



Hampshire Bird Club, Inc. Amherst, Massachusetts

www.hampshirebirdclub.org

Volume 22, No. 5

January, 2006

In this edition:

- An introduction to this month's program,
- A very self-deprecatory field trip report by Mike Locher
- Highlights of the Northampton Christmas Count
- The **Winter-Spring-Summer HBC Field Trip Schedule**
- Programs by Hitchcock, Arcadia and VEEC
- A number of general interest stories from the world of birds

I hope you find this information useful!

PROGRAMS

Monday, January 9 at 7:30 PM

Nancy Weiss speaks about **The ABC/Bird Conservation Alliance**

Immanuel Lutheran Church; 867 North Pleasant Street, Amherst.

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

With the growth of interest in birds, many diverse groups have become concerned about bird conservation issues. Nancy believes that, if more is not done, there won't be any birds for us to watch. She will be speaking about the Bird Conservation Alliance. It is a network of organizations focused on bird conservation, education, and observation that represents millions of birdwatchers and concerned citizens, united for the conservation of birds. It seeks to promote birds as an important biological, aesthetic and economic resource for the future. It hopes to reduce bird mortality due to human activities and help protect and manage habitats to conserve the diversity of bird species and the abundance of bird populations. It supports bird conservation throughout the Americas.

Nancy Weiss has lived and worked as a physician in the valley for over thirty years. She has a life-long interest in conservation and has bought and donated over 450 acres of land in Massachusetts to 3 different conservation organizations. She loves to watch birds and admires them greatly. Not only does she work to protect bird habitat but, as a vegetarian, she doesn't eat birds either.

Coming Up

February 13, 2006. Gregor Yanega. Hummingbird Bills

March 13, 2006. David Spector. Birds and Books

April 17, 2006. Harry Vogel. Common Loons

Near Miss

Shortly after World War 2, **Brown Tree Snakes** (*Boiga irregularis*) were accidentally introduced to the island of Guam. Over the past fifty years or so, the snake has devastated the ecology of the island, causing the extinction of the half the bird species. To prevent further spread, departing planes and ships are generally checked carefully for stowaway snakes. This did not prevent an individual from making its way late last year in a military cargo container to the McAlester Ammunition Plant in southeastern Oklahoma. The animal survived without food or water for about three months.

FIELD TRIPS

Reports

On Saturday, **December 10**, two handfuls of HBC faithful accompanied Mike Locher in his search for spectacular sunsets. The trip was mislabeled as an **owling** excursion. We got the sunset off the flanks of Mount Warner.

Mike finally scared up one little Screech Owl off Moody Bridge Road, at a low spot in the road henceforth to be known as "David's Dingle," in honor of our newsletter editor. This site will no doubt soon be as well known as Ned's Ditch, Bartholomew's Cobble, and Tom's Mount as a birding hotspot. Other birds we saw included a dozen Canada Geese, ten Mourning Doves, and a solitary Song Sparrow. Maybe next time I'll offer hot chocolate.

Mike Locher

Editor's Note; I don't mind having a dingle named after me, if Mike really thinks I earned it. I just don't want my name associated with any berries that might be found there.

Coming Trips

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

HITCHCOCK PROGRAMS

Sustainable Sundays: Natural Homes and Healthy Lifestyles: *Tina Clarke and Myriam Laura Beaulne.*
Sunday, January 22, 1 - 3 p.m.

Taming the Beast: Reducing Energy Use at Home: *Peter Talmage.*
Thursday, February 9, 7 p.m.

Holyoke: Origin of Water Power City: *Ed Klekowski.*
Tuesday, January 31, 7 p.m.

Veracruz River of Raptors Slide Show: *Jan Ortiz and Scott Surner.*
Thursday, February 2, 7 - 8:30 p.m.

Spring Birding Class: *Scott Surner*
Evening Classes (9): March 1, 8, 15, 22, April 5, 12, 26, May 3, 10; 6:30-8:30 p.m.
Field Trips (10): March 4, 25, April 8, 15, 22, 29, May 6, 13, 20, June 3; 7 a.m. – noon

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.

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**.

ARCADIA PROGRAMS

Owl Moon Family Program: *Nancy Childs, Patti Steinman.*

Saturday, January 14. 5-7 p.m.

Tracking and Animal Signs at Laughing Brook: *Kevin Kopchynski.*

Saturday, January 21. 10-11:30 a.m.

Winter Crows: *Patti Steinman.*

Sunday, January 22. 2-6 p.m.

Winter Birding on the South Shore and Daniel Webster Wildlife Sanctuary: *Dan Furbish.*

Saturday, January 28. 11:30 a.m.-6:00 p.m.

Changes in Massachusetts Bird Populations: *Wayne Peterson.*

February 7, 7-9 p.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.

VEEC PROGRAMS

"Tides of Change: Wildlife Population Trends in the Valley"

Valley Environmental Education Collaborative is composed of state, federal, and private conservation and educational organizations along with like-minded individuals. VEEC is sponsoring a series of workshops, each addressing a different local population that has changed or been monitored over time.

Stemming the Decline of Shrubland Bird Populations in Western Massachusetts.

Jill Liske-Clark, Upland Program Coordinator, Mass Wildlife

January 24, 2006 at 7 PM. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Hadley; 413-253-8303. Please call to register.

Flown the Coop: Changes in Massachusetts Bird Populations. Wayne Peterson, Mass Audubon

February 7 at 7 PM. Arcadia Wildlife Sanctuary, Easthampton; 413-584-3009. Please call to register.

Preening as a Way of Life

Why do so many male birds and other animals maintain costly attractive features like breeding plumage long after they have formed pair bonds?

In a study led by Rebecca Saffran at Cornell University, female Barn Swallows formed clear and robust social pairings with single male birds, but mated and bore offspring by a variety of other males. Saffran found that males with the brightest reddish-chestnut hues on the breasts were most likely to father children by females from other pairs. Females did not form fixed opinions on the reproductive fitness of give males, but constantly re-evaluated the pool of prospective mates throughout the season. Changes in brightness translated immediately into changes in desirability. On this basis, it is clear that male Barn Swallows will be most reproductively successful if they can maintain their reddish color well into the breeding season. The authors surmise that "fitness" may depend not just on genetic and environmental good fortune, but also on the fastidiousness of male preening and other strategies for feather maintenance, a fact that gives this author something to think about. The research is published in the September 30, 2005 edition of *Science*. You can read a more comprehensive summary of it at www.birds.cornell.edu/pr/swallows.html.

NORTHAMPTON CHRISTMAS COUNT

Sunday, December 18, 2005

Species

85 on count day

2 additional species observed in count week

Individual birds

32,485

High Counts

Wild Turkey (162, previous high 127 in 2001)

Sharp-shinned Hawk (22, previous high 19 in 1994 and 1995)

Red-bellied Woodpecker (101- they hit a new High Count every year),

Black-capped Chickadee (2096, previous record 1970 in 1994. Susan Smith says this is an irruption year)

Tufted Titmouse (681, previous high 633 in 2004)

White-breasted Nuthatch (489, previous high 478 in 2004)

Hermit Thrush (9, previous high 7 in 2001)

Gray Catbird (5, previous high 4 in 1996)

Unusual Species

American Pipit (4)

Other interesting numbers

Red-breasted Goose (first observation) is officially listed as "origin unknown" since it probably escaped from a breeder who is surely sad to have lost this elegant European bird.

Red-tailed Hawk (123, the record set last year was 124)

Red-breasted Nuthatch (120, unusually high - one of 6 spikes since the 1930s)

Cedar Waxwing (1540, the record set in 1998 was 1567)

Total participant count

109 people spent time in the field this year, and there were 16 feeder watchers. The total (125 participants) represents a new record.

Potluck Count

59 people ate, 33 households contributed food, including 15 main dishes. Of these, the newsletter editor sampled 12, a new high. The group consumed 2.5 gallons of hot cider.

A **Summary Report** with lots and lots and lots of data is online at www.hamshirebirdclub.org, click on Christmas Count). You can also review the records for this count since 1934 at (www.audubon.org/bird/cbc - the name of this count is MANO). You can also look at the records for any other count that interests you for as many years as that count has been held (some have more than 100 years of data.)

Mary Alice Wilson

First Bell's Vireo Banded in Massachusetts

Tuesday, October 24 was a red-letter day for the Manomet Bird Observatory. Their banding program captured, banded, and released the first ever **Bell's Vireo** banded in Massachusetts. The bird showed up again in the mist nets two days later.

CONSERVATION

“Think Globally and Act Locally”

If you subscribe to this adage, there are a couple of opportunities in local conservation to think about.

The “Watras Parcel” at Arcadia.

Arcadia Sanctuary in Easthampton is administered by Mass Audubon. It already protects 725 acres, including 168 acres of grassland around our beloved “ibis pool” in the west meadows of Northampton. The sanctuary has been working hard to restore native grasses to this grassland, and to address the encroachment of forest around the margins. Amongst other things, this promises to encourage breeding of ‘large grassland’ specialists. Kestrels have bred in the vicinity of the Ibis Pool in recent years. Meadowlarks bred in 2003, and seem to be on the verge of a comeback here. Grasshopper Sparrows may be next.

Currently, the 65-acre “Watras” farmlands are almost completely surrounded by existing sanctuary property. Their protection is key to a broad vision, which is to manage the largest possible area of contiguous grassland. The good news is that, with a loan from Mass Audubon, Arcadia Sanctuary closed on the Watras parcel in January of 2004, at a cost of over \$240, 000. Even better news is that, through grants from the Frank Stanley Beveridge Foundation, the Fields Pond Foundation, the Xeric Foundation, and the George H. and Jane A. Mifflin Memorial Fund, only \$16, 000 of the loan repayment remains to be raised as of December 15, 2005. An anonymous donor will match \$8, 000 from local donors.

So, in a nutshell, Arcadia needs \$8, 000 from people like us! What better way to use our conservation dollars than by contributing to a large local conservation area, where most of us bird on a regular basis? Please join me in contributing! Checks should be made out to “Arcadia Wildlife Sanctuary” and annotated “Grassland Appeal”. Mail to: Arcadia Wildlife Sanctuary, 127 Combs Rd., Easthampton, MA 01027.

O’Neill Hill Property. Williamsburg

Mass Audubon is urgently seeking funds to purchase and permanently conserve the O’Neill Hill land parcel in Williamsburg. This 26-acre property on Depot Road adjoins the Graves Farm Sanctuary, and provides a link between it and an 80-acre conservation property just east of the town center. The land has also been identified as a priority for protection by the town of Williamsburg in its recently completed Open Space and Recreation Plan. The rich habitat of the land supports wildlife such as moose, black bears, and bobcats, and rich plant life, and helps maintain the water quality of Joe Wright Brook.

The project received a boost in December, when the state Executive Office of Environmental Affairs (EOEA) provided \$35, 000. It remains for the campaign to raise around \$76, 000 by March 31, 2006, in order to permanently save the parcel.

The success of the O’Neil Hill Conservation Campaign will help advance protection of wildlife habitat at Graves Farm Wildlife Sanctuary and will also further a broader landscape-scale conservation initiative in an area stretching from Williamsburg Center to the Conway State Forest. This area includes some of the largest undeveloped tracts of forest in the Commonwealth. To make a gift to the campaign, download a pledge form from www.massaudubon.org/pdf/OHCCPledgeForm.pdf, or send a check to Connecticut Valley Sanctuaries, 127 Coombs Rd., Easthampton, MA 01027. Attention: O’Neill Hill Campaign. Annotate the check accordingly.

For further information on either of these land conservation efforts, contact Arcadia at 584 3009, or email the sanctuary director, Mary Shanley-Koeber at mshanley@massaudubon.org

I would like to be able to announce how much members of HBC have donated to each of these campaigns. If you donate, please email me at newsletter@hampshirebirdclub.org or leave a message at (413) 529 9541. It is not necessary to reveal how much you donated. I will not reveal names of donors in the announcement.

PUBLIC NOTICE
PUBLIC ACCESS MANAGEMENT PLAN UPDATE: QUABBIN RESERVOIR
WATERSHED SYSTEM
DRAFT

The Department of Conservation and Recreation, Division of Water Supply Protection, Office of Watershed Management Quabbin Section has completed a draft *Public Access Management Plan Update: Quabbin Reservoir Watershed System* for public review and comment. A public hearing regarding the draft Plan is scheduled for January 19th, 2006 at 7:00pm in the Quabbin Visitor Center, Belchertown, MA. Please call the Quabbin Visitor Center (413) 323-7221 for directions or possible snow cancellation.

The draft Plan will be available on the DCR website by January 3, 2006. It can be viewed and downloaded at the following website location: <http://www.mass.gov/dcr/waterSupply/watershed/quabaccess05.htm>. In addition, copies will be available at the local watershed libraries, the Quabbin Visitor Center, and upon request from the address or email listed below.

Written comments may be submitted until 5pm Friday, February 3, 2006 to:

Public Access Plan Update Comments

485 Ware Road

Belchertown, MA 01007

Or

Quabbin.publicinput@state.ma.us

Piping Plovers Down, Other Nesting Seabirds Steady.
2005 Census Data from MassWildlife

Piping Plovers

In 2005, a total of 475 pairs of **Piping Plovers** nested at 109 sites on Massachusetts coastal beaches. This represents a 3% decline from last year's 490 pairs. Dr. Scott Melvin, Senior Zoologist for Mass Wildlife, noted that the average number of chicks fledged per pair was only 1.0; below the minimum reproductive success needed to sustain Massachusetts' breeding population of Piping Plovers. "This year's low reproductive success is due in part to two spring coastal storms that destroyed many nests," said Melvin. He also said that loss of eggs and unfledged chicks to a variety of avian and mammalian predators continues to be a primary factor limiting productivity. Beach management practices to protect beach-nesting birds from disturbance, mortality and habitat degradation remain effective conservation tools. Piping plovers are classified as "Threatened" on both the federal and state endangered species lists.

Nesting Shorebirds

Since the last census in 2004, numbers of nesting **Common Terns** declined 6% to 15,417 pairs. Numbers of nesting **Roseate Terns** (1510 pairs), **Least Terns** (2625 pairs), **Arctic Terns** (4 pairs), and **Black Skimmers** (6 pairs) were remarkably stable. Despite stable numbers of Roseate Tern in Massachusetts this year, the entire Northeast population of this endangered species appears to have declined substantially since 2000. Storms in May delayed nesting and caused nest failures for many coastal waterbird species.

Backyard Birds (on Strong St. in Northampton) offers a wide range of birding books, audio resources, gifts, feeders, and other paraphernalia. They also offer a 10% discount to Hampshire Bird Club Members. Remember, when you shop locally, your money stays here!

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. Winter-Spring-Summer Field Trip Schedule, 2006

Please register with the field 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 \$0.40 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 7. North Shore: Cape Ann to Plum Island. All day. Bob Bieda will head to the coast in search of wintering specialties like 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 14. Winter Finches and Whatnot. Three quarters of a day. Mike Locher (413-585-5864) will venture to the west to look for winter finches, Northern Shrikes, Bohemian Waxwings, or whatever else seems to be around. Meet at the Hadley Elementary School (on Route 47, half a mile north of Route 9) at 7:30. (E)

FEBRUARY

Saturday, February 11. South Shore: Plymouth and Falmouth. All day. Al Richards veers south of Boston to find winter's ducks, gulls, and owls. Dress warmly. Call Al (413-665-2761) for meeting information. (E)

Wednesday, February 15. Midweek half day in the Connecticut River Valley. Morning. Harvey Allen (413-253-7963) scours the local area in search of birds, and shows off his favorite birding sites along the way. Meet at 8:00 a.m. across from Atkin's Farm (on the corner of Rt. 116 and Bay Road, Amherst). (E)

MARCH

Saturday, March 4. Plum Island. All day. Geoff LeBaron will seek out late-winter specialties like Rough-legged Hawks, Barrow's Goldeneyes, Glaucous Gulls, and Snowy Owls. Dress warmly. For meeting information, call Geoff (413-268-9281) as the date approaches. (E)

Wednesday, March 15. Midweek half day in the Connecticut River Valley. Morning. Harvey Allen (413-253-7963) leads a local trip to find seasonal specialties, probably migrating waterfowl. Meet at 7:30 a.m. across from Atkin's Farm (on the corner of Rt. 116 and Bay Road, Amherst). (E)

Saturday, March 25. Connecticut River Waterfowl. Half day. Al Richards will follow (more or less) the course of the mighty Connecticut, seeking out her migrating denizens. Ducks, that is. Lots of 'em. Call Al (413-665-2761) for meeting information as the date approaches. (E)

APRIL

***Sunday, April 9. Timberdoodles.** Early evening. Mike Locher looks, and mostly listens, for displaying American Woodcocks and other crepuscular creatures. Call Mike (413-585-5864) the week before the trip for meeting information. (E)

Saturday, April 15. Ashley Reservoir: Early Warblers. Half day. Bob Bieda searches out the gems of spring, the early migrants. Often, the trip finds Pine and Palm Warblers, Ruby-crowned Kinglets, and migrating Broad-winged Hawks and Ospreys. Meet at the Holiday Inn parking lot, Exit 15 ("Holyoke Mall") off Rt. 91 at 7:00 a.m. Call Bob (413-527-2623) to register. (E)

Wednesday, April 19. Midweek half day in the Connecticut River Valley. Morning. Harvey Allen (413-253-7963) looks for the early migrants Bob missed. Meet at 7:30 a.m. across from Atkin's Farm (on the corner of Rt. 116 and Bay Road, Amherst). (E)

***Saturday, April 22. More Migrants.** Half day. Betsy Higgins (413-586-7585) looks for more migrating warblers and neotropicals, starting around Look Park in Northampton (for her signature waterthrush). Meet at 6:30 a.m. in the parking lot of the JFK Middle School on Bridge Street in Northampton. (E)

Saturday, April 29. Graves Farm. Half day. Shirley Hilborn (413-253-6462) and Anne Lombard (413-253-7509) will lead birders around Graves Farm, looking for migrants and other local specialties. Meet at Graves Farm at 7:00 a.m. (E)

MAY

Sunday, May 7. Spring Migration in the Quabbin. All day. Tom Gagnon guides birders through the Quabbin in search of its varied avifauna. This trip is limited to Hampshire Bird Club members only. Call Tom (413-584-6353) well ahead of time for meeting information and to register. (M)

Saturday, May 13. Mt. Auburn Cemetery. All day. David Peake-Jones goes to Boston's most historic cemetery, which is also one of the city's birding hotspots, to see what happens to fly in. The numbers and variety can be astonishing. (PS-If you peed in the Quabbin the week before, don't use the water fountains.) Call David (413-529-9541) for meeting information. (E)

Wednesday, May 17. Midweek half day in the Connecticut River Valley. Morning. Harvey Allen (413-253-7963) shows off his favorite birding spots. Meet at 7:00 a.m. across from Atkin's Farm (on the corner of Rt. 116 and Bay Road, Amherst). (E)

Saturday, May 20. Coastal Rhode Island. All day. Never fear, Geoff LeBaron just moved his trip to the coast of our petite southern neighbor into the warm season (in response to member requests). Call Geoff (413-268-9281) for meeting information and further details. (E)

Friday, May 26 – Monday, May 29. Monhegan Island. Overnight trip. David Peake-Jones and Andrew Magee guide birders through a long weekend on this exquisite Atlantic isle in search of migrants and deer ticks. This trip is limited to Hampshire Bird Club members only. Call David (413-529-9541) to register. (E/M)

Saturday, May 27. Poor Man's Monhegan. All day. Bob Bieda guides the rest of us to Massachusetts' less artsy, but no less birdy, isle. Past trips have found Wilson's Phalaropes, Piping Plovers, Seaside Sparrows, Orchard Orioles, and Evening Grosbeaks. Call Bob (413-527-2623) to register and get meeting information. (E)

JUNE

Saturday, June 10 or 17. Westover Air Force Base. Half day. Pending permission, Bob Bieda will lead his annual trip into New England's premier grassland habitat, looming for Upland Sandpipers, Bobolinks, Grasshopper Sparrows, and Eastern Meadowlarks. This trip is limited to Hampshire Bird Club members only. Call Bob (413-527-2623) to register and check on the date and time for meeting. (E)

Wednesday, June 21. Midweek half day in the Connecticut River Valley. Morning. Harvey Allen (413-253-7963) leads birders through the local landscape, seeking out late migrants. Meet at 6:00 a.m. across from Atkin's Farm (on the corner of Rt. 116 and Bay Road, Amherst). (E)

JULY

Saturday, July 29. New South Beach, I. All day. David Peake-Jones goes looking for early migrating shorebirds, especially Red Knots. Bring a lunch, a jacket, and \$20 for the boat ride. Call David (413-529-9541) to register. (E/M)

AUGUST

Saturday, August 19. New South Beach, II. All day. Bob Bieda leads birders in their quest for late shorebird migrants, including Curlew Sandpipers and Marbled and Hudsonian Godwits. Bring a lunch, a jacket, and \$20 for the boat ride. Call Bob (413-527-2623) to register. (E/M)



Hampshire Bird Club, Inc. Amherst, Massachusetts

www.hampshirebirdclub.org

Volume 22, No. 6

February, 2006

THIS MONTH WE HAVE AN INTRODUCTION TO A MOST INTRIGUING PROGRAM, COMING FIELD TRIPS, AND A HOST OF CONSERVATION-RELATED MATERIAL TO GET YOU INSPIRED ABOUT THE PLANET AND ITS FEATHERY DENIZENS.

PROGRAMS

Monday, February 13 at 7:30 PM

Gregor Yanega speaks about Hummingbird Bills

Immanuel Lutheran Church; 867 North Pleasant Street, Amherst.

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

Eating is essential to the survival of any animal, so it is not surprising that birds may change over time (evolve) based on how they feed. Amongst other things, Gregor studies how the feeding machinery of a bird changes according to what it feeds on, and how it feeds on it.

Hummingbirds are nectarivorous birds whose narrow beaks are famously thought to have evolved to match the shapes of the flowers they pollinate. Yet, because the floral nectars they consume are lacking in the amino acids hummingbirds need for protein synthesis, hummingbirds must also consume small animals such as insects, spiders, and other arthropods. Gregor studied whether beak shape affected how successfully seven different hummingbird species captured insects. He began with two questions.

Firstly: *"How do hummingbirds catch and transport arthropods?"*

Secondly: *"Given that most aerial insectivores have short beaks with wide gapes, is a hummingbird's long, narrow, curved bill the wrong tool for catching arthropods?"*

Gregor will reveal the answers to these questions and more dark secrets about some of the world's tiniest killers on February 13. See you there!

Here, in the first person, is Gregor's biography.

"I was born in Cape Canaveral, Florida on April 9, 1970 while Apollo 13 was stuck up in the sky. My dad was working for the space program at the time and he said it was a really nice week, as he puts it, when both payloads arrived home safely. Since then I've been interested in biology. I grew up in the Pacific Northwest and I received my BS from the Evergreen State College, in Olympia, Washington. In the eight years following the completion of my undergraduate degree, I studied seabirds, shorebirds, land birds, sharks, monkeys, bats, and reef fish in seven countries and on four continents. I also took up printmaking and bookbinding. Alas I yearned for the trappings that come from a steady job, so I went to graduate school. I am currently finishing my doctoral dissertation research at the University of Connecticut where I have studied the biomechanics of insectivory in hummingbirds with Dr. Margaret Rubega for six years. 'Ad astra per aspera' ('to the stars through our labors')."

Coming Up

March 13, 2006. David Spector. Buy, Buy, Birdbook!

April 17, 2006. Harry Vogel. Common Loons.

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

Editorial

There is (fortunately) a curious tension in birding between objectivity and caring. During the wee small hours of the Christmas count this year, I stopped to play a screech owl tape at a traditional spot. No owls had responded a week earlier, and now here I was broadcasting intruder-like calls into the habitat again. But there was a Christmas Count to be done, and like a dutiful citizen scientist I had numbers to collect. I was asking, "Is there an owl here?"

I played the tape twice, each time sifting through the ever-more-pervasive human background noise for a response that did not come. I got back in the car. One less owl for the count, and no time to waste. I set off toward the next location, but now I was worried about the owl. Had it failed to make it through the previous year? Had it fallen victim to a Great Horned cousin while wailing its mournful response to last year's tape? I went back and played the tape one more time. This time, I was not looking for data, I was asking, "Are you alright?" And this time, an owl answered. I turned off the intruder, and listened awhile to the gentle voice of a Screech Owl that had made it through another year.

Owlers will tell you that owls are notoriously reticent, and frequently withhold their responses for many minutes. That would be the rational explanation of what happened. I prefer to wish it was because I changed the question.

FIELD TRIPS

100% of this month's **Reports** were not written by the editor!

Cape Ann

On **Saturday, January 7**, nine members had a delightful day on **Cape Ann**. Unlike many past years, the weather was perfect. Temperatures ranged around thirty degrees with sun and clear blue skies and light wind. We began the day at Dunback Meadows in Lexington. **Long-eared** and **Saw-whet** owls had been reported there. We saw both! The Saw-whet thanks to the amazing spotting by Sally Hills. We're all still shaking our heads that she could spot that bird. At Cape Ann we ran a counter clockwise route around the edge of the Cape. In Gloucester we saw Iceland, Glaucous and Black-headed gulls at the Fish Pier. We then had Black Guillemot at Bass Rocks and Harlequin Ducks and two(!) drake **King Eiders** at Cathedral Ledges. At Andrews Point we observed a distant bird that most observers there called a non-breeding Common Murre. It was a bit beyond my abilities so we left it **Murre sp.** In the wooded section of Halibut Point we saw some **Bobwhite** below some feeders and, perhaps the highlight of the day a pair of **Bohemian Waxwings** in the afternoon sunlight side by side with Cedar Waxwings. We saw and heard these birds thanks to the efforts of the Bill Drummond group. Thanks everyone for a great day.

Bob Bieda

Coming Trips

Please see also the Winter-Spring-Summer Field Trip Schedule sent with the January newsletter.

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LIBRARY

HBC has a substantial library, located at the Hitchcock Center for the Environment in Amherst.

Hours are those of the Hitchcock Center:

9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. from Tuesday through Friday, and

9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. on Saturday.

The collection is catalogued on-line at www.hampshirebirdclub.org.

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

POT LUCK THANK YOU! (belated, but that is purely the editor's fault)

The HBC would like to thank everyone who worked so very hard to help make our annual Pot-Luck Compilation Supper such a great success. This year there were approximately 60 birders present to partake in the goodies and to contribute their sightings. Although the 'beak' count may have been down from last year, it still was a good year to be birding. With the continued assistance of dedicated birders such as **Sally Hills, Helga Beatty, Mary Alice and Bill Wilson, Christa Glatter, Joanne Parker, Bruce Callahan** and **YOU**, I am sure that our 06 Pot-Luck Compilation Supper will see an even greater turn out, and the subsequent compilation will feature even better birds. During the coming year the HBC will be soliciting all of its members to take an active role in supporting this worthwhile annual project so, as they say, it will really 'take wings and fly'.

Sue Emerson, ad hoc 'Pot Luck Coordinator'

JOIN THE GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT!

FEBRUARY 17-20, 2006!

The Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) returns for its ninth season February 17-20, 2006. Sponsored by National Audubon Society, the Cornell laboratory of Ornithology and Wild Birds Unlimited, the GBBC is part of an effort to assess the abundance, distribution and dynamics of North American winter bird populations and to provide answers to such questions as:

- the influence of snow and cold temperatures on bird populations
- the location of winter finches and other irruptive species
- the late winter movements of songbird and waterfowl species.

In 2005, participants sent in more than 52,000 checklists, with a record-breaking 613 species and more than 6 million birds counted. When these data are combined with those from the Christmas Bird Count and Project FeederWatch, they provide a broad source of scientific information about North American winter bird populations. Each year these data are collected makes them more important and valuable.

Each participant (or team) in the GBBC tallies the highest number of each bird species they see together at one time on one or more days of the count. No fee or prior registration is required. Reports can be made from public lands, local parks and backyards, but the results from each site should be reported separately. Whether you report the species coming to your feeder, or to some more exotic location, your data will help. At the end of each day, participants tally their totals online at: <http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc/>, where sightings maps, lists, and charts can be seen as the count progresses. Information and tally sheets will be available at the upcoming HBC meeting on February 13. This year for the first time, Audubon and the Laboratory of Ornithology are launching an element of friendly competition: awards will be given to localities that submit the most checklists, record the greatest number of species, or count the highest number of birds.

For more information on participating in the GBBC, see www.birdsource.org/gbbc/howto.html

CONSERVATION

The HBC board and the Conservation Committee would like you to be aware of the following news.

Endangered species Act Under Attack!

Last September, the U.S. House of Representatives passed a bill deceptively entitled the *Threatened and Endangered Species Recovery Act* (HR 3824) which will virtually destroy the Endangered Species Act of 1973, effectively dismantling the nation's safety net for plants and wildlife on the brink of extinction. The bill will come up for action by the Senate within the next couple of months. The National Audubon Society is coordinating a campaign to convince the Senate to uphold the Endangered Species Act of 1973. If you wish to add your voice to this effort, please consider communicating your opinion to Senators Kerry and Kennedy. While consideration of the House bill in the Senate has not yet been scheduled, it will be useful to write as soon as possible. A sample letter and contact information will be available at the February 13th HBC meeting.

HELP FOR SICK BIRDS

American Goldfinches and **Pine Siskins** have been showing evidence of disease in New England this winter. Typically, sick birds will show **reduced activity** and **will fluff up their plumage** in an attempt to save energy. Birds examined by Tufts Veterinary School have been dually diagnosed with **avian conjunctivitis** and **Salmonella poisoning**. Avian conjunctivitis is typically spread when infected birds with weeping eyes leave infectious exudates around the windows in tube feeders. Uninfected birds then come into contact with the exudates when feeding. *Salmonella* bacteria are typically spread through fecal material in tray-type feeders.

If you observe sick birds using or near your feeders, please do the following:

- 1) *Take down all seed feeders and keep them down for two weeks. Suet feeders may be left up. When the feeders are put back up, it is best to use dish-type feeders for the balance of the season. Stock the feeders with small amounts of seed and clean them regularly.*
- 2) *Stop using tray feeders where fecal material may accumulate.*
- 3) *Make sure your birdbath is cleaned regularly and always has fresh water.*

ARCADIA PROGRAMS

EAGLES AT QUABBIN: *Clif Read, Patti Steinman.*

Saturday, Feb.4, 10 am-2 pm.

CHANGES IN MASSACHUSETTS BIRD POPULATIONS:

Wayne Peterson. Tuesday, Feb.7, 7-9 pm.

WINTER BIRDS : *John Green Jr.*

Saturday, Feb. 25; 10 am-2:00 pm.

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.

HITCHCOCK PROGRAMS

TAMING THE BEAST: REDUCING ENERGY USE AT HOME: Peter Talmage, Energy and Design
Thursday, February 9, 7 p.m.

SUSTAINABLE SUNDAYS: CRAFTING A SUSTAINABLE LIFESTYLE: Ted Watt: Naturalist/Educator
Sunday, February 12, 1-3 p.m.

THE ENERGY PROBLEM AND SCIENTIFIC SOLUTIONS: Dick Stein, UMass
Thursday, March 2, 7 p.m.

SUSTAINABLE SUNDAYS: MAPLE SYRUP AND THE SIMPLE LIFE: Jeff Field and Family
Saturday, March 11, 1-3 p.m.

VERACRUZ RIVER OF RAPTORS SLIDE SHOW
Jan Ortiz and Scott Surner, River of Raptors Trip Coordinators
Thursday, February 2, 7 - 8:30 p.m.

ENGLEWINDS ENSEMBLE PERFORMS BUTTERFLY MUSIC
McCulloch Auditorium at Pratt Hall, Mount Holyoke College
Friday, February 10, 8 p.m.

NATURAL HISTORY OF CHOCOLATE: Bob Heiss, "*Cooks Shop Here*" (previously *The Coffee Gallery*)
Wednesday, February 22, 7 p.m.

TRACKING TURKEY AND GROUSE: Alan Emond, Little Cree Spy Tracking and Farmer
Saturday, February 25, 11 a.m. - 3 p.m.

SPRING BIRDING COURSE: Scott Surner, Instructor
Evening Classes (9): March 1, 8, 15, 22, April 5, 12, 26, May 3, 10; 6:30-8:30 p.m.
Field Trips (10): March 4, 25, April 8, 15, 22, 29, May 6, 13, 20, June 3; 7 a.m. – noon

LIVING WITH WILDLIFE: CO-EXISTING WITH COYOTES: Trina Moruzzi, MassWildlife Biologist
Thursday, March 9, 7 p.m.

A FLY IN THE OINTMENT: WHEN BIOCONTROL MEETS BIODIVERSITY
George "Jeff" Boettner, UMass Entomologist
Also part of the **Valley Environmental Educational Collaborative (VEEC)** program series.
Held at the Hitchcock Center for the Environment, Amherst
Tuesday, February 28, 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**.

OPERATION BACKYARD RECOVERY

On the Mississippi Coast

Our Treasurer, Janice Jorgensen, through her work with FEMA last year, came across little-publicized ecological devastation in the gulf region, in addition to the now well-documented human losses from Hurricane Katrina. She described entire landscapes apparently devoid of birds, and bird habitats wiped clean. She also came across **Judy Toups**, of the **Mississippi Coast Audubon Society**, who sent us this report on grass-roots efforts to restore bird habitat through the efforts of individual home-owners.

*"The catalyst for **Operation Backyard Recovery** (that name came later) was the overwhelming number of migrating Ruby-throated Hummingbirds that arrived in the gulf counties on the day following Katrina's passage. By then, most nectar feeders had been destroyed by the wind, and flowering plants were non-existent. Moreover, there were no retail outlets at which a feeder could be purchased.*

As soon as phone service was available, I made calls to friends and associates in areas like Jackson, Mississippi. A flood of used feeders followed. As soon as there were feeders to offer, I spread the word via my weekly birding column that these were available, and this set the stage for subsequent events.

Through the generosity of a great many people and businesses, upwards of 700 feeders were distributed, along with field guides and other feeding accoutrements to feeders set up in people's backyards. Boards from uprooted fences are ideal for making nesting boxes. "Birdhouse clinics" run by Mississippi Coast Audubon Society and Audubon Mississippi are instructing homeowners on how to construct birdhouses to put in their backyards. These are helping restore some nesting habitat for cavity-nesters, most of whose natural woodland cavities have been lost to the storm.

Operation Backyard Recovery plans to continue, with installations of Purple Martin nesting boxes in public areas traditionally inhabited by the species. In February, an Arbor Day giveaway of native trees is scheduled, and a flowering/fruiting/berry-bearing plant swap/sale/giveaway is being planned. Donations have come from all over the nation, and further funds are urgently needed."

To find out more, you can visit Mississippi Coast Audubon at www.mscoastaudubon.org. There are links there to the Mississippi Audubon website, which is collaborating in Operation Backyard Recovery.

To contribute to Operation Backyard Recovery, send a check made out to "Audubon Mississippi" to:

Audubon Mississippi

285 Plains Road

Holly Springs, MS 38635

Annotate the check "Operation Backyard Recovery"

Good News!

Manomet Conservation Efforts Extend To South Texas Salt Lakes.

Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences is a jewel of ornithological research and conservation in Massachusetts. The observatory is a key player in the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network (WHSRN).

One of the newest sites to join the WHSRN encompasses the South Texas Salt Lakes. These lakes are the **winter home of more than 2,000 Long-billed Curlews**, by some estimates as much as 10% of the world's entire population of this species. Long-billed Curlews are a highly imperiled species. The South Texas Salt Lakes are partly contained in the Lower Rio Grande Valley National Wildlife Refuge complex that runs along the U.S.-Mexican border. The remaining lakes are privately owned by a cooperating landholder.

Source; Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences: The Nature Report. www.manomet.org/naturereport/

(Maybe) Good News

Teetering Knots Being Considered for Endangered Species Listing!!

Need a reason to support the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (see "Conservation" on page 4)? Read this!

Every fall, when we venture out onto New South Beach, birders alone (amongst the teeming hordes of clammers, power boaters and beach-goers) pay attention to dumpy, robin-sized shorebirds with fading apricot breasts. We pay attention because these unassuming creatures are on their way from the furthest reaches of the Arctic to their wintering grounds in Tierra del Fuego, at the extreme southern tip of South America. Recently, our attention is sharpened because the subspecies *Callitris canutus rufa* is teetering on the edge of extinction.

If the good luck resurrection story of the century is the Ivory-billed Woodpecker, then the "Chance to Get It Right" story has to be that of the Red Knot. This is one of those rare cases where we can watch a species sliding towards the edge, but we know precisely what has to be done, and we have some very heavy hitters going in to bat for the birds.

The *rufa* subspecies of Red Knot migrates northward in the spring. Birds have only a few critical stopovers to feed on their way to the northern extremes of North America. The last of these stops is Delaware Bay on the mid-Atlantic coast, "chosen" (through generations of trial and error by the knots) because of its abundant but singular food supply. Horseshoe crabs congregate in huge numbers at the high water mark during spring tides to lay their eggs in the sand. These fat-rich packages provide the concentrated source of fuel needed by the knots to sustain the result of their long flight.

Unfortunately, Horseshoe Crabs are also used as bait by fishermen in the bay, and have been seriously over-harvested over the past decade as a result. **Red Knot numbers have declined by 80% in the last ten years**, and the science points to the dwindling food resources along the shores of Delaware Bay as the culprit. Despite short-term moratoria and increased regulation of the crab harvest on both sides of the bay, the alarming decline continues, as it is projected to do for several years even if crab populations begin to recover. **Some models predict extinction by 2010 if the current rate of decline continues.**

The really big recent news is that a coalition of groups including New Jersey Audubon, National Audubon, Defenders of Wildlife, and the American Bird Conservancy (amongst others) petitioned the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in July, 2005 to grant an emergency **Endangered Species** listing for the Red Knot. The petition is currently under review, and, if the listing occurs, much needed regulatory muscle and funding will be brought to bear. ***This presumes the continued existence of an effective Endangered Species Act!!***

If you want to help or simply remain better informed, you can sign on to New Jersey Audubon's Online Action Alert network (a free on-line communication network) for the latest news and suggestions for action.

Visit www.njaudubon.org, and click on the "On-line Action Center" link. They will send you lots of their publicity materials as well as the knot alerts, but I hope you agree it is worth the slight inconvenience.

Sources: New Jersey Audubon Quarterly Conservation Report: Nov. 2005. www.njaudubon/conservation/
Bird Conservation Alliance: www.birdconservationalliance.org



Well, I have done all the disseminating of information I am going to do for this month. I hope at least someone finds it useful.

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. 7

March, 2006

This edition brings you a bewildering mélange of information including an introduction to the club's annual flagship trip to Monhegan Island in Maine, the chance of a life-time to experience the *Rio de Rapaces* in Mexico, an important note about our trip to Westover in June, a call to arms over the endangered Endangered Species Act, some good news about shorebirds. There is also information about the annual Northeast Hawkwatch conference right here in our own backyard, and finally, a report on habitat management at Arcadia. I hope you find some of it useful!

PROGRAMS

Monday, March 13 at 7:30 PM

Dave Spector recounts the story of one birdwatcher's library:

"Buy, Buy, Bird Book!"

Immanuel Lutheran Church; 867 North Pleasant Street, Amherst.

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

David Spector discusses his thoughts on collecting bird books and some of the books in his collection. In keeping with the theme, there will be a table of natural history books for sale to benefit the Hitchcock Center.

David Spector, a member of the Hampshire Bird Club since its first meeting, has given several talks to the club. David is a former president of the Hitchcock Center for the Environment and teaches biology at Central Connecticut State University. He is a co-editor of the *Bird Finding Guide to Western Massachusetts*.

Coming Up

April 17. Harry Vogel. Common Loons.

May 8. John Van de Graaff. Peregrinations of a Bird Photographer.

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

FIELD TRIPS

Reports

On **Wednesday, February 15**, **Harvey Allen** and eight others swept south through the Connecticut River Valley to **Thompsonville, CT**, in search of the reported Cackling Goose. Despite picking through about 2, 000 Canada Geese, there was no sign of the diminutive version. A hunting Cooper's Hawk helped relieve the monotony a little.

On the way home, the group stopped at Fannie Stebbins Refuge in Longmeadow. They found three Pintail, a Belted Kingfisher, and good comparative looks at American Black Ducks and Mallards.

Coming Trips (see also Winter-Spring-Summer Field Trip Schedule)

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" (September newsletter or on the Website).

A Special Note on the Westover Trip: Saturday June 10 or 17. Westover AFB is one of the most significant grasslands in the northeast. It regularly hosts breeding populations of Grasshopper Sparrows, Upland Sandpipers, and Eastern Meadowlarks. The trip will run this year on Saturday, June 10, with a rain date on June 17. Westover has promised to do all they can to make the trip accessible to people with disabilities. **If you are interested, you MUST pre-register before May 15.** Call Bob Bieda: 527 2623.

Wednesday, March 15. Midweek half day in the Connecticut River Valley. Morning. Harvey Allen (413-253-7963) leads a local trip to find seasonal specialties, probably migrating waterfowl. Meet at 7:30 a.m. across from Atkin's Farm (on the corner of Rt. 116 and Bay Road, Amherst). (E)

Saturday, March 25. Connecticut River Waterfowl. Half day. Al Richards will follow (more or less) the course of the mighty Connecticut, seeking out her migrating denizens. Ducks, that is. Lots of 'em. Call Al (413-665-2761) for meeting information as the date approaches. (E)

***Sunday, April 9. Timberdoodles.** Early evening. Mike Locher looks, and mostly listens, for displaying American Woodcocks and other crepuscular creatures. Call Mike (413-585-5864) the week before the trip for meeting information. (E)

Saturday, April 15. Ashley Reservoir: Early Warblers. Half day. Bob Bieda searches out the gems of spring, the early migrants. Often, the trip finds Pine and Palm Warblers, Ruby-crowned Kinglets, and migrating Broad-winged Hawks and Ospreys. Meet at the Holiday Inn parking lot, Exit 15 ("Holyoke Mall") off Rt. 91 at 7:00 a.m. Call Bob (413-527-2623) to register. (E)

MONHEGAN ISLAND

Memorial Day Weekend (May 26-29), 2006.

The Monhegan announcement is late this year, owing to negligence on the part of the editor, who also happens to be a co-leader. Please review the details below and sign up as soon as possible!

Most birding trips are targeted 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, sometimes 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. Registration is by deposit.

For further details, including an estimation of costs, call Andrew Magee (586 1509), or speak with Andrew and David at the February meeting.

River of Raptors – A Birding Trip to Veracruz, Mexico

October 4-12, 2006

The Hitchcock Center for the Environment is proud to offer a special travel program to Veracruz, Mexico in partnership with Pronatura, a nonprofit conservation and education organization in Mexico. It is no wonder that raptors get top billing in Veracruz. The *River of Raptors* can produce tens of thousands of hawks and vultures on a “slow” day and a 100,000 on a “good” day! In addition, millions of passerines, butterflies, and dragonflies use this coastal migration corridor. It is an area strikingly rich in natural history.

Our 9-day Veracruz *River of Raptors* tour specializes in witnessing the greatest raptor migration in the world. In 2005, approximately 5.6 million birds of prey passed through Veracruz from late August to mid-November. In addition, an estimated 8 million passerines funnel between the mountains and the coast at this time of year. Over 25 species of raptors are possible on this trip with about 240 additional waterbirds and passerines rounding out the list.

Hitchcock Center birding instructor, **Scott Sumner**, will co-lead this trip with a bilingual birding guide from Pronatura. For more information call the Hitchcock Center at 256-6006 or go to www.hitchcockcenter.org.

Hampshire Bird Club Morning at WFCR

Once again HBC members can spend 3 hours answering phones at WFCR during their fund drive in March. We will be taking calls at the station (in the studio with the on-air hosts) on Saturday, March 11, from 7-10 AM. It's easy (training is provided). It's fun (you get to see radio behind-the-scenes). Breakfast is provided; all you need to do is bring yourself (and friend if you wish) and answer pledge calls as they come in. If you'd like to join the fun, sign up by calling or emailing Dave Gross at 253-2897 or dgross@biochem.umass.edu.

Date: *Saturday, March 11*

Time: *7-10 a.m.*

Location: *WFCR studios, Hampshire House, UMass campus*

Regional Hawk Migration Conference

The **Northeast Hawk Watch** is holding its eighth quadrennial **Regional Hawk Migration Conference** on **Saturday, March 18, 2006**, at **Holyoke Community College in Holyoke, MA**. The conference is from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

The program includes presentations on:

- Peregrine Falcon in New England
- American Kestrels in New England
- Raptor Population Trends (Broadwinged- and Sharp-shinned Hawks)
- Goshawk Nesting Studies in New Hampshire
- Saw-whet Owl Migration
- Live Birds of Prey, and a whole lot more!

For complete information and a registration form, visit:

<http://www.battaly.com/nehw/conference>

HITCHCOCK PROGRAMS

Sustainable Sundays: Maple Syrup and the Simple Life: *Jeff Field and Family*

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

Spring Birding Course: *Scott Surner, Instructor*

Evening Classes (9): March 1, 8, 15, 22, April 5, 12, 26, May 3, 10; 6:30-8:30 p.m.

Field Trips (10): March 4, 25, April 8, 15, 22, 29, May 6, 13, 20, June 3; 7 a.m. - noon

He's back! We are pleased to announce that Scott is back from his sabbatical and ready for another season of birding with both new and experienced birders. This is the fastest growing recreational activity in the country and with good reason. Spring is the time for great zest as the migrants flow into our region full of song and color. Waves of migrants offer new excitement and new learning opportunities for all levels of birders. The evening classes will include slides, stories and examples of identification techniques. The field trips will be mostly local, with 2 trips planned for the coast and another for the Berkshires (the longer trips have a 5 a.m. start time). The first meeting begins at the Hitchcock Center on March 1, at 6:30 p.m. as a pre-meeting prep for the field trip to Plum Island on March 4. All are welcome to share in Scott's enthusiasm for birding and his decades of experience. Space is limited to 20.

Living With Wildlife: Coexisting With Coyotes: *Trina Moruzzi, MassWildlife Biologist*

Thursday, March 9, 7 p.m.

A Visit to Harvard Forest and Fisher Museum: *John O'Keefe, Museum Director*

Sunday, March 19, 2-4 p.m.

Big Night With Commander Salamander: *Bob Winston, Co-founder of Henry Street. Salamander Tunnels*

Thursday, March 30, 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

New England Forests Through Time: John O'Keefe

March 7, 7-9 pm

Winter Walk at Laughing Brook: Kevin Kopchyncki and Patti Steinman

March 12, 1-4 pm

Dinosaurs, Dunes and Drifting Continents: Richard Little

March 14, 7-9 pm

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.

"Tides of Change: Wildlife Population Trends in the Valley"

Valley Environmental Education Collaborative is composed of state, federal, and private conservation and educational organizations along with like-minded individuals. VEEC is sponsoring a series of workshops, each addressing a different local population that has changed or been monitored over time.

This Month

The Impact of Holyoke Dam on Connecticut River Shortnose Sturgeon: Boyd Kynard, USGS

March 14 at 7 PM. Great Falls Discovery Center, Turner's Falls; 413- 863-3221. Please call to register

Uncommon Loons: Rose Maconi, Mass Aquatic Conservation Society

March 28 at 7 PM. Quabbin Visitor Center, Belchertown; 413-323-7221. Please call to register.

GREAT FALLS DISCOVERY CENTER PROGRAMS

Art in Nature (Photographic images by Tom Whalen).

On display in March and April

Spring Birds Arrive: Center staff

Saturday, March 4, 1 pm-2 pm:

St. Patrick's Day is for the Birds! Susan Russo and Gini Traub

Friday, March 17: 10am-11am and 11am – 12pm

Geared to 3-7 year olds

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

Kudos for Kroodsma!

It was announced recently that **Don Kroodsma** has been awarded the **Burroughs Medal** for his latest book, *"The Singing Life of Birds."*

Each year the Burroughs medal is awarded to the author of a distinguished book of natural history, with the presentation made during the Association's annual meeting on the first Monday of April. Fortunately, there is an equal, if less tangible reward for those who purchase and read the book: that benefit which always accrues when one rubs up against genius.

CONSERVATION

National.....

Endangered Species Act Under Attack!

Last September, the U.S. House of Representatives passed a bill deceptively titled the Threatened and Endangered Species Recovery Act (HR 3824) which will virtually destroy the Endangered Species Act of 1973, effectively dismantling the nation's safety net for plants and wildlife on the brink of extinction. The bill will come up for action by the Senate within the next couple of months. The National Audubon Society is coordinating a campaign to convince the Senate to uphold the Endangered Species Act of 1973. If you wish to add your voice to this effort, please consider communicating your opinion to Senators Kerry and Kennedy. While consideration of the House bill in the Senate has not yet been scheduled, it will be useful to write as soon as possible. A sample letter and contact information will be available at the February 13th HBC meeting.

According to the Center for Biological Diversity, the Threatened and Endangered Species Act of 2005:

- Disallows the designation of “critical habitat” for endangered species. Without these provisions in the Act, protection of key areas for species survival is not possible.
- Makes the Secretary of Interior (a political appointee), rather than the scientific community responsible for determining what information will be used in decisions involving endangered species.
- Removes regulatory weight from plans made to ensure the recovery of endangered species. These plans, under the new bill, would have to take account of the interests of involved industry and commercial interests, rather than being expressly designed to avert extinction.
- Allows the Secretary of Interior to exempt any federal agency action, or any “category of actions” that may harm endangered species from the oversight of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.
- Mandates federal compensation to any commercial interests which would be inconvenienced by what fragile protections remain in the legislation. Hence, a precedent would be set whereby taxpayers become responsible for subsidizing commercial interests for even the most basic environmental responsibility. There is potential for industry to specifically design the most environmentally disruptive proposals possible, in order to reap the compensation payments.

You can find the bill and more complete analysis at
www.biologicaldiversity.org/swcbd/Programs/policy/esa/atax.HTML.

Good News for Shorebirds!

The Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network (WHSRN) - a program administered by the Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences - has announced that three international sites in Argentina, Mexico and the state of Texas will join the international partnership dedicated to the conservation and protection of migratory shorebird species and their habitats.

The 20-year-old WHSRN - with 63 global partners in eight countries that comprise over 20 million acres - is the only group of its kind in the Western Hemisphere working to protect the hemisphere's 1-2 million migratory shorebirds.

The site at **Rio Gallegos, Argentina** is a large estuary with mud flats and marshes, owned by the municipality of Rio Gallegos on one shore and the Province of Santa Cruz on the other. The estuary at the mouth of the river attracts a number of North American species including the Red Knot and a locally-occurring bird called the Magellanic Plover which has a world population smaller than 2,000 birds.

Llano de la Soledad, Mexico is a grassland area of great importance to the Mountain Plover and the Long-billed Curlew.

(Continue next page→)

Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge near Houston, Texas is managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Long-known for waterfowl, new management priorities recognize the importance of the area as a crucial migratory stopover for the Whimbrel.

Source: The Nature Report at www.manomet.org/naturereport

Manomet Looks at Shorebirds in ANWAR

The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge received its most recent reprieve from oil drilling in September 2006. In addition to its mammalian wildlife, the refuge contains critical breeding habitat for shorebirds, whose natural history and conservation needs on the North Slope have hitherto been largely unknown. Manomet Observatory, based here in Massachusetts, is setting out to change this situation.

Fourteen species breed on Alaska's North Slope, which includes the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, and the National Petroleum Reserve – Alaska, where drilling is already underway. Seven of these 14 species of shorebirds are listed as species of high conservation concern, including **American Golden-Plover, Whimbrel, Bar-Tailed Godwit, Ruddy Turnstone, Buff-Breasted Sandpiper, Dunlin (arctic subspecies), and Red-Necked Phalarope.**

Manomet Observatory is involved in three major projects to enhance understanding and protection of species nesting on the arctic North Slope. Firstly, Manomet is helping Subhankar Banerjee, author of "*Seasons of Life and Land*," with a new book about the birds of the Arctic Refuge. This book will help make the case for protection of the coastal plain by illustrating the bird habitat values of this remote wilderness for the general public. Second, the observatory is collaborating with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to complete the first study of breeding shorebird and waterbird distribution throughout the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge coastal plain. This study will show which habitats within the Refuge are most important for breeding birds. Finally, Manomet is playing a lead role in the development of a new shorebird monitoring effort called the Program for Regional and International Shorebird Monitoring, or PRISM. The Arctic surveys will determine the actual population status of the shorebird species currently thought to be in serious decline.

Source: The Nature Report. www.manomet.org/naturereport

.....And More Local

Arcadia's Ecological Management and Natural History Conference: March 4, 2006.

As well as simply conserving habitat in the Pioneer Valley, Arcadia Sanctuary maintains numerous ecological monitoring programs, and is increasingly interested in active management of habitat. David McLain, John Burk, Connie Parks, David King, and others described some of this work in detail at what has now become an annual event to spread the word about Arcadia's research and habitat management efforts.

Ned's Ditch: More Than Mosquitoes and Button-Bush!

Ned's Ditch, despite its rather unassuming name, is the remains of an oxbow, last connected to the Connecticut River about 800 years ago. John Burk, Marjorie Holland, and David McLain are the latest in a diverse group of local biologists who have monitored the flora of the ditch since 1973. Oxbows, after they are cut off, tend to fill-in and evolve toward a more terrestrial fauna. Oxbows in various states of this transition can be observed throughout the valley; the Whately Oxbow being an example of advanced change.

Interestingly enough, by contrast, the ditch flora seems to be in a state of *dynamic equilibrium*, or *pulse stability*. It oscillates between a more "upland" kind of flora, and a more "wetland" kind of flora, without moving permanently in the direction of either state. Since 1973, during dry times, Silver Maple seedlings increase in the ground-storey, along with two species of ferns, and various members of the *Bidens* (or "sticktight") genus. Unchecked, these changes would eventually result in an essentially terrestrial ecosystem. However, during periods of high and/or prolonged flooding from the Connecticut such as last year, water-loving

species such as Yellow Water Buttercup and Common Duckweed thrive instead. Buttonbush stands seem to expand during these wet periods.

Presumably because of the continuous flip-flopping of conditions in the ditch, invasive species have almost entirely failed to take hold in the ditch, though they are painfully evident on all sides. Oh, and since this is a birding magazine, there were 19 pairs of Great Blue herons in the Ned's Ditch heronry last year, a slight decline from a recent high of 27 species, but a healthy number by historical standards.

Of Blue-Winged Warblers and Eastern Towhees

Amongst the species of most conservation concern nation-wide are early-successional shrubland birds. These include Blue-winged Warblers, Eastern Towhees, Prairie Warblers, White-throated Sparrows, Indigo Buntings, Willow Flycatchers and a number of others. The overall abundance of early-successional shrublands has declined markedly during human history, giving rise to widespread argument over how to address the conservation needs of these birds.

On the theoretical side, Dave King presented a comparison of clearcutting versus maintenance of wildlife openings as conservation tools for early successional shrubland birds. Wildlife openings are generally areas kept open by periodic removal of mature shrubs and tree saplings, either by hand, or using machines such as the infamous 'brontosaurus'. Clearcuts generally result from timber harvesting methods which are currently confined (in the Northeast) mostly to paper pulp concessions in Maine. Maintaining wildlife openings is generally done with less drastic immediate impacts on the landscape, but has the disadvantage of being prohibitively expensive, since there is no direct economic return from the process. Clearcutting, by contrast, generally pays for itself through the sale of harvested timber.

King and other researchers asked whether habitat use and breeding success varied between clearcut areas and wildlife openings. Not surprisingly, they do! Some early successional shrubland species such as the Song Sparrow, did better in wildlife openings. Other species, such as the Chestnut-sided Warbler, did better in clearcut areas. The differences probably reflect the fact that wildlife openings tend to have well developed grass and forb communities in the ground-storey, whereas clearcut areas have more shrubs and less grass/forbs. The conclusion would seem to be that, cost and public-relations concerns notwithstanding, both wildlife openings and clearcutting should be part of regional conservation efforts on behalf of early-successional shrubland species.

Habitat Management at Arcadia

Visitors to the West Meadows this winter and spring will note immediately the efforts being made to maintain a mosaic of early-successional shrubland habitats in the west meadows. Around the margins of the Arcadia grasslands, shrublands have, in recent years, been tending further toward maturing forest, with consequential declines in their value to early successional birds. Approximately fifteen acres of this habitat were cleared in January of this year, and another fifteen will be cleared in the same way in the future. Both fifteen-acre parcels will then continue to be cleared on a ten-year rotation, maintaining a mosaic of shrublands.

Fans of the weedy fields at the Ibis Pool will be pleased to see that, after years of slow takeover by Goldenrod, the areas adjacent to the pool (tilled in 2004) are sporting increasingly healthy stands of weeds that favor fall migrants!

That's all for this month!

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

David Peake-Jones, Editor

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Hampshire Bird Club, Inc.

Amherst, Massachusetts

www.hampshirebirdclub.org

Volume 22, No. 8

April, 2006

In this edition we have, as always, an introduction to this month's speaker, a trip report reminders about coming trips, and program schedules for Hitchcock and Arcadia. We also have a call to save yet another endangered piece of habitat in the valley, some results of the Backyard Bird Count, news of a history-making HBC trip earlier this year, and one or two miscellaneous items. Finally, there is a tribute to David Stemple, who died recently, by his friend Don Kroodsma. I have placed it at the end of the newsletter, not to reflect its relative importance, but because I think many of us will be unable or unwilling to read beyond the end of it.

PROGRAMS

Monday, April 17 at 7:30 PM

Harry Vogel speaks about The Lives, Trials and Future of Loons

Immanuel Lutheran Church; 867 North Pleasant Street, Amherst.

Mr. Vogel will begin with a brief introduction to the various species of North American loons. He will move on to discuss threats to the survival of Common Loons, and the formation of the Loon Preservation Committee. Harry will talk about the work of the committee in New Hampshire, and believes the experiences there are relevant to anyone interested in preserving loons in New England.

Harry Vogel is currently the Executive Director of the Loon Preservation Committee. He has a Bachelor's degree in Environment and Resource studies and Biology, and a Master of Science degree in Zoology with graduate and undergraduate theses written on various aspects of loon research. He is a trustee and Chair of the Research Committee of the North American Loon Fund and Co-chair of the Northeast Loon Study Working Group, a consortium of government agencies and non-governmental organizations from New England and the Canadian Maritimes addressing loon issues in the northeastern United States and eastern Canada.

Prior to his current activities, he served as Project Biologist and Coordinator of the Canadian Lakes Loon Survey, a self-funded project to study the effects of human activities on the presence and breeding success of Common Loons across Canada. He has captured, banded and sampled blood and feathers of loons in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and New Hampshire and undertaken detailed observational studies on several aspects of loon behavior in Canada.

Coming Programs

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

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

FIELD TRIPS

Reports

Plum Island, March 4, 2006

A group of eight stalwart birders joined Geoff LeBaron for a full day trip to Plum Island. The wind dominated the day, with a steady northwest gale of 20-25 mph with gusts over 35 mph. When the group arrived at Joppa Flats, the temperature was 28 °F and it rose to only 36 in the early afternoon. The only respite from the wind and cold was gotten by soaking up weak sunshine in the low spots between sand dunes. Despite the wind, we did find two of our three target birds. After spending all morning and part of the afternoon searching the tens of thousands of white lumps of ice at the Parker River NWR, we did see a lovely, very white **Snowy Owl**. In the spirit of full disclosure, we didn't locate this bird ourselves. Having given up in disgust and heading out of the NWR, we saw Scott Sumner's birding class at Joppa Flats. About 30 minutes later we received a call from Scott, who had miraculously located the bird in a sea of white. We beat a track back to the NWR and saw the owl. We did find our other target bird by our own devices.

Al Richard's keen ears picked up an unusual call near the Hellcat boardwalk. Guesses as to the bird's identity included Robin and Catbird. The bird was low in a tangle, and all eyes were straining to see it. Al said, "It's been a long time, but I think that might be a **Northern Shrike** singing." At just that moment, two groups of us saw the bird, and indeed, it was a shrike. We later saw the bird, again singing, on a more typical high, open perch.

We saw a number of other birds including Bald Eagles (8), Northern Harriers (3), a lovely Great Cormorant in high breeding plumage at the Chain Bridge, some great views of Common Goldeneye. Overall we saw a total of 51 species, not bad for such a windy day. The one that got away was the Short-Eared Owl, of which there were none at Salisbury Beach.

Dave Gross

Coming Trips

(Note that the April 19 mid-week Sweep has been cancelled)

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).

Saturday, April 15. Ashley Reservoir: Early Warblers. Half day. Bob Bieda searches out the gems of spring, the early migrants. Often, the trip finds Pine and Palm Warblers, Ruby-crowned Kinglets, and migrating Broad-winged Hawks and Ospreys. Meet at the Holiday Inn parking lot, Exit 15 ("Holyoke Mall") off Rt. 91 at 7:00 a.m. Call Bob (413-527-2623) to register. (E)

Wednesday, April 19. Midweek half day in the Connecticut River Valley. *Please note this trip has been cancelled because Harvey will be away.*

***Saturday, April 22. More Migrants.** Half day. Betsy Higgins (413-586-7585) looks for more migrating warblers and neotropicals, starting around Look Park in Northampton (for her signature waterthrush). Meet at 6:30 a.m. in the parking lot of the JFK Middle School on Bridge Street in Northampton. (E)

continues next page →

Saturday, April 29. Graves Farm. Half day. Shirley Hilborn (413-253-6462) and Anne Lombard (413-253-7509) will lead birders around Graves Farm, looking for migrants and other local specialties. Meet at Graves Farm at 7:00 a.m. (E)

Sunday, May 7. Spring Migration in the Quabbin. All day. Tom Gagnon guides birders through the Quabbin in search of its varied avifauna. This trip is limited to Hampshire Bird Club members only. Call Tom (413-584-6353) well ahead of time for meeting information and to register. (M)

NOMINATING COMMITTEE

The HBC Nominating Committee (Mary Alice Wilson, Betsy Higgins, Dave Gross) is working to produce a slate of candidates for the HBC Board of Directors for the June 2006-May 2007 fiscal year. The slate will be announced at the April club meeting, so if you are interested in serving on the board, please contact one of the committee members soon.

LIBRARY

HBC has a substantial library, located at the Hitchcock Center for the Environment in Amherst. Hours are those of the Hitchcock Center:

9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. from Tuesday through Friday, and

9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. on Saturday.

The collection is catalogued on-line at www.hampshirebirdclub.org.

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

Book Signing at Odyssey Bookshop

Friday, April 28: 7 PM

Odyssey Bookshop, The Village Commons

9 College St., South Hadley, MA

Miyoko Chu of the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology will be at the Odyssey Bookshop on Friday, April 28 at 7 pm to read from and sign her new book, *Songbird Journeys: Four Seasons in the Lives of Migratory Birds*. David Sibley writes, “*Songbird Journeys* pulls together in one readable book much of the latest research on the fascinating lives of the songbirds. Anyone who has been impressed or inspired by these tiny feathered jewels will be more so after reading this book.” This reading and signing is co-sponsored by Mass Audubon Society, Northampton Bird Watcher’s Club, the Hampshire Bird Club, and the Appledore Island Migration Banding Station. If you can’t attend, the store can reserve a signed book for you.

Great Backyard Bird Count Results

New York, NY & Ithaca, NY, March 13, 2006-

*The ninth annual **Great Backyard Bird Count**, which took place **February 17-20**, set new records as participation soared across the United States and Canada. From backyards to wildlife refuges, bird watchers tallied a record-breaking 623 bird species and 7.5 million individual birds during the four-day event, coordinated by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and National Audubon Society. Participants sent in more than 60,000 checklists, providing a wealth of information unmatched in previous years.*

The flood of reports yielded what would have been otherwise impossible—a comprehensive snapshot of the continent's birdlife. "With more people watching birds, together we discovered amazing things," said Paul Green, director of Citizen Science for National Audubon Society. "In some places, observers described flocks of robins so large their combined calls were louder than jetliners, and good seed crops in northwest Canada caused several species of seedeaters to remain in sub-zero northern Canada rather than move to warmer areas further south."

American Robins are typically reported in greatest number by observers in the balmy southern states, but they inundated the Northwest this year, including Washington State, where flocks of 40,000 or more were seen and totals skyrocketed to 96 percent above last year's count. In contrast, tallies of robins were down to less than one-half of their 2005 numbers in Texas, Louisiana and Mississippi for reasons that are as yet unclear.

Although most insect-loving birds travel south of the United States in winter, warm weather may also have enticed some swallow and warbler species to stay farther north than usual, living on a partly vegetarian diet. The number of birders who reported Orange-crowned Warblers rose by more than 50 percent compared with last year and they reported twice as many birds, some of which were eating suet and nectar from feeders. Tree Swallows, which can feed on bayberry berries during winter, have broadened their distribution from 11 states in 2001 to 20 states in 2006. Adjusted numbers were up by 134 percent compared with last year.

Complete tallies and maps are available at the Great Backyard Bird Count web site www.birdsource.org/gbbc, along with photos and narratives about other birds—including species in southern states hit by hurricanes, the stunning invasion of Snowy Owls in the Pacific Northwest, migratory pathways of Sandhill Cranes, regional rarities such as a Black-throated Blue Warbler in Connecticut, and continued drops in counts of American Crows, which have been plagued by West Nile virus.

Hitchcock Center Programs

BUILDING HOPE: ARCHITECTURE, DESIGN AND THE WAVE OF THE FUTURE

Carol Vince, Architect

Thursday, April 27, 7 p.m.

LIVING WITH WILDLIFE: THE MATING DANCE OF THE AMERICAN WOODCOCK

Ted Watt, Hitchcock Center Naturalist

Saturday, April 15, 6-8 p.m.

BIRDING BY EAR: CARDIOVASCULAR HIKE

John Green, Naturalist and Photographer

Saturdays, April 29, May 6, May 13, 6:30-9:30 a.m.

SPRING COMES ALIVE THROUGH BOOKS AND WALKS: ROBERT MCCLUNG DAY

Sunday, April 30, 1-3 p.m.

continues next page→

(Hitchcock Center Programs. Continued)**A SALAMANDER SOIREE***Amherst College Alumni House**Friday, May 5, 5:30 - 8:30 p.m.***THE 6TH ANNUAL BIOTHON***Friday, May 12 through Sunday, May 14***REPTILES OF THE CONNECTICUT VALLEY***Tom Tynning, Naturalist and Professor**Held at the Holyoke Heritage State Park Visitors Center**Tuesday, April 11, 7 p.m.***THE SECRET LIVES OF BATS: WHAT DO WE REALLY KNOW?***John Foster, Director of New England Naturalist Training Center**Held at Northfield Mountain Recreation and Environmental Center, Northfield**Tuesday, April 25, 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**Dance of the American Woodcock at Graves Farm:** *Nancy Childs; Patti Steinman.***Saturday, April 15:** 6:30-8:30 pm

Dance of the American Woodcock at Laughing Brook: Kevin Kopchynski; Patti Steinman. **Sunday, April 30:** 7-9 pm

Great Blue Herons: *Patti Steinman.***Friday, April 21,** 4-7 pm

Mass Audubon Birdathon: Please help the Connecticut River Valley Sanctuaries by birding or sponsoring a team. Funds raised will help habitat restoration. For more information contact Patti Steinman at 413-584-3009 ex.14.

*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.*

Bird-a-thon, 2006

The Bird-a-thon will be taking place this year from 6 pm on May 12 to 6 pm on May 13. Connecticut River Valley Sanctuaries Teams will be birding both locally and all over the state that during those 24 hours. If you would like to lead or join a team contact Bob Bieda (527-2623) or Anne Lombard (586-7509). If you would like a pledge form or would like to send a check to support the CRV Sanctuaries, contact Anne for information. All funds raised from the Bird-a-thon go to support maintenance and management at these sanctuaries where we bird so frequently.

CONSERVATION

Help Save 151 Acres on Turkey Hill Road

Thirty-seven homes will be built on this beautiful hilltop property with lovely views and fine birding potential if \$70,000 additional dollars are not raised privately by May 1. The land is at the western end of the city close to the existing Mineral Hills conservation area. The City of Northampton is trying to conserve this parcel of land. If successful, it will likely become a public conservation area like Fitzgerald Lake.

Contributions should be sent to the Northampton Office of Planning and Development, 210 Main St., Room 11, Northampton, MA 01060. Make checks payable to the City of Northampton, and write "Turkey Hill Land Purchase" in the memo space. All contributions are tax-deductible. Please contribute right away so we don't lose this. Seven-hundred contributions of \$100 will do it! If the purchase does not go through, all contributions will be returned.

For further information, contact Anne Lombard: 586 7509; conservation@hampshirebirdclub.org

GREAT FALLS DISCOVERY CENTER PROGRAMS

Important Bird Areas: *Wayne Peterson*

The history and significance of the eleven Important Bird Areas in Massachusetts.

Thursday, May 4: 4-7 PM

Grapevines, Trees & Shrubs: What Do These Things Mean to Birds? *Center Staff*

Geared to "the child in all of us."

Saturday, May 6, 1-2 pm

*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*

Eurasian Collared Dove Record Accepted By MARC.

HBC Trip Makes History!

The Massachusetts Avian Records Committee recently accepted the report of a Eurasian Collared Dove identified during HBC's "Poor Man's Monhegan" birding trip to Plum Island and vicinity on May 28, 2005. This is the first accepted record of this species in the state! The sighting was truly a group effort. Dave Mako first heard the bird and knew it was something unusual. Bob Bieda found the bird sitting on a wire, identified it, and said it might be the first state record. Janice Doppler ran for her notebook and scribbled field marks as Bob and Al Richards named them. Chris Ellison, Gail Abbott, and Deborah Oeky also participated in the sighting.

The bird was singing as it sat on a wire next to a large salt marsh on Island Road in Ipswich. Trip leader Bob Bieda added the stop to the day's itinerary after on a tip from a birder who'd spotted Red-necked Phalaropes at the marsh. We hoped to add that bird to the Wilson's and Red Phalaropes we'd already seen. There were no Wilson's and Red Phalaropes, but we found a special bird plus a new location to visit on future trips.

Janice Doppler

Federal Funds for America's Migratory Songbirds

(March 29, 2006. Washington, D.C.) *The House Resources Committee today passed unanimously the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Improvement Act (HR 518). This is a vital step forward in the reauthorization of a bill that provides the only significant federal funding source for neotropical migratory birds.*

The original Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act of 2000 expired in 2005, prompting the new legislation. The new bill would increase funding from the previous \$5 million level by \$1 million each year, to reach a maximum of \$8 million by 2010. Further improvements are a reduction in the ratio of matching money that recipients must raise from three to one down to one to one, making the funds that much more accessible. The new bill also makes Canadian projects eligible for funding.

"This is an important victory along the road to securing this funding source for America's songbirds," said Fenwick. "This bill represents funding for real on-the-ground conservation efforts for migratory birds, and we will continue to dedicate resources to advance this important bill until it is signed into law."

The American Bird Conservancy, of which HBC is a member, has been a key advocate for this bill. The next step for the legislation is debate in the House of Representatives. Companion legislation in the Senate (S.1410) is also awaiting floor action.

Source: The American Bird Conservancy

Young Birders Wanted!

The editors of *Bird Observer* magazine, in response to a bequest from the widow of a former subscriber, have asked several birding organizations, including the HBC, to provide a name of a young birder to receive a free 1-year subscription to the magazine. If you know of a budding birder in the age range of 11-16 who lives in a household that does not currently subscribe to *Bird Observer*, please send the nominee's name, address and phone or email to president@hampshirebirdclub.org. There will be a random drawing at the April meeting for the winner.

Welcome New Members!

Margaret Frenkel: Amherst.

Carla Wirzburger & Judy Peck: Easthampton, MA

Corning & Tita Townsend: Edgecomb, ME

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!

That's it for this month!

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

David Peake-Jones, Editor

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I leave you with Don's words on Dave Stemple.

Dave Stemple

A Personal Remembrance

Many of us know exactly when and where we met Dave: a person of his wit, wisdom, and birding skills being rather unforgettable. I remember my first encounter vividly. In the spring of 1981, I had taken my ornithology class to Plum Island, a premiere birding spot north of Boston. It was the best birding I've ever seen, with warblers dripping from every branch, and who would show up, but Dave Stemp, as I introduced him to the class. "Oh, no, I'm not worthy to be a Stemp. I'm only a little Stemp, a Stemple." What he taught the class in just a few minutes was extraordinary; he saw an opening and a stage, and the class eagerly listened.

As I look back, three aspects of that encounter hint at the essence of Dave:

1. "No moss grows on Dave." It was no accident he was there at the absolute best I've ever seen it and I never saw him there again on all of the mediocre days I've been there since. He knew it was going to be a good day, by watching the weather, and there was nothing else more important than being at Plum Island that day. It's the way he lived his life, he would tell me later. Don't delay the good times. Have fun, now. Live fully, always. He was always intensely engaged, and living with no regrets.

2. What a superb teacher! He clearly loved taking what he knew and sharing it with students, of all ages, and the students were eager to listen to "the man who knew everything," as his family sometimes called him. Dave was, as Geoff LeBaron put it, the "ultimate birding companion."

3. "Mr. Language person." His way with words and ideas, not just in English but in multiple languages. I don't know how many languages he spoke fluently or passably, but it was impressive. German, Spanish, French, Portuguese, Italian. When we were at a remote field station, on the border between Panama and Costa Rica, he was struggling with his Russian, and he and a Russian scientist broke into a Russian drinking song. It was extraordinary. He loved words, I think, because he loved ideas, and he loved to be able to communicate with almost anyone anywhere.

I'd learn other things about Dave in the 25 years that followed that first encounter.

Firstly, as may seem self-evident with the benefit of hindsight, Dave loved owls. His owling for the Christmas Bird Count is legendary. It's said sometimes that we resemble the birds we study or love. I have a saucy friend who studies jays, but Dave loved owls. Wise, mysterious, magical. In his words, as transcribed from a conversation I recorded:

"Owling is different. There's a certain magic about owl finding.

There's owls all over the country, and I've seen them all, and some you look for in the daytime, and some you look for at night, some are easy to see, Barn Owl for example, and some are difficult to see. There's the elf owl, and you say what's that sparrow doing there, and you put your binoculars on it and it's an owl, a miniature owl, unbelievable, and they go kikiki, something like that. It's been 20 years. Flammulated-, Elf-, Western Screech, Whiskered Screech Owl, Great Horned Owl, Short eared, Long-eared, Barn Owl. Ferruginous Owl, Pygmy Owl. There's 10. All in this one area, you get them all in one night.

As Geoff wrote to me: "Dave was the Owling King.I think the owls came out each December to get Dave checked off on their year list....He thought he knew where they were, but they

knew when he was there.” . . . Who else would morph Super Bowl Sunday into Superb Owl Sunday, the day to go out and find some good owls?

He loved lots of other birds, too.

Suboscines. Flycatchers. When I first arrived in western Massachusetts in 1981, he took me to his favorite places in the Berkshires, showing me where the good birds were. One night while driving back from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, where he generously fixed them up with a database system for their archive, we heard bellbirds on the CD we were listening to. The Three-wattled Bellbird turned out to be the ultimate suboscine, and we had several good trips to Costa Rica together as we documented how these birds learn their songs and change them from year to year.

Solitaires. Dave got hooked on solitaires at another field station in Costa Rica. He then traveled everywhere he could find solitaires, finding some of the most beautiful singers in the Caribbean.

Ring ouzels. Dave studied this relative of our American robin throughout Europe but especially in Scotland, his second home, tape recording them and studying their song dialects, reporting annually to a research group in UK. Having retired as a computer scientist from UMass, Dave was well on his way into a second career, that of ornithology, or, more specifically, a bioacoustician.

We shared big and little moments, eureka moments and the mundane. We had good discussions, about things that most people took for granted, such as what a species is and why they are listed the way they are in our field guides.

I think my last day in the field with Dave was typical. It was at the Hatfield robin roost (just south of the Whately line, he would remind me, and therefore in *his* hometown). This was in January, and his son Jason and I helped Dave into the car about 6:30 A.M. As the robins emerged from the roost, it was no ordinary departure, I soon realized. They kept coming, and coming, and coming, boiling into the sky, layer upon layer of robins filling the sky to the horizon, easily 30,000 robins we guessed. It was as if the robins saved their best for Dave's visit. Throughout this departure, Dave stayed in the car, never complaining, yet fully engaged in the spectacle around us, wanting to get high-resolution video cameras to document this event so that we could get a good count of what was here. By watching the robins pass through his Hatfield yard morning and evening, he tried to help understand from how far the robins came to gather at this roost. Always engaged. Always thinking. Always learning . . .

Dave loved life and was so full of it. He was a good friend, and best of all a good birding friend, and it doesn't get much better than that.

Don Kroodsmma



Hampshire Bird Club, Inc. Amherst, Massachusetts

www.hampshirebirdclub.org

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May, 2006

“Concealment is a complex business.” This statement is not the prelude to an account of corruption at the highest levels of government. It is, in fact, a musing on the Ruffed Grouse.

If you are like me, you have rarely, if ever, had a good look at a Ruffed Grouse. Most of us have seen these reclusive denizens of the forest floor only in headlong flight from us: a brown blur at best. On the last day of April, Betsy Higgins and I had a rare opportunity to really see a grouse in all its glory. The bird was lurking by one of the trails at Fitzgerald Lake and, inexplicably, chose not to flush as we approached. Instead, it retreated rapidly a few yards into the undergrowth, then began a sedate, almost glacial retreat, no doubt trusting in its ability to blend into the dun hues of the woodland floor. While watching this extraordinary bird, we became aware of just how complex the plumage really is. The face is streaked, with a buffy line through the eye to break up its outline. The bird's flanks are clothed in surprisingly delicate body feathers, each with dark bands, which combine to create wide, curving dark bars across the sides of the breast and flanks. Dark striping across the upper back gives the impression that the grouse is wearing some kind of ruff. The mid-back is a subtle gray, with dark chevrons. These grade to a bright buffy hue lower down the back. The central tail feathers were a warm chestnut color, each feather barred laterally with dark bars, each of which had a pale lower border. Each feather has a strong, dark, sub-terminal band. The outer tail feathers were contrastingly grayish, with the same intricate barring.

It seems ironic that a bird whose strategy is to remain hidden must do so with such a complex plumage. Consider, by contrast, the male Scarlet Tanager, which, in quest of conspicuousness, resorts to the simplicity of pure red, with contrasting wings. It seems that in the bird world, as perhaps in politics, to blend seamlessly with the prevailing environment requires a coat of extraordinary intricacy.

PROGRAMS

Monday, May 8 at 7:30 PM

John van de Graaff attests to the **Peregrinations of a Bird Photographer**

Immanuel Lutheran Church; 867 North Pleasant Street, Amherst.

In photographing birds, **John Van de Graaff** combines two life-long loves, travel and photography, with a more recently acquired one: birdwatching. This digital slide show features a selection of his best bird photos, including a wide variety of species, from common to rare. Some images are from close to home, but most were shot further afield in, for example, Florida, Texas, and New Mexico in the U.S., Ontario in Canada, France and England in Europe, and Costa Rica and Panama in Central American.

A native of Boston, John has lived in Switzerland, Germany and Canada. On retiring as a financial analyst in 2000 (last of a number of occupations), he embarked on serious bird photography, which quickly became his full-time passion. In 2003, he migrated with his wife to Northampton from Manhattan.

In the summer of 2005, John spent time on the coast at Allens Pond Sanctuary in Westport, MA, capturing images which have been used extensively by MassAudubon to support their Coastal Waterbird Program. His photos have won several prizes, and a colorful male Painted Bunting appears on the June 2006 cover of *Birder's World* magazine. His prints have been shown at the Hitchcock Center for the Environment in Amherst, and a small follow-up show will begin in mid-May 2006. He is collaborating with Amherst nature poet Wally Swist on a book combining bird images and poetry. John's web site is www.birdsbyjohn.com.

Coming Programs

June 12, 2006. Tom French. *Return of a Raptor: Peregrines in Massachusetts*

Unusual Program Date in October, 2006.

We'll be having Dr. Reuven Yosef from Israel, who will be speaking about bird migration and conservation in Israel. Because of Dr. Yosef's scheduling constraints, the meeting will be **TUESDAY, October 3** (not Monday, and in the first week of the month).

FIELD TRIPS

Reports

On April 21, with rain brewing, a small but select group with Betsy Higgins at the helm made its way through **Look Park**. Amidst the bewildering auditory assault of a multitude of Chipping Sparrows we seemed to hear almost every combination of speed and timbre imaginable. Wandering on through the surprisingly quiet park, we encountered a strangely subdued flock of Goldfinches and Pine Siskins, feeding on cottonwood blossoms. The Mill River seemed at first devoid of interesting bird life, including the **Louisiana Waterthrush** which is usually the *raison d'être* of this trip. Not to be deterred by the singing Carolina Wren teed up *en route* to the Northampton Country Club, we followed a series of unmistakable sweet notes, and found the singing waterthrush perched cryptically above the torrent advertising himself to all who would listen.

We heard tantalizing snatches of what might have been a Black and White Warbler, and finally located a beautiful Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, before, remarkably, finding our second waterthrush of the day. Our only warbler wave of the day yielded Yellow-rumped Warbler and **Solitary Vireo**, as well as a number of Ruby-crowned Kinglets. **White-throated Sparrows**, curiously absent to that point, cavorted in the burning bush by the bathrooms, and our depleted group searched in vain amidst the pines behind Pines Theater for a Hermit Thrush. As the rain began, we dispersed back to our Saturday afternoon chores, naps, and, in many cases, messages on answering machines telling us about the White-tailed Hawk.

Coming Trips

Inexplicable Vacancies on Monhegan Trip!

Approaching Warblers Feeling Unappreciated!

Monhegan Island lies about twelve miles off the coast of Maine. It is an artist's colony, lobster-fishing port, and a legendary migrant trap in both spring and fall. Since our inception, Hampshire Bird Club has ventured out to the island each Spring, (and several times in the fall) for a gentle weekend of birding, great looks at a wonderful range of birds, and in the eternal hope of being there for "the big one". In recent years, we have had some wonderful mornings, when the apple trees and spruces of the village were rife with almost every imaginable warbler competing for space in our binoculars. But we have not, of course, been there for the truly monumental fallout every birder dreams of, and which must surely come sooner or later.

SO how can it be that we have a few spaces remaining on this year's trip? Dear birder, there is only one way to avoid the hideous possibility that you had the opportunity to be there for the fallout of '06, but missed out, and that is to sign up!! We stay at the rustic Trailing Yew and move about entirely on foot over an island devoid of major roads, which has been immortalized in the art of Jamie Wyeth, who still keeps a home there. The total cost of the weekend runs to about \$400, and it is money well spent indeed.

If you are interested in Monhegan this year, please contact David Peake-Jones (529 9541; davidpj@the-spa.com) IMMEDIATELY!! The trip will close on May 7

Oh, and we have a multitude of other trips this May (see next page)

Coming Trips (continued)

Sunday, May 7. Spring Migration in the Quabbin. All day. Tom Gagnon guides birders through the Quabbin in search of its varied avifauna. This trip is limited to Hampshire Bird Club members only. Call Tom (413-584-6353) well ahead of time for meeting information and to register. (M)

Saturday, May 13. Mt. Auburn Cemetery. All day. David Peake-Jones goes to Boston's most historic cemetery, which is also one of the city's birding hotspots, to see what happens to fly in. The numbers and variety can be astonishing. (PS-If you peed in the Quabbin the week before, don't use the water fountains.) Call David (413-529-9541) for meeting information. (E)

Wednesday, May 17. Midweek half day in the Connecticut River Valley. Morning. Harvey Allen (413-253-7963) shows off his favorite birding spots. Meet at 7:00 a.m. across from Atkin's Farm (on the corner of Rt. 116 and Bay Road, Amherst). (E)

Saturday, May 20. Coastal Rhode Island. All day. Never fear, Geoff LeBaron just moved his trip to the coast of our petite southern neighbor into the warm season (in response to member requests). Call Geoff (413-268-9281) for meeting information and further details. (E)

Friday, May 26 – Monday, May 29. Monhegan Island. Overnight trip. David Peake-Jones and Andrew Magee guide birders through a long weekend on this exquisite Atlantic isle in search of migrants and deer ticks. This trip is limited to Hampshire Bird Club members only. Call David (413-529-9541) to register. (E/M)

Saturday, May 27. Poor Man's Monhegan. All day. Bob Bieda guides the rest of us to Massachusetts' less artsy, but no less birdy, isle. Past trips have found Wilson's Phalaropes, Piping Plovers, Seaside Sparrows, Orchard Orioles, and Evening Grosbeaks. Call Bob (413-527-2623) to register and get meeting information. (E)

Saturday, June 10 or 17. Westover Air Force Base. Half day. Pending permission, Bob Bieda will lead his annual trip into New England's premier grassland habitat, looming for Upland Sandpipers, Bobolinks, Grasshopper Sparrows, and Eastern Meadowlarks. This trip is limited to Hampshire Bird Club members only. Call Bob (413-527-2623) to register and check on the date and time for meeting. (E)

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

On **Monday, May 8**, Hampshire Bird Club will hold its **Annual General Meeting at Immanuel Lutheran Church**; 867 North Pleasant Street, Amherst at **7:30 PM**. The meeting will occur immediately prior to our May program. The HBC Nominating Committee (Mary Alice Wilson, Betsy Higgins, Dave Gross) is happy to announce the slate of candidates for the HBC Board of Directors for the June 2006-May 2007 fiscal year. It is proposed that the 2006-2007 board be the same group which has guided us successfully through the past year. The slate is:

President: DaveGross

Vice President/Program Chair: Geoff LeBaron

Treasurer: Janice Jorgensen

Membership Secretary: Sue Emerson

Communications Secretary: Marcia Merithew

At-Large Members: Betsy Higgins, Mike Locher, Dennis McKenna, Elissa Rubinstein, Jaap van Heerden, Bob Zimmermann.

Nominations will also be accepted from the floor during the meeting.

A DISTINGUISHED VISITOR!

Saturday, April 22, 2006

For the second time in a year, Hampshire Bird Club members were at the center of a historical event in local birding history.

It begins with Scott Sumner heading past the horse farms on an otherwise-average Saturday morning with his Hitchcock Birding class. As the group proceeded along North Maple Street about 8 AM, Scott stopped to put a scope on what he took to be a cooperative Red-tailed Hawk perched low and close to the road. As Scott noted one field mark after another, he began to realize that this was not, in fact, a Red-tailed Hawk. After some time had passed, the group was able to identify it as a White-tailed Hawk, primarily a bird of Central America, whose most northerly range is the coastal savannahs of Texas. The rest, as they say, is history!

As word spread, local birders began showing up along North Maple Street in the rain, and trooping along a track by the field where the bird had been seen. By early afternoon, the bird, after hunting a field just west of North Maple Street for much of the morning, disappeared into inaccessible woods. Having been disturbed from a late morning nap, I was one of the latecomers. Lori Rogers and I stood in the rain peering across a field into the woods which somewhere hid the bird.

Creative searchers began going further afield, and eventually found the bird in the notoriously raptor-friendly fields at the end of Hawley Road, not far from the Mt. Warner pumping station. By about 2PM, birders were massed at the end of the road gazing at the bird in a dead tree a few yards from the end of the road.

There it sat: a truly miraculous apparition. A White-tailed Hawk is slightly longer and longer-winged than a Red-tailed Hawk, though marginally lighter-bodied. This individual showed second year feathering, but was very close to full adult plumage with a white front, with delicate black barring across the upper belly. It had a snowy white tail with a fairly stunning black sub-terminal band. The bird showed a dark gray cowl and had a distinctly green and extensive cere. It had a delicate and distinctly hooked bill. If there is such a color as a rich gray, then that color prevailed across the back, offset by two muted but distinctive chestnut shoulder stripes. From behind, the bird showed broad, stubby inner wings, with the secondaries ending bluntly, well short of the tail, but with slender primaries extending down well beyond the tail. When the bird took flight briefly, the full splendor of gray-whitish wing linings was briefly revealed, along with the graceful, elongated hands of this aerial acrobat. If, as seems likely based on early indications, it is of natural origin (initial word from local falconers is that they do not keep this species), it represents perhaps the bird of the decade for this region. The bird remained in the same general area for several days. A xenophobic local red-tail clashed with the hawk on Monday morning, April 24 about 10 AM and it flew off to the south-west, not to be seen again. A White-tailed Hawk in the same plumage appeared at the Pilgrim Heights hawk watch on Cape Cod on April 27 at about 10 AM.

LIBRARY

HBC has a substantial library, located at the Hitchcock Center for the Environment in Amherst.

Hours are those of the Hitchcock Center:

9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. from Tuesday through Friday, and

9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. on Saturday.

The collection is catalogued on-line at www.hampshirebirdclub.org.

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

HITCHCOCK PROGRAMS

BUILDING HOPE: ARCHITECTURE, DESIGN AND THE WAVE OF THE FUTURE: *Carol Vince, Architect.* Thursday, April 27, 7 p.m.

IF ONLY THERE WERE WINGS THAT COULD CARRY ME: A READING OF POETRY REGARDING BIRDS: *Wally Swist.* Tuesday, May 9, 7 p.m.

BIRDING BY EAR: FOR ALL ABILITIES: *Ted Watt, Marcy Marchello.* Wednesday, May 10, 8-10 a.m. (rain date May 12)

TRIP TO GARDEN IN THE WOODS: *Ted Watt, Hitchcock Center Naturalist* Thursday, May 11, 9 a.m.-5 p.m.

A SALAMANDER SOIREE: *Amherst College Alumni House* Friday, May 5, 5:30 - 8:30 p.m.

THE TRACKING WAY: *Mark Elbroch, Tracker, Naturalist and Author* Friday, May 12, 7-9 p.m.

UNDERSTANDING AND INTERPRETING FORM: A NATURAL HISTORY OF ANIMAL SKULLS *Mark Elbroch.* Saturday, May 13, 10 a.m.-4 p.m.

CREATION CARE: *Paul Gorman, Director of the National Religious Partnership for the Environment.* Tuesday, May 23, 7 p.m.

SNAKES OF NEW ENGLAND: *Linda Krulikowski, Author and Photographer* Saturday, June 3, 10 a.m. – noon

ALL ABOUT BLUEBIRDS AND MORE: *John Rogers, Bluebird Enthusiast* Thursday, June 8, 4 p.m. for children and families
Thursday, June 8, 7 p.m. for everyone

THE BEAUTY OF HIGH LEDGES: *Ted Watt, Hitchcock Center Naturalist* Saturday, June 10, 9:30 a.m. - 1 p.m.

THE 6TH ANNUAL BIOTHON Friday, May 12 through Sunday, May 14

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.

MASS AUDUBON PROGRAMS

Early Morning Bird Walks: *Guest Leaders;*

Saturday, May 6, 7-8:30 a.m. at Arcadia

Monday-Friday, May 8-12, 6:30-8:00 a.m. at Arcadia.

Saturday, May 13, 7-8:30 a.m. at Graves Farm

Saturday, May 20, 7-8:30 a.m. at Lynes Sanctuary

Saturday, May 27, 7-8:30 a.m. at Laughing Brook

Bluebirds: *David McLain*, Saturday, May 20, 10 a.m.-noon.

Birding and a Bite Before Breakfast: *Anne Lombard*, Tuesday, May 16, 7-8:30 a.m.

Mass Audubon Birdathon: Friday, May 12-Saturday, May 13,

Call Bob Bieda ,527-2623, Anne Lombard, 586-7509, or Patti Steinman, 584-3009 to get involved

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.

GREAT FALLS DISCOVERY CENTER PROGRAMS

Thursday, May 4, 7- 9 pm. **Important Bird Areas.** *Wayne Petersen*

Saturday, May 6, 1-2 pm. **Grapevines, Trees & Shrubs: What Do These Things Mean to Birds?**

Saturday, May 13 8:30am to 2pm **Birding in Northfield.** *Bob Coyle*

Saturday, May 13, 10 am and 2 pm. **Local Birding (from Great Falls Discovery Center)**

Saturday, May 13, 1-2 pm. **A Closer Look at Trees with Gini Traub of DCR**

Thursday, May 18, 7-9 pm. **Habitats, Birds, and Migration**

Saturday, May 20 & Sunday May 21 **Great Falls Art Fest**

Saturday, May 20, 1-2 pm. **Walking Tour:Geology of Turners Falls.** *Steve Winters*

Thursday, May 25, 7-9 pm. **Whip-poor-wills of the Montague Plains.** *Dave Small*

Saturday, May 27, 1-2 pm. **Birds of the Boreal Forest.**

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

PROJECT ORIOLE. CITIZEN SCIENTISTS NEEDED!

Mass Audubon is asking for participants for a Baltimore Oriole census project. The objective of the project is to locate and catalog as many breeding pairs of orioles as possible. This is an ongoing project that was focused in Eastern Mass in previous years. This year Mass Audubon wants to increase participation in Western and Central Mass. Participation is simple: settle on one or more observation areas, look and listen for orioles that are breeding within the area, and send in your observations.

More information about the project and online forms for data reporting can be found at the web site <http://massaudubon.org/oriole/index.php>. Alternatively, you can get data cards to report orioles from your local Mass Audubon sanctuary.

NEOTROPICAL MIGRATORY BIRD CONSERVATION

Appropriations for increased funding for the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Improvement Act are being considered in the House at this time. **John Olver, the representative for the First Congressional District of Massachusetts, covering much of Western Massachusetts, sits on the Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior and Related Agencies. If you are interested in voicing your views, please ask Congressman Olver to support increased funding for the Fiscal Year 2007 Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act Grants Program!** Letters should be written and emailed or faxed by May 4th. More information and a template letter in Microsoft Word format (courtesy of the American Bird Conservancy) can be downloaded from the HBC website at <http://www.hampshirebirdclub.org/Endangered%20Species/index.html> or from the Endangered Species link on the front page.

As you may know, this relatively small, but extremely effective, matching grant program coordinates and funds the conservation of neotropical migratory birds and their habitats throughout the United States, Latin America, and the Caribbean. The Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act Grants Program has provided an effective framework for nations, states, local governments and other entities to work together cooperatively for the protection of neotropical migratory birds in the Western Hemisphere. Grants have gone to conservation programs in 31 states and 33 Latin American and Caribbean countries for projects that protect, research, monitor, and manage neotropical migratory bird populations and their habitats.

Speak Out on Sunday Hunting!

Bills are before the Massachusetts legislature to remove all prohibition against hunting on Sunday. This would make it virtually suicidal to venture into many of our favorite birding locations during (at least) deer and bear season. Here is the information you need to contact your Massachusetts Senators and Representatives.

House 4517 (completely removes the prohibition on Sunday hunting). On March 16, it was reported favorably from the Joint Committee on Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture. It should, therefore, come to the floor for a vote.

House 1279 (allows Dept of Fisheries and Wildlife to permit hunting on Sundays). Has been referred to study committee (is still alive and well.)

House 1325 (provides for annual two-day hunt on Saturday and Sunday immediately following Thanksgiving Day.) Like 1279, referred to study committee (is still alive and well.)

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

PROGRAMS

Monday, June 12 at 7:30 PM

Tom French describes the Return of a Raptor: Peregrines in Massachusetts

Immanuel Lutheran Church; 867 North Pleasant Street, Amherst.

The Massachusetts Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program was established in 1984 with funding from a voluntary state income tax check off. The very first new project that was undertaken was the restoration of the Peregrine Falcon. This project was part of the continent-wide effort to restore breeding populations in the east and to enhance the status of this endangered species in the west. With a U.S. population of over 2000 nesting pairs, the Peregrine Falcon was removed from the federal list of endangered and threatened species in 1999, but remains the focus of continued state restoration efforts, particularly in the northeast. Peregrine Falcons are now firmly established in our cities and dominate some of our urban skies. We will look at their feeding strategies, hostile mate replacements, and the management challenges created by their aggressive behavior around their nests.

Tom French: A Biography of our Speaker

Thomas W. French was born and grew up in Atlanta, Georgia. His educational background includes a B.S. in Biology from Georgia State University, an M.S. in Zoology from Auburn University, a Ph.D. in Ecology and Systematics from Indiana State University, and a post doctoral position at Cornell University. He was formerly a zoologist with The Nature Conservancy and an instructor-naturalist and field biologist with the National Audubon Society. Since 1984 he has been an Assistant Director of the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife, where he serves as Director of the Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program. Tom has served on numerous committees of scientific societies and conservation organizations, graduate student committees, and endangered species recovery teams. He has written over fifty papers on small mammals, birds and reptiles, and works frequently with the media to foster greater public interest in conservation.

Coming Programs: The 2006-2007 Season Preview

| | | |
|---------------------------|-------------------------|---|
| September 11, 2006 | Laurie Saunders | Costa Rica |
| October 3, 2006 | Dr. Reuven Yosef | Bird Conservation in Israel |
| November 13, 2006 | Greg Budney | Stories Behind the Making of the McCauley LNS |
| December 11, 2006 | Members' Meeting | Members' Slide Show |
| January 8, 2007 | To Be Announced | |
| February 12, 2007 | To Be Announced | |
| March 12, 2007 | Wayne Petersen | The Massachusetts IBA Program |
| April 9, 2007 | To Be Announced | |
| May 14, 2007 | To Be Announced | |
| June 11, 2007 | Dr. Paul Green | TBA |

The following people have agreed to speak to the club at as-yet-undetermined times:

Sam Fried (speaking on his trip along the Dempster Highway in the Canadian Arctic)

Paul Sievert (Short-tailed Albatross research)

Elijah Goodwin (song learning in Red-winged Blackbirds)

FIELD TRIPS

Reports

Mt Auburn Cemetery. Saturday, May 13.

Betsy Higgins and David Peake-Jones decided to brave the appalling weather in search of spring migrants, and to fulfill our obligations to the Birdathon. We disembarked in the cemetery around seven, to be greeted by unrelenting rain. We drifted through the under-populated cemetery, hearing the occasional warbler and getting thoroughly wet.

Still without anything striking to our credit, we eventually headed to Great Meadows in Concord, where there had been some truly great birds reported from the previous week. Venturing out onto the causeway in driving rain, we failed to hear any trace of the reported King Rail, but we were able to pick up the frenetic dancing of seven **Red Phalaropes** out on the water, and were thrilled to pick out two foraging **Black Terns** driven inland by the storm. We eventually headed home: wet and cold, but feeling most virtuous!



Mid week Sweep of the Connecticut River Valley. Wednesday, May 17

Harvey Allen led a group of ten birders from eight different villages in the valley. We travelled to South Deerfield and Sunderland. At Mt Sugarloaf, we watched torrid interactions between the nesting peregrines and the nesting ravens. The ravens have four large young and the parents were trying to feed them. The falcons periodically dive-bombed the ravens, driving them to the back of the nest. During pauses in the bombing, the irrepressible ravens would move back to the front of the nest. We then visited the manure marsh on Stillwater Road where we had more than twelve Solitary Sandpipers, Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs, and a Red-necked Phalarope in great light. From the Stillwater Bridge over the Deerfield River, we watched two Spotted Sandpipers picking up food from a floating raft of debris to feed their young.

Harvey Allen, with one adjective by the editor.



Coastal Rhode Island. Saturday, May 20 (from notes by Geoff LeBaron)

Geoff LeBaron led Jim Marcum, Sol Satin, Bob Bieda, Mary Alice Wilson, Joan Duprey and Larry Duprey on a tour of Rhode Island. At Swan Point Cemetery in Providence, the group found **Bay-breasted Warbler** and several thrushes. Scarlet Tanagers provided a graphic illustration of the impending breeding season. At Jerusalem Marsh in South Kingston, there was an **American Avocet**. Amidst the gorgeous flowering shadbush in the thickets there were an **Orchard Oriole**, several **White-eyed Vireos**, Eastern Towhees, **Purple Finches**, and a lot of Yellow Warblers. In the thickets of Ninigret NWR and the Charlestown Senior Center there were more Orchard Orioles, a Prairie Warbler, and a pair of Field Sparrows. To round out the day from the Quonochontaug Breachway, the group had a nice selection of shorebirds, plus a Merlin and Common Nighthawk flying by. At some point in the day, the group had a **Gray-cheeked/Bicknell's Thrush**, **White-rumped Sandpipers**, both cuckoos, and two **Cliff Swallows**. The total species count ran to 112, surpassing the totals for both Monhegan and Poor Man's Monhegan this year, and attesting to the avian diversity of this little island that isn't!



Poor Man's Monhegan.: Plum Island/Salisbury/Cape Anne. Saturday, May 27

After last year's great trip with its fall-out of land birds and phalaropes and a new state record thrown in for good measure, it was too much to hope for anything near a repeat this year. But there is a reason why people

hope. This year was every bit as good (minus the new state record). We arrived on Plum Island to find a large group of people pacing the side of the road opposite the Salt Pannes. During the next two hours we had the best collection of land birds most of us have had in a single day in years. These included beautiful looks at **Yellow-bellied Flycatcher** and **Philadelphia Vireo**, male and female **Mourning Warblers**, a female **Bay-breasted Warbler**, more Wilson's Warblers than I've seen in one day in a long time, and male and female Canada Warblers. In this area we also had ten other species of warblers, close looks at **Wilson's Phalarope**, a nice show by Least Terns and a good look at **Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrow**. Good birds continued during

the day with highlights being: flyby Tricolored Heron later in the day, male **Shoveler** and **Blue-winged Teal**, Piping Plover and **White-rumped Sandpipers**, two **Black-billed Cuckoos**, Swainson's Thrush, and great looks at Olive-sided Flycatcher. We finished the day near sunset at the North Pool joining Geoff LeBaron in his successful quest to add **Common Moorhen** to his state list. We totaled 108 species. Even the weather was much better than predicted.

Bob Bieda



Monhegan Island. May 26-29

| | | |
|------------------|-----------------|--------------------|
| Betsy Higgins | Christa Glatter | Ed Olmstead |
| Isabel Higgins | Lisa Rock | Rick McNeil |
| Shirley Smigel | Pete Westover | Elizabeth McAnulty |
| Corning Townsend | Joanne Parker | Andrew Magee |
| Tita Townsend | Lou Peugh | David Peake-Jones |

Under sultry skies, **Andrew Magee**, **David Peake-Jones** and thirteen others boarded the Elizabeth Anne at Port Clyde for the annual Monhegan Island trip. As always, we disembarked on the island in anticipation of flycatchers on the beach, and apple trees awash with warblers. As we made our way through town to the Trailing Yew it became apparent that, for now at least, we would have to work for it. There were a few birds popping up here and there, but overall things were fairly quiet.

We went to bed on Friday night hoping for southerlies and an influx of birds the next day. As it turned out, the island had reasonable numbers of migrants all weekend, most giving us wonderful looks at twenty-one species of warblers, amongst other things, but gave up its rarities reluctantly for the entire weekend. The various birders and birding groups on the island got fleeting glimpses of birds which then disappeared, either going to ground in some anonymous corner of the island, or disappearing across Muscungus Bay to the mainland. Exemplifying this kind of experience, Betsy and Shirley, while preparing to head in to breakfast one morning, found a female **Cape May Warbler** in an apple tree right outside the Trailing Yew. We disappeared in to breakfast, and got no further looks at that species for the rest of the weekend. Likewise, Isabel and Andrew were amongst the few who got fleeting good looks at **Mourning Warbler**, despite there being several about. A **Bay-breasted Warbler** was also decidedly reticent. One group got brief looks at a **Philadelphia Vireo** in a frustratingly thick grove of alders by the ice pond, whereupon the bird vanished. A solitary Lincoln's Sparrow provided only a brief reminder of the legions of his/her brethren which had filled the thickets last year. Rick had a brief encounter with his first ever **Black-billed Cuckoo** on the last day, but no-one else saw the bird at all. We never did find the White-eyed Vireo which was reported from the muddy confines of the Underhill Trail.

On the way to Eastern Egg Rock, we were blessed with a **Razorbill** at close range from the boat. **Puffins** were abundant, and for one of the few times in recent memory we got great comparative views of **Arctic**, **Roseate**, and **Common Terns** in quick succession.

In a moment of high drama, we realized that we had forgotten to bring copies of the HBC song. It seemed this would be the first trip ever when the graceful strains of this august melody would not send other patrons of the Yew scurrying for the woods. Rick put his guitar and musical skills to good use in cajoling some new and original verses out of the assembled group on Saturday night. Just when it seemed this jerry-rigged version of the historic song would have to suffice, Marian let it slip that she, as the proprietor of the Yew, had filed a copy away in an earlier year. We were able to sing it after all, much to the delight of the Yew staff, who were some of the most enjoyable folks we have had on any trip in my memory.

After a gorgeous weekend's weather and good company, and a gentle boat ride back, we finally said our goodbyes at the dock in Port Clyde, as an immature Bald Eagle rowed its way on some strange errand overhead. It seemed our return to southern New England was an even stranger errand to undertake.

David Peake-Jones

Wildwood walks

The traditional HBC walks at the Wildwood Cemetery in Amherst on Tuesdays and Thursdays in May netted several leaders, participants and bird sightings this year. The weather ranged from frosty cold to warm, from bright sun to rain, and from calm to breezy. There were experienced old-timers and brand new first-timers on the walks. All told we saw or heard at least 40 species of birds including some nice bright Scarlet Tanagers and Indigo Buntings for the first-timers. One can always argue over the best bird seen, and this season it may have been the Black-billed Cuckoo that Elissa Rubinstein hung around to locate and observe on May 11.

There has been discussion by the HBC board about changing the Tuesday/Thursday May walks to be split between Wildwood and the South Amherst Rail Trail. Let Mike Locher or another board member know your thoughts about this proposal.

Dave Gross

Coming Trips

(Note the impromptu addition to this schedule on June 11)

Saturday, June 10 or 17. Westover Air Force Base.

Registration for this trip is now closed.

Sunday, June 11. An Impromptu Trip to Mt Greylock

David Peake-Jones will approach the states highest point from North Adams. We will stop at various locations for short hikes, including the summit and Jones Nose. There are good possibilities for breeding species like Blackburnian, Blackpoll and Mourning Warbler. We may even encounter the odd boreal specialty. Please be prepared to walk up to a mile from the cars at one or two locations. We'll meet at 5:30 AM at Northampton Bowl, and at 5:45 AM at Stop and Shop in Hadley/Amherst. Please contact David to register (529 9541, newsletter@hampshirebirdclub.org).

Wednesday, June 21. Midweek half day in the Connecticut River Valley. Morning. Harvey Allen (413-253-7963) leads birders through the local landscape, seeking out late migrants. Meet at 6:00 a.m. across from Atkin's Farm (on the corner of Rt. 116 and Bay Road, Amherst). (E)

Saturday, July 29. New South Beach, I. All day. David Peake-Jones goes looking for early migrating shorebirds, especially Red Knots. Bring a lunch, a jacket, and \$20 for the boat ride. Call David (413-529-9541) to register. (E/M)

Saturday, August 19. New South Beach, II. All day. Bob Bieda leads birders in their quest for late shorebird migrants, including Curlew Sandpipers and Marbled and Hudsonian Godwits. Bring a lunch, a jacket, and \$20 for the boat ride. Call Bob (413-527-2623) to register. (E/M)

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. There are no Saturday hours in the Summer. 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.

HITCHCOCK PROGRAMS

ALL ABOUT BLUEBIRDS AND MORE: *John Rogers, Bluebird Enthusiast*

Thursday, June 8, 4 p.m. for children and families

Thursday, June 8, 7 p.m. for everyone

THE BEAUTY OF HIGH LEDGES: *Ted Watt, Hitchcock Center Naturalist*
 Saturday, June 10, 9:30 a.m. - 1 p.m.

MONARCHS ARE BACK!: *Jennifer Wiest, Hitchcock Center Educator*
 Tuesday, June 13, 4-5:30 p.m.

NEW ENGLAND WILD FLOWER SOCIETY (NEWFS)
FIELD IDENTIFICATION TECHNIQUES: *Dr. Julie Richburg, Ecologist*
 Saturdays, June 17, 24, July 15, 22, 10 a.m.-3 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.

GREAT FALLS DISCOVERY CENTER PROGRAMS

Pollinators and Plants: *Dan Conlon (Warm Colors Apiary, So. Deerfield)*
Thursday, June 8. 7 pm – 8 pm

Bird Walk at Fitzgerald Lake in Northampton, MA: *Mitch Hartley of USFWS*
Saturday, June 17. 7 am – 10 am. North Farms Rd. entrance.

Eagles, Bagels and Video at Barton Cove and Great Falls DC: *7 yrs and Up.* **Saturday, July 1st. 7 am - 11 am**
 Fee (\$6 per person) and preregistration required. Call Northfield Mountain at (413) 659 4461
Shop and Save...Birds That Is! (Impact of our shopping habits on birds)
Saturday, July 8th. 1 pm – 2 pm

Wild Edible Plants of Massachusetts: *John Root*
Tuesday, July 11th. 7 pm - 8:30 pm

Beaks and Feet- Bird Adaptations
Saturday, July 22nd. 1 pm – 2 pm

Follow Me to the Beach! (Protecting shorebirds while at the beach: for children)
Friday, August 4th. 11 am – 12 pm

Discovering Jewels of the Air: Ruby-throated Hummingbirds: *Sharon Stichter*
Thursday, August 17. 7 pm – 8 pm.

Migration Headache (for children)
Saturday, August 19th. 11 am - NOON

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

Revamped HBC Web Site!

Thanks to considerable work by Afranio Torres-Neto, the HBC web site has a completely new look. Afranio took the old web site and altered it into a site that has easier navigation and a consistent look. Thanks also go to John Van de Graaff who donated several of his images of local birds for use on the web site. Check it out and let the webmasters know if you can think of additions or improvements to the HBC's presence on the web. The HBC web site address is www.hampshirebirdclub.org.

Recent Reviews for the New Website:

"A convincing argument against Internet Neutrality" (Someone in Big Business)

"We don't want to know what they are saying, just who they are saying it to." (Someone in the Executive Branch)

"Oh sweetie, you know I don't like creepy-crawlies." (my granny)

Volunteer Birder/Teachers Wanted!!

Patti Steinman of Arcadia is looking for one or two educationally-minded folks to join her in facilitating one or more of three short workshops at Springfield College. The subject of each workshop is 'Becoming A Birder', and they are part of a series entitled "Becoming an Outdoorswoman." The audience will be (presumably female) students from Springfield College. This is a voluntary project, run by MassWildlife.

The workshops run from 9 to 11 AM; 11 AM to 1 PM; and 2 to 4 PM on **Saturday July 8, 2006**.

If you are interested, please contact **Patti Steinman** at Arcadia; psteinman@massaudubon.org or 584 3009.

Alternatively, you might wish to contact **Ellie Horwitz of MassWildlife** directly:

Ellie Horwitz

Chief, Information & Education

MassWildlife

One Rabbit Hill Road, Westboro, MA 01581

Tel: (508) 792-7270 ext. 105 ; Fax: (508) 792-7275

HBC Elects Board for 2006-2007

The following were elected to the Board of Directors at the Annual General Meeting on May 8.

President: DaveGross

Vice President/Program Chair: Geoff LeBaron

Treasurer: Janice Jorgensen

Membership Secretary: Sue Emerson

Communications Secretary: Marcia Merithew

At-Large Members: Betsy Higgins, Mike Locher, Dennis McKenna, Elissa Rubinstein, Jaap van Heerden, Bob Zimmermann.

Welcome New Members!

Dick Wynne: Northampton

Allison Keeler: Florence

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

David Peake-Jones, editor. 529 9541; newsletter@hampshirebirdclub.org



Hampshire Bird Club, Inc. Amherst, Massachusetts

www.hampshirebirdclub.org
Volume 23, No. 1

September, 2006

Pluto is now a dwarf planet, and we can no longer exult in the rediscovery of the Ivory-billed Woodpecker. Amidst such global uncertainties as these, it is refreshing to remember that Hampshire Bird Club is gearing up for another year. Trips have already been to Westover this summer to check out the largest habitat for grassland species in the north east, and two groups have been to New South Beach for different snapshots of the shorebird migration. A quick glance at the enclosed **Fall Field Trip Schedule** will convince you that these summer activities are but the prelude to a wonderful set of trips to sample the fall migration. We will be active throughout the bracing scarcity of winter, and we will be on hand next spring to welcome migrants back in their full breeding regalia. Similarly, you will find in the **Coming Programs section on page 2**, a varied array of speakers to interest any intellect. In addition, you will find the club offers a library with a wide range of birding resources, and has a diverse membership, amongst whom you will find others to share and broaden your passion for birding.

Your immediate assignment, should you choose to accept it, is to **RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP** for the coming year. The form is included with this newsletter. **We need your membership contribution** to fund the speakers who will be visiting this year, and to pay the myriad of other expenses which this thriving bird club incurs in the course of its annual activities. In response to concerns about distribution of information, you have the option this year (via the membership form) to have your name and contact information excluded from the membership list we distribute to members later in the year. Please note that the club distributes member contact information **ONLY** to members via a hard copy. This information **IS NOT** published on the Internet, and **IS NOT** shared with any other organizations or individuals **FOR ANY PURPOSE**.

Please also review the enclosed **Rare Bird Alert Form** and make your careful decision about whether to sign up. Above all, strap on the noddies and get ready to go birding!

PROGRAMS

This Month

Monday, September 11 at 7:30 PM

Laurie Sanders speaks on Birding In Costa Rica

Immanuel Lutheran Church; 867 North Pleasant Street, Amherst.

Laurie Sanders is perhaps best known to us here in the valley as the host of *Field Notes*, a weekly natural history series heard on WFCR and on Connecticut Public Radio. Laurie also hosted more than 35 short natural history documentaries, forming a series entitled "A Natural Focus," which aired on WGBY Channel 57 between 1994 and 1998. Laurie's diverse career has included stints as an educator with UMass Extension's Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation program, specializing in watershed-related issues. She has also worked on wetlands assessment and protection for the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection, and as a botanist for the U.S. Forest Service in Vermont. Working with her husband, she has found dozens of new locations for rare species of plants, reptiles, amphibians, dragonflies, damselflies, and tiger beetles in Massachusetts and Connecticut. In addition to her home in Westhampton, MA, Laurie and her family own a house in Costa Rica and she has, in recent years, lead several birding trips to this enchanted country. When last I ran into her, Laurie had recently become active with a collaborative working to increase the use of local, sustainably-harvested lumber in the Pioneer Valley.

Please Note: It is NOT a Typo. The October program is on Tuesday, October 3.

HBC NEWSLETTER AVAILABLE ON-LINE!

You can choose to get the newsletter on-line via the club website, instead of through the mail. Please choose this option if you have internet access and are even moderately comfortable online.

“How does that work?”

The newsletter is posted on the HBC website. Participants receive an 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.

Coming Programs. 2006-2007

| | | |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| Tuesday, October 3, 2006. | Dr. Reuven Yosef. | <i>Bird Conservation in Israel.</i> |
| November 13, 2006. | Greg Budney. | <i>The Stories Behind the Making of the McCauley LNS.</i> |
| December 11, 2006. | Members’ Meeting. | <i>Members’ Slide Show.</i> |
| January 8, 2007. | Geoff LeBaron. | <i>The History and Future of the Christmas Bird Count.</i> |
| February 12, 2007. | Elijah Goodwin. | <i>Song Learning In Icterids.</i> |
| March 12, 2007. | Wayne Petersen. | <i>Massachusetts “Important Bird Areas” Program.</i> |
| April 9, 2007. | Sam Fried. | <i>Birding the Dempster Highway (North-West Territories).</i> |
| May 14, 2007. | Paul Sievert. | <i>The Short-tailed Albatross.</i> |
| June 11, 2007. | Dr. Paul Green. | <i>TBA</i> |

FIELD TRIPS

Reports

Saturday, June 10 at Westover Air Reserve Base.

Bob Bieda lead a group from the Hampshire Bird Club under HIGH security. Here’s what they found:

| | | | |
|-------------------------|-----------|----------------------------|-----------|
| Great Blue Heron | 4 | Bobolink | 18 |
| Kestrel | 1 | Eastern Meadowlark | 16 |
| Upland Sandpiper | 15 | Field Sparrow | 1 |
| Willow Flycatcher | 1 | Savannah Sparrow | 8 |
| Brown Thrasher | 2 | Grasshopper Sparrow | 15 |
| Horned Lark | 5 | | |
| Prairie Warbler | 1 | | |

Speaks for itself, don’t it?

♣♣♣♣

On **Sunday, June 11**, **Chris Ellison, Betsy Higgins, and David Peake-Jones** set out along the Mohawk Trail for an impromptu exploration of **Mt Greylock**. The Forest Tent Caterpillar outbreaks that are devastating southern New England forests were painfully evident in the leprous patches that covered normally green slopes on the way through the Berkshires. To our despair, the weather deteriorated as we approached the park, and by the time we paused at Patterson Reservoir on the lower slopes of the mountain, there were strong, cold winds making birding almost impossible. Chestnut-sided Warblers and a few other species made themselves heard above the keening of the wind, and an odd-sounding Indigo Bunting made us perk up our ears for a few moments. before proceeding slowly up the mountain. Least Flycatchers and Redstarts seemed *de rigour* on the lower slopes. We paused to walk a few yards into the woods at the Wilbur's Shelter trailhead. Here we heard Blackburnian Warblers making several of their bewildering array of songs, pursued a singing female Purple Finch through the treetops for a bit, and heard the distant "Cu-Cu-Cu" of a **Black-billed Cuckoo**. We also surprised a rather ratty but striking Yellow-bellied Sapsucker working his way through the trees, and heard Black-throated Blue Warblers proclaiming territory.

We eventually reached the intersection of Notch Road and the summit loop, and took to our feet for a bit. In driving cloud, we picked our way up the Appalachian Trail toward the summit, hearing Blackpoll Warblers and more Purple Finches eking out a living amongst the short spruces. After wandering about in the clouds at the local roof of the world for a while, we began to make our way down the summit road. We were disappointed to find the scrubby slopes almost free of birds, save for an invisible Magnolia Warbler. Moving down Rockwell Road a little, we walked briefly along another stretch of the A-T to a location known for breeding **Canada Warbler**. To our delight, a bird began singing in exactly the predicted place. We were each rewarded for our own brands of perseverance with good views of the secretive singer picking its way through the dense hobblebush of the understorey.

The spruce bog further along the trail was green, delicately mossy, and tranquil, but free of all but a Yellow-rumped Warbler.

From here we traveled down Sperry Road and wandered about in the campground for a while. We heard lots more Blackburnian Warblers, Blue-headed Vireos and Brown Creepers. Rocky Ledges were remarkably bird and butterfly-free, but Chris alertly picked a Broad-winged Hawk's delicate whistle out of the dwindling wind, and we watched the singer flirt with the breezes while enjoying views out over the Hopper. Our last stop of the day was Jones Nose, where we had high hopes of encountering a Mourning Warbler. **Indigo Buntings** were outrageously well-represented, along with a singing **Field Sparrow**, **Eastern Towhees**, and Chestnut-sided Warblers, but the Mourning Warblers kept their own counsel. We exited the park via the Cheshire entrance, drifting slowly down the road past some fabled Mourning spots of yesteryear, but the bird continued to elude us. We ended the trip determined that the annual HBC presence should be renewed, preferably starting in the other direction next year!



It is one of the ironies of birding that, as we dust off rusty senses after the lethargy of summer, in preparation for the excitement of fall migration, we have to start with the shorebirds. Putting oneself on a mudflat in Chatham in late August with a bunch of sandpipers moulting into winter plumage is like asking the Patriots to play the Superbowl in the first week of training camp. Nevertheless, a keen band of birders alighted at the far tip of **New South Beach on July 28** to immerse ourselves in the beginning of the shorebird migration. Toward the tip of the beach we were almost immediately rewarded by a **Marbled Godwit** standing enigmatically on the shore, and a rather lonely **Brant**. Further toward the mainland, we were relieved to find good numbers of **Red Knot**, attesting to the fact that the species is, at least for now, hanging on. We had in excess of fifteen **Hudsonian Godwits** for the day, and the usual wonderful assortment of shorebirds and terns of all shapes and sizes. We slogged through the blazing sand to the ocean beach on no fewer than two occasions, for the dubious reward of one **Cory's Shearwater**, identified after later research by Bob Bieda. Even as the rising tide created ideal birding conditions, we found out time running out and had to make a frustrating rush for the pickup point. After some shameless indulgence at the Cream and Cone we made our way back to western Massachusetts, more than satisfied.

David Peake-Jones



There is just nothing better than a perfect summer day on **South Beach, Cape Cod**. Seven HBC members boarded the Outermost Harbor ferry at on **August 19** at 8:30 a.m. for the fifteen-minute trip to the south tip of the beach. From there we worked our way north through three miles of shorebirds and terns, some clustered around high tide pools and others nicely spaced over mud flats as the tide receded. Highlights included a near breeding plumage **Curlew Sandpiper** first found by Bob Clem and later re-found by our group. We were able to study this bird at close range for a long period of time as it fed, preened, and rested on the mud-flat. Of course, Al Richards reminded us of broken promises by Shawn

Smolen-Morten, who is now safely residing in South Carolina (See A1 for more details). Other highlights were three **Stilt Sandpipers** found by Sol Satin. These birds provided an excellent opportunity to compare them to Short-billed Dowitchers and a reminder, at least for me, of how humbling identifying shorebirds can be. Also an adult **Lesser Black-back Gull** and as many as eight **Black Terns** in various plumages. Our usual artery-clogging meal of fried seafood finished off the day.

Bob Bieda

Library

HBC has a substantial library, located at the **Hitchcock Center for the Environment** in Amherst.

Hours are those of the Hitchcock Center:

9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. from Tuesday through Friday, and

9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. on Saturday.

The collection is catalogued on-line at www.hampshirebirdclub.org.

The library contains birding resources in various media, including field guides, bird-finding guides to almost every major birding destination in the U.S., and overseas, natural histories, periodicals and videos. Items can be signed out and borrowed for a period of up to one month, or longer by arrangement. Henry Lappen oversees the collection and is happy to bring items to meetings, if you give him a few days notice. You can reach him at (413) 549 3722.

Hitchcock Programs

Wind Power Tour: *Searsburg Wind Facility, Searsburg, VT*

Tuesday, September 19, 1 - 4 p.m.

Amherst's Renewable Energy Campaign: *Peggy MacCleod, Center for Ecological Technology*

Tuesday, September 26, 2006. 4:30-6:00 p.m.

Mushroom Foray: *Tyler Seavey, local mushroom hunter*

Wednesday, September 13, 7 - 9 p.m.. AND Saturday, September 16, 9 a.m. – noon

Monarch Butterfly Tagging: *Jennifer Wiest, HCE Educator*

Thursdays, September 14 (at the Hitchcock Center) and 21 (at Mt. Pollux), 4 p.m.

Hawk Watch on Skinner Mountain: *John Green, local naturalist & nature photographer*

Sunday, September 17, 10 a.m. – noon. Meet at the Summit House.

Goldenrod Identification Workshop: *Arieh Tal, Botanist*

Saturday, September 9, 10 a.m.-3 p.m.

Aster Identification Workshop: *Arieh Tal, Botanist*

Saturday, September 23, 10 a.m.-3 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.

Welcome New Members!

Ginny Fuhringer: Northampton, MA

Allison Keeler: Florence, MA

Robert MacLauchian: Williamsburg, MA

Dick Wynne: Northampton, MA

Pre-empted by lack of space this month: Great Falls Discovery Center and Arcadia programs.

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

David Peake-Jones, Editor

(413) 529 9541; newsletter@hampshirebirdclub.org

| | | | | |
|----------------|---|----------------------|-----------------------|---------------|
| Date received: | Payment: __ cash, __ check, \$ _____ | Release Form signed? | Newsletter Choice? | Data entered: |
|----------------|---|----------------------|-----------------------|---------------|

For administrative purposes only.

HAMPSHIRE BIRD CLUB, INC. MEMBERSHIP FORM: 2006-2007

Please note that contact information may be shared with other members of the club, unless you request otherwise below.

Name(s): _____

**Please select ONE of the two options below
to receive the newsletter:**

Address: _____

_____ I will download the newsletter from
the HBC Website (club will send
monthly reminders)

_____ Send me the newsletter via US mail

City: _____

State: _____ ZIP: _____

**Please check any activities listed
below in**

Home Phone(s): [_____] _____

which you would like to participate:

[_____] _____

_____ Occasionally provide refreshments

Work Phone(s): [_____] _____

_____ Conservation Committee

[_____] _____

_____ Field Trip Committee

E-mail(s): _____

_____ Lead field trips

_____ Share information on birding locations

_____ Other (describe)

☐ Please mark this box only if you would like to EXCLUDE your name and contact information from the club membership list (distributed **ONLY** to members). Thank you.

Please choose a level of membership from the options below. Funds generated through supporting membership categories aid in financing the outstanding programming for which our club has become known. **All membership contributions are tax deductible** (if you itemize your deductions).

MEMBERSHIP - REGULAR: Tax deductible

Individual @ \$15.00

\$

Family @ \$25.00

\$

MEMBERSHIP – SUPPORTING: Tax deductible

Downy Woodpecker @ \$35.00

\$

Northern Flicker @ \$50.00

\$

Red-bellied Woodpecker @ \$100.00

\$

Pileated Woodpecker @ \$250.00 or more

\$

Other

\$

Please make checks payable to the **Hampshire Bird Club, Inc.** and send (with this form) to:
Hampshire Bird Club, Inc. P.O. Box 716, Amherst, MA 01004-0716.

Reminder: fill out and sign the Release Form enclosed.

RELEASE FORM: 2006-2007

Please complete the release form below if you intend to go on field trips or think you might participate in the future. We need members to share responsibility for their own safety and the safety of others during field trips. The signed release will be filed with the club secretary. For family memberships, all participating members should sign.

RELEASE OF ALL DEMANDS - HOLD HARMLESS

I hereby acknowledge that as a participant in field trips with the Hampshire Bird Club, Inc. (HBC) I may be exposed to significant risks. These may include, but are not limited to, vehicular travel over land and water, foot travel over difficult terrain, and hazardous weather conditions. I may also encounter poisonous plants, dangerous wildlife, and/or disease-carrying insects. In the event of injury, I understand that I may face considerable delays in reaching professional medical help.

I fully accept these risks and agree to hold the Hampshire Bird Club, Inc., its officers, directors, volunteers, employees, and agents free from any and all liability for injuries and/or loss which I may incur, directly or indirectly, while on field trips run by HBC during the 2006-2007 membership year.

EXECUTED freely and voluntarily this day:.....,,
(month) (day) (year)

(Signatures of all participating family members)

Please print names:

HBC RARE BIRD ALERT. Where are the Birds Today?

All of us are interested in knowing what birds are in our area each day. We do this by:

- birding
- talking with other birders
- calling the Voice of Audubon or reading "The Voice" in the newspaper
- checking the Web
- joining the Rare Bird Alert (for those interested in unusual species)

To check The Voice of Audubon:

Call toll free **1-888-224-6444**

Follow the directions (press 2 to listen to Seth Kellogg, the Western Mass voice). Seth updates The Voice once a week - more often when necessary - so check regularly. (Thanks to Trudy Tynan, the transcript also appears weekly in most of our local papers.)

To share local sightings with other valley birders via email: You may wish to join the Allen Bird Club "*Bird News of Western Massachusetts*" network. To join, email Seth Kellogg at skhawk@comcast.net

To check various sources on the web:

Go to the HBC website: www.hampshirebirdclub.org. From the **Related Links** section on the Home Page, you can go to **the Voice** and/or to **Massbird**

To join the Rare Bird Alert (RBA).

If you want to be notified by email, fill in the form below and return with your membership form **by October 3** (date of Monday night program).

If you want to be on the phone tree AND HAVE AN ANSWERING MACHINE, fill in the phone tree information below and return with your membership form **by October 3**.

Date: _____

Rare Bird Alert (RBA) Form: 2006-2007

Name(s): _____

EMAIL ONLY: Some people give both home and work email address. You cannot sign up for both email and the phone tree. Email participants automatically receive both "Valley Only" and Valley and Beyond" announcements.

email address: _____

PHONE TREE ONLY: Please understand that signing up for the telephone tree means that you must participate in passing along the information. ***It is absolutely essential that you call the next person on the list immediately.*** If unable to reach that person, leave a message on the answering machine and keep going down the list. ***Please do not sign up if you cannot commit to doing this every time.***

home phone _____ work phone: _____

(phone tree) Rare Birds in the **Valley Only** _____ (phone tree) Rare Birds **Valley and Beyond** _____

Hampshire Bird Club, Inc. Fall Field Trip Schedule, 2006

Please register with the field 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 \$0.40 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.*

SEPTEMBER

Saturday, September 16. East Meadows: Migrating Warblers. Morning. Bob Bieda seeks out the fall migrants in Northampton's East Meadows. Meet at the Northampton Bowl, 525 Pleasant St. (Route 5) in Northampton at 7 a.m. Call Bob at 413-527-2623 to confirm meeting details. (E)

***Wednesday, September 20. Midweek in the Connecticut River Valley.** Morning. Harvey Allen leads his monthly midweek trip to local hot spots. 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 details. (E)

Saturday, September 30. Bolton Flats. Half day. Scott Sumner looks for sparrows, late warblers, and other denizens of the marshes. Meet at 5:30 a.m. at the Sumner Heating Company parking lot, 60 Shumway St. in Amherst. Conditions can be wet, so bring waders/boots/a change of shoes as well as snacks. Call Scott 413-256-5438 for further details. (M)

Saturday, September 30. Quabbin: Fall Migrants. All day. Tom Gagnon leads participants into the Quabbin to see birds, insects, and mammals. This trip is limited to Hampshire Bird Club members. Call Tom (413-584-6353) to register and get meeting information. (M)

OCTOBER

***Saturday, October 7, OR Sunday, October 8. Lighthouse Point: Hawk Migration.** All day. David Peake-Jones identifies all those little specks in the sky around New Haven harbor. Meet at the Northampton Bowl, 525 Pleasant St. (Route 5) in Northampton at 6 a.m. The actual date of the trip will be decided based on weather forecasts, so call David at 413-529-9541 *at least a week ahead of time* to register or for information. (E)

Saturday, October 14. Dead Creek Wildlife Management Area: Snow Geese. All day. Al Richards will lead birders to the annual spectacle of thousands of Snow Geese (and a Ross's Goose or two, with any luck) fueling up for their migration, then explore nearby sites around Lake Champlain. Call Al (413-665-2761) to register and get meeting information. (E)

***Wednesday, October 18. Midweek in the Connecticut River Valley.** Half day. Harvey Allen looks for migrants in his monthly midweek trip. Meet at 7:30 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 details. (E)

Saturday, October 21. Coastal Rhode Island. All day. Geoff LeBaron will seek out migrants along the shore of our neighbor to the southeast. For meeting information and further details, call Geoff (413-268-9281) as the date approaches. (E)

NOVEMBER

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Hampshire Bird Club, Inc. Amherst, Massachusetts

www.hampshirebirdclub.org

Volume 23, No. 2

October, 2006

Hope springs eternal! Having been inspired by evidence from the Cache River basin in Arkansas suggesting living Ivory-billed Woodpeckers, it has been with dismay that many of us have witnessed mounting skepticism concerning that body of evidence. Not only did a year-long search by ornithologists fail to find more conclusive evidence for the existence of the bird, but the video evidence that was, for most, the most conclusive part of the original evidence has been called into question by ornithologists as eminent as David Allen Sibley and others.

Those still cupping their hands around a flicker of hope will be heartened by a paper published this month by a group of five authors. They document an impressive body of evidence from the Choctawhatchee River basin in Florida. The authors describe fourteen (14) possible sightings of Ivory-billed Woodpeckers, between May 2005, and May 2006, including two cases where they believe they saw two (2) birds together. The authors have also compiled an impressive body of audio evidence, and documented bark scaling similar to that practiced by the last known living Ivorybills. There are numerous suspiciously large feeding cavities in the study area. These authors do not have any photographic evidence for the bird.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service are planning another huge hunt for the ghost bird. I, for one, am waiting with bated breath. A reference to the paper in question and an on-line version will be given at the end of the newsletter.

In the meantime, do not forget that wonderful birds live in, and pass through, our own backyards every day. The bird club offers a great selection of trips all over the region to find these wonderful creatures, and an array of speakers to bring the world of birding to our little valley.

Membership Fees for this year are due by September 30.

Rare Bird Alert Forms are due by October 3.

We need your membership dues to fund the club activities, and the sooner we have your dollars in our coffers, the sooner we can get going. Thanks, in anticipation!

Included in this edition are the Field Trip Policy, Field Trip Guidelines, and the ABA guide to Birding Ethics.

See you on Tuesday!!

PROGRAMS

This month's program occurs unusually early: on Tuesday, October 3. This is to accommodate an extremely exciting speaker, on a topic few will want to miss. Please see Page Two for an introduction to the program, and a brief biography of the speaker.

Coming Programs

November 13, 2006. Greg Budney.

The Stories Behind the Making of the McCauley LNS.

December 11, 2006. Members' Meeting.

Members' Slide Show.

January 8, 2007. Geoff LeBaron.

The History and Future of the Christmas Bird Count.

This Month
Tuesday, October 3 at 7:30 PM
Dr. Reuben Yosef speaks about Birds and Conservation in Israel

Immanuel Lutheran Church; 867 North Pleasant Street, Amherst.

Dr. Reuben Yosef received his undergraduate education in Israel, and did doctoral work in the United States, in the course of becoming a world-renowned authority on birds. He has authored or co-authored over 200 papers and five books on birds, and is currently the director of the International Birding and Research Center in Eilat, Israel. Here, amongst other things, he has overseen the reclamation of a local landfill and its conversion into a large bird sanctuary, providing habitat for millions of migratory birds. Dr Yosef is also involved in bird conservation in India, South Africa, Nigeria, Spain, and Hungary. He is an adjunct Assistant Professor of Ornithology at the Ben Gurion University of the Negev in Beer Sheva, Israel.

Dr. Yosef will examine the decisions that a bird must make while on migration. We will see how Levant Sparrowhawks and Bee-eaters use similar strategies to minimize time and maximize distance covered while on migration, how waders from the Tundra modify breeding behavior and adapt strategies that are similar to temperate zone migrant warbler species, how local predators take advantage of fatigued migrants, and how age and experience enhance survival. Dr. Yosef will touch on recent studies that throw new light on how birds are able to conserve energy *en route*. Dr. Yosef will use the International Birding and Research Center in Eilat to illustrate the importance of conserving staging habitats for migratory bird populations and how the task is actually simpler than realized by most. Each and every one of us can be a part of the global effort to conserve habitat for migrating birds.

HBC NEWSLETTER AVAILABLE ON-LINE!

Renewing Your Membership? You can choose to get the November-June newsletters 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 an 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

Four other birders met **Bob Bieda** in the fog of early morning on **Saturday, September 16** to explore the **East Meadows** for fall warblers. As expected, with fog and a poor night for migration, the first hour or so of the trip was very quiet. As the air cleared and the weather warmed we managed to run into a couple of areas of activity. In the meadows this usually happens as follows. There will be a group of robins and waxwings feeding on berries. Into this group will appear a few smaller birds, a Tennessee Warbler here, a few Red-eyed Vireos there. For a few minutes each person will be looking in a slightly different direction reporting a warbler or two and then, as if a curtain is drawn, all the small birds are gone and the scene returns to a few robins feeding on berries. In this manner our few highlights were a **Wood Thrush** seen by all and seemingly late in the season, one or two **Tennessee Warblers**, a Northern Parula, and **Nashville** and **Wilson Warblers**. Since no Connecticut Warblers were seen, each participant got double their money back.

Bob Bieda

Coming Trips

(See also the Fall Field Trip Schedule. It's Yellow! We sent you one!)

***Saturday, October 7, OR Sunday, October 8. Lighthouse Point: Hawk Migration.** All day. David Peake-Jones identifies all those little specks in the sky around New Haven harbor. Meet at the Northampton Bowl, 525 Pleasant St. (Route 5) in Northampton at 6 a.m. The actual date of the trip will be decided based on weather forecasts, so call David at 413-529-9541 *at least a week ahead of time* to register or for information. (E)

Saturday, October 14. Dead Creek Wildlife Management Area: Snow Geese. All day. Al Richards will lead birders to the annual spectacle of thousands of Snow Geese (and a Ross's Goose or two, with any luck) fueling up for their migration, then explore nearby sites around Lake Champlain. Call Al (413-665-2761) to register and get meeting information. (E)

***Wednesday, October 18. Midweek in the Connecticut River Valley.** Half day. Harvey Allen looks for migrants in his monthly midweek trip. Meet at 7:30 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 details. (E)

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Backyard Birds (on Strong St. in Northampton) offers a wide range of birding books, audio resources, gifts, feeders, and other paraphernalia. They also offer a 10% discount to Hampshire Bird Club Members. Remember, when you shop locally, your money stays here!

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 Saturday. 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 the meeting on June 14, 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** 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 CENTER

Recycling Tour: *Justine Fallon*

Wednesday, Oct. 11, 1:30 - 3:30 p.m.

The Second Annual Amherst Renewable Energy Fair (on the Town Common)

Saturday, October 7, 10 a.m. – 4 p.m.

Green Buildings Open House

Saturday, October 7, 10 a.m. – 4 p.m.

Solar Energy: Own A Piece of the Sun: *Chris Vreeland*

Wednesday, October 18, 7 - 9 p.m. (6:30 registration and refreshments)

Location: Florence Civic Center, Park Street, Florence, MA

Small Scale Wind: *Chris Vreeland*

Monday, October 23, 7 - 9 p.m.

Chester Arches Hike: *Laurie Sanders and Dave Pierce*

Saturday, October 14 (Rain date: Sunday October 15), 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Hiking the Range: *Ted Watt*

Saturday, October 21, 9 a.m. – noon

Living With Wildlife: Forest Insects: *Ken Gooch*

Thursday, November 2, 7:00 – 8:30 p.m.

Wonders of the Giant Hissing Cockroach: *Pilar Boutte*

Saturday, November 4, 10 a.m. – noon

Witches and Skeletons: *Roland "Boot" Boutwell. At Nasami Farm, Whately*

Saturday, Oct. 21, 9 a.m. - 12:30 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

Basic Nature Photography: *Kevin Kopchynski*

Sundays, October 1 and 15. 1:00-4:00 p.m.

Amazing Mushrooms: *Marty Klein*

Sunday, October 8, 1:00-4:00 p.m.

Autumn at High Ledges: *Ron Wolanin*

Sunday, October 15. 10:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m.

Beaver Ecology Walk: *Bob McMaster*

Saturday, October 21. 9:00 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

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

Waterfowl Identification Presentation: *Mitch Hartley*

Thursday, October 5. 7:00 – 8:30 PM

Migratory Journey (Migration in Birds): *GFDC Staff*

Saturday, October 7. 1:00 – 2:00 PM

Know Your Local Refuge (the Silvio O. Conte Refuge): *GFDC Staff*

Thursday, October 12. 7:00 – 8:00 PM

Project Flying Wild Workshop: *Pam Landry*

Tuesday, October 24. 9 AM – 3:30 PM

Bird Walk Along the Power Canal: *GFDC Staff*

Saturday, October 24. 8:30 – 9:30 AM

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

Editor's Thanks

I would like to thank the following orcs* for their assistance: Sally Hills, Mary Alice Wilson, and Betsy Higgins. They helped me cut, paste, address, fold, and stamp the September edition which, I trust, winged its way successfully to you, dear member. I also want to thank Sue Emerson for allowing us (well, actually we didn't ask) to use her basement while she was in Kenya.

* orcs. Those who read this thing more-or less regularly (you have my sympathy), will remember that I took exception last year to what I see as the unquestioning use of the term "elves" as an affectionate descriptor of those who give voluntary aid to our organization. I reckon other mythical creatures should get a look in as well. In this vein, I mention the orcs, who are after all, as Tolkein tells it, the most mistreated and repressed of all the elven folk. Despite their unquestioning obedience to Sauron and other dark lords of Middle Earth, they are portrayed most unflatteringly in both film and book. Thus, my assistants last month shall be likened unto orcs, and I hope they understand how fondly that term is meant.

Christmas Count!!

Mark Your Calendars! The **Northampton Christmas Count** this year will be on **Sunday, December 17.**
More details in November!!

Dave Stemple Library

Dave Stemple had a considerable library of bird magazines, including the following: Bird Watchers Digest, American Birds, Bird News of Western Massachusetts, Living Bird Quarterly, Field Notes, Bird Observer, Birds (British), Birding, Winging It, and Natural History. His wife has asked me if I could try to find a home for these items. If you are interested, please contact Don Kroodsma at 253 5519. Thank you.

Don Kroodsma

Ivory-billed Woodpeckers in Florida?

Hill, G.E., D.J. Merrill, B. W. Merrill, B. W. Rolek, T. L. Hicks and K. A. Swiston, 2006. *Evidence Suggesting that Ivory-billed Woodpeckers (Campephilus principalis) Exist in Florida.* **Avian Conservation and Ecology** 1(3) : 2

You can read the full text at www.ace-eco.org/vol1/iss3/art2

Migratory Bird Funding Passes House

Washington, DC (September 20, 2006): The House of Representatives today unanimously passed a revised Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Improvement Act of 2006 (NMBCA, H.R. 518). The legislation was folded into H.R. 4957, the Tylersville Fish Hatchery Conveyance Act. The Act authorizes matching grants to support conservation programs for migratory birds, and when fully implemented, will authorize \$6.5 million per year for projects.

Each year, an estimated 10 billion birds of some 800 species breed in North America. More than one-third have declining populations, are restricted to small ranges, or face serious threats. NMBCA is the only federal funding program designed specifically for migratory bird species throughout North America, and also provides the only dedicated source of funds for migratory birds on their wintering grounds in Latin America and the Caribbean.

From 2002 through 2006, partners in 42 U.S. states and 30 Latin American and Caribbean countries have been involved in 186 Act-supported projects. Projects involving land conservation have affected some 3.2 million acres of bird habitat, and species that are benefiting include the Cerulean Warbler, Golden-winged Warbler, Bobolink, Red Knot, and Bicknell's Thrush.

Conservation groups, including American Bird Conservancy and other members of the Bird Conservation Alliance (130 groups collaborating to support bird conservation), have fought to gain passage of the Act, which reauthorizes the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act of 2000 that expired last year. Once signed into law, it will enable the only significant federal funding source for neotropical migratory birds to continue through 2010.

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 23, No. 3

November, 2006

In this edition:

- an introduction to our **programs** for this month and the immediate future;
- **field trip** reports and coming trips
- a plug for the **Christmas Count**
- a recap of **Reuben Yosef's talk in October**
- **Hitchcock, Great Falls, and Broad Brook Coalition** programs
- news of a **major local land conservation effort** and a **tragedy in the Great Lakes**
- **an appeal from the librarian** and one or two other snippets.

I hope you find it all useful!

PROGRAMS

Monday, November 13 at 7:30 PM

Greg Budney: The Origin of the Macaulay Library of Natural Sounds

Immanuel Lutheran Church; 867 North Pleasant Street, Amherst.

By presenting some of the most spectacular animal sounds in the natural world, this program explores strategies of animal communication. We will explore the role that sound plays in the lives of creatures as diverse as tree-hoppers, whales, and birds.

Greg Budney is the curator of the Macaulay Library (formerly the Library of Natural Sounds) at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. He has been at the Lab of Ornithology since 1980, first as an archivist, later as the assistant curator, and, beginning in 1989, as the curator. Mr. Budney has collected audio recordings for the Macaulay Library in Africa, Antarctica, Australia, Central America, South America, and North America. In 1984 he began an in-depth field course in techniques for recording wildlife sounds. Today the course is a popular annual workshop that attracts students from as far away as Australia, Ghana, India, New Zealand, and Switzerland.

Greg is a producer on many of the Macaulay Library audio guides. In his spare time, he records wildlife. He and his wife and son live in Trumansburg, New York where he occasionally mows the lawn.

Coming Programs

December 11, 2006. Members' Meeting. *Members' Slide Show.*

January 8, 2007. Geoff LeBaron. *The History and Future of the Christmas Bird Count.*

February 12, 2007. Elijah Goodwin. *Song Learning In Icterids.*

FIELD TRIPS

Reports

Lighthouse Point

Andrew Magee, Betsy Higgins, Marcia Merithew, Laura Davenport, Kenley Clark and David Peake-Jones departed in the pre-dawn dark toward **Lighthouse Point** on **Sunday, October 8**, anticipating that the forecast

north-west winds would bring a multitude of raptors to the tip of the point. We had some fine early luck as a **Merlin** and a Sharp-shinned Hawk sparred energetically for well over half an hour, periodically coming to rest in one or other of the trees which dot the park. We also had a smattering of other hawks, including Coopers Hawks, American Kestrels and one or two Northern Harriers. We did our share of conjecting about the borderline accipeters, the “default” accipeter, the changing ratios of sharpies to coops, and other such esoteric matters. However, as the morning wore on it became clear that we would not be blessed with many hawks today. The plughole was indeed open, but the tub had already drained over the preceding few days.

We wandered for an hour or so through the scrubby part of the park, encountering a nice selection of sparrows, including **Field Sparrow**, Swamp Sparrow, and a **Vesper Sparrow**. We also remarked on the good numbers of Ruby-crowned Kinglets flitting amongst the willows. A bird which looked, from the rear, like a Red-headed Woodpecker vanished before anyone could get a decent look. In the deeper woods by the park entrance, we had a nice look at Swainson’s Thrush and Red-bellied Woodpecker as well as a few warblers and vireos.

Departing from Lighthouse Point, we made our way to the much-touted Sandy Point on the other side of New Haven Harbor. The windswept tidemarsch and samphire flats looked ripe with opportunities for Seaside or Saltmarsh Sparrows, but aside from a few Brant, we could find nothing that would stay long enough to be seen. From here we made our way eastward to Hammonasset State Park. We searched the tidemarsches here too, for the elusive coastal sparrows. It was not until we reached the Meigs Point trail system that we eventually encountered a bedraggled **Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrow** near the nature trail.

As we surveyed the dozen or so Great and Snowy Egrets hunting the tidal flats, two **American Bitterns** flew up from the sand dunes and loped across the marsh before alighting in the inscrutable grassy flats and disappearing.

It seemed this would be the totality of the day. Some nice things, but nothing special. Just as we prepared to leave, a group of birders alerted us to a rather special occupant of a dense stand of cedars by the trail. Worming our way in, we encountered a gaunt, shadowy form surveying us imperiously from the shadows of the canopy. It was a **Long-eared Owl**, located by the other group earlier in the day. After spending some time with this bird, and searching fruitlessly for others in the extensive cedar stands, we set off for home, greatly satisfied.

David Peake-Jones



Dead Creek

Three intrepid birders (including **Al Richards**) left Sunderland at 6:00 AM on **October 14** to travel to **Dead Creek Wildlife Management Area** in Addison, VT. The first amazing sighting was that of Tom Gagnon leaving the Connecticut River Valley and traveling to a "foreign state".

When we arrived at Dead Creek I contemplated offering people double their money back since there were no Snow Geese to be seen. Though a few small flocks appeared, they all seemed headed toward Lake Champlain. As I talked to Ted Murin he suddenly exclaimed "Here they come!" Following the line of Ted’s out-flung arm, we beheld a huge flock of some four to five thousand birds outlined against the mountains of New York. This flock came directly over our heads and gave us spectacular views against a clear blue sky. We were able to pick out several “blue geese” amongst the Snow Geese. Unfortunately, the geese landed well away from the viewing area and because of the wind they faced away from us, thus precluding a search for Ross's Geese.

We also saw three species of grebes, two species of loons and a total of eight species of waterfowl. Surprisingly there were NO shorebirds. We had five species of raptors including Bald Eagle, Cooper's Hawk and several Northern Harriers, including one beautiful "gray ghost."

We finished off at Herrick's Cove where we added a few passerines to bring our list total to 56 species.

Al Richards



Coastal Rhode Island

Geoff LeBaron led a trip to his old stomping ground of coastal **Rhode Island on October 21**. The group consisted of Helga Beatty, Bob Bieda, Chris Ellison, Sue Emerson, Bruce Hart, Sally Hills, Ilene Goldstein, Elaine Pourinski, Elissa Rubenstein and Sol Satin. Between them, they encountered 89 species.

Stops & Highlights:

1. **Avondale Farm Preserve, Westerly:** windy and cold, but clear and pretty. Hard to find sparrows or any landbirds, but a constant stream of raptors overhead.
2. **Napatree Point:** even windier and colder—but great looks at a few raptors including a **Merlin** and the “mother of all” Coops!
3. **Ninigret NWR:** Great views of the “pet” Lesser Black-backed Gull, plus passing Peregrine and Bald Eagle (both with id discussions...), tons of cormorants, and a lonely pair of Bufflehead.
4. **Carolina Management Area and Richmond Turf Farms:** great views of lingering Pectoral Sandpipers with Killdeer in the turf farms, and a nice variety of dabbling ducks at the White Brook fish hatchery.
5. **Trustom Pond NWR:** spectacular looks at a wide variety of waterfowl, including two stunningly ruddy Ruddy Ducks, point-blank looks at an Eared Grebe, and a lingering **Blackpoll Warbler**.
6. **Point Judith:** the race to catch sunset paid off—rising Earth shadow to the east, glowing sunset (with green flash) to the west, and a constant stream of gulls and ducks (and even a few distant gannets) going by. Plus we learned a bit about the nocturnal fishing habits of some Rhodies.

Geoff LeBaron

Coming Trips

(see also the Fall Field Trip Schedule)

Saturday, November 4 and Sunday, November 5. Cape Cod. All day. Scott Sumner goes to Cape Cod for late migrants. Join Scott for one or both days (lodging is on your own). Call Scott (413-256-5438) for meeting information and details. (M)

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CHRISTMAS COUNT, 2006

How could you keep track of changes in bird populations and distribution across the entire continent of North America? The annual Christmas Count aims to do just this. Birders all over the U.S., Canada, the Caribbean, Latin America and Pacific Islands come together every holiday season to count birds. It is one of the world's finest examples of citizen science.

The Northampton and Quabbin circles are divided up into smaller areas, each counted by an experienced leader or leaders, with assistants. Groups plan who will participate, for how long, and how to divide up the count area. This is basically a fine day of birding, with every observation becoming part of the longest-running database in all of ornithology. Both local counts end with a compilation session when the entire count group combines observations to create the data that's will be submitted to National Audubon. Interestingly enough, our numbers ultimately end up on the desk (metaphorically, of course) of our very own Geoff LeBaron who is the national Christmas Count coordinator for Audubon. If you want to contribute to bird conservation and the greater understanding of bird populations on this continent, there is no more satisfying way to spend a day.

Here is one of many possible itineraries for the Northampton Count:

12:01 AM: Commence Owling.

3:00 AM Experience first motivational crisis of the day. Nap in car

4:30 AM: Wake with a start. Owl frantically till dawn

Dawn onward: Daylight birding. Could that have been a Merlin?? Am I supposed to count all these crows??

1 PM. Second motivational crisis for the day. Nip home for a quick shot of some medicinal beverage.

Everything seems temporarily warmer and more optimistic.

4:00 PM. Stagger in to the Hitchcock Center for the Potluck. Consume vast quantities of hot food.

6:00 PM: Compilation begins.

6:30 PM: Fall asleep in front of dozens of witnesses. Wake with a start and claim some outlandish bird for your area.

9:00 PM Finally get to fall asleep for real.

7:00 AM on Monday morning: Call in sick (for those of us who still have to concern ourselves with such things).

You may, of course, be the very epitomy of organization and endurance, and have a day free of any of the tribulations depicted above. In this event, please keep it to yourself! Information packets will be distributed to leaders at the November meeting or in other ways for those leaders not at the meeting.

Wanna Be A Part of This?

Northampton Count: Sunday, December 17.

Quabbin Count: Saturday, December 30.

Further Information or to Sign Up for a Team

Northampton Count: Jan Ortiz (413 549 1768; jtortiz@aol.com) or Mary Alice Wilson (548-9078, mwilson@k12s.phast.umass.edu).

Quabbin Count: Scott Turner (413 253 5438; ssurner@aol.com)

Christmas Count Compilation Pot Luck

Please, all counters and friends, don't forget the pot luck starting at 4:30 pm -- just before the compilation!!

We would appreciate any and all donations of food to make this meal another great success.

There will be a sign up sheet at the next meeting. Thank you all for your assistance!

Sue Emerson: Pot Luck Coordinator: 413-584-6736 spe33@hotmail.com

Reuben Recap

On October 3, Dr. Reuben Yosef spoke to the club about the work of the International Bird and Research Center in Eilat, Israel.

The center nestles amongst the remnants of a saltmarsh on the extreme eastern shore of the Mediterranean Sea. The marsh has been almost entirely “reclaimed” (what an ironic term that is) from its natural state and is now a patchwork of residential and agricultural land. The center was established on a former refuse tip. This location is a crucial stopover along one of the most significant migratory flyways in the world. Millions of birds breed in Eurasia and winter in Africa. In order to avoid trying to cross the full width of the Mediterranean, they resort to one of three routes: via the narrows of Gibraltar to the west, via Italy, Sicily and Tunisia in the central Med., or by skirting the sea altogether via its eastern margin. Particularly in the Spring, this takes millions of birds through Israel and its neighbors. Even if these birds had migrated through favorable environments on their way north, Eilat would likely be an important stopover. However, Dr Yosef pointed out that, because of the geography and climate along the migratory path, *Eilat is the difference between life and death for most of the birds which reach the region in the spring.* With its re-established wetlands and natural habitat, the center is one of the most important migratory stopovers in the world.

Dr Yosef began by pointing out some fascinating facts about the biogeography of Africa. The well-known Sahara desert forms a foodless barrier to migration stretching from the northern coast of Africa to its southern margins, where pure desert gives way to the slightly more hospitable savannahs of the Sahel. These occupy most of the mid-latitudes of the African continent. The Sahel is itself quite bleak during the southern winter (dry) season, but spring rains in August, September and October bring a temporary greening of the northern Sahel, just in time for the arrival of European migrants. This greening is temporary, and by late October, the northern Sahel dries again, forcing birds to migrate further to the southern Sahel. Sixty (60) percent of wintering birds fall prey to predators in this crowded environment.

The nuances of climate are such that, when the songbirds need to make their way back to the northern hemisphere for the northern spring, they find the northern Sahel dry and foodless. Hence the Sahel and the Sahara together form a 2,000 mile barrier for migrating birds in the northern spring. This coincides with the absolute limits of endurance for most migratory species and individuals. *Consequently, birds arrive at their first Eurasian stopovers (including Eilat) in a debilitated state, in urgent need of rest and recovery.*

The rigors of migration for songbirds are illustrated by a grisly adaptation to which many species resort in order to complete the spring journey. *Many reabsorb much of their digestive system in transit*, which both provides nutritional resources and reduces weight.

Dr Yosef and his colleagues have demonstrated that birds arriving at Eilat must first regenerate their digestive system, then feed to regenerate their musculature. Male birds do little more than this before resuming the northward journey. They arrive at breeding territories with no fat reserves, and thus little insurance against starvation. Females spend longer at Eilat, regenerating gut, musculature, and some fat reserves before continuing northward.

Dr Yosef described some other fascinating aspects of his work in Eilat, including a *collaboration with bee-keepers*, whose winged pollinators are crucial to the intensive agricultural enterprises in the Eilat region. Exhausted bee-eaters of several species, tend to congregate to feed at beehives around Eilat as they seek to recuperate from the migration over the Sahara. Volunteers from the center capture these birds with mist-nets and relocate them away from the agricultural regions.

It is worth recognizing that Eurasian songbirds are affected by various precariously balanced environmental influences, any of which could tip catastrophically against them. Climate change models suggest that rainfall in

the Sahel hinges on a delicate balance of factors which may change with global warming. If the ephemeral resources birds rely on in the northern Sahel each northern fall were not available, birds would be facing even longer foodless migrations to their wintering grounds. Birds on all three major flyways must traverse densely populated human habitats where stopover resources are ever-dwindling. Eilat is an example of a place where the lives of millions depend on a few acres of conserved and regenerated natural habitat. We can see similar phenomena affecting new-world shorebirds in Delaware Bay. *At a smaller scale, the valley has its own Eilats and its own Delaware Bays, whether they be Echodale Farm in Easthampton, the Northampton Meadows, or Rattlesnake Gutter in Leverett. It's up to all of us to hang on to them.*

LIBRARY

Our library is missing two books. Please call Henry (549-3722) if you have leads to their whereabouts.

"Bird Finding Guide to Ontario"

"The National Parks of Costa Rica"

HBC has a substantial library, located at the Hitchcock Center for the Environment in Amherst.

Hours are those of the Hitchcock Center:

9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. from Tuesday through Friday, and

9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. on Saturday.

The collection is catalogued on-line at www.hampshirebirdclub.org.

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

HITCHCOCK PROGRAMS

A New England naturalist Goes West: Thoreau's Trip To Minnesota: Corinne Smith

Thursday, November 9: 7 p.m.

Biomass, Wind and Photovoltaics in Action: Rob Rizzo

Saturday, November 18: 8:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.

Poetry Reading: If Only There Were Wings That Could Carry Me: Wally Swist and John Van de Graaff

Thursday, November 30: 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.

New Voice of Audubon Number: 781 259 8805

On Wednesday, November 1st, Mass Audubon changed the phone number for the Voice of Audubon to (781) 259-8805. The toll-free number is no longer in service, but all four recorded reports from throughout the state continue to be accessible through the new number, and the transcripts will still be available anytime on their website (www.massaudubon.org/voa).

GREAT FALLS DISCOVERY CENTER PROGRAMS

2006 Junior Duck Stamp Exhibit

November 17-December 23

Animal Preparedness Winter Survival Series

Every Saturday in November (10:30 - 11:30 am)

Bat Program

November 10 (10:30 - 11:30 am)

Turkey Talk

November 17 (10:30 - 11:30 am)

Bird Walk along the Power Canal

November 18 (2pm-3pm)

Connecting Creatures

November 24 (10:30am – 11:30am)

Friends Coffeehouse Series

November 29 (7pm)

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

Open Fridays and Saturdays from 10 AM to 4 PM

Phone (413) 683 3221

Broad Brook Coalition Programs

Discovering the Eastern Forest: *Robert Leverett*

Saturday, November 11: 10 a.m.- 1 p.m. at Fitzgerald Lake Conservation Area
North Farms Rd. entrance.

Further Information: Call Bruce Hart; bhart2000@aol.com; 584 4176

HBC Smart-Alecks at Hitchcock Trivia Night!!

The second annual Hitchcock Trivia Night took place this year at the Harp in Amherst, and featured a number of contestants from the ranks of HBC.

Scott Sumner, Val Miller, Jan Ortiz and hubby **Carlos** abandoned the now apparently extinction-ridden title of the “Ivory-billed Woodpeckers”, and ran under the watershed-related moniker of the “River of Raptors”.

Despite this grandiose appellation, their second run at the title ended (like the first) with disappointment. The more life-experienced “Oldies but Goodies” (**Sally and Bill Venman, Bob Wilce and Joanne Parker**), did a little better, taking home a placing.

However, the really stellar performance of the evening came from a nameless team assembled hastily at the bar prior to the event. Joining the team progenitor, (my brother-in-law **Ira Band**), were **Patti Steinman** from Arcadia, **David Peake-Jones** (of nowhere in particular), and a gentleman who proved to have an encyclopedic brain, **Mr. Jim Laffley** (from the DCR). Defying the odds, this rag-tag bunch actually came out on top of the standings, and took home a couple of nice prizes for our troubles.

Save Echodale Farm!

We have an opportunity to help save the most significant remaining area of open space in Easthampton, and one which is of valley- and state-wide significance. Park Hill has long been one of the scenic and agricultural gems of the town, with a superb mix of open farmland, orchards, and forested land (including a section of Bassett Brook). Several farms historically formed the core land use in the area, two of which are already protected by Agricultural Protection Restrictions. However, the largest remaining agricultural property in Easthampton, Echodale Farm, is currently up for sale and in danger of being developed.

The Trust for Public Land, the City of Easthampton, and locally based Pascommuck Conservation Trust have launched an ambitious plan to purchase the property. Funds have already been promised from the Easthampton Community Preservation Fund and a number of trusts and foundations. The conservation partners are actively seeking state and federal funding as well. Over half the 2.85 purchase price needs to come from private donations, and this is where we come in.

Please join me in donating toward the conservation of this beautiful and precious area!

Some Facts About Echodale

Size: 164 acres

Location: Between West Street and Park Hill Road, Easthampton.

Designations: 75% of the property is designated as Biomap Core Habitat associated with the Manhan River by the Massachusetts Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program.

If Saved: Will form part of an unbroken parcel of 550 acres close to the city of Easthampton.

Current Private Funds Raised (November 4): About \$75, 000

To donate and/or for more information, visit www.pctland.org (Pascommuck Conservation Trust) OR www.tpl.org (The Trust for Public Land). Local telephone enquiries to Marty Klein (PCT) at 413 529 9594.

Birds and Bees

Did anyone else happen to notice the bird-related word that appeared in the final rounds of the National Spelling Bee earlier this year? OK, back up one question: Is anyone else willing to admit to having *watched* the National Spelling Bee?

Well, those of us who did may have noted that the eventual winner: a delightful little over-achiever from New Jersey, only won the title after getting by the word “**Towhee**.”

More surprising to me was that the judges recited the word with *three different pronunciations*, and even cited a *synonym* for the name of the bird. News to me!! And no, I can’t remember any of these snippets of info. We never had a National Spelling Bee in my home country. We can’t even agree on a National Anthem!

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!

Gleanings from the Technical Literature

Men are from Tamaulipas, Women are from Oaxaca!

It has long been observed that, in song-birds which winter in temperate regions (such as the southern part of North America), males tend to winter further north than females. This observation has now been extended to birds wintering in Mexico. In Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Swainson's Thrush, Orange-crowned Warbler, Yellow Warbler, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Black and White Warbler, Ovenbird, and Wilson's Warbler, males stayed further north than females. Indigo Buntings bucked the trend, with males further to the south.

Reference: **Olmar, K.; B.J. O'Shea; A. Townsend Peterson and A.G. Navarra-Siguenza. 2005**
Evidence of Latitudinal Sexual Segregation in Migratory Birds Wintering in Mexico.
Auk: Vol 22, #3. pp 938-948

Loons Imperiled in Great Lakes

Loons have been dying at a terrifying rate this fall in the Great Lakes, and an insidious new threat seems to be the root cause of the die-off.

It seems that several introduced aquatic organisms, including zebra mussels and quagga mussels harbor the bacterium that produces botulinum toxin. This toxin is released by the mussels and sinks to the bottom of the lakes, where it is absorbed in low concentrations by bottom-dwelling invertebrates. Round goby fish then concentrate the toxin when they consume large numbers of the invertebrates, and the toxin is further concentrated when loons consume numerous round goby fish.

Outbreaks of botulism amongst loons and other aquatic animals have been occurring for a number of years. The numbers of dead loons this year seems certain to match or exceed the worst year on record. In 2002, at least 25, 000 birds died in Lake Erie alone.

Welcome New Members!

Marjory Ackerman: Amherst

Nancy Leonard: Amherst

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 23, No. 4

December, 2006

As the calendar year comes to a close, 'tis the season to expect brisk birding in land- and seascapes wiped crystal clean by the cold. Winter birding has a way of rewarding those willing to venture into the snowy wilds. Our collective global climate experiment seems to be revising our expectations of winter on a daily basis, but I for one hope there will be a few traditional winters left. The HBC board is busy as usual, planning programs far into the future, and trying to revive our slate of overnight trips, which has been a little thin in recent years. Club stalwarts are also beginning to plan for the club's twenty-fifth anniversary, which is coming up soon.

In this edition there will be:

- a description of this month's program and the slate for the next few months,
- two trip reports and a description of the last trip for the calendar year,
- last minute information on the Northampton Christmas Count,
- some gleanings from the ornithological literature,
- a welcome to some new members, and
- a directory of board members and office holders of the Hampshire Bird Club.

As always, I hope you find some of it useful!

Attached, you will find a directory of club members to facilitate birding-related communications between us all. Thanks to Sue Emerson and Mary Alice Wilson for the time and effort spent to bring the list to us.

PROGRAMS

Monday, December 11 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.

First on the program is our Annual Members Slide and Photo Show.

If you have slides and/or digital images with a natural history theme from the recent, or even more distant past that you would like to share with others, please collect ten or so of these to present at the meeting. Depending on the number of people who want to present, you may be able to get away with more than ten images, but please be ready to limit the number to ten if necessary.

Please bring conventional slides or digital images on either CD or flash stick. They will be loaded into David Gross's computer prior to the show. Please be prepared to narrate your material.

In the past we have seen some unbelievably beautiful and sometimes whimsical images from the collections of our own members. It helps us recognize the depth of world experience and photographic ability that lurks within our humble bird club. Please contribute if you can!

The second item on the agenda will be planning for the Christmas Count. This is left to individual teams. Please check with your area leader to see whether you will meet at the members meeting.

Coming Programs

January 8, 2007. Geoff LeBaron.
February 12, 2007. Elijah Goodwin.
March 12, 2007. Wayne Petersen.

The History and Future of the Christmas Bird Count.
Song Learning In Icterids.
Massachusetts "Important Bird Areas" Program.

FIELD TRIPS

Reports

Berkshire Lakes. November 5.

Tom Gagnon, Bruce Callahan, Joe Wicinski, Bill Brenner, Al Richards, Bob and Lura Bieda, Lori Rogers, John Rogers and David Peake-Jones went in search of Bartlett's donuts. Just for appearance, we stopped by a number of the Berkshire Lakes and checked out the nice selection of waterfowl in evidence.

Our first stop was a rather deserted Moran Wildlife management area in Windsor, where some of the group caught distant glimpses of a **Northern Shrike**. Winding our way from there to Cleveland Brook Reservoir, we found a mid-molt Common Loon holding solitary court. Our next stop was the East Branch of the Housatonic River. This too was almost deserted, except for a couple of Mallards and a few gulls. As some of those present will remember, Tom's hope for a Wood Duck did not give rise to anything.

We made various stops along the length of the Cheshire Reservoir. Almost before we saw anything else we were treated to a **Merlin** perched at close range, first espied by Lori. The long-sought Wood Duck eventually appeared, along with one Black Scoter, a Pied billed Grebe, fifteen (15) Lesser Scaup, one American Coot and a few Hooded Mergansers.

Pontoosuc Lake was (aside from Mudd Pond) by far the most populace place for ducks for the day. There were almost 200 Hooded Mergansers, a good number of Common Mergansers, three (3) **Red-breasted Mergansers**, great looks at a **Red-necked Grebe** and two Horned Grebes, and several American Widgeon. From the cove and causeway at Pontoosuc, we had three Gadwall and watched a beautiful adult **Bonaparte's Gull** bobbing over the shallows, looking for all the world like someone was dangling it by a string.

Onota Lake was unremarkable save for more Hooded Mergansers. Bartlett's donuts were yummy. Our donut quaffing was perused (no doubt with derision) by a Bald Eagle perched in a tree nearby. From Mudd Pond we could make out over **900 Ring-necked Ducks** and **70 Ruddy Ducks** lurking at the far end of the pond. Finally, at Stockbridge Bowl we saw our only shorebird - a gangly **Greater Yellowlegs** - as well as our only Bufflehead.

David Peake-Jones



Turkey Trot to Cape Ann. November 24

Bob Bieda led a group of us to Cape Ann and Plum Island for the annual **Turkey Trot**. Harlequin Ducks abounded in the crashing surf at Cathedral Rocks. Moving from there to Andrews Point, we found a strong off-shore breeze which misted up our optics, and seemed to auger well for some inshore pelagic species. We were immediately treated to a parade of **Northern Gannets**, some quite close, in all conceivable plumages. A number of **Black-legged Kittiwakes** danced above the waves further out but did not come in close. A steady stream of Scoters, of all stripes and protuberances made their way around the point and passed in front of us. Alcids flashed past at that infuriating mid-range where it was almost possible to identify them. A solitary **Razorbill** eventually appeared amongst the rollers at close range.

The annual resident **Eared Grebe** consorted with a great number of both Horned- and Red-necked Grebes off Niles Beach. The calm waters of Niles Pond sheltered a beautiful flock of dazzling white **Bonaparte's Gulls**, which occasionally got up and wheeled across the sky as one. Here we also had an **Iceland Gull**, some **Ring-necked**-, and **Ruddy Ducks**, and a **Pied-billed Grebe**.

We made our way to Plum Island, and in the quiet calm of a gentle twilight; we struggled to pick up the muted colors of a nice band of ducks at the salt pannes. We were able to find **Green-winged Teal**, **Gadwall**, and

The Turkey Trot (continued)

American Widgeon. There was no sign of the Green-tailed Towhee that had been reported earlier in the week, but as we surveyed the evening beauty of the marsh, a passing harrier spooked a **Short-eared Owl** from the marsh, which flew in to the shelter of the dunes. Fortunately, it returned moments later and perched quite close to the road, enabling most of the group to get wonderful looks at the bird.

David Peake-Jones

Coming Trips

Sunday, December 10. Moran Wildlife Management Area. Half day. Mike Locher goes to Moran WMA to look for Northern Shrikes, crossbills, and other northern species. In the event of difficult snow conditions, the site may be changed. Wear boots, and dress for the weather. Call Mike (413-585-5864) for meeting information and details. (M)

NORTHAMPTON CHRISTMAS COUNT

Sunday December 17, 2006

IF you are organized and ready to go, great!

IF you have lost the information so carefully and personally prepared for you, go to hampshirebirdclub.org, click on Christmas Count and there will be copies of all the forms.

IF you are interested and have not yet signed up, contact **Jan Ortiz** or **Mary Alice Wilson** or come to the December HBC meeting.

Christmas Count Compilation Pot Luck Supper

There is still time to sign up to bring a delicious dish to add to the much sought after meal after a hard day in the cold field - hopefully not rainy or snowy. The potluck begins at 4:30 PM on December 17 at the Hitchcock Center for the Environment.

We are in need of salads, desserts, soups, a loaf or two of bread and butter. There will be time to sign up at the next meeting. Please see Sally Hills, Helga Beatty, Joanne Parker (my wonderful elves) or myself...Thanks, Sue Emerson.

Snake Skins Deter Egg Predators

It has long been observed that some birds use snakeskins in their nests. Experimental evidence now suggests that, at least in the case of Great Crested Flycatchers using Rat Snake skins in their nests, that this does, in fact, deter predators, especially flying squirrels. The experimenters found that 20% of artificial nests without snakeskins incorporated in them were preyed upon in the field, whereas none of those with snakeskins built in suffered predation.

Reference:

Medlin EC, Risch TS (2006) AN EXPERIMENTAL TEST OF SNAKE SKIN USE TO DETER NEST PREDATION. The Condor: Vol. 108, No. 4 pp. 963–965

Welcome New Members!!

Susy Shure:

Chesterfield

Nancy & Robert First:

Northampton

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