor Emeritus*
Saturdays, February 5 & 12, 9 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

RETURN OF LARGE MAMMALS: Nick & Valerie Wisniewski, Walnut Hill Tracking
Monday, February 7, 7 p.m.

OWL PROWL: *David Spector, Central Connecticut State University Professor & Ornithologist*
Sunday, February 27, 3 a.m. (aka very late Saturday night)

MONARCHS IN MEXICO: *Jennifer Wiest, Hitchcock Center Educator*
Monday, March 7, 7 p.m.

BIRDING BY THE BOOK: SPRING BIRDING:

Wednesday Classes:

March 23, April 6 (waterfowl), April 27 (warblers), 7 - 9 p.m.

Weekend Field Trips:

March 26, TBA (To Bird Anywhere) with Scott Surner, 7 a.m. - noon

April 9, to East Meadows (pg 174) with Scott Surner, 7 a.m. - noon

April 16, to Lake Siog & Hamilton Reservoir (pg 289) with Bill Cormier, 7 a.m. - noon

May 7, to Quabbin Reservoir (pg 251) with Harvey Allen, 7 a.m. - noon

May 15, to Beartown State Forest (pg 79) with Myles & Kathy Conway, 7 a.m. - noon

May 22, to High Ledges Wildlife Sanctuary (pg 98) with David McLain, 7 a.m. - noon

June 4, to Tyringham Valley & Cobble (pg 71) with Edwin Neumuth, 7 a.m. - noon

THE SECRET LIFE OF BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEES

Susan Smith, Professor of Biological Sciences, Mount Holyoke College
Tuesday, February 15, 7 p.m at the Hitchcock Center for the Environment

FOREST HEALTH AND THE WOOLLY ADELGID: *Bob Childs, UMass Professor & Entomologist*
Tuesday, March 1, 7 p.m at Arcadia Wildlife Sanctuary, Easthampton

For details and registration for all Hitchcock programs, please contact the Hitchcock Center for the Environment, 525 South Pleasant St., Amherst MA 01002. Telephone (413) 256 6006, or on the web at www.hitchcockcenter.org.

PROJECT INSPIRE!

February 5 & March 5, from 1-3 PM (both days)

An **Introductory Bird Watching Program** will be offered at the **Great Falls Discovery Center** on **Avenue A** in **Turners Falls**. The program will include a brief introduction to the use of binoculars and viewing scopes, followed by an excursion by car caravan to view waterfowl, gulls, and other local birds in nearby locations along the Connecticut River. The pace of the program will accommodate all ages-- from the youngest in the family to seniors. Binoculars and scopes will be available for people to use.

People with disabilities are especially invited to attend. For further information and to pre-register, please call **413-545-5758**. The program is limited to the first 12 people who sign up and may be offered on a monthly basis if there is enough interest.

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

David Peake-Jones, Editor
(413) 529 9541
newsletter@hampshirebirdclub.org



Hampshire Bird Club, Inc. Amherst, Massachusetts

www.hampshirebirdclub.org

Volume 21, No. 7

March, 2005

Canadian biologist Jim Duncan, quoted in an article in the February edition of *National Geographic*, says that being attacked by a nesting Great Gray Owl is rather like “being hit with a two-by-four with nails sticking out of it.” Scores of visitors, from diehard migrant birders, to photographers armed with mice and obscene optical equipment, to curious local families walking their dogs, got an opportunity to see these birds in quite a different light on Ile Bizard, just to the north-west of downtown Montreal this past month. Herman Staengle’s account of his encounter comes later in this edition. By contrast with Duncan’s image of fierce familial protectiveness, the Great Grays on Ile Bizard were very tolerant of people and almost oblivious even to the snowmobiles howling by only feet from their perches. A marvelous gift from the boreal wilderness!

Oh, and by the way, **SIGN UP FOR MONHEGAN!!!** (page 4)

PROGRAMS

Programs are held at Immanuel Lutheran Church, 867 North Pleasant St. in Amherst. Should bad weather force a cancellation, it will be announced on WHMP 1400 AM radio.

This Month

Monday, March 14 at 7:30 PM

Margaret Rubega speaks about **“Eating at the Interface of Water and Land: the Evolution of Feeding Systems in Aquatic Birds.”**

Aquatic birds are faced with an interesting set of problems while trying to secure food in a dense, fluid medium like water, while they themselves are largely operating in air. Shorebirds are particularly interesting because they display an array of lifestyles that vary from almost fully aquatic to completely land-based. This talk will address the interaction of form and function in the feeding systems of aquatic birds, with a focus on phalaropes, a group of shorebirds that have evolved a highly aquatic way of life, and a planktivorous feeding habit.

Margaret Rubega received a B.S. in Biology from Southern Connecticut State College in New Haven, CT, and a Ph. D. in Biology from the University of California at Irvine. She did postdoctoral work at the University of Nevada, Reno, on waterbirds. She is currently Assistant Professor of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology at the University of Connecticut, and the Connecticut State Ornithologist. Dr. Rubega works primarily on the ecology, evolution, functional morphology, and biomechanics of feeding in birds, particularly aquatic species. She is also interested in avian conservation, especially the interactions of birds and invasive plants.

Coming Programs

April 11. Geoff LeBaron. “From Kamchatka to Katmai: An Incredible Journey”

May 9. Susan Roney Drennan. “Pacific Albatross Biology and Conservation”

June 13. Frank Gill. “The Power of Citizen Science”

Last Month's Program

On a trial basis, and subject to the ever-variable motivation of the editor, come some scholarly water-wings for those of us who fall asleep in meetings, or for whatever forlorn reason, fail to attend altogether. Yes, dear reader, we shall attempt to summarize the presentation of last month's speaker for the edification of the HBC faithful.

On February 14, Daniel Klem spoke on "Glass: A Bird Conservation Issue."

Twenty five percent of North America's bird species experience significant mortality due to collisions with glass. Even using conservative assumptions, glass-related mortality rates dwarf those due to cats, pesticides, and navigation/cell phone towers. Contrary to popular belief, birds rarely die of spinal injuries, but rather of brain injury. The extent of the problem is masked by the fact that foraging omnivores such as raccoons, cats, and even chipmunks, remove and conceal killed birds, often before they are observed by people.

This mortality, especially in rare species with certain types of migratory and foraging behavior can be devastating. The Swift Parrot, native to South-eastern Australia, is a case in point. Of about 1,000 breeding pairs, 1.5% annually are killed by collisions with window glass.

Mortality can be reduced at a given window by using any means to either make the window space look obstructed, or by physically preventing birds from hitting the glass. In the latter category, mesh screens (using horticultural bird-excluding plastic mesh) can be fitted over windows. In order to make the glass detectable, opaque shapes can be attached to it. Dr Klem has conducted studies of this popular technique, and found that dark silhouettes of hawks etc. can be effective, but only inasmuch as they deter the birds from flying through that section of the window space covered by the silhouette. In other words, the birds do not interpret the shape as that of a real hawk, merely as a physical obstruction. In order for any opaque pattern to deter birds from trying to fly through a window space, the space between elements of the design must be no more than 2-4 inches. Unfortunately, this severely reduces the functionality of the window.

Glass can also be made visible to birds by frosting it, using nanoparticle coatings to create visible interference patterns, or by hanging strings of beads or bamboo strips in front of the glass, all of which are techniques with narrow potential applications.

Sadly, but not surprisingly, there has been virtually no effort on the part of organized conservation groups to change public awareness and behavior on this issue. All the currently available methods of reducing glass-related mortality involve significantly reducing the area and aesthetic effectiveness of windows. There is no simple change homeowners and commercial property owners can make that helps significantly, without making their windows less effective, or their buildings less attractive. The greatest hope for major advance in this field comes from the fact that many species of birds are sensitive to ultraviolet light. If materials can be incorporated in glass to create high-density patterns of UV reflectance, the space might appear obstructed to birds, but still admit visible light, as desired by people. Sadly, the architectural and glass industries are loathe to investigate these possibilities in the absence of widespread pressure from the consuming public.

As an interesting sidelight, there is a counterintuitive relationship between bird feeders and glass-related mortality in birds. Feeders located ten (10) yards or so from a window, will contribute to more death and injury than feeders located closer to the window, because at the larger distances, birds are (a) less able to pick up subtle clues like dirt on the pane before launching into flight toward the glass, and (b) build up greater momentum before a collision. If feeders are to be anywhere within 15 yards of window glass, particularly large expanses which reflect nearby habitat, they should be immediately adjacent to the window (range less than 1 yard). Window screens can be viewed and bought at www.birdscreen.com

FIELD TRIPS

Reports

Three intrepid souls attended the trip to **Plymouth and Falmouth**, on **Saturday, February 5**, which observed a total of 47 species of birds and a pair of River Otters. As will be apparent below, **Al Richards** exercised considerable poetic license in selecting the locales visited.

The weather was unbelievably mild and pleasant. While many of the ponds we normally visit were either completely, or at least mostly, frozen, we were able to observe seventeen species of waterfowl including very nice looks at Harlequins. Some of the best observations were at Provincetown Harbor where we saw **Thick-billed Murres, Red-necked- and Horned-Grebes**, and a **Black Guillemot** right below us in amongst the boats. Sharp-eyed Herman Staengle spotted two otters playing peek-a-boo at the edge of the ice at Marston Mills Pond which strangely had nary a single duck despite much open water. A very enthusiastic Dhyana Miller (a junior at Hampshire College) was a pleasant representative of new young birders in the area.

Al Richards

Coming Trips

Please register with the trip leader(s) and check this schedule's information when a phone number is given. The Field Trip Chair (Michael Locher-413-585-5864, fieldtrip@hampshirebirdclub.org) is always looking for new trip ideas and leaders. The Hampshire Bird Club recommends carpooling whenever possible, and suggests that all riders share equally the per-car cost of \$0.30 per mile, as well as tolls and parking. See also the "Field Trip Guidelines for Participants" (in the September newsletter or on the Website).

Wednesday, March 16. Midweek half day in the Connecticut River Valley. Morning. Harvey Allen (413-253-7963) will go where the birds are. Meet at 7:30 a.m. on the corner of Rt. 116 and Bay Road, Amherst, across from Atkin's Farm. Call for more information as the date approaches. (E)

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***Sunday, April 3. Woodcocks.** Early evening. Mike Locher (413-585-5864) will look for displaying American Woodcocks, and then try to call out some owls on the way home. Meet at 5:30 p.m. at Mitch's Marina on Route 47 in Hadley. (E)

Fall Field trip Suggestions

Even with Spring only a vague possibility, Mike Locher (585 5864; mlocher@yahoo.com) is assiduously thinking about the Fall Field Trip Schedule. Please contact him with suggestions and requests for future trips. If you are willing to lead the requested trip/s, so much the better.

NOMINATING COMMITTEE

The Annual General Meeting, including the election of the Board for 2005-2006 will take place before the program on Monday, May 9. A slate of nominees will be presented to the membership at the April meeting, and in the April newsletter. The **Nominating Committee** for this year consists of **Sue Emerson, Betsy Higgins, and Mary Alice Wilson**. Please contact any member of the committee if you would like to serve on the Board, or if there is a club member you feel would serve well in any position.

OVERNIGHT TRIPS

There are still vacancies for:

MONHEGAN ISLAND

May 27-30, 2005

Most birding trips are targetted affairs. We pile in and out of vehicles at strategic locations, carefully tailoring our effort to those places and times most likely to maximize our chances of seeing one of the rarer members of the world's dwindling avifauna, or of intercepting one of those migrants who bless us ever so briefly with their presence. This is all well and good, but if you have ever wanted to steep yourself in the Spring migration, Monhegan is for you.

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OWLS IN MONTREAL

Though the massive numbers of Great Gray Owls reported in Minnesota have not materialized this far east, there have been elevated numbers of these birds just north of the St. Lawrence river for much of the winter. Here is an account of one extra-curricular jaunt to see these remarkable birds by a group of freelancing HBC birders.

On **Saturday, February 12**, Al Richards, Shawn Smolen-Morton and I headed north across the border in hopes of observing several of the **Great Gray Owls** reported on **Ile Bizard near Montreal**. The driving time (one way) was about 5.5 hours. Watching for large gray shapes while walking the trails and driving the roads on Ile Bizard, the owls were surprisingly easy to find. Al observed two birds from the parking lot and we were fortunate to come face-to-face with these amazing creatures. Remarkably, the owls appeared completely undisturbed by the presence of humans, providing wonderful observations. Apart from their striking appearance, we found their hunting behavior, with the owls diving into the snow to catch voles, particularly memorable. Sometimes the owls perched on fairly thin branches which seemed too fragile to support their apparent weight.

Continues over →

After observing at least six Great Gray Owls on Ile Bizard, we moved on to St-Eustache where a **Northern Hawk Owl** had been sighted. Hardly had we arrived when Al, from the driver's seat, spotted the bird perched atop a tall tree. We scoped the bird and enjoyed a great look.

Our third owl stop took us to Boucherville where several species of owls had been reported. We found a **Saw-Whet** napping in a cedar rather close to the road and a pair of Great Horned Owls perched in a spruce. We enjoyed nice looks at both species. The Boreal Owl had not been seen for several days and remained elusive. Additional notable sightings included two Pine Grosbeaks and several mixed flocks of Snow Buntings and Lapland Longspurs.

In summary, we had a fine day indeed and highly recommend the trip!

Herman Staengle

Please consider writing a report of any unusual birding trips you may do: whether under the auspices of the club or not. It all helps inspire others and provide future fodder for the field trip committee. Ed.

LIBRARY

Your mom always said "Neither a borrower or a lender be." Right?

WRONG!!!!!! HBC has a substantial library, located at the Hitchcock Center for the Environment in Amherst. Henry Lappen maintains a collection of birding resources including field guides, bird-finding guides to almost every major birding destination in the U.S., and some overseas locations, natural histories, periodicals and videos. Why *buy* for that once-in-a-lifetime trip to the Rio Grande valley, when you could *borrow*? Hours are 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. on Tuesday through Friday, and 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. on Saturdays. Items can be signed out and borrowed for a period of up to one month, or longer by arrangement. Henry is happy to bring items to meetings, if you give him a few days in advance. You can reach him at **(413) 549 3722**.

Remembering Jennifer Pinkham

On February 1, 2005 we lost a friend, fellow birder and HBC member, Jennifer Pinkham. Jennifer had been very ill for two and a half years, but all the while she kept her zest for life, sense of humor and love of birds. We will miss her.

Jennifer grew up in Northern Maine where her lifelong interest in the natural world developed. As she continued her education at Bowdoin College, Yale and MIT, she found time to pursue other interests, and bird life was among them. Jennifer met and married Martin Weinberg and settled in the Pioneer Valley. Her favorite birding spot may have been her back yard in Pelham, given her regular reports of Barred Owl, Sharp-Shinned Hawk and the U-flight of Ruby-Throated Hummingbirds. Jennifer loved visiting Block Island, including the birding it afforded.

Some club members remember Jennifer for her gift of conversation. She was a regular at the HBC Saturday evenings during WFCR fund drives. Jennifer was always the first volunteer for the "hot seat" where half the calls arrive. Anyone who met Jennifer would remember her quick wit and her gift for puns, which were sometimes groaners, often sarcastic, and always funny. I only wish I had a good one now to do her justice. Farewell, Jennifer.

Theopholis Punoval

PROJECT INSPIRE!

Programs: Spring 2005

These gentle paced bird watching opportunities are open for people of all ages and abilities. Some optical equipment and birding gear is available to use during the open houses and with advance notice on the field trips.

Accessible Birding Programs at Turners Falls continue on
Saturday, April 2, 9 – 11am & Saturday, May 7, 8 – 10am

Join Jan Ortiz in search of spring arrivals. We'll carpool to local sites and bird at a pace that accommodates all ages. These outings are for anyone interested in birds -- for people both with and without disabilities. Advance registration is required; please call All Out Adventures at 413-527-8980.

Accessible Birding at Fitzgerald Lake Conservation Area

North Farms Road entrance

Northampton, MA

Saturday, April 9, 9 -11am and Wednesday, May 4, 8 -10am

Join Shirley Hilborn and Anne Lombard as they leisurely look and listen for early migrants along the accessible walkway that leads out to the lake. See what species will turn up in the varied habitat between the parking area and the water. These walks are for anyone interested in birds -- for people both with and without disabilities. Advance registration is required; please call All Out Adventures at 413-527-8980.

HITCHCOCK PROGRAMS

WIND POWER IN NEW ENGLAND: *Walton Congdon & Sally Wright*
Sunday, March 13, 1 - 3 p.m.

MONARCHS IN MEXICO: *Jennifer Wiest, Hitchcock Center Educator*
Monday, March 7, 7 p.m.

BIRDING BY THE BOOK: SPRING BIRDING
Wednesday Classes and Weekend Field Trips till summer

DINOSAURS IN THE PIONEER VALLEY: *Paul Olsen, Columbia University Tuesday, March 15, 7 p.m.*
Held at Heritage State Park, Holyoke

HERPS AND ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH: *Al Richmond, UMass Professor*
Tuesday, March 29, 7 p.m.
Held at Northfield Mountain Recreation Area, Northfield

For details and registration for all Hitchcock programs, please contact the Hitchcock Center for the Environment, 525 South Pleasant St., Amherst MA 01002. Telephone (413) 256 6006, or on the web at www.hitchcockcenter.org.

That's all for this month.

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

David Peake-Jones, Editor
 (413) 529 9541

newsletter@hampshirebirdclub.org



Hampshire Bird Club, Inc. Amherst, Massachusetts

www.hampshirebirdclub.org

Volume 21, No. 8

April, 2005

PROGRAMS

This Month

Monday, April 11 at 7:30 PM

Geoff LeBaron brings us “*From Kamchatka to Katmai: An Incredible Journey*”

Programs are held at Immanuel Lutheran Church: 867 North Pleasant St., Amherst.

Please join us for a journey along the southern rim of the Bering Sea, as we traverse the entire length of the Aleutian Island chain from the frozen Kamchatka Peninsula of Russia to the verdant Alaska Peninsula. We'll visit Attu, Kiska, and Dutch and Geographic Harbors, as well as Petropavlosk Kamchatskii and the Valley of the Geysers in the frozen interior of Kamchatka.

Only in recent times have the political tides changed allowing such an amazing voyage to this land of incomparable scenery, astounding seabird colonies (including 16 species of alcids), and the chain of perfect cone-shaped volcanoes that makes up the northern arc of the “chain of fire.” Fabled Attu Island is once again reachable only by sea, and artifacts of the little-publicized Japanese occupation of the Aleutian Islands during the Second World War will be explored throughout visits to the “Rat Islands” of the outer Aleutians.

Geoff LeBaron graduated from the University of Miami, Florida, and completed a Masters degree in Zoology at the University of Rhode Island. He spent five years on the staff at the Academy of Sciences in Philadelphia, and currently works as the Christmas Count Director for National Audubon. In addition, he has conducted ornithological fieldwork for the state Audubon societies of New Hampshire and Rhode Island. He led whale- and seabird-watching trips on Stellwagen Bank for three seasons and has logged thousands of hours surveying marine mammals along the eastern coast of the United States. Geoff has led natural history tours to Alaska, Big Bend, the Texas Hill Country, Baja California, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands, Panama and Costa Rica, the Galapagos Islands and Ecuador, Argentina, the Falkland Islands, Antarctica, Australia, and New Zealand. Geoff is a natural teacher and leader, with tremendous patience and fantastic birding skills.

Coming Up

May 9. Susan Roney Drennan. “Pacific Albatross Biology and Conservation”

June 13. Frank Gill. “The Power of Citizen Science”

Last Month

Margaret Rubega: “Feeding at the Interface of Water and Land”

Ask an elementary school kid to design a bird bill to feed on plankton, and most would come up with a filtration device like the bill of the flamingo. Most teachers would challenge a student who came up with a simple, straight, thin bill. Nevertheless, Red-necked Phalaropes have been living on the open ocean for millenia, armed with nothing more than a pair of tweezers and a marvelous technique.

The phalaropes have not resorted to filter-feeding. They visually identify individual prey items in the water column and grab them. To increase the number of available prey items, phalaropes kick water away from the body with one leg. In addition to making them spin (a side effect), this creates a “hole” in the water under

the bird's body (visible on film), which, in turn, draws water and critters up from depths of up to a foot and a half.

So far, so good! Most of us probably assume that swallowing the prey after capture is somehow simple. This fails to take account of an obvious problem. Being wet and tiny, the prey will tend to stick to the bill of the bird. Transferring it to the mouth presents a tricky challenge, which must be solved without expending precious energy or feeding time.

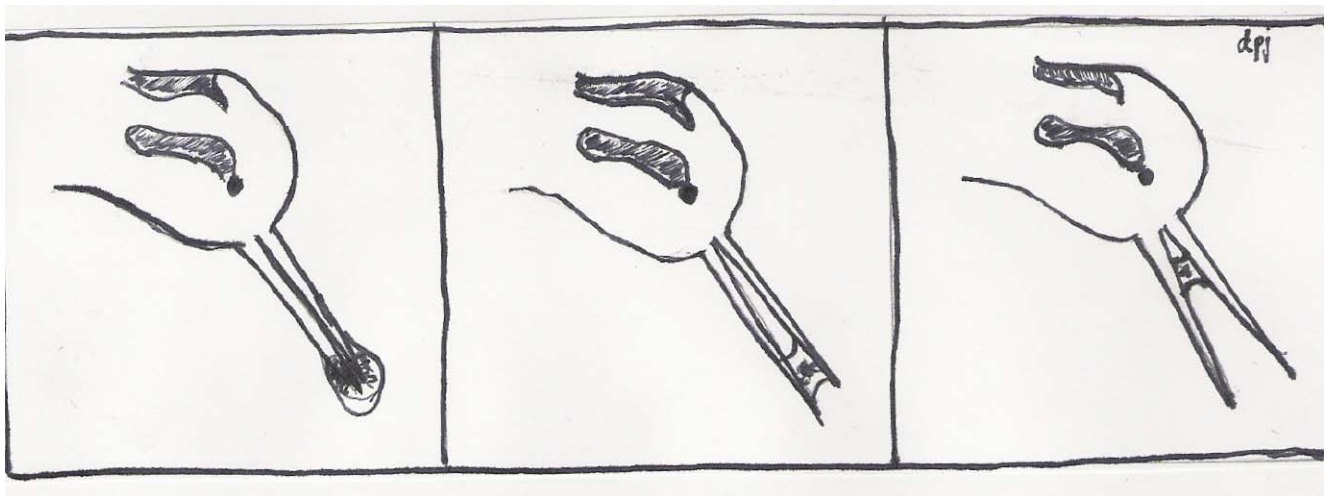
Margaret Rubega finds that phalaropes, and shorebirds in general, make use of the physical properties of their bills and water, in an elegant technique called "surface-tension feeding," presumably the culmination of millions of years of evolutionary experimentation.

The key facts are these:

- Water is adhesive (it sticks to most things, to varying degrees),
- Phalarope bills are "wetable", meaning that forces of adhesion between the bill and a drop of water, substantially overcome the surface tension of the drop itself,
- An open bird beak forms a "v" shape: the distance between the mandibles decreases toward the base,
- Surface tension tends to decrease the surface area of a drop of water. For this reason, drops will tend to assume the smallest size possible. In other words, stretching a drop of water is like stretching a spring – potential energy accumulates in the drop. Unless something keeps the drop stretched, it will tend to contract again, releasing the potential energy.

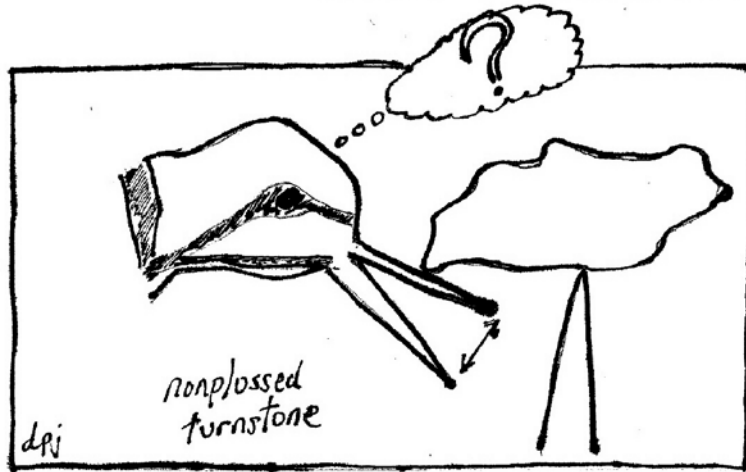
Now here's what happens.

1. The bird grabs a small creature in the tip of its bill, enclosed in a drop of water. The drop adheres to the surface of the bill, which limits its shape and size.
2. The bird opens its bill slightly, keeping the drop connected to both mandibles.
3. The drop now finds itself stretched between two rails. Migrating up the rails towards where they meet reduces the degree of stretch, the surface area, the surface tension, and the potential energy trapped in the drop. In this way, in only 100ths of a second, the water drop, and its passenger critter are transferred up the bill to the mouth for swallowing.



In addition to uncovering these gorgeous dynamics, Margaret suggests that opening the bill is a deeply ingrained motor pathway in shorebirds, which has been co-opted to serve a variety of different feeding strategies. Ruddy Turnstones, for example, begin lifting a stone by inserting the bill under it, then opening the

beak. The lower mandible bears against the ground, and the upper mandible lifts the stone. The turnstone will do this even when the stone rests on a pedestal, meaning there is nothing upon which the lower mandible can bear. Margaret suggests, mischievously, that the birds even look momentarily nonplussed when their bill opens ineffectually in these experiments.*



Margaret's website: www.eeb.uconn.edu/faculty/rubega/rubega.htm

* I can't resist pointing out that opening the mouth also appears to be a deeply ingrained motor pathway in humans. As with Margaret's pedestal-feeding turnstones, it often seems to serve no apparent purpose.

FIELD TRIPS

Reports

On Saturday, March 5, ten birders under the protective wing of **Geoff LeBaron** toured the **Plum Island/Newburyport** region of eastern Massachusetts. From Joppa Flats we looked out at an estuary alive with American Black Ducks, Mallards, gulls, and distant Bufflehead/Goldeneye/Long-tailed types, but nothing unusual. Moving upriver just a little to the Newburyport Sewerage Treatment Works we found three wonderfully cooperative adult "**Kumleins**" **Iceland Gulls**, sporting their grayish wingtips, rotund heads, and graceful lines.

Plum Island itself proved to be rather desolate. All but one of the dirty snowballs dotting the icy wastes of the saltmarsh proved to be just that. The other was a large, immature, **Snowy Owl**. For you astronomers, there were no comets in view. We wandered out to the beach twice for looks at good numbers of White-winged Scoters, the odd Common and Red-throated Loon, and Horned Grebes.

We unsuccessfully searched a section of the Newburyport residential area for a reported Varied Thrush, before visiting the chain bridge. There were five **Bald Eagles** in the area, including two striking adults. Just as we did last year, we saw Great Cormorants in unique breeding plumage. These individuals had large white flank patches, and grizzled necks. They show this plumage only during the breeding season, and mostly in places far removed from us here in New England. At Cashman Park the group got great looks at winter-clad **Long-tailed Ducks**. Toward the end of the day at Salisbury Beach State Park, we found a **Merlin** sitting on the pavilion, and got fantastic views of two hunting **Short-eared Owls**.



On **March 19**, a few optimists led by **Mike Locher** perused the **Connecticut River Valley** in search of wintering species and migrating waterfowl. The trip was notable for visiting some sites further south than we customarily do, beginning with an area just below the Rt. 116 dam in Holyoke. This region had yielded a good selection of unusual gulls a couple of weeks earlier. Despite limited access, we did catch a glimpse of an **Iceland Gull** amongst the usual complement of wintering gulls. From the Dinosaur Tracks along Rt 5 in Holyoke we saw a nice group of Goldeneye, with the males displaying avidly. Moving northward, we found two **Peregrine Falcons** hanging around the cliffs at Sugarloaf, perhaps contemplating procreation.

From there, we wended our way to the Rod and Gun Club, the canal, and Barton's Cove. These locations offered us nice but not surprising looks at Common and Hooded Mergansers, Ring-necked Ducks and Lesser Scaup. Great Pond in Hatfield remained almost entirely icebound. All in all, the Connecticut Valley offered tantalizing glimpses of impending Spring, but Mother Nature is yet to deliver!

Coming Trips

***Sunday, April 3. Woodcocks.** Early evening. Mike Locher (413-585-5864) will look for displaying American Woodcocks, and then try to call out some owls on the way home. Meet at 5:30 p.m. at Mitch's Marina on Route 47 in Hadley. (E)

Saturday, April 16. Ashley Reservoir: early warblers. Half day. Bob Bieda (413-527-2623) will beat the bushes for Pine and Palm Warblers, Broad-winged Hawks, Ospreys, and Ruby-crowned Kinglets. Meet at the Holiday Inn parking lot, Exit 15 ("Holyoke Mall") off Route 91 at 7 a.m. Call to register. (E)

Wednesday, April 20. Midweek half day in the Connecticut River Valley. Harvey Allen (413-253-7963) will go where the birds are. Meet at 7:30 a.m. on the corner of Rt. 116 and Bay Road, Amherst, across from Atkin's Farm. Call for more information as the date approaches. (E)

***Saturday, April 23. More migrants.** Half day beginner's trip. Betsy Higgins (413-586-7585) looks for waterthrushes, in addition to other warblers and neotropical migrants. She'll start at Look Park in Northampton. Meet at 6:30 a.m. in the parking lot of the JFK Middle School on Bridge Road in Northampton. Call for further details. (E)

Saturday, April 30. Graves Farm. Half day. Anne Lombard (413-586-7509) and Shirley Hilborn (413-253-6462) will guide birders through Graves Farm, looking for migrants and local specialties. Meet at the Hitchcock center at 6:30 a.m. (E)

Wildwood Walks

On a gentle rise in the heart of Amherst lies the Wildwood Cemetery. Migrating songbirds are drawn to this little island, and each year the club hosts morning bird walks here during May, each led by a club member. This year walks are scheduled for the following:

Tuesdays: May 3, 10, 17 and 24

Thursdays: May 5, 12, 19 and 26

Each begins at **6:30 am** and runs until **8 am**, though of course you may freelance a little longer if you wish. Meet the leader at the main entrance, off Strong Street. Make sure you park in the designated parking areas and not on the lawn. Remain on the roads and paths in the cemetery, and respect the solemnity of the site. Thank you.

MONHEGAN ISLAND

May 27-30, 2005

There is still space for Monhegan this year, but don't leave it too long!!!

Most birding trips are targetted affairs. We pile in and out of vehicles at strategic locations, carefully tailoring our effort to those places and times most likely to maximize our chances of seeing one of the rarer members of the world's dwindling avifauna, or of intercepting one of those migrants who bless us ever so briefly with their presence. This is all well and good, but if you have ever wanted to steep yourself in the Spring migration, Monhegan is for you.

During the Spring, migrant songbirds moving northward up the Atlantic seaboard are sometimes pushed out over the ocean by storms, and have to fight their way back toward the safety of land. Monhegan Island lies about twelve miles off the coast of Maine and is often a haven for exhausted birds to recuperate before resuming the perilous journey northward. We will arrive on the island on the Friday of Memorial Day weekend, without vehicles, and immerse ourselves in the gentle rhythms of island life. We'll find migrant songbirds throughout the tiny village of Monhegan, sheltering in the numerous apple trees, picking through the sea-wrack on the town beach for sand-fleas, or even hiding in the lobster pots piled almost everywhere. Each day will bring fresh migrants to the island, and a storm could even produce one of the fallouts of birding legend. When the birding slows down, we can venture off on any of the island's numerous walking trails to Lobster Cove, the stupendous seaward cliffs, the Seal Rocks (aptly named), or the Enchanted Forest.

We'll stay at the rustic Trailing Yew, which will lay on breakfast and dinner each day, including a local lobster dinner. This is the perfect opportunity to slow down, REALLY learn the birds, and remember what life *should* be about. This trip is open only to members of the Hampshire Bird Club. For information, call Andrew Magee (586 1509) or David Peake-Jones (529 9541, davidpj@the-spa.com). To register (places assured by deposit only), call David.

DON KROODSMA: Local and Live

A Book Launch

We tend to forget that club member Don Kroodsma, during his tenure at UMass and other teaching/research institutions, established himself as a world authority on birdsong. We are therefore greatly privileged to have the opportunity to hear Don launch a copy of his latest book right here in the valley. **Hampshire Bird Club** and the **Hitchcock Center for the Environment** present:

The Singing Life of Birds: Don Kroodsma, Ornithologist & Author

Sunday, May 1, 7-9:30am at the Hitchcock Center

Don has succeeded in compiling his life's work and passion about birdsong into a work of art. This is now available to the public in his new book "*The Singing Life of Birds*." Join the Hitchcock Center and the Hampshire Bird Club in a celebration of this book's release with Don himself leading a bird walk on the trails at the Hitchcock Center. By 8:30am, we'll come back inside and Don will be available for signing books and informal discussions. Bill Thompson, editor of *Bird Watcher's Digest* says, "*Donald Kroodsma yearns to know not just what bird species he hears singing but what individual bird it is and why it is singing what it is singing. This engaging and amazing sense-filled journey takes you inside the minds of both the author and his beloved songsters. After reading The Singing Life of Birds, you'll listen to birds with new ears.*"

PROJECT INSPIRE!
Accessible Bird Watching Open House
Saturday, April 16, 1-4pm
 Great Falls Discovery Center
 Turners Falls, MA

A free indoor/outdoor open house introducing bird watching as a multidimensional activity, with accessibility options for people with disabilities. Weather permitting, short excursions via carpooling to view local birdlife in and around the Connecticut River will be offered.

Advance registration is required; please call All Out Adventures at 413-527-8980.

BACHELOR BROOK BIRD WALK

Saturday, April 30 at 6:30 - 10:00 AM

The South Hadley Conservation Commission has recently purchased a beautiful section of the Pioneer Valley, between Route 47 and the Connecticut River, just to the north of South Hadley. The Commission has arranged a bird walk led by HBC's David Peake-Jones on the property:

Meet at the South Hadley Athletic Fields on Rt 47. These are just beyond Ferry Street on Rt 47 as you head toward Hadley on Rt 47, and just after Pearl Street as you come from Hadley on 47.

BILL SCHAFER CHALLENGE FUND

Longtime HBC member Bill Schafer, who died on December 11, 2004, left a generous bequest of \$10,000 to Broad Brook Coalition's Land Acquisition Fund, but stipulated that in order to receive that bequest, the organization had to raise funds to match it within a year.

Broad Brook Coalition manages the Fitzgerald Lake Conservation Area in partnership with the City of Northampton. Bill was a BBC board member and an active volunteer, and was presented with its Volunteer of the Year award at its Annual Meeting in November 2004.

One of BBC's priorities is preserving additional wildlife habitat adjacent to the conservation area. Since 1993, its Land Acquisition Fund has contributed over \$50,000 toward land purchases, and 383 acres have been added to the conservation area. Its contribution of \$15,000 toward the forthcoming purchase of 33.5 acres will use up the reserves the Land Acquisition Fund has built up over the past three years, so Bill's legacy is especially timely.

*If you would like to remember Bill by helping to preserve some of the area's best birding habitat, please send your contribution to **Broad Brook Coalition, P.O. Box 60566, Florence, MA 01062**, and note that it is to be applied to the Bill Schafer Challenge. All contributions to Broad Brook Coalition are tax deductible.*

ONCE MORE INTO THE BREACH?

The North Pool on Plum Island

The North Pool of the Parker River National Wildlife Refuge has been, in recent years, a rather non-descript and disappointing bird habitat. However, the pool is at the center of a fascinating argument about what the refuge should be and what species it should serve. The argument is part of the broader struggle we face, as inhabitants of an increasingly crowded region, over the way to "do" conservation.

Parker River NWR was created, lest we forget, as part of a national effort to protect and allow recovery of waterfowl species, largely in response to concerns from hunters. Parker River had, as its main reason for existence, the mandate to provide undisturbed salt-marsh habitat for the American Black Duck and other waterfowl. Prior to the 1950s, the entire refuge consisted of salt-marsh, with little or no freshwater habitat for breeding ducks. By dredging parts of the salt-marsh, building dikes from the resultant fill to isolate sections of the original habitat, and allowing rainwater to fill the impoundments, the refuge created the Bill Forward-, Stage Island-, and North Pools, where the salinity was significantly lower than that in the rest of the refuge. However,

by the late 1990s, years of intensive effort had failed to create dynamic ecosystems in the North Pool. Lack of circulation created a rather stagnant body of water, substantially under-used by birds by comparison with the other freshwater habitats on the refuge. In recent years invading *Phragmites* and Purple Loosestrife have worsened the problems.

In the mid-1990's, the refuge began looking at ways to improve the quality of the existing habitat in the North Pool by manipulating the hydrology. The overall aim was to increase water flow, nutrient cycling, and to control the invasives. Habitat control in the North Pool consumed 70% of the total time spent on habitat control on the refuge in 1997. Despite this, the pool stubbornly refused to live up to its potential, either as waterfowl habitat, or as a breeding ground for birds such as Marsh Wrens, Bitterns and Rails. In 1995, a consultant suggested abandoning the notion of the North Pool as an artificial freshwater habitat. Feasibility studies began on breaching the dike and returning the area to saltmarsh. These studies indicated that the North Pool could revert to something like its natural state, saving (apparently) wasted time and energy. All seemed set for the dike to be breached. Then came the summer of 2004.

Last year, five (5) state-listed species used the pool during the breeding season, some for the first time in decades. **Northern Harriers** bred, as they have done for some time, in the extensive *Phragmites* beds. **King Rails** and **Common Moorhens** were documented for the first time in over a decade. Both **American-** and **Least Bitterns** were found using the pool last year. Why was 2004 so special? It could be a function of the unusually wet spring conditions, cyclicity of the marsh-dwelling species in question, or some combination of these factors. In any case, occurrence of any of these species, let alone five in a single year, has caused many, including the refuge, to reconsider the fate of the North Pool.

We no longer live in a world where conservation land managers simply try to increase duck numbers. Ours is a region where water-birds of all stripes face critical shortages of suitable habitat. Parker River NWR, like all other places where natural habitat exists in any form, is under pressure to consider itself a custodian of rare and threatened habitats and species assemblages rather than individual species. In response, the refuge is conducting a second feasibility study, this one on the prospect of managing the North Pool as a cat-tail swamp.

Should the North Pool revert to saltmarsh, allowing the resources it currently consumes to be diverted to other things? Should we make it still more artificial in the interests of rare species which almost certainly would not have been there before the impoundments were created? Given the comparative failure of fifty years of experimentation, it would be a massive act of faith to continue actively managing the North Pool. Parker River has called for public comment on the matter. You can read the full history of the North Pool at www.fws.gov/northeast/parkerriver/news.html

To *contribute to public comment*, write or email Janet Kennedy
Refuge Manager
Parker River NWR
6 Plum Island Turnpike
Newburyport, MA 01950
janet_kennedy@fws.gov

Welcome New Members!

Steve & Carol Gehlbach Amherst, Ma.

HITCHCOCK PROGRAMS

The Singing Life of Birds: Don Kroodsma, Ornithologist & Author

Sunday, May 1, 7-9:30am Presented jointly with the Hampshire Bird Club. See Page 5.

Wildlife-Friendly Landscape Design: Cindy Bright, Landscape Designer and Biologist

Wednesday, April 28, 7-9 pm

Budding Birders (Birding for Ages 9-12): Cindy Bright, Environmental Educator

Saturdays, May 7, 14, 21, 9 - 11am

Spring Birding By the Book

Class: Wednesday, April 27 (warblers with Harvey Allen), 7-9pm

Field Trips: Saturday, April 16, 7am-noon, to Lake Siog (pg. 289) with Bill Cormier;

Saturday, May 7, 7am-noon, to Quabbin Reservoir (pg. 251) with Harvey Allen;

Sunday, May 15, 7am-noon, to Beartown SF (pg. 79) with Myles & Kathy Conway;

Sunday, May 22, 7am-noon, to High Ledges Sanctuary (pg. 98) with David McLain;

Saturday, June 4, 7am-noon, to Tyringham Valley (pg. 71) with Edwin Neumuth;

Member: \$150 full package or \$50 for 3 field trips of your choice plus the class

Non-Member: \$175 full package or \$75 for 3 field trips of your choice plus the class.

This series began in March and continues through the spring using the definite Bird Finding Guide to Western Massachusetts book.

Breeding Bird Walk: (Royalston) John Green, Naturalist

Sunday, June 12, 7-10am. Meeting at New Salem. Preregistration required.

For details and registration for all Hitchcock programs, please contact the Hitchcock Center for the Environment, 525 South Pleasant St., Amherst MA 01002. Telephone (413) 256 6006, or on the web at www.hitchcockcenter.org.

ARCADIA PROGRAMS

VERNAL POOL CERTIFICATION: *Tom Lautzenheiser, Mass Audubon Ecological Extension Agent;*
Saturday April 16, 9:00 a.m.-noon.

GREAT BLUE HERONS: *Patti Steinman, Education Coordinator*

Friday, April 22, 4:00-7:00 p.m.

MIGRANTS AT THE IBIS POOL: *David McLain, Ecologist*

Saturday, April 30, 7 a.m.

EARLY MORNING BIRD WALK AT ARCADIA: *Guest leaders*

Saturday, April 30, 7:00 a.m.

For details and registration for all Arcadia programs, please contact Mass Audubon at Arcadia at (413) 584-3009 ex 12, or visit our website at massaudubon.org and click on the Connecticut River Valley.

CAPE WIND

The information provided here is for the information of HBC members. HBC Inc. neither supports nor opposes the Cape Wind development.

Those of us who wander annually down to Monomoy or New South Beach and marvel at the avian diversity of Nantucket Sound and its immediate surroundings might want to know more about the proposed wind energy development, currently in the news. Cape Wind Associates are planning to build 130 wind turbine generators over a 24 square mile area in the Horseshoe Shoals area of Nantucket Sound to generate about 170 MW of electricity for the New England Power Grid. The electricity would be transmitted to the mainland via 102 miles of transmission cables to be laid across the floor of the sound. On February 24, both Mass Audubon and the United States Environmental Protection Agency submitted public comment to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, calling for a supplement to be prepared to the Draft Environmental Impact Statement on the project. Mass Audubon contends, amongst other things, that further data and analysis are needed to assess the:

- impacts on populations of Long-tailed Ducks in migration and while wintering in the sound,
- impacts on Roseate Terns during migration to and from adjacent breeding grounds,
- impacts on nocturnal passerines in migration, and
- collision-related mortality rates likely to be caused.

Mass Audubon questions the thoroughness of the data collected so far in these areas, and the methods used to analyze data collected in studies on behalf of the applicant (Cape Wind Associates). The U.S. EPA officially categorized the Cape Wind DEIS as “inadequate.” EPA suggests that the DEIS authors did not study the prospective impacts on birds and other wildlife in the manner recommended by the USFWS and other “recognized avian experts”, and that the DEIS overstates the degree to which these experts were consulted during the preparation of the document. EPA also shares Mass Audubon’s skepticism about the methods used to estimate bird traffic and mortality in the “rotor-swept” zone of the proposed project.

Both Mass Audubon and the EPA state that they generally support the development and use of renewable energy sources in New England and nationally. You can read the details of their submissions at www.massaudubon.org/news/index.php. Cape Wind Associates outline their proposal, including the likely impact on air and electricity-related pollution in the region at www.capewind.whgrp.com/

References:

Letter from Secretary Ellen Herzfelder, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (Boston, MA) to Colonel Thomas L. Konig, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Concord, MA). February 23, 2005
 Press Release. Mass Audubon. “Mass Audubon Comments on Cape Wind DEIS”. February 24, 2005.

Backyard Birds

17 Strong St., Northampton (near Eastside Grill). Phone 586 3155

Your local source for birding and bird-feeding supplies, including feeders, optics, gifts, written and audio-materials. Ten percent discount for members of the Hampshire Bird Club. Remember, with local merchants, your dollar stays here!

This edition seems to be rather dense and wordy; descriptions that have also been applied to the editor from time to time!

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

David Peake-Jones, Editor

(413) 529 9541

newsletter@hampshirebirdclub.org



Hampshire Bird Club, Inc. Amherst, Massachusetts

www.hampshirebirdclub.org

Volume 21, No. 9

May, 2005

There is no time for an editorial this month. The warblers are on our doorstep. Take a look inside this voluminous publication for a field trip that is of interest, grab the binoculars, hat, bug dope, field guide, trail mix, hearing aid, and whatever other aids you need and get going. Create your own editorial!!

Also inside: notice of this year's Annual General Meeting, opportunities for citizen scientists from MassWildlife, a changing of the guard at the Boutique, and a ton of other news. Please read on!

PROGRAMS

This Month

Monday, May 9 at 7:30 PM

Immanuel Lutheran Church; 867 North Pleasant Street, Amherst.

Susan Roney Drennan speaks about Albatrosses and their Interactions with Longline Fisheries.

Susan will introduce us to the beauty and grace of albatrosses that inhabit the Southern Ocean, the practice of long-line fishing, how it affects albatrosses, and some possible solutions to minimize these effects.

Susan Roney Drennan enjoyed a lively career, for many years, as Editor-in-Chief of Audubon's ornithological publication, *American Birds*, and Vice President for Ornithology. She is a recipient of the Bushnell Distinguished Birder Award and the prestigious Arthur A. Allen Medal, awarded to individuals who have dramatically advanced ornithological knowledge through their writings, publications, teaching, and inspiration. She is the author of numerous papers, scientific/popular articles and books, including "*Where to Find Birds in New York State: The Top 500 Sites*," "*The Birder's Field Notebook*," and "*The North American Birder's Library Lifelist*." Currently she is a full-time author and tour leader, naturalist, and lecturer for National Audubon's "*Nature Odysseys*" program. She lives in Vermont with her husband, Paul Meyer.

Coming Programs

June 13. Frank Gill. "The Power of Citizen Science"

Situations Vacant: Boutique Proprietors

Janice Doppler and **Peg Army** are retiring as proprietors of the HBC Boutique. We need at least one person to volunteer to take over.

The boutique is a collection of HBC designer sweatshirts and T-shirts which not only complement the wardrobes of most of us to some degree, but also allow us to publicize the club when we are out and about. In addition, the boutique stocks field trip checklists, field guide labels, and other miscellaneous items. The proprietor/s order replacement items from our suppliers as necessary, bring the collection to meetings, and attempt to sell items to the somewhat reticent HBC membership. *If you can help, please contact any member of the Board.*

Thank you so much, Peg and Janice for your service to the club over the past few years!

FIELD TRIPS

Reports

On **April 3**, **Mike Locher** led himself to look for **woodcocks in Hadley** on the most shamefully under-attended HBC trip in my tenure as editor. Mike walked in along the Mill River floodplain, locating 45 Wood Ducks, a Fox Sparrow, and what he believes is the same Song Sparrow the trip found last year, distinguished by a unique and atypical song. Retiring disconsolately* to his deck with a glass of wine, Mike witnessed two American Woodcocks challenging each other in a frenzy of display activity.

* OK, this is anthropomorphization. We cannot possibly know what passes through the mind of a dedicated Field Trip Chair when not only does no-one show up for a field trip, but when it one of HIS! Observers, had there been any, would have seen Mike leaping about and yelling, “Yeah!! Wine on the deck! Finally!! YEEHAH!!” We are, however, unable to objectively assign any emotional context to this behavior.



On **April 16**, **Mike Locher** took a group to **Ashley Ponds in Holyoke**, looking for early migrants. Mike describes the list as “sorry.” However, they found Pine Warblers sporting in the pines, Red-breasted Nuthatches cavorting, well, in the pines, Brown Creeper (probably in a piny environment of some sort), a Winter Wren (perhaps in a fallen pine*), a Ring-necked Duck (pining for the breeding grounds), and plenty of Ruby-crowned Kinglets (yep, pine again). It is a very pine-laden place. A sorry day of birding is better than a good day contemplating the winner of the NCAA basketball tournament.

*Please do not misconstrue the term “fallen” when applied to pines. They are not, as you might be imagining, pines which have fallen to exploiting their physical characteristics in order to make a living, as would be the case with the archaic term “fallen woman.” No, fallen pines are merely those whose (shallow) root systems have given up the relentless struggle with gravity, and have allowed the above-ground portions of the plant to recline on the forest floor. There are no moral overtones attached to the term at all, though it makes it indecently easy for chipmunks to satisfy their lust for pine nuts.

I had a secret desire to one day create a footnote that was longer than the trip report from which it arose. Now I have done it! Ed.



On **Saturday, April 23**, **Betsy Higgins** led Peggy Macleod and David Peake-Jones through one of her favorite birding haunts in the region: **Look Park** in Northampton. Despite a dreadful forecast, precipitation limited itself to a light drizzle for the entire morning. We walked the perimeter of the park, pausing to delight in the exuberant ramblings of **Ruby-crowned Kinglets**, and to speculate on the interlaced Chipping Sparrow and Pine Warbler calls resounding through the damp morning. The Mill River initially failed give up any waterthrushes, but we did enjoy a pair of Wood Ducks squeaking in proprietary anxiety from the trees along the bank, and similarly residential-looking Common Mergansers. Walking further, we were astounded to hear a **Great Horned Owl** hooting from nearby pines. In searching for the bird we found a collection of dead birds, in various stages of dismemberment under a possible raptor nest. We concluded the GHO was playing fall guy for some nesting accipiter. As if in reward for this sleuthing, we finally detected the ringing notes of a **Louisiana Waterthrush** from the stream, and were treated to wonderful views of the bird foraging amongst the stream cobbles. Several waves of **Yellow rumped-** and **Palm Warblers** moved overhead, sadly free of any rarer species. Returning toward the park entrance, we picked up a **Blue-headed Vireo** singing tentatively, and got a distant look at a **Pileated Woodpecker** for Peggy’s life list. The rain began as we drove toward our respective homes.

David Peake-Jones

Coming trips on the next page→

Coming Trips

Please register with the trip leader(s) and check this schedule's information when a phone number is given. The Field Trip Chair (Michael Locher-413-585-5864, fieldtrip@hampshirebirdclub.org) is always looking for new trip ideas and leaders. The Hampshire Bird Club recommends carpooling whenever possible, and suggests that all riders share equally the per-car cost of \$0.30 per mile, as well as tolls and parking. See also the "Field Trip Guidelines for Participants" (in the September newsletter or on the Website).

There is one recently-added trip in this list, by comparison with the pink "Winter-late Summer Schedule" published earlier. It has been given its own nifty border so you will notice it.

Wildwood Walks

On a gentle rise in the heart of Amherst lies the Wildwood Cemetery. Migrating songbirds are drawn to this little island, and each year the club hosts morning bird walks here during May, each led by a club member. This year walks are scheduled for the following:

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Each begins at **6:30 am** and runs until **8 am**, though of course you may freelance a little longer if you wish. Meet the leader at the main entrance, off Strong Street. Make sure you park in the designated parking areas and not on the lawn. Remain on the roads and paths in the cemetery, and respect the solemnity of the site. Thank you.

Saturday, May 7. Hardwick and environs. Chris Ellison (413 477 8326) will lead a new trip to a variety of habitats on the mysterious eastern shore of the Quabbin Reservoir. Meet at 6:00 AM. at the Old Hardwick Town Hall in the center of Hardwick. Expect about a five mile walk and strenuous humor.

From Amherst and the valley:

Go east on Rt 9 through Belchertown. Remain on Rt 9 to Ware, where it merges with Rt 32. Remain on Rt 32 to Gilbertville. Shortly after Gilbertville, make a LEFT onto 32A (North). Continue to Hardwick Center.

From points north:

On Rt 2, take exit 17 for 32 South. Proceed on 32 S to Petersham. Continue south for about 1/2 mile until you meet the intersection with route 122. Turn right onto route 122W and proceed another 1/2 mile until you come to the flashing yellow light announcing route 32A. Turn left onto route 32A and continue for about 10 miles, until you reach Hardwick Center. Bear left as you approach Hardwick Common, passing close by the church on the hill, arriving at the old Hardwick Town Hall.

Parking for the Town Hall is adjacent to the Hardwick Historical Society, and on Common Street. Please call Chris ahead of time to register. (M)

Sunday, May 8. Quabbin Reservoir migration. All day. Tom Gagnon (413-584-6353) leads a trip into the Quabbin to track down its varied avifauna. This trip is limited to Hampshire Bird Club members only. Call to register. (M)

Saturday, May 14. Mt. Auburn Cemetery. All day. David Peake-Jones (413-529-9541) will lead birders into this historic cemetery near the Charles River. Anything can show up here, so be prepared for some unusual species. Call ahead for details. (E)

Wednesday, May 18. Midweek half day in the Connecticut River Valley. Harvey Allen (413-253-7963) will go where the birds are. Meet at 7:00 a.m. on the corner of Rt. 116 and Bay Road, Amherst, across from Atkin's Farm. Call for more information as the date approaches. (E)

New Trip!

Saturday, May 21. The Birds of Leverett. Half day. Mary Alice Wilson (413-548-9078; mwilson@k12s.phast.umass.edu) takes birders to North Leverett to walk through scrub and up Rattlesnake Gutter Road for both scrub and forest birds. Mid-morning the group will drive south and walk the East Leverett Meadow (which might be muddy). The trip is technically over at 11:00 a.m., but the hardy can continue to Long Hill and Leverett Pond. Meet at 7:00 a.m. in parking lot of North Leverett Co-op. Call or email to register. (M)

Friday-Monday, May 27-30. Monhegan Island. Overnight trip. David Peake-Jones and Andrew Magee will lead birders for a long weekend of birding off the coast of Maine. This trip is currently full. (E/M)

Saturday, May 28. Poor Man's Monhegan: Plum Island and vicinity. All day. Bob Bieda (413-527-2623) leads birders to Massachusetts' own little gem. Past trips found Wilson's Phalarope, Piping Plover, Seaside Sparrow, Orchard Oriole, and Evening Grosbeak. Call to register. (E)

Saturday, June 11. Bartholomew's Cobble. Harvey Allen (413-253-7963) goes to one of Western Massachusetts's most unique habitats. Expect Black Vultures. Call for details as the date approaches. (M)

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING and ELECTION OF OFFICERS

The **Annual General Meeting** of the **Hampshire Bird Club, Inc.**, will take place on **Monday, May 9**, at the **Immanuel Lutheran Church: 867 North Pleasant St., Amherst, commencing at 7:30 p.m.** At this meeting, the Board of the HBC for 2005-2006 will be elected by the members present.

The Nominating Committee respectfully proposes the following slate of officers for the coming year. Positions with an outgoing officer, and the name of the nominee for 2005-2006 are shown in **bold**.

President: David Gross

Program Chair/Vice President: Geoff LeBaron

Treasurer: Janice Jorgensen

Corresponding Secretary: Marcia Merithew

Membership Secretary: Susan Emerson

At-large Board members:

Betsy Higgins

Jaap Van Heerden

Elissa Rubinstein

Mike Locher

Bob Zimmermann

Dennis McKenna

Additional nominations for these positions will also be accepted from the floor.

Thank You!

The nominating committee would like to thank **Jan Howard** who has served as Corresponding Secretary and is leaving the Board this year; **Dennis McKenna** who has served as president and will stay on the Board as a member-at-large; and all the officers and Board members for their service past and future. We also thank the Nominating Committee (**Sue Emerson, Betsy Higgins and Mary Alice Wilson**) for locating individuals with the talent and drive to keep the club going.

LIBRARY

Your mom always said “Neither a borrower or a lender be.” Right?

WRONG!!!!!! HBC has a substantial library, located at the Hitchcock Center for the Environment in Amherst. **Henry Lappen** maintains a collection of birding resources including field guides, bird-finding guides to almost every major birding destination in the U.S., and some overseas locations, natural histories, periodicals and videos. Why *buy* for that once-in-a-lifetime trip to the Rio Grande valley, when you could *borrow*? Hours are 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. on Tuesday through Friday, and 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. on Saturdays. Items can be signed out and borrowed for a period of up to one month, or longer by arrangement. Henry is happy to bring items to meetings, if you give him a few days in advance. You can reach him at **(413) 549 3722**.

CONSERVATION

*If you are interested in conservation of birds and birding habitat, you may like to share information and effort with others in the club. Anne Lombard is our conservation chair. Contact her at **(413) 586 7509**, or **aslombard@comcast.net***

PROJECT INSPIRE

Bird Walk at Fitzgerald Lake

Wednesday, May 4: 8-10am. North Farms Road, Northampton, MA

Join Shirley Hilborn and Anne Lombard of the Hampshire Bird Club for a ¼ mile walk through woods and wetlands in search of early spring migrants. We will look and listen for rails and other marsh birds.

Call All Out Adventures at 413-527-8980 to register.

Introduction to Birding – Arcadia Wildlife Sanctuary

Thursday, May 5: 7-9pm; **Saturday, May 7:** 7-10am

Fee: \$15 for Mass Audubon members, \$25 for non-members.

413-584-3009

Have you always wanted to learn about birds but never found the time? Here's your opportunity. Thursday night at Arcadia, we will learn about birds and their identification, calls, and habitat preferences. On Saturday, we will put our new found knowledge to work with a casual stroll at Arcadia or other nearby birding hot spots. At this time of year, we may see both resident birds and migrants. Enjoy a continental breakfast as we review our sightings.

Inclusive Birding Outing – Turners Falls

Saturday, May 7: 8-10am: Great Falls Discovery Center, Turners Falls, MA

Join Jan Ortiz and friends from the Hampshire Bird Club on an outing in search of birds in the Turner Falls area. We'll carpool to local sites in search of spring migrants. Afterwards view the exhibits at the Discovery Center.

Call All Out Adventures at 413-527-8980 to register.

Herricks Cove, VT - Wildlife Festival

Sunday, May 8

Come northward to Herricks Cove, VT for a wonderful wildlife festival on the banks of the Connecticut River. Bird walks, live birds of prey, and many other activities will be taking place all day at this designated Important Birding Area (IBA) **Call 413-545-5758 for information and directions.**

For an event schedule visit: www.sover.net/~mwalsh/herrick.html

Birding by Ear – Hitchcock Center for the Environment

Tuesday, May 10: 8-10am; 535 S. Pleasant St., Amherst, MA. 413 – 256- 6006

Join Ted Watt and Marcy Marchello for a morning stroll on the accessible boardwalk. We'll be listening for year round residents and spring migrants. This is a good opportunity to learn or practice bird song identification for birds whose habitat is dense shrubs or woodlands. Raindate: Wednesday, May 11

Birding and Biking on the Rail Trail

Saturday, May 21: 8am-Noon. Norwottuck Rail Trail, Hadley, MA

Join All Out Adventures for a 14 mile long biking adventure from Hadley to S. Amherst and back on the rail trail. We'll bike through agricultural fields and woodlands to a beaver swamp. We will stop to view birds nesting or migrating through at this peak time of the birding year. There is a non-bicycling option for those who want to walk to the wetland from Strong St. in Amherst.

Pre-register by calling All Out Adventures at 413-527-8980.

Birding Northfield

Saturday, May 28: 8-11am. Great Falls Discovery Center, Turners Falls, MA

Join Marcy Marchello and Taj Schottland on an outing in search of Indigo Buntings and other easily viewed birds singing on their breeding territories in fields and wetlands. We will meet at the Discovery Center and carpool to Northfield.

Advance registration required, please call Marcy at 413-545-5758.

CITIZEN SCIENTISTS NEEDED BY MASSWILDLIFE

MassWildlife is involved in gathering information for a number of different birds during this field season. We would love to get reports from birders on some specific projects we are working on this year. Below are the birds we are trying to locate and the time period to report on them.

Common Loons

The haunting wail of the common loon (*Gavia immer*) evokes a sense of wild and remote areas which may be why some people are surprised to learn Massachusetts is home to a small, but growing number of nesting loons. MassWildlife Biologists Bridgett McAlice and Carolyn Mostello recently summarized common loon nesting activity for 2004 and will be working with other cooperators this spring to document loon nesting sites across the state. In 2004, 28 territorial pairs on 12 waterbodies were documented with 19 attempting to nest. A total of thirteen chicks were produced and presumed fledged. In 2003, 24 pairs of territorial loons were observed with 19 pairs nesting on 6 waterbodies.

“The Quabbin and Wachusett Reservoirs are home to the majority of Massachusetts’ nesting loons,” said McAlice. “Other nests have been documented in relatively quiet water supplies and private ponds in Worcester County, but it’s entirely possible there are nests in other parts of the state which haven’t been reported to us.” McAlice noted that cooperators and volunteers played a vital role in gathering field data for MassWildlife. She acknowledged the efforts of the Department of Conservation Recreation, Massachusetts Aquatic Conservation Society, Biodiversity Institute, Forbush Bird Club and other volunteers.

As soon as pond ice melts, loons sporting their striking black and white breeding plumage will be returning to their territorial waters. Egg laying begins at the end of May. The following summarizes the information MassWildlife needs.

Species: Common Loon (especially pairs)

Seen During This Period	Town	Location and/or name of water body
April 15 – May 31		

Report To:*Bridget McAlice**Central District Wildlife Office: (508) 835 3607***Brooding Canada Geese**

Be on the lookout for families of geese (adults and young) that number 12 or more birds. MassWildlife staff will be leg and neck banding Canada geese beginning in mid- June through mid-July and they need reports of the locations of goose families to band. Goose banding can take place in many locations: beaches, golf courses, cemeteries, condominium developments and municipal parks.

Species: Canada Goose

Flock Characteristics	Seen During this Period	Address/directions/body of water	Approximate number of goslings	Total birds in flock	Property owner
12 or more birds	June 6 - 20				

Report to :Mass.wildlife@state.ma.us**Canada Goose Populations: Summer**

Keep an eye out for Canada Geese with yellow neck bands. Provide location of the bird and numbers of birds in that flock with the banded bird. These reports can be made until Labor Day when the survey period ends.

Species: Canada Goose (with Yellow Neck Band)

Seen During This Period	Neck band Number	Location/Address/Body of Water	Number of geese in flock with the banded bird
July 15 – Labor day			

Report to:Mass.wildlife@state.ma.us**Mute Swans**

MassWildlife staff will be actively seeking and accepting reports of mute swans as part of a periodic survey. Due to the mushrooming population that has spread west across the state, it's difficult to get staff out to all possible swan locations.

Species: Mute Swans

Seen During this Period	Location/Body of water	Number of Swans
August 1 – August 15		

Report to:Mass.wildlife@state.ma.us

HITCHCOCK PROGRAMS

SPRING BIRDING BY THE BOOK

Remaining Field Trips:

Saturday, May 7, 7 a.m. - noon, to Quabbin Reservoir (pg. 251) with Harvey Allen;
 Sunday, May 15, 7 a.m. - noon, to Beartown State Forest (pg. 79) with Myles & Kathy Conway;
 Sunday, May 22, 7 a.m. - noon, to High Ledges Sanctuary (pg. 98) with David McLain;
 Saturday, June 4, 7 a.m. - noon, to Tyringham Valley (pg. 71) with Edwin Neumuth

SINGING LIFE OF BIRDS: Don Kroodsma, Ornithologist & Author

Sunday, May 1, 7 - 9:30 a.m.

MARINE FISHERIES: Francis Juanes, UMass Oceanography Professor

Sunday, May 15, 1 - 3 p.m.

BIRDING BY EAR: Ted Watt, Marcy Marchello

Tuesday, May 10, 8 - 10 a.m. (rain date, May 11)

LIVING WITH WILDLIFE: STURGEON, SALMON & SHAD: Boyd Kynard, Tuesday, May 24, 4 - 6 p.m.

BREEDING BIRD WALK: John Green

Sunday, June 12, 7 - 10 a.m.

MONARCH CATERPILLAR RESEARCH PROJECT: Jennifer Wiest

Saturday, June 11, 1 - 3 p.m.

SISTERS OF THE EARTH: WOMEN WRITING ABOUT NATURE: Rema Boscov

Saturdays, May 7 & 21, 10 a.m. - noon; Thursday, May 12, 7 - 9 p.m.

WOMEN'S NATURE RETREAT WEEKEND

Friday, May 13, 4 p.m. through Sunday, May 15, 1 p.m.

Temenos Retreat Center, Shutesbury

SENIOR WALKS: Jennifer Wiest, Hitchcock Center Staff

April 26, May 31, June 28 at 11 a.m.

WILDFLOWERS OF NEW ENGLAND (Workshop): Ted Elliman

Saturdays, May 14 & 21 from 9:30 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Held at the Hitchcock Center for the Environment

For details and registration for all Hitchcock programs, please contact the Hitchcock Center for the Environment, 525 South Pleasant St., Amherst MA 01002. Telephone (413) 256 6006, or on the web at www.hitchcockcenter.org.

I can't resist.....

An embarrassing incident befell the President when he attended the funeral of Pope John Paul 2. He was introduced to a group of cardinals, and graciously congratulated them on beating the Astros!

ARCADIA PROGRAMS

BIRDING FOR BEGINNERS: *Anne Lombard, Peter Redfern, Patti Steinman* Thursday, May 5: 7-9 p.m. and Saturday, May 7: 7-9 a.m.

PONDING FOR FAMILIES: *Rebecca Moretti, Environmental Educator*
Saturday, May 5: 10-11:30 a.m.

SATURDAY MORNING BIRD WALKS: *Guest Leaders*
7-8:30 a.m.

May 7 at Graves Farm. May 14 at Lynes. May 21 at Laughing Brook. May 28th at West Mountain

SPRING EPHEMERALS: *Janet Bissell and Connie Parks, Plant Conservation Volunteers*
Sundays, 9:30a.m. -1:00 p.m.

May 1 at Arcadia, May 8 at Graves Farm, May 15 at Lynes June 5 at High Ledges

EAGLES BY CANOE AT BARTON COVE: *Aimee Gelinas, Naturalist*
Friday June 3, 6-9 p.m.

IBA AT GRAVES FARM: *David McLain, Ecologist*
Saturday, June 4; 7-10 a.m.

For details and registration for all Arcadia programs, please contact Mass Audubon at Arcadia at (413) 584-3009 ex 12, or visit the website at massaudubon.org and click on the Connecticut River Valley.

Dead Birds in the Interest of Science

You may have picked up dead birds (mostly window kills) and put them in their freezer hoping that some museum or research collection would be interested in them. Unfortunately, the collections in our area are so under-staffed they cannot accept specimens.

However, there is still one institution in California with a trained volunteer staff preparing skins. Former HBC member, Maureen Flannery, works as a curatorial assistant in the Department of Ornithology and Mammalogy at the California Academy of Sciences. For more information about the museum, go to their website (www.calacademy.org then select research/collections then ornithology/mammalogy).

The Academy will only accept specimens that have both the date and the specific collecting location. They will pay the shipping fee. *For more information on donating specimens, contact Moe Flannery by phone (415-321-8371) or email (mflannery@calacademy.org).*

Welcome New Members!

Sharon L. Bombard - Amherst

Christa Glatter - Amherst

Ed. Neumuth - Washington

Mary Schneider - Belchertown

Patti Steinman - Easthampton

Janice Jorgensen & Karen Rosenbaum - Hadley

Please note that if you join the Hampshire Bird Club for the first time between now and September 1, 2005, your membership will be good till September 2006!!

That's all for this month. Until next month, walk softly and carry a big scope.



Hampshire Bird Club, Inc. Amherst, Massachusetts

www.hampshirebirdclub.org

Volume 21, No. 10

June, 2005

I think the story of this month was Saturday, May 28. Following an unusually wet and cold April and May, which seemed to delay migration by several weeks for some species, and a nor'easter in the previous week which apparently found a large number of Red-necked- and Red Phalaropes in a vulnerable migratory state, the night of Friday, May 27 seems to have been the zenith of a compressed migratory pattern this year, which saw rarely equaled numbers of many species all moving at the same time. Monhegan Island saw the most frenetic day of birding in recent memory.

Not to be outdone, Bob Bieda's group not only found a Eurasian Collared Dove on Plum Island, but they were the first birders to find it! If accepted by the MARC, it will be a new state record for Massachusetts. A red-letter day for Western Mass birders indeed!! The magnitude of this experience can perhaps best be gauged by the fact that I received not one, but TWO trip reports for Poor Man's Monhegan, sections of each of which are in the Trip Reports section.

As tired birds settle into breeding territories all over North America, exclaiming the avian equivalent of "Thank goodness that's over with," members of HBC may find themselves similarly lauding their temporary respite from the florid prose of this publication and settling into more legitimate summer entertainment such as reruns of "The Bachelor" and "Fear Factor: the Culinary Edition." As you will see below, programs resume on September 12, shortly before which time you will receive your annual reminder to renew. Enjoy the summer, and we will see you back in September.

PROGRAMS

This Month

Monday, June 13 at 7:30 PM

Frank Gill speaks about "The Power of Citizen Science"

Citizen science generally, and birding in particular, have been primary forces in the growth of modern conservation movements in North America and Europe. Three simple words define citizen science as a force for conservation – count, own, and act. Effective conservation requires countable units, usually acres or species. The average citizen also tends to take ownership of what he or she counts and then acts to benefit these species or to stop/reverse observed declines. Beyond pressing conservation issues, birders advance the foundations of ornithology.

Birders are the preeminent citizen scientists. The 102 year-old Christmas Bird Count is now the largest and oldest citizen science project in the world, engaging 60,000 citizen scientists annually with a steady 10% growth rate. Ever increasing numbers of people participated in local conservation of the birds they counted. Looking ahead, the sheer volume of observations contributed daily combined with modern analytical tools will allow us to track bird populations in real time as a conservation radar with unprecedented power of timely public participation.

This Month's Speaker

An eminent authority on birds and conservation, Frank Gill recently retired as National Audubon Society's Chief Scientist. He continues part-time with Audubon as its Senior Ornithologist.

Frank came to Audubon after 25 years at the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia. While there, he transformed the academy's ornithological department into one of the nation's leading centers of ornithology, including Visual Resources for Ornithology (VIREO) and the Center for Neotropical Ornithology. His published works include his acclaimed textbook, *Ornithology* (W.H. Freeman, 1989 and 1994) and numerous scientific monographs, reviews and popular articles. His research programs included pioneering field studies of hybridization by Blue-winged- and Golden-winged Warblers, flower feeding energetics of sunbirds and hermit hummingbirds, and phylogeny through DNA of the chickadees of the world. For his outstanding contributions to ornithology, Frank received the William Brewster Medal of the AOU.

A recent past President of the American Ornithologist's Union, Frank Gill's conservation initiatives include leadership roles at the Hawk Mountain Sanctuary Association, American Birding Association and National Audubon, where he championed the Important Bird Areas initiative, Citizen Science, and the latest search for Ivory-billed Woodpeckers in Cuba. He directed the Pennsylvania Breeding Bird Atlas project and was Executive Director and Editor of their recently completed encyclopedic work. He is co-chair of the International Ornithological Congress' Committee on English names of the birds of the world.

Frank Gill has a Ph.D. in Zoology from the University of Michigan (1969). He lives in Rushland, PA and summers in the Adirondacks with his wife Sally Conyne and two dogs Merlin and Raven. Sally and Frank are avid birders, hunters, and novice fly fishermen. Expeditions to remote corners of South America are some of their favorite diversions.

Coming Programs

The program schedule for 2006 is being honed to perfection by Geoff LeBaron. Calendar 2005 has been finalized, and here it is!

September 12, 2005. Don Kroodsma introduces his book "The Singing Life of Birds."

October 17, 2005. Andrea Jones: Namibia.

November 14, 2005. Blair Nikula: Antarctic Seabirds.

December 12, 2005. Members Meeting (Slide Show).

FIELD TRIPS

Reports

Despite intermittent rain and an unrelenting cold wind, the **May 7th Hardwick** trip proved a reasonably productive outing for its two participants, with leader **Chris Ellison** and David Peake-Jones focusing their attention upon Brook Road and immediately adjacent terrain.

Upon disembarking from vehicles at the southern tip of Brook Road, concentrated listening quickly produced Black-and-White Warbler, Common Yellowthroat, and Red-winged Blackbirds struggling mightily against buffeting winds. Scrutinizing a modestly sized beaver pond situated immediately east of their starting point yielded first rate-views of a Spotted Sandpiper, David's first sighting of this species this year. Through the mist we managed to make out retreating Wood Ducks and Hooded Mergansers. Investigation of second growth woodland interspersed with open pasture produced Yellow-rumped Warbler, an elusive Field Sparrow, a Song Sparrow, and the plaintive calls of an Eastern Phoebe. The interior of a dense swamp and its borders revealed few birds but abundant Lycopodium, Marsh Marigold, Red Trillium, and Reindeer Moss. A Ruffed Grouse drummed vigorously. As we trudged further east, a Yellow Warbler vocalized strongly, its lemon-hued wings

Continues next page→

at last flicking away over the surrounding willow, barberry, and multiflora rose tangles. A myriad of deceptive vocalizations emanating from a dense pocket of White Pine proved eventually to belong to a Ruby-crowned Kinglet foraging with a small band of Black-capped Chickadees and Tufted Titmice.

Looping westward back to the roadway while pushing steadily into a pocket of juniper yielded fine views of Palm Warbler, White-throated Sparrow and a lone Northern Flicker. An American Robin engaged in a peculiarly supplicatory courtship display never before observed by either observer proved an absorbing subject. Travels further north on Brook Road revealed a splendidly camouflaged Ovenbird skulking along a low stone wall, closely followed by a more ebullient individual establishing territory. Black-throated Green Warblers danced enticingly amongst the slender upper branches of a stand of birch on the east side of the roadway. A possible Magnolia Warbler in a hemlock failed to be any more definitive than that.

Veering sharply west away from the river into steep deciduous woodland allowed the addition of Black-throated Blue Warbler and Blue-headed Vireo to the morning's tally. Persistence finally brought us looks at a singing Louisiana Waterthrush. Chris was rewarded for his greater endurance by great looks at Northern Parula, American Redstart, and Hairy Woodpecker at the end of the morning.

Chris Ellison



A Black-crowned Night Heron flying over the HBC convoy headed through Watertown toward **Mt. Auburn** cemetery augured well for **Saturday, May 14**. Once inside the cemetery, we enjoyed a reprieve from the promised rain, and steady birding with extended song under overcast skies. A spectacular immature male **Orchard Oriole** tested the song-recognition of the group and found it adequate to the task at the end of the Indian Ridge trail.

Many species which had hitherto been absent from the migration in Western Massachusetts turned up reassuringly amongst the fabled landscaping of the cemetery. We found seventeen species of warblers. A major highlight occurred when we heard an unmistakable "Kowp, Kowp, Kowp" from the top of a maple tree. The dense foliage at first refused to give up its secrets, but a judicious response to the call eventually induced a Yellow-billed Cuckoo to betray its whereabouts. We later followed a **Black-billed Cuckoo** as it led several birding groups on a merry and somewhat frustrating dance through a wooded section of the cemetery. Amongst a number of Scarlet Tanagers, we eventually found a mottled orange individual with an over-sized bill lurking in a mixed flock of songbirds at the Dell, which satisfied us that it was a **Summer Tanager**. There were just enough birds to keep us interested, but rarities remained elusive. By the time we reached Willow Pond in the early afternoon our impending capitulation was compensated by a **Northern Waterthrush**, which skulked along the shoreline. As always at Mt. Auburn, we enjoyed birds in a spectacular setting, affording superb visibility and unequalled birding aesthetics.

A few of the diehards, in search of a good place to round out subsequent trips visited Bolton Flats near Devens on the way home. Though touted in the eastern Mass. birding guide as an excellent aquatic habitat, access proved very disappointing, and not really worth the visit, especially during the afternoon. We did find a Green Heron to pad the list to a respectable 75 species for the day.

David Peake-Jones



The goal of the trip to **Leverett** on **May 22**, led by **Mary Alice Wilson**, was to introduce folks to good Leverett birding spots. We didn't make it to all of them, but highlights included a chorus of Chestnut-sided-and Prairie Warblers, Indigo Bunting and Common Yellowthroat. We found young ravens trying to drown out the song of a Winter Wren (Rattlesnake Gutter), a Brown Creeper visiting its nest (Hemenway), a Blackburnian Warbler causing a traffic jam (Cave Hill corner), displaying Bobolink and a hidden Field Sparrow (East Leverett Meadow), yelling Great-Crested Flycatcher (4-H Forest) and newly arrived orioles and catbirds everywhere.

Mary Alice Wilson

Memorial Day weekend, 2005 turned out to be one of the best in recent memory for anyone birding almost anywhere in the northeast. Nowhere was this better illustrated than on **Monhegan Island**. Twenty HBC members, led by **Andrew Magee** and **David Peake-Jones** embarked for the legendary isle with the usual sense of anticipation, sharpened by the nor'easter of the previous week, with its reports of Red-necked Phalaropes on suburban lawns in the eastern part of Massachusetts. During the ride out, we encountered unusual numbers of Wilson's Storm Petrels dabbling over the calm seas, which, along with Bonaparte's Gulls, a Northern Gannet, and at least one suspiciously phalaropy shorebird exiting quickly from the path of the boat, seemed to signal something special in the air. Our enthusiasm was tempered by a dreary forecast, predicting rain on all three days. There was a strange sense of anticlimax as we wandered through the silent village on our way to the Trailing Yew. Was this to be another one of those disappointing years when the weather and the birds simply did not combine as we would wish? A singing Virginia Rail and a **Marsh Wren** helped to assuage the uneasiness just a little as we retired to bed.

Saturday morning proved our enthusiasm justified. From the moment the sun rose, the spruces and apple trees of the island were alive with birds, creating an electric atmosphere where almost anything seemed possible. The day became a blur of birds. Individual sightings dissolved into a wonderful pageant of warblers. Always, the special birds seemed just a slight movement of the binoculars away. Empidonax Flycatchers abounded. Initially, it seemed we might hear nothing but the "Che-bek" of Least Flycatchers, but as the weekend wore on, Willow, Alder, and **Yellow-bellied Flycatchers** made themselves known. An **Olive-sided Flycatcher** waited until the last morning to reveal itself. Several **Philadelphia Vireos** flashed their tantalizing gray lores and barely yellow breasts to, it seemed, each field group in turn. Just enough to be convincing, but not enough to be taken for granted. Swainson's Thrushes abounded, but not to the complete exclusion of the other expected thrush species, including the Veery, Hermit, Gray-cheeked/Bicknell's and Wood Thrush. One group had four of these species together in one view by the Mooring Chain. Twenty-three species of warblers eventually materialized out of the flitting multitudes. The rarest of these included the **Cape May, Orange-crowned, Mourning, Tennessee, and Bay-breasted Warblers**. Conspicuously abundant were Magnolia-, and Blackpoll Warblers, plus Northern Parula and American Redstart, all typically dominant warblers on this trip, joined this year by a startling number of Canada-, and Wilson's Warblers. Tired birds on Commercial Beach provided close encounters with a number of species, including spectacular **Blackburnian- and Bay-breasted Warblers**. Scarlet Tanagers and Baltimore Orioles provided frequent splashes of exuberant song and color.

Lincoln's Sparrows abounded on Friday and Saturday as never before in my memory, joined at various times by White-crowned Sparrows. Pine Siskins and **Red-winged Crossbills** crossed paths with us just often enough on their peripatetic meanderings for general satisfaction, and several Indigo Buntings dazzled even the hard core of our group with their porcelain brilliance. Purple Martins, **Black-billed Cuckoo** (found in the same tree as one of last year's birds), Eastern Towhee, a rare village Golden-crowned Kinglet, **Dicksissel and Red-bellied Woodpecker** were too secretive for most of us. The trip to Eastern Egg Rock was calm, and replete with the usual suspects, including Atlantic Puffins, Purple Sandpipers, various terns, and even more Wilson's Storm Petrels.

A raft of twenty or so **Red-necked Phalaropes** close to the boat on the return voyage to the mainland provided a fitting point of emphasis for one of the most wonderful Monhegan trips in recent memory. What makes our trip list of 128 species particularly unique is that it contains (except for Dicksissel and Red-necked Phalarope) not a single accidental, vagrant, or particularly rare species for the island. The trip found perhaps the most complete representation of northeastern migrant songbirds of any trip in recent memory.

David Peake-Jones



My apologies to Tom Gagnon. The report on the Quabbin trip on May 8 has been lost in the overwhelming work load of this month. Rest assured it was a wonderful trip. Ed.

Bob Bieda led six others on a trip to **Plum Island** and vicinity on **May 28**. It was the kind of day birders dream of from start to finish. All morning the trees and bushes were filled with so many warblers and flycatchers that it was often hard to know where to look. The group saw just over 100 species including eleven warblers species and seven flycatchers, Saltmarsh Sharp tailed-and Lincoln's Sparrows. We saw Wilson's Phalaropes and a few straggling Red Phalaropes in breeding plumage that were remnants of the thousands blown ashore all along the north shore after the recent passage of a three-day Nor'easter. During a brief break from birding to view the storm damage to the beach on Plum Island, we saw the remnants of a fin whale that had been buried on the beach nine years ago that was uncovered by erosion during the storm. It still smelled really bad.

The highlight of the trip occurred at the end of the day when we followed up on a tip about the possible location of a Red-necked Phalarope. The bird was no longer there so our dream of a three-phalarope day was not realized. However, it was one of those times when you don't get what you hoped for, but you get something else special instead. While scanning for the phalarope, Dave Mako heard an unusual song and Bob Bieda identified the vocalizing bird - a **Eurasian Collared-Dove**! A report of the observation has been filed with the Massachusetts Avian Records Committee and, if accepted, it will be the first record of this bird in the state!

Janice Doppler

Bob Bieda adds:

"When we arrived on the island there were birds everywhere. Warblers, vireos and flycatchers by the hundreds. Comments like "my best day EVER", "just like the old days", "I haven't seen birds like this in years" were heard from groups of birders we met all day. I think of Wilson Warbler as an early season migrant and Blackpoll as late season. We had dozens of both. We saw hundreds of Redstarts and good numbers of all the regulars. In addition we had three or four Yellow-bellied Flycatchers and a few Least, Willow and Alder. Early and late season vireos and three Swainson's Thrushes were seen. We got these numbers without ever getting to the Hellcat where, in the past, was the only place we got numbers of warblers. I've been waiting a long time to write a report like this and it's not April 1st."

Bob Bieda

PASSING THE TORCH

The following officers were elected to the Board of Hampshire Bird Club Incorporated for 2005-2006 at the Annual General Meeting on May 9, 2005.

President: David Gross

Program Chair/Vice President: Geoff LeBaron

Treasurer: Janice Jorgensen

Corresponding Secretary: Marcia Merithew

Membership Secretary: Susan Emerson

At-large Board members:

Betsy Higgins

Jaap Van Heerden

Elissa Rubinstein

Mike Locher

Bob Zimmermann

Dennis McKenna

HBC LIBRARY: Need Summer Reading?

The Hampshire Bird Club Library has some new books! Check them out, literally and figuratively!

"*A Field Guide to Dragonflies & Damselflies of Mass.*" by Nikula, Loose & Burns

"*Sibley's Birding Basics*" by Guess Who

"*Warblers of Europe, Asia & N. Africa*" by Kevin Baker
 "*Sparrows & Buntings*" by Byers, Curson & Olsson
 "*Nightjars*" by Cleers & Nurney

"*The Wind Birds*" by Peter Matthiessen
 "*The Wind Masters*" by Pete Dunne
 "*The Big Year*" by Mark Obmascik

"*Birds of Grand Tetons N.P. & Surrounding Lands*" by WY Bert Raynes
 "*Birds of Zion N.P. & Vicinity*" by Roland Wauer
 "*A Birders' Guide to the Bahama Islands*", by Anthony White
 "*Birds of Kenya*" by ?

We are also missing a few books. Anybody have a lead on these?

"*The Black Capped Chickadee*" by Susan Smith and
 "*Birds of the Carolinas*" by Potter, Parnell & Teulings

As usual call Henry to bring a book to meetings for you, or help yourself down at the Hitchcock Center. .
Hours are 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. on Tuesday through Friday, and 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. on Saturdays.

HITCHCOCK PROGRAMS

WOOD AS AN ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCE

Paul Catanzaro; Shane Bajnoci; Susan Campbell; Scott Maslansky.

BREEDING BIRD WALK: John Green, Naturalist
 Sunday, June 12, 7 - 10 a.m.

MONARCH CATERPILLAR RESEARCH PROJECT: Jennifer Wiest
 Saturday, June 11, 1 - 3 p.m.

LITTLE DRAWINGS, BIG MEMORIES: Rema Boscov, Artist and Writer
 Saturdays, June 11 & 18, 10 a.m. – noon

PRINCIPLES OF PLANT ECOLOGY: Julie Richburg, Ecologist
 Saturdays, July 23, August 6 & 13, 9:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.
 Held at the Hitchcock Center for the Environment

FERNS OF THE CONNECTICUT RIVER VALLEY; Ted Watt, Hitchcock Center Naturalist
 Wednesday Class, July 6, 7 - 8:30 p.m.; Sunday Field Trip, July 10, 9:30 a.m. - 4 p.m.
 Held at the Hitchcock Center for the Environment

NATIVE FERNS PROPAGATION WORKSHOP: Leslie Duthle
 Saturday, July 9, 9 a.m. - noon
 Held at Nasami Farm in Whately.

For details and registration for all Hitchcock programs, please contact the Hitchcock Center for the Environment, 525 South Pleasant St., Amherst MA 01002. Telephone (413) 256 6006, or on the web at www.hitchcockcenter.org.

Fitzgerald Lake Trail Improvement Day.

Saturday, June 11, 9:00 AM – 12:00 NOON

North Farms Road entrance.

The Broad Brook Coalition, which manages Fitzgerald Lake Conservation Area, is asking interested folk to come out Saturday morning and help to improve the trails in our conservation area. Please bring gloves and tools for trail work.

Help for Blue-wings at Arcadia

Arcadia Sanctuary is seeking approval from the Northampton Conservation Commission for an important stage of its long-term plan to promote habitat diversity in the West Meadows. Visitors to the Ibis Pool and Trolley Line/Ned's Ditch areas will be familiar with areas of abandoned farmland lying adjacent to the Mill River, to the northwest of the Ibis Pool, and north of the trolley line. These old-field areas have been regrowing for approximately twelve years, and are rapidly being transformed from early successional shrublands into dense stands of maple, cottonwood and yellow birch. Sanctuary staff believe that these areas are now becoming progressively less suitable for species such as Blue-winged Warbler, Eastern Towhee, and Willow Flycatcher, which have nested there in recent years.

Mass Audubon has applied for a grant to cut approximately half this regrowth back this year, restoring an earlier successional habitat. Pending future grant applications, the remainder of the parcel will be cut in 2008. In the long term, the idea is to maintain a mosaic of these early successional shrublands, benefiting several bird species whose overall breeding success in New England is tenuous and declining.

Some Good News for Peregrines

Amidst news of high peregrine nestling mortality this season from Springfield and Holyoke, **Jaap Van Heerden** and **Gina Martel** were fortunate to be able to observe the banding of three Peregrine Falcon chicks on the roof of the W.E.B. Dubois Library at UMass. The banding was done by personnel from MassWildlife on Tuesday morning, May 31, 2005.

The chicks, one male and two females, appear to be 2-3 weeks old. After some frantic initial swoops, the adult falcons settled in and the male looked on from a tall antenna, while the female stayed close to the nest box. After banding these birds, the team moved on to Mount Sugarloaf, where two more chicks were banded.

Welcome New Members

These folks are paid up through September 2006!

Mary L. Hamilton: Florence

Louis J. Musante: Ashfield

Juliana Vanderwielen: South Hadley

Steve Funderburk & Kathi Bangert: Amherst

That's all for this year. Until September, walk softly and carry a big scope!

David Peake-Jones, Editor

newsletter@hampshirebirdclub.org

(413) 529 9541



Hampshire Bird Club, Inc. Amherst, Massachusetts

www.hampshirebirdclub.org

Volume 22, No. 1

September, 2005

We are on New South Beach in Chatham, Massachusetts in mid August. The beach is a huge mudflat, wreathed in mist. It is a world dominated by a single, planar, fluid interface between water, sand, and air. Dowitchers, sandpipers, knots, oystercatchers, and plovers of many stripes stand upon the sand as if they had sprung from it. Occasionally, as if we were in one of those Christmas snow globes being shaken by some vast hand, the birds leap into the air and swirl like smoke in a breeze, shuffling themselves into some new formation before drifting again to earth.

We interlopers struggle over this alien landscape and set up our scopes to look at resting peeps. We pick away visually at the massed birds, each with a unique plumage, and begin to try to force these subtle ranges of characteristics into something that gives us a label. At first, the salient questions for some of us are of the most embarrassingly broad variety. Struggling to calibrate our sense of size, we ask, "Is that a Least-Sandpiper, or a Pectoral-?" Later, if we are lucky enough to get beyond that point, we can start to ask, "Are those scapulars bright enough for a Western Sandpiper?" and "Is that bill 'relatively longer and heavier than a Semipal's?'" "Just where is a bird I can conclusively call a Semipal?"

A long-suffering field trip leader points out some birds in the group that are slightly larger, with brighter eye-lines, longer sterns, more orderly streaking on the throats, and subtle chevron-streaking down the flanks. At first, we have to force ourselves to focus on one or two characteristics at a time, coaxing certainty from the daunting subtlety of feather and bill. At some point, these tentative comparisons may coalesce into the seeds of a *gestalt*, a sense of the overall *jizz* of the birds, the beginnings of *knowing* the bird. With a gentle wash of satisfaction, we realize that we can begin to pick the White-rumped Sandpipers from their semi-palmated cousins! For just a few moments, we are there. We are shorebirders! This hard-won observational toehold tends to erode over time – in my case, before reaching the next group of shorebirds. However, with the years of patient peering the *knowing* gradually increases, incorporated into the brain, and, in more important ways, into the soul. Birding is a journey with no end point. It keeps us coming back year after year.

HBC goes all over New England throughout the birding year to witness the marvels of bird migration and breeding. We even venture out into the winter chill to share moments with those birds that hunker down in these latitudes year round. Our monthly speakers spur us toward new birding horizons. Won't you sign up again this year, or try it for the first time? You won't be disappointed! **Our first program happens on September 12 when Don Kroodsma pays a visit.** See page 2 for details.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS ARE DUE BY SEPTEMBER 30!

YOU CAN DOWNLOAD A MEMBERSHIP FORM VIA THE LINK ON THE HOMEPAGE. THIS CAN BE MAILED TO THE CLUB, OR TURNED IN AT THE SEPTEMBER MEETING.

Also in this edition:

The HBC Rare Bird Alert form

The Fall Field Trip Schedule

Coming Programs

and more.....

PROGRAMS

Monday, September 12 at 7:30 PM

at Immanuel Lutheran Church, 867 North Pleasant St. Amherst

Don Kroodsma: “The Singing Life of Birds”

“Somewhere, always, the sun is rising, and somewhere, always, the birds are singing.” So begins “The Singing Life of Birds,” by noted local ornithologist Don Kroodsma. Don, perhaps the most erudite exponent of the sonogram ever to grace the pioneer valley, will personally elaborate on his groundbreaking book “The Singing Life of Birds.” The book blends science, mystery and poetry, and, not surprisingly, has been received with critical acclaim.

Don has recently been featured on [*Fresh Air with Terry Gross*](#), Morning Edition’s *Radio Expeditions*, the *Leonard Lopate Show*, and *Kojo Nnamdi Show*. The book has also been featured in [*Audubon Magazine*](#), [*Scientific American*](#), [*USA Today*](#), [*Entertainment Weekly*](#), [*Outside Magazine*](#), [*E Magazine*](#), and elsewhere. You can hear and read these sound-articles via links from Don’s Website: <http://thesinginglifeofbirds.com/>

Don Kroodsma’s early birding in the 1950’s was down the sights of a double-barrel 12-gauge shotgun, at a small crossroads in southern Michigan where the pheasant hunting was extraordinary. Discovering real birds his last semester in college, he took his ornithology courses from Sewall Pettingill the following summer, then headed out to Oregon State University for graduate school, where he got hooked on wrens. A few decades later, he’s retired from an academic career and is rediscovering birds all over again.

Coming Up

October 17, 2005. Andrea Jones. *Namibia.*

November 14, 2005. Blair Nikula. *Antarctic Seabirds.*

December 12, 2005. *Members' Meeting (Slide Show).*

January 9, 2006. Nancy Weiss. *The ABC/Bird Conservation Alliance.*

February 13, 2006. Gregor Yanega. *Hummingbird Bills.*

March 13, 2006. David Spector. *Birds In Literature and Literature About Birds.*

April 17, 2006. Harry Vogel. *Common Loons.*

May 8, 2006. John Van de Graff. *Peregrinations of a Bird Photographer.*

June 12, 2006. Tom French. *Return of a Raptor-Peregrines in MA.*

www.hampshirebirdclub.org

As always, the HBC web site has information about upcoming programs, postings of current and past newsletters, and useful links to other birding sites.

All **club officers and activities** chairs can be reached via email that ends in @hampshirebirdclub.org. For example, to ask a question of the president, mail goes to president@hampshirebirdclub.org. All of these new addresses are listed on the “about” link at the HBC web site.

Don’t forget the **club bulletin board**. There are sections about the Rare Bird Alert, local birds seen that don’t quite merit the full-blown RBA, and information about upcoming (and past) field trips. Anyone is welcome to post sightings, links or other items on the bulletin board. . If you have comments or suggestions about the web site, please send them to webmaster@hampshirebirdclub.org (who else?).

HBC NEWSLETTER AVAILABLE ON-LINE!

You can choose to get the newsletter on-line via the club website, instead of through the mail. We ask that if you have Internet access and are even moderately comfortable online, that you consider selecting the on-line option.

“How does that work?”

The newsletter is posted on the HBC website. Participants receive a monthly email notification, whereupon they can view and/or download the newsletter from the website at their leisure. You need to give us an email address in order to get the on-line newsletter reminder.

“What’s the point?”

You can archive our publication electronically, without accumulating paper files. You reduce postage costs for HBC, which keeps dues down for all of us, and you reduce the labor involved in distributing the newsletter.

“What are the computer/software requirements?”

The newsletter will be posted on the Website in PDF format. This means you will need to have Adobe Acrobat Reader software (version 5.0 or later) on your system. If you do not have it already, this software is available FREE via a link at the club Website.

How do I sign up?

Please sign up in the upper right hand corner of the **Membership Form** and make sure you include your email address.

“What if I encounter technical difficulties?”

Most users last year had no difficulty. In the event that you find the system does not work for you, a simple communication with the Membership Secretary will get you back on the “Hard Copy” mailing list.

I signed up last year. Do I need to sign up again?

We ask all members to decide each year how they want to receive the newsletter. Regardless of how you got the newsletter last year, please make your choice of how to receive the newsletter this year on this year’s membership form.

FIELD TRIPS

Reports

On July 30, Sally Hills, Helga Beatty, Hermann Staengle, David Mako, Chris Ellison, and Mike Locher, under the dubious leadership of **David Peake-Jones** traipsed our way onto **New South Beach** in Chatham, MA in search of early shorebirds. People in both cars busied themselves during the ride down there, feverishly poring over Sibley’s descriptions of Little Stint, and Wilson’s Plover, both of which had been reported recently. We enjoyed mild weather and good birds all day. As we alighted at the far end of the beach, Dave M. alertly spotted a male **Northern Harrier** directly overhead at considerable altitude. Shortly afterward, he repeated this neck-craning feat in spotting the first two of our three **Whimbrels** for the day. Despite adverse tides, we steadily accumulated a handy list of shorebirds, gulls and terns, including a **Black Tern** (which Hermann picked out of a flock we were about to give up on), goodly numbers of Roseate Terns, a **Dunlin**, about 10-12 **Hudsonian Godwits**, and numerous Piping Plovers. We did find about 120 **Red Knots**, a number which, though low by comparison with several years ago, gives more cause for optimism than the paltry handful of birds we found last year. The innumerable Semipalmated Plovers all remained steadfastly just that, with nary a hint of Wilsonism amongst the lot of them. The Little Stint/s had either gone or were overlooked in the masses of Semipalmated-and Least-Sandpipers.

On a sad note, we discovered that Barnacle Bill’s, our traditional dinner venue on the ride home, has changed formats, and will no longer be suitable for the group. Let the scouting begin!



Saturday, August 20 dawned overcast with mild temperatures, presaging a comfortable time on **New South Beach** for **Bob Bieda**, Al Richards, Shawn Smolen-Morton, Elissa Rubenstein, Bernie Rubenstein, Chris Ellison, Hermann Staengle, and David Peake-Jones.

If you are one to look around the parking lot, or to sneak a peek over the far side of that birdless cove, you’ll know that checking the least likely places rarely seems to pay off. This doesn’t mean that good birds are not in unpromising locations, but rather that they are not in very many places at all, and we tend to get

irrationally discouraged by this. So, as we set off with Outermost Harbor Marine toward the beach, it was with rather mechanical expectation of disappointment that we scanned the narrow mudflats bordering the marina. We might have been satisfied with our only **Whimbrel** of the day, but as we motored past scattered shorebirds, someone caught a fleeting glimpse of a slightly-too-big and pale Semipalmated Plover with an oversized schnozz. Surely this was just early trip over-enthusiasm, or the well-documented size calibration errors that plague shorebird identification for some of us. We tentatively begged the indulgence of our fellow passengers, just to be sure. Our driver obligingly veered around for another pass. There on the mud, with that “I-have-been-here-all-the-time” complacency that shorebirds always seem to have, was an unmistakable **Wilson’s Plover**, a bird that had eluded the previous HBC trip three weeks earlier!!

Such an auspicious start might have boded poorly for the rest of the trip, but with an ideal tide and mostly good visibility, we sifted our way through huge numbers of terns (including Roseates in all plumages), and impressive flocks of shorebirds, including reassuring numbers of Red Knot. Our first Godwit for the day was a never-to-be-taken-for-granted **Marbled Godwit**, and the overall tally of five for the trip beats most days on the beach. We later found 35 **Hudsonian Godwit** in a single group.

Sifting through large numbers of Sanderlings and Semipalmated Sandpipers resting on the dry sand, we found a **Buff-breasted Sandpiper**, and, with help from another group, located the telltale rusty belly of a **Curlew Sandpiper**, trying its best for anonymity amongst the local peeps. Good numbers of White-rumped Sandpipers tantalized us with their streaked flanks, long sterns, and subtly different throat markings. It is amazing how, after a couple of hours in expert company, one can get the whole gestalt of a subtle bird like a White-rumped Sandpiper, only to have this knowledge vanish by the next fall. There were some **Lesser Black-backed Gulls** scattered about, and we tried in vain to find a Golden Plover amongst the mobs of diverse Black-bellied Plovers. By the time fog and fatigue beset us at around 2:00, we were ready for the long trudge back to the pick-up point, knowing that it had already been one of the better days in recent memory. As if to punctuate this conclusion, Bob managed to pick out not one but two fast-fading **Black Terns** from the multitudes, and we found a most unlikely **Red throated Loon** swimming amongst the boats in the marina. We toasted the day with a profusion of greasy seafood at the Cream ‘n’ Kone before heading home.

Those with long memories will recall a long-standing wager between Shaun Smolen Morton and Al Richards, stipulating that, should Al find/see a Curlew Sandpiper on a New South Beach Trip, Shaun would carry him up the stairs to Morris Island. While Al undisputably saw the bird, the protagonists are deadlocked over whether or not he had to be the finder of the bird. Given that Mr. Smolen-Morton appears several years older and not quite so spry as he was when this virtually suicidal pact was first made, this desperate splitting of hairs is perhaps forgivable.

Coming Trips

Please see the enclosed Fall Field Trip Schedule.

Welcome New Members!

Cyndy Chamberland: Amherst
Julie Abramson: Northampton
Lynne Cherry: Thurmond, Md.

John P. Joyal: South Hadley
John & Linda Riehl: Boston, Ma.

No space this month for Project Inspire (please see the link at www.hampshirebirdclub.org), Arcadia programs, Hitchcock Programs, our gorgeous library, or the conservation committee. Ah well, more for October! Until next time, talk softly and carry a big scope!

David Peake-Jones, Editor
(413) 529 9541
newsletter@hampshirebirdclub.org



Hampshire Bird Club, Inc. Amherst, Massachusetts

www.hampshirebirdclub.org

Volume 22, No. 2

October, 2005

In lieu of a decent editorial this month, I would simply like to enter my nomination for the most under-appreciated bird in New England. It is the fall Bobolink. By contrast with the almost clownish flamboyance of the breeding birds, fall individuals epitomize the season like no other species. They are a rich and subtle buffy-golden color, with boldly striped backs, featuring an intricate array of dark feathers with golden edges. While non-birders are desperately searching for the perfect leafy vista, we in the know have only to find a weedy field.

If you want to be on the Rare Bird Alert phone tree, please send in the form from the September newsletter before October 17, or submit it to Sue Emerson at the October meeting. Spare forms will be available at the meeting, and are also on the web at www.hampshirebirdclub.org.

Attached to this online version of the newsletter are the **Field Trip Policy** and **Field Trip Guidelines**. This is to save you navigating back and forth between links. The **ABA Code of Birding Ethics** is available at the website, but I was unable to attach it to the newsletter.

PROGRAMS

This Month

Andrea Jones takes us to Namibia

Monday, October 17 at 7:30 PM

Immanuel Lutheran Church; 867 North Pleasant Street, Amherst.

Andrea took a sabbatical leave in Namibia during the fall of 2004. She worked with a US-based conservation organization named "*Round River*" which brings college students overseas for a semester to work with locally based conservation initiatives to provide research, gather ecological information, and assist with conservation planning. In Namibia, *Round River* works with *Save the Rhino Trust* whose mission is to curb the poaching of the desert Black Rhinoceros in the Kunene region of northwestern Namibia. In the fall of 2004, the students studied the effects of increased tourism on the rhino, collected valuable information on the abundance and density of large mammals in the area, and developed a bird survey and birding brochure for the area. Andrea will present a slide show of the plants and animals of Namibia, the results of their research, and photos of adventures to remote areas such as the Skeleton Coast and encounters with desert elephants.

Andrea Jones has worked at Mass Audubon since 1993. She is currently the director of the Coastal Water Bird Program and coordinator for the Important Bird Areas (IBA) program in this state. She also works on a variety of other avian conservation programs. Andrea received a bachelor's degree in Wildlife Biology and Management from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. She then received an M. Sc. after studying Grasshopper Sparrows in Massachusetts. She has worked as a teacher/naturalist for Massachusetts Audubon Society's Drumlin Farm and for the National Wildlife Federation in North Carolina. She spent four months in Kenya in 1989 studying wildlife management and conducting a research project on giraffe feeding behaviors. She has led numerous tours for Massachusetts Audubon Society to East Africa. Recently, she spent 3 months in Namibia on sabbatical working with US college students on a program to teach students how to conduct field research.

Coming Programs

November 14, 2005. Blair Nikula. Antarctic Seabirds

December 12, 2005. Members' Slide Show –

FIELD TRIPS

Trip Reports Wanted!!

*When a leader's not engaged in his employment (his employment)
 When the small brown jobs have all been soundly taught (soundly taught)
 He loves to lie a-basking in the sunshine (in the sunshine)
 Far from his mind is any trip report (trip report)*

(Gilbert & Sullivan, almost)

Field trips are fundamental to our bird club, and documenting them is an important part of keeping people interested and participating. This should not fall to the field trip leaders. It should fall to YOU, the enthusiastic participant! Others need to hear your perspective on the birds seen, and how the trip contributed to your love for and understanding of birds. Please volunteer to write a trip report next time you venture out.

Race one off when you get home and email it to me at newsletter@hampshirebirdclub.org.

Thanks. Editor

Coming Trips!

See also the Fall Field Trip Schedule from the September edition

Please register with the trip leader(s) and check this schedule's information when a phone number is given. The Hampshire Bird Club recommends carpooling whenever possible, and suggests that all riders share equally the per-car cost of \$0.40 per mile, as well as tolls and parking. See also the "Field Trip Guidelines for Participants" (in the October newsletter or on the website).

Trips have been coded as Easy (E) or Moderate (M) to give an indication of the pace and/or terrain, but check all information with the trip leaders. An asterisk () denotes a trip that is particularly good for beginners.*

Please contact the Field Trip Chair (Michael Locher-413-585-5864 or via email at the club website) with either feedback or ideas for new trips, and please volunteer to write a trip report for the newsletter.

Wednesday, October 12. Connecticut River Valley. Half day. Harvey Allen looks for migrants on his monthly midweek sweep. Meet at 7 a.m. across the street from Atkins Farm, at the corner of Route 116 and Bay Road in Amherst. Call Harvey (413-253-7963) for further information. (E)

Saturday, October 15. Dead Creek Wildlife Management Area, Vermont. All day. Al Richards heads to southern Lake Champlain, looking for one or two Ross's Geese among thousands of Snow Geese, and searching out other seasonal specialties. Call Al (413-665-2761) to register. (E)

Saturday, October 22. Coastal Rhode Island. All day. Geoff LeBaron explores the coast of Rhode Island. Call Geoff (413-268-9281) for details and meeting information. (M)

Sunday, November 6. Berkshire Lakes. All day. Tom Gagnon leads his annual trip to the lakes and ponds of the Berkshires looking for migrating waterfowl. Bring snacks, warm clothing, and a lunch. Meet at the Northampton Stop 'n' Shop on King Street at 6:30 AM. Call Tom (413-584-6353) to register and for further information. (M)]

CHRISTMAS COUNTS, 2005

Mark These Dates!

Northampton Count: Sunday, December 18

Quabbin Count: To Be Announced.

Now that you can tell a Downy from a Hairy in driving rain (or not!), here is an opportunity to contribute to one of the longest-running databases in ornithology. Birders all over the U.S., Canada, the Caribbean, Latin America and Pacific Islands contribute to an annual census of birds in their local areas, the results of which are collated internationally.

The Northampton and Quabbin circles are divided up into smaller areas, each counted by an experienced leader or leaders, with assistants. To take part, all you really need is a willingness to cope with the vagaries of December birding, and a willingness to count everything in a scientific manner. The coordinators can hook you up with a team that needs members in your area. Both local counts culminate in a compilation session during which those still standing come together to pool results. The sense of camaraderie and shared purpose is palpable and rarely equaled in birding!

For further information, watch coming newsletters, or contact Jan Ortiz (413 549 1768; jtortiz@aol.com, Northampton Count) and Scott Surner (413 253 5999; ssurner@aol.com, Quabbin Count)

REMEMBERING VERA CRANE

Vera Crane, a longtime birdwatcher and member of the Hampshire Bird Club died on August 30th after an illness of several months. Many of us knew of her fondness for the ocean. Periodically she would call me and ask urgently, "When is the next bird trip going to Plum Island? The Rhode Island shore? The coast of Maine?" She would then ride with us, excited to be at her favorite place. Jan Ortiz recalls that Vera would take her bathing suit, ask her if there was time for a swim, and say that she could quickly change into her suit behind the bushes so as not to hold up the group. Field trip leaders remember Vera's rather disconcerting habit of mysteriously vanishing, then reappearing during a trip. It was all part of her mysterious and highly personal reverence for place and solitude.

A memorial service for Vera took place at 2:30 on October 8th at the Unitarian-Universalist Church in Northampton.

Anne Lombard

WHERE ARE THE BIRDS?

For a synopsis of the birds being seen statewide, organized by region, call:

Voice of Audubon

1-888-224-6444

Seth Kellogg maintains the Western Massachusetts voice. He tries to create a comprehensive picture of what is being seen in the region, meaning all reports are welcome. Seth asks that you include the numbers of birds seen in your reports, not just the species list. He can be reached by email at skhawk@comcast.net. Alternatively, you may call him at (413) 569 3335, or leave a message in the Western Mass. section of The Voice.

For Rare Birds, the **Rare Bird Alert** is an email/phone tree run by HBC. Please see the cautions on the RBA form (enclosed) if you are considering being part of it.

LIBRARY

HBC has a substantial library, located at the Hitchcock Center for the Environment in Amherst. Henry Lappen maintains a collection of birding resources including field guides, bird-finding guides to almost every major birding destination in the U.S., and some overseas locations, natural histories, periodicals and videos. Why *buy* for that once-in-a-lifetime trip to the Rio Grande valley, when you could *borrow*? Hours are 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. on Tuesday through Friday, and 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. on Saturdays. Items can be signed out and borrowed for a period of up to one month, or longer by arrangement. Henry is happy to bring items to meetings, if you give him a few days in advance. You can reach him at **(413) 549 3722**.

CONSERVATION

*If you are interested in conservation of birds and birding habitat, you may like to share information and effort with others in the club. **Anne Lombard** and Bob Zimmerman make up our **Conservation Committee**. The club is looking for ideas on how we can contribute to habitat conservation in our area. Contact Anne at **(413) 586 7509**, or Bob at **(413) 585 0405**. The committee email is conservation@hampshirebirdclub.org.*

HITCHCOCK PROGRAMS

SUSTAINABLE SUNDAYS: THE QUICK SUSTAINABILITY CLINIC: *Paul Lipke, Jo Comerford, Sunday, October 30, 1 - 3 p.m.*

CLIMATE CHANGE IN THE ARCTIC: *Steve Roof, Tuesday, October 11, 7 p.m.*

FRAMEWORK TREES OF NEW ENGLAND: *Brian Hawthorne*
Classroom Sessions: Wednesdays, October 5, 12, 19, 7 - 9 p.m., Hitchcock Center
Field Sessions: Saturdays, October 15 and 22, 9:30 a.m. - 2 p.m.

SHRUBS OF THE CONNECTICUT RIVER VALLEY: *Roland "Boot" Boutwell, Saturday, October 22, 10 a.m. - 3 p.m.*
Held in Northfield and Gill. Directions given at registration.

LOCAL GEOLOGY TOUR: *Joe Kopera, Saturday, November 5, 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.*

NATURE'S PERFECT PREDATOR, MOUNTAIN LIONS IN NEW ENGLAND: *Bill Betty, Sunday, November 6, 7 p.m.*

For details and registration for all Hitchcock programs, please contact the Hitchcock Center for the Environment, 525 South Pleasant St., Amherst MA 01002. Telephone **(413) 256 6006**, or on the web at www.hitchcockcenter.org.

Backyard Birds

17 Strong St., Northampton (near Eastside Grill). Phone 586 3155

Your local source for birding and bird-feeding supplies, including feeders, optics, gifts, written and audio-materials. Ten percent discount for members of the Hampshire Bird Club. Remember, with local merchants, your dollar stays here!

ARCADIA PROGRAMS

INTRODUCTION TO DIGITAL NATURE PHOTOGRAPHY: *Robert Floyd*

Fridays; Oct.14, 21, Nov.11, 18, Dec. 9, 16, 7:00-9:00 p.m.

AUTUMN AT HIGH LEDGES: *Ron Wolanin*

Sunday, Oct.16, 10 a.m.-2:00 p.m.

INTRODUCTION TO LANDSCAPE ECOLOGY: *Marty Klein, Tom Lautzenheiser*

Sunday, Oct.23, 1:00 p.m.-4:00 p.m.

COMPOSTING AND HEALTHY LANDSCAPING: *Ann McGovern*

Saturday, Nov.5; 10 a.m.-12 noon

*For more details of these and other programs go to www.massaudubon.org (select "Sanctuaries", then "Choose a Sanctuary: Arcadia") or call the sanctuary at the number below. To register for programs contact **Arcadia Wildlife Sanctuary**, 127 Combs Rd., Easthampton MA 01027. Telephone **(413) 584-3009**.*

GREAT FALLS DISCOVERY CENTER PROGRAMS

Celebration of "Waterfowl Population Surveys: 50 Years & Still Counting"

Friday, October 14. 10am - noon

Project WILD Teacher Workshop: *Pam Landry*

Environmental Education Ideas for K-12 educators.

Saturday October 2, 9am-5 pm. Please register by calling 413-683-3221.

***Great Falls Discovery Center** is located at 2 Avenue A, Turners Falls, MA*

Open Fridays and Saturdays from 10AM to 4 PM

Phone (413) 683 32212

Welcome New Members!

Nancy & Denny Baker: Greenfield

Rachel Greenwood: Williamsburg

James P. Smith & Susannah Lerman: Amherst

Cynthia and Donald George: Amherst.

Matthew & Sally Galman: Belchertown

Stephen LaValley: Haydenville

Laura Wetzler: Cummington

Ed McCarron: South Hadley

That's all for this month.

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

David Peake-Jones, Editor

(413) 529 9541

newsletter@hampshirebirdclub.org

The (unabridged) Hampshire Bird Club Directory for 2005-2006 is on the back page

HBC Directory: 2005 - 2006

President: David Gross; (413) 253 2897; president@hampshirebirdclub.org

VP/Program Chair: Geoff LeBaron; (413) 268 9281; programs@hampshirebirdclub.org

Membership Secretary: Sue Emerson; (413) 584 6736; membership@hampshirebirdclub.org

Communications Secretary: Marcia Merithew; (413) 584 8874;
communications@hampshirebirdclub.org

Treasurer: Janice Jorgenson; (413) 585 0148; treasurer@hampshirebirdclub.org

Board Members

Elissa Rubinstein; (413) 549 5078; erubinstein@hampshirebirdclub.org

Betsy Higgins; (413) 586 7585; bhiggins@hampshirebirdclub.org

Dennis McKenna; (413) 256 8439; dennismckenna@hampshirebirdclub.org

Jaap van Heerden; (413) 253 5569; jvanheerden@hampshirebirdclub.org

Mike Locher; (413) 585 5864; mlocher@hampshirebirdclub.org

Bob Zimmermann; (413) 585 0405; zimmermann@hampshirebirdclub.org

If you would like to contact the entire board in one fell swoop, try board@hampshirebirdclub.org

Field Trip Chair: Mike Locher; (413) 585 5864; fieldtrip@hampshirebirdclub.org

Conservation Committee: Anne Lombard (Chair); (413) 586 7509; **Bob Zimmermann;** (413) 585 0405
conservation@hampshirebirdclub.org

Boutique Proprietor: Betsy Higgins; (413) 586 7585; boutique@hampshirebirdclub.org

Librarian: Henry Lappen; (413) 549 3722; library@hampshirebirdclub.org

Publicity Chair: Jan Ortiz; (413) 549 1768; publicity@hampshirebirdclub.org

Webmaster: David Gross; (413) 253 2897; webmaster@hampshirebirdclub.org

Newsletter Editor: David Peake-Jones; (413) 529 9541; newsletter@hampshirebirdclub.org

Refreshments: Sally Hills; (413) 549 5550; **Helga Beatty;** (413) 253 2410
refreshments@hampshirebirdclub.org

Rare Bird Alert: Bob Bieda; (413) 527 2623
Geoff LeBaron; (413) 268 9281
Jan Ortiz; (413) 549 1768
Scott Surner; (413) 253 5983
alert@hampshirebirdclub.org

FIELD TRIP POLICY: 2005-2006
HAMPSHIRE BIRD CLUB, INC. 10/7/2005

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

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

Overnight Trips (2 or more days, reasonable driving distance) are planned by the Field Trip Committee and approved by the HBC Board at least 3 months in advance (see #5 below). Such trips generally require more planning by the trip leader, including, for example, arranging for lodging and travel. Participants will be charged an amount equal to actual predetermined costs (including liability insurance) plus a prorated amount to cover reimbursement of the leader's expenses (see #5 below). All fees, including the trip deposit, shall be paid to the HBC Treasurer. If a participant needs to cancel, fees (less a 10% processing fee) will be refunded subject to the conditions outlined in the trip description. Any excess fees remaining after costs have been met will be refunded, unless they are less than ten dollars per person, in which case they will revert to the HBC treasury. Overnight trips are open to only HBC members who have signed a release form and who have completed a medical information form.

4. The HBC Board recommends that passengers reimburse owners of vehicles used on HBC trips for costs associated with vehicle operation. The maximum recommended reimbursement is the federal government employee mileage reimbursement rate, rounded down to the nearest 10 cents, plus tolls and parking to be shared equally by all persons in the car including the driver. The participants (not the leader) are responsible for making carpool arrangements.
5. Leaders of Overnight Trips shall:
 - a. Submit a trip plan to the Field Trip Committee, which must be approved by the Board at least 3 months in advance of the trip. The plan should describe in writing the nature of the trip as completely as possible. Include an itinerary, estimated cost, conditions of lodging and lead time needed for reservations, roughness of terrain, pace of the trip, extra costs not covered by the fee, date of deposit and final payment, date after which fee is not refundable, and provide a list of any specialized items that participants should take on the trip. Repeat trips lead by the same leader need only submit necessary changes to the previous plan. The Board can waive the 3-month planning time if there is a special birding opportunity.
 - b. Consult with the membership secretary before the trip to make sure that all participants have signed the HBC Release Form.
 - c. Be reimbursed for all costs associated with planning (i.e. long-distance calls, postage), lodging, and transportation during the trip. The maximum reimbursement for automobile travel shall be one quarter of the costs incurred by a single vehicle under clause 4 of this policy.
 - d. Upon return, provide the HBC Board with an itemized account of all income and expenses related to the trip including receipts for major expenses.
6. The Field Trip Chair will send all participants in overnight trips the Field Trip Evaluation Form. The completed forms, to be returned to the Field Trip Chair, will help the Field Trip Committee plan future trips and provide feedback for leaders.
7. Leaders of both Day and Overnight Trips are asked to submit a Trip Highlights Report to the newsletter editor for publication in the next HBC newsletter.
8. HBC may ask professional bird touring organization to organize trips further away than the Overnight Trips. All responsibilities for planning the trip and all liability will be assumed by the touring organization. Such trips must be approved by the Board at least 6 months in advance.
9. Trips not sponsored by the Club: As a courtesy to its members, HBC will announce birding trips organized by members or other organizations, but not sponsored by the club. Such announcements will be made in the newsletter (on a space available basis) and at meetings and HBC will assume no other responsibility for such trips.

Field Trip Guidelines for New Field Trip Participants and Drivers: 2005-2006 Hampshire Bird Club, Inc.

Field trips are one of the best ways to help the Hampshire Bird Club, Inc. (HBC) achieve its purpose: "to help its members and the general public enjoy birding and to educate them about birds, bird watching and bird habitats."

While these Guidelines are written primarily for new HBC Participants and Drivers, we hope that everyone will review this document, the ABA's Principles of Birding Ethics, the HBC Field Trip Policy, and the HBC Release Form.

All Participants:

1. Most trips described in the newsletter ask you to call the trip leader in advance. Please do so. It helps the leader plan the trip and you learn about any special arrangements or any change of plans.
2. Check with the leader before bringing children on a trip. Many of the trips are not appropriate for children. (All minor children (under 18) must be accompanied by a parent/guardian or an adult who has written authorization to be responsible for the child's care and conduct. See the Field Trip Policy for more information.)
3. All HBC members are asked to sign the HBC Release Form each year. If you did not receive a copy, please contact the Membership Secretary.
4. Be on time at the meeting place. If you plan to leave the trip early, you must inform the leader in advance.
5. Be prepared with binoculars, appropriate clothing (including protection from ticks), food and water. Assume the weather will be more extreme on the trip than at home and prepare accordingly.
6. Do not bring pets.
7. HBC encourages participants to carpool, both to reduce the environmental impact of the trip and to make the trip as safe as possible for all participants. We ask that the cost (presently \$0.40/mile plus tolls and parking) be shared equally among the driver and all passengers. You should estimate the probable cost of the trip so that you will be able to reimburse the driver at the end of the trip. The participants (not the leader) are responsible for making carpool arrangements.
8. HBC always encourages new birders to participate in trips. It is the responsibility of all trip members, leader and participants, to help new birders learn both identification techniques and bird observing skills.
9. All participants are responsible for their own safety. Use common sense if you feel that any part of the trip is too arduous for you. Always check with the trip leader if you have any questions or medical concerns about the trip.

Drivers:

1. It is the responsibility of the car owner to meet all registration, insurance, and inspection regulations.
2. Please fill up your tank before the trip and set your odometer at the beginning of the trip.
3. If the trip is going to caravan, follow common sense rules to make sure no one is put in danger or lost.

Stay in the same order so that you know which car is in front of you and which car is behind you.

If the car behind you is stopped by a light, pull safely to the side of the road so that you can wait until that car catches up.

If you are driving the car or cars catching up with the group, slow down so that the lead/stopped cars can pull in front of you.

It is a good idea for all caravan drivers to have their lights on.

4. Always have a description of the next major stop from the trip leader so that, should the caravan become separated, you can join the group at the next major stop.



Hampshire Bird Club, Inc. Amherst, Massachusetts

www.hampshirebirdclub.org

Volume 22, No. 3

November, 2005

PROGRAMS

This Month

Blair Nikula speaks about Antarctic Seabirds

Monday, November 14 at 7:30 PM

Immanuel Lutheran Church; 867 North Pleasant Street, Amherst.

Blair Nikula, a native of Cape Cod and life-long birder, is a former regional editor for *American Birds* (now *North American Birds*), a past-president of the Cape Cod Bird Club, and currently serves as a member of the Mass Avian Records Committee and an associate member of the Massachusetts Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program Advisory Committee. Blair has also been studying and photographing dragonflies and damselflies for about 15 years. He co-edits *Ode News*, a newsletter about the odonates of southern New England, co-authored the *Stokes' Beginner's Guide to Dragonflies and Damselflies*, and *A Field Guide to the Dragonflies and Damselflies of Massachusetts*. He is currently working on a revision of *The Birds of Cape Cod*.

Earlier this year, Blair had an opportunity to spend four weeks on a Russian ship in Antarctica assisting in seabird research. In this program he will share some of his images and experiences from this exciting trip.

Coming Up

December 12, 2005. Members' Meeting (Field Trip Forum and Slide Show).

January 9, 2006. Nancy Weiss. The ABC/Bird Conservation Alliance.

February 13, 2006. Gregor Yanega. Hummingbird Bills.

FIELD TRIPS

Reports

On a miserable **October 22**, Larry Duprey, Joan Duprey, Chris Ellison, Sue Emerson, Betsy Higgins, Don Kroodsma, Dan Marchant, Elaine Pourinski, and Al Richards, under the expert guidance of **Geoff LeBaron**, toured **coastal Rhode Island**. At Avondale farm in Westerly, a very pale Red-tailed Hawk led to whispers of "Krider's Hawk", but remains, officially, a blonde red-tail. Among the multitudes of sparrows were numerous **White-crowned-** and a few **Lincoln's Sparrows**. **Red-throated Loons** streamed by out over the water, and a Marsh Wren skulked.....

At the Misquamicut beaches, a Peregrine Falcon overhead nearly caused an accident and at Ninigret N.W.R., a more cooperative **Marsh Wren** made amends for its reclusive predecessor. At Trustom Pond, the thickets held several flocks of mixed kinglets, a Brown Creeper, a Red-breasted Nuthatch, plus abundant "Myrtle" Warblers, and five **Northern Harriers** were in view at the same time out over the marsh. The pond held hundreds of **Ruddy Ducks**, American Coots, various scaup, an immature **Red-necked Grebe**, and a distant second-winter **Lesser Black-backed Gull**.

Finally, as the day ended in rough weather at Point Judith, a flock of all three **scoters** flew by, with **Northern Gannets** visible further out.

In all, the group tallied 83 species under atrocious conditions. Not bad!

♣♣♣♣♣

Al Richards, Sally Hills, Helga Beatty, Elizabeth McAnulty, and David Peake-Jones met at the **Dead Creek NWR** on **October 15** to see Snow Geese. After a week of seemingly incessant rain in the northeast, we were owed a break. NOT! Drizzle was never more than a few minutes away throughout the day. There were several thousand geese at fairly close range, and many thousands of others forming a spectacular backdrop. Once, the birds got up *en masse* in response to some unknown goosy impulse, and huge numbers drifted in loose skeins toward the mist-wreathed hills to the east. We contented ourselves with observing these beautiful and enigmatic creatures for some time at the viewing area, as well as a **Peregrine Falcon** defending a kill from a very ambitious **Northern Harrier**, then set off down the back roads of Addison county in search of other seasonal fare.

Tree lines along the roads were swarming with Yellow-rumped Warblers, and roadside weeds were replete with a variety of small brown jobs including good numbers of **White-crowned- and White-throated Sparrows**. **Green-winged- and Blue-winged Teal** dotted numerous small washes and cat-tail marshes throughout the refuge and surrounds. Along West Road we came across a lone **Rusty Blackbird** surveying the drizzle with a jaundiced eye and making its unique rusty-gate call. At Button Bay, we surveyed a huge raft of Canada Geese, numerous **Common Mergansers**, and distant **Bonaparte's Gulls**. We spent a little more time back at the viewing area before setting out for home.

Coming Trips

Please register with the trip leader(s) and check this schedule's information when a phone number is given. The Hampshire Bird Club recommends carpooling whenever possible, and suggests that all riders share equally the per-car cost of \$0.40 per mile, as well as tolls and parking. See also the "Field Trip Guidelines for Participants" (in the October newsletter or on the website).

Trips have been coded as Easy (E) or Moderate (M) to give an indication of the pace and/or terrain, but check all information with the trip leaders. An asterisk () denotes a trip that is particularly good for beginners.*

Please contact the Field Trip Chair (Michael Locher-413-585-5864 or via email at the club website) with either feedback or ideas for new trips, and please volunteer to write a trip report for the newsletter.

Sunday, November 6. Berkshire Lakes. All day. Tom Gagnon leads his annual trip to the lakes and ponds of the Berkshires looking for migrating waterfowl. Bring snacks, warm clothing, and a lunch. Meet at the Northampton Stop 'n' Shop on King Street at 6:30 AM. Call Tom (413-584-6353) to register and for further information. (M)]

Wednesday, November 16. Connecticut River Valley. Half day. Harvey Allen will seek out migrants on his monthly sweep. Meet at 8 a.m. across the street from Atkins Farm, at the corner of Route 116 and Bay Road in Amherst. Call Harvey (413-253-7963) for further information. (E)

Sunday, November 20. East Quabbin. All day. Tom Gagnon ventures to the far side of the reservoir on this annual late fall trip. Bring snacks, warm clothes, and a lunch. The trip will be limited to 15 participants, who must, as mandated by the Quabbin authorities, be members of the Hampshire Bird Club. Call Tom (413-584-6353) to reserve a place and make arrangements for meeting. (M)]

Friday, November 25. Turkey Trot: Cape Ann. All day. Al Richards and Bob Bieda lead this annual trip to the north shore searching for wintering sea ducks, Purple Sandpipers, seabirds, and perhaps a Snowy Owl. Bring snacks and warm clothing. Call Al (413-665-2761) or Bob (413-527-2623) to register. (M)

***Saturday, December 10. Owling in the Valley.** Evening. Mike Locher will go out in search of our most common local owl species (Screech, Barred, Great Horned, and possibly Saw-whet). Dress so that you can stand still for long periods in cold weather. Call Mike (413-585-5864) for meeting place and time. (E)

FIELD TRIP FORUM

December 12, 2005. 6:30 PM

Immanuel Lutheran Church, North Amherst

Immediately before the December HBC meeting, this forum is a chance for HBC members to share ideas about new or improved field trips the club might consider in the near future. Mike Locher (Field Trip Chair) needs ideas for trips at any level from local, part-day jaunts to long-range overnight jobs (within a 6-hour driving radius of the valley). If you have any ideas to offer, and especially if you can proffer leadership/organizational skills, please attend!

NORTHAMPTON CHRISTMAS COUNT NEEDS YOU!

Sunday, December 18, 2005.

If you participated last year, you will be receiving the forms for this year's Count shortly.

We encourage you to join us for this extraordinary event. All levels of birding skill are welcome. You can choose to go owling, go birding during the day, do a feeder count, or all of the above. At the end of the day there is a potluck supper and compilation (tallying of results) at the Hitchcock Center.

The best way to learn more about the Count is to read last year's international report (last year's participants have their copies, additional copies will be available at the November meeting). You can also read about the Northampton Christmas Count over the years at hampshirebirdclub.org. Click on Christmas Count and then on Report. The map of the count circle is also there. You may contact the count coordinators, **Jan Ortiz** (jtortiz@aol.com, 549-1768) or **Mary Alice Wilson** (mwilson@k12s.phast.umass.edu, 548-9078) for more information.

(The Coordinators are also looking for an additional coordinator. If you would like to be an apprentice elf, contact them).*

CHRISTMAS COUNT POTLUCK NEEDS YOU EVEN MORE!!

OK, it is a poorly kept secret. The real reason for the CBC is to provide an excuse for the potluck. **Sue Emerson** (membership@hampshirebirdclub.org; 584 6736) will be coordinating this happy event this year, with a band of dedicated "elves,"* and needs volunteers to prepare dishes. Those who have staggered into the Hitchcock Center and cupped the frozen remnant stumps of their hands around a steaming bowl of potluck soup or chili will attest to the fact that this catering is noble work. Sue will pass around a sign-up sheet at a coming meeting, or you can take the bit between your teeth and contact her of your own volition.

LIBRARY

HBC has a substantial library at the Hitchcock Center in Amherst. **Hours** are 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. on Tuesday through Friday, and 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. on Saturdays. Items can be signed out and borrowed for a period of up to one month, or longer by arrangement. **Henry Lappen** is happy to bring items to meetings, given a few days notice! Call him at (413) 549 3722.

* I just want to point out that there are no fewer than two references on this page to elves, with the implication that these creatures are the epitome of diligence and unquestioning obedience. I might just point out that, as loyal readers of Harry Potter already know, the house-elf community has been battling the repression associated with this stereotype for centuries, and are only now beginning to reap the benefits of organized labor and the "elf rights" movement. I'd like to propose that we shift the burden to some hitherto-overlooked fantasy creature. When cheap labor is required, we should co-opt some of those stony-faced mythomorphs with the pointy hats which otherwise lounge about in our landscaping. I refer, of course, to the not-so-humble gnome. They have had it too good for too long. (Ed.)

BROAD BROOK COALITION

A Chance to Enhance the Fitzgerald Lake Conservation Area

As you may recall, Bill Schafer, longtime member of the Hampshire Bird Club and the Broad Brook Coalition, passed away last December after a lengthy battle with cancer. In his will, Bill stipulated that his estate would donate \$10,000 to the Broad Brook Coalition for the acquisition of land for the Fitzgerald Lake Conservation Area (FLCA) in Northampton, if the BBC could raise an equal amount within a year. Altogether, this would mean the addition of \$20,000 to the BBC's Land Acquisition Fund.

Over the years, the BBC and its Land Acquisition Fund have made a big difference to the FLCA. Since 2000, nine parcels of land, totaling 97 acres, have been added to the conservation area, bringing the total to almost 600 acres. The BBC's Land Acquisition Fund has contributed over \$44,000 toward these purchases, which the City of Northampton would never have been able to make otherwise.

It was an important part of Bill's wishes that his challenge be met by those who know and use the FLCA. At this point, roughly 80% of the needed funds are in hand, but there are only a few months left in which to complete the job. ***Please help to make the Fitzgerald Lake Conservation Area bigger and better by sending your contribution to the Broad Brook Coalition, P.O. Box 60566, Florence, MA 01062, and note that it is to be applied to the Bill Schafer Challenge.*** All contributions to the Broad Brook Coalition are tax deductible.

Bob Zimmermann

HITCHCOCK PROGRAMS

CLIMATE CHANGE IN THE ARCTIC: Steve Roof, Hampshire College Department of Natural Science
Tuesday, October 11, 7 p.m.

SUSTAINABLE SUNDAYS: MENDING OUR FRAGILE PLANET WITH RENEWABLE ENERGY AND COMMUNITY ACTIONS: Peggy MacLeod, Center for Ecological Technology
Sunday, November 13, 1 - 3 p.m.

SECRET LIFE OF BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEES: Susan Smith, Mount Holyoke College
Monday, December 5, 7 p.m.

GREEN STENTOR CAVORT OFF THE BIKE PATH: Lynn Margulis, UMass
Thursday, December 8, 7 p.m.

For details and registration for all Hitchcock programs, please contact the Hitchcock Center for the Environment, 525 South Pleasant St., Amherst MA 01002. Telephone **(413) 256 6006**, or on the web at **www.hitchcockcenter.org**.



SOFFER COLLECTION AT AMHERST COLLEGE

The Richard L. Soffer Class of 1954 Ornithology Collection, is now part of the Amherst College archives. This very large collection, containing some seminal works in ornithology, is coming to the College in installments. The first installment arrived last year and is catalogued and available. A description of what the College presently has can be found at <http://www.amherst.edu/library/archives/exhibitions/soffer/index.html>

John McDermott

John was kind enough to announce this news at the October HBC program. (ed.)

ARCADIA PROGRAMS

COMPOSTING AND HEALTHY LANDSCAPING: *Saturday, Nov.5; 10 a.m.-12 noon, Ann McGovern. To be held at Arcadia.*

STORIES OF THE LAND: *Sunday, Nov.6; 10:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m., Kevin Kopchynski. To be held at Laughing Brook.*

TREES WITHOUT LEAVES: *Saturday, November 12, 1-4 p.m., Patti Steinman. To be held at Laughing Brook.*

MUSIC FROM NATURE FAMILY PROGRAM: *Friday, Dec.2, 7-8:30 p.m. Kevin Kopchynski. To be held at Arcadia.*

*For more details of these and other programs go to www.massaudubon.org (select "Sanctuaries", then "Choose a Sanctuary: Arcadia") or call the sanctuary at the number below. To register for programs contact **Arcadia Wildlife Sanctuary**, 127 Combs Rd., Easthampton MA 01027. Telephone **(413) 584-3009**.*

GREAT FALLS DISCOVERY CENTER PROGRAMS

November 18 – December 3: Junior Duck Stamp exhibit in the Great Hall

November 19, Saturday, 11 am: Art Opening: The Duck Stamp Story

November 25 & 26, Fri & Sat, 1 pm: Talking Turkey

GFDC is located at 2 Avenue A, Turners Falls, MA 01376

Open Fri & Sat 10am-4pm

For further information, contact the center at 413-863-3221

MISCELLANEOUS

Winter Finches: Irruption Imminent!

Below is a quote from a knowledgeable Canadian, suggesting we should expect plenty of northern visitors to feeders this year.

"There should be a moderate to good flight of most (not all) winter finch species out of Ontario's boreal forest this fall and winter. Cone crops and birch seed crops range from poor to good across northern Ontario. Very few northern areas have excellent crops. Many crops are patchy or spotty with some trees having good crops while nearby trees have poor crops. On the Canadian (Precambrian) Shield of central Ontario including Algonquin Park, seed crops are very poor on most species. In much of urban and agricultural southern Ontario, seed crops are generally poor so expect finches at feeders this winter."

I have lost the information that would allow me to acknowledge the source of this information, so we will simply have to have faith that this knowledgeable Canadian is not fibbing! (ed.)

That's it for this month.

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

David Peake-Jones, Editor

(413) 529 9541

newsletter@hampshirebirdclub.org



Hampshire Bird Club, Inc. Amherst, Massachusetts

www.hampshirebirdclub.org

Volume 22, No. 4

December, 2005

PROGRAMS

Monday, December 12 at 7:30 PM

Members Meeting

Immanuel Lutheran Church; 867 North Pleasant Street, Amherst.

Should bad weather force a cancellation, it will be announced on WHMP 1400 AM radio.

Perhaps the most important item on the agenda is the Christmas count. Time is allocated for team leaders to meet with their respective teams and plan the count. If you haven't yet found a group for the count, please see "Christmas Count" later in this edition.

There is also a program, of sorts. The featured speaker is you! This is a chance for us to kick back and share natural history experiences from the entire season through slides and (brief) narratives. Birding tales are, of course, most relevant, but any adventures in the natural world are probably of interest to others in the club. We ask that you plan to present no more than twenty slides per person, since there may be many others who wish to present! Hope to see you there!

Coming Up

January 9, 2006. Nancy Weiss. The ABC/Bird Conservation Alliance

February 13, 2006. Gregor Yanega. Hummingbird Bills

March 13, 2006. David Spector. Birds and Books

FIELD TRIPS

Reports

Harvey's Mid-Week Sweep of the Pioneer Valley

On **Wednesday, November 16**, a small group went to Ludlow Reservoir under the guidance of **Harvey Allen**. Now as the illustrious editor of this rag has so gallantly requested (begged) for trip reports, so as to encourage attendance on club field trips, I should gallantly share with you how fabulous this walk was, what with 70 degree sunshine, and hundreds of species at close range, especially the Ivory Billed Wood- . . .

But alas honesty (and contrariness with those with funny accents) force me to cease this glorification of a mediocre event. In reality, only four of us braved the weather, which actually turned out not too bad - warm 50s, and only a few quick rain squalls. We didn't see much at all -except the **150 Ruddy Ducks**. Oh, and the 2 Red Breasted Mergs, and 9 **Hoodies**. And, oh yeah, a Loon, 2 **Pied Billed Grebes**, and a Kingfisher. And, I almost forgot, a Surf Scoter. The woods were quiet though: only a few Blue Jays and Chickadees.

Thanks Harvey!

Henry Lappen

Just when I thought I had a field trip report submitted by a member without an ulterior motive....Henry reminds us to check out the new titles in the HBC Library, including the *Florida Bird Finding Guide*. A seasonally appropriate plug for the library as well! Henry may believe I have not noticed the thinly veiled reference to those of us from the antipodes in his piece above. As reward (or retribution, depending on your viewpoint) for this, I have allowed his report to appear in this august journal unedited!!

Turkey Trot to Cape Ann.

Battling toxic levels of tryptophan in our laboring bloodstreams, a band of devote birders under the leadership of **Al Richards** and **Bob Bieda** took off for the coasts of **Cape Ann/Plum Island** on **November 25**. The enigmatic Shawn Smolen-Morton, becoming something of a living legend by virtue of his comparative scarcity on trips these days, joined us after one of his trademark all-night marking sessions, and was (predictably) relegated to driving one of the cars. Shawn kept up a constant stream of carping and generally insurgent behavior for most of the day. This seems designed to promote his campaign to be the youngest recognized birding curmudgeon in HBC history.

We managed to avoid periods of balmy weather immediately preceding and following the trip and found ourselves opening the car doors at Salisbury Beach in about 17 degree weather, with a brisk wind whipping off the Merrimack estuary. Despite this, a perky Hermit Thrush greeted us, along with a cheery assortment of winter residents. A **Northern Gannet** flew by over the frigid expanse of ocean, and a **Northern Pintail** was the rather improbable leader of a small gaggle of geese that flew overhead. Six **Snow Buntings** attested to the bitter cold as they eked out a living along the narrow strips of grass peeking through the decaying parking lot near the beach.

A typical cast of winter sea ducks fell prey to our scopes from the boat ramp along the Joppa Flats shorefront. Buffleheads, Long-tailed Ducks, Black Ducks, and Mallards formed the majority of the assembled multitudes, with a sprinkling of delicate **Bonaparte's Gulls**.

Snow-free Plum Island was a drab brown, and almost exquisitely bird-free, save a **Great Blue Heron** bearing witness to the generally mild late fall. At Emerson Rocks we beheld an interesting assortment of ducks, including all three scoters, **Red-necked Grebe**, Horned Grebe, and both loons. A group of **Green-winged Teal** started up out of the marsh in response to some unknown threat.

Moving on to Cape Anne in the vanishing late afternoon, we enjoyed a tantalizing smattering of distant pelagic birds skimming along the shimmering horizon, before a **Razorbill** deigned to go sputtering by at close range. We had nice looks at Black Guillemots, and a surprisingly sedentary **Black-legged Kittiwake** bobbing demurely in the waves, apparently quite oblivious to the indecent proximity of the shore. In the blessed quiet of late afternoon, we could hear the quaint contact peeps of a lovely group of Purple Sandpipers on the rocks beneath us at Andrew's Point. Our last stop of the day was at Cathedral Ledges for gorgeous **Harlequin Ducks**. With our intestines finally free of the ravages of turkey sandwiches, we compiled the very pleasing day's results over fish and chips at one of the local eateries.

David Peake-Jones

Coming Trips

Please register with the trip leader(s) and check this schedule's information when a phone number is given. The Hampshire Bird Club recommends carpooling whenever possible, and suggests that all riders share equally the per-car cost of \$0.40 per mile, as well as tolls and parking. See also the "Field Trip Guidelines for Participants" (in the October newsletter or on the website).

Trips have been coded as Easy (E) or Moderate (M) to give an indication of the pace and/or terrain, but check all information with the trip leaders. An asterisk () denotes a trip that is particularly good for beginners.*

***Saturday, December 10. Owling in the Valley.** Evening. Mike Locher will go out in search of our most common local owl species (Screech, Barred, Great Horned, and possibly Saw-whet). Dress so that you can stand still for long periods in cold weather. Call Mike (413-585-5864) for meeting place and time. (E)

Mike Locher, not merely a field trip leader, but the Field trip Chair, is at this moment laboring away to get the Winter-Spring-Summer Field Trip Schedule prepared. Let him know if you want to lead a trip this coming year at 585 5864, or fieldtrip@hampshirebirdclub.org

FIELD TRIP FORUM: Monday, December 12 at 6:30 PM

Immanuel Lutheran Church

In the hour immediately preceding the December program, Mike Locher will meet with any and all interested members to discuss new ideas for our field trip program. We are looking for new ideas ranging from the leisurely and local to more ambitious ideas for overnight trips. We are especially interested if you are able to lead or otherwise assist in organizing trips you want to see on the program.

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

The **Northampton Christmas Count** (in its 71st year) will be held on **Sunday, December 18**. Contact Jan Ortiz (413) 549-1768 jtortiz@aol.com or Mary Alice Wilson (413) 548-9078 mwilson@k12s.phast.umass.edu.

The **Quabbin Count** will be held on **Saturday, December 31**. Contact Scott Sumner (413) 253-5999 ssurner@aol.com.

Food Donations Needed for Christmas Bird Count “Pot Luck” Meal !!

We are in need of food (hot or cold dishes) for the Christmas Count Potluck. The potluck starts at 4:30 PM before the 6:00 PM compilation. After a rigorous day (and in some cases night) in the field, there is no better way to cap-off a successful bird count than by partaking in a good, hot meal. Your help is needed in order to make this an evening to be remembered! y!!

Please contact Sue Emerson (413/584-6736; membership@hampshirebirdclub.org.com) before December 12 and tell us what you will be bringing. We are seeking hot or cold main dishes, salads, deserts and snack foods (This is an ideal way to test that new recipe you have always been wanting to try-out). Sue will give you drop-off details.

Thank you, on behalf of all the Christmas Count faithful!

GREAT FALLS DISCOVERY CENTER PROGRAMS

Public Reading – Writing with Nature Series: Tammis Coffin
Thursday, December 8, 6-8 pm

Introduction to Winter Birds: Sue Cloutier
Saturday, December 10: 10 am

Writing by the River Series: Tammis Coffin
Saturdays, December 10 and 17: NOON to 2 pm. Pre-registration requested

Bird Friendly Tree Decorations: Center Staff
Friday, December 23: 1 pm

Wildlife Track and Sign: Susan Russo and Sue Clouthier
Wednesday, December 28: 11 am (family program)

Wildlife’s Winter Survival Strategies: Susan Russo and Sue Clouthier
Wednesday, December 28: 1 pm. (family program)

*Great Falls Discovery Center is located at 2 Avenue A, Turners Falls, MA
Open Fridays and Saturdays from 10AM to 4 PM*

Phone (413) 683 32212

LIBRARY

Bill Clinton has one. George Bush Snr. has one. Ummm...the President before that has one. Now that he is a two-term president, perhaps W. will have two. More to the point, we have one!

A substantial library, that is. It is located at the Hitchcock Center for the Environment in Amherst. **Henry Lappen** maintains a collection of birding resources including field- and bird-finding-guides to almost every major birding destination in the U.S., and some overseas locations, natural histories, periodicals and videos.

Hours are 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. on Tuesday through Friday, and 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. on Saturdays. Items can be signed out and borrowed for a period of up to one month, or longer by arrangement. Henry is happy to bring items to meetings, given a few days notice! Call him at **(413) 549 3722**.

HITCHCOCK CENTER PROGRAMS

WHAT POWERS YOUR CAR? A PANEL DISCUSSION ON VEGETABLE OIL FUEL IN THE VALLEY:

David Biddle, Mark Bucciarelli, Bruce Davidson, Susanne Hale, Les Patlove, Julie Rypysc

Sunday, December 11, 1 - 3 p.m

GREEN STENTOR CAVORT OFF THE BIKE PATH: *Lynn Margulis*

Thursday, December 8, 7 p.m.

CONNECTING TO PLACE THROUGH NATURAL PHOTOGRAPHY: *John Green*

Monday, December 19, 7 p.m.

*For details and registration for all Hitchcock programs, please contact the Hitchcock Center for the Environment, 525 South Pleasant St., Amherst MA 01002. Telephone (413) 256 6006, or on the web at **www.hitchcockcenter.org**.*

ARCADIA PROGRAMS

SNOWSHOEING THE WINTER WOODS (Family Program): *Aimee Gelinas*

Sunday, December 18, 10:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.

SOLSTICE CELEBRATION: *Wednesday, December 21, 5:30 –8:30 p.m.*

Please bring a nonperishable food item to donate to the Food Bank.

*For more details of these and other programs go to www.massaudubon.org (select "Sanctuaries", then "Choose a Sanctuary: Arcadia") or call the sanctuary at the number below. To register for programs contact **Arcadia Wildlife Sanctuary**, 127 Combs Rd., Easthampton MA 01027. Telephone **(413) 584-3009**.*

Refreshments for December Program

Sally Hills does not formally line up refreshments for the December program, but she asked me to reassure you all that anyone is free to bring any snack tasty snack or beverage they please. I think this is code for **"Will people PLEASE bring food and drink to the December Meeting??"**

The HBC membership directory is included with this newsletter. Please use it privately to safeguard the security of our members. That's it for this month.

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

David Peake-Jones, Editor

(413) 529 9541

newsletter@hampshirebirdclub.org