



Hampshire Bird Club, Inc. Amherst, Massachusetts

www.hampshirebirdclub.org

Volume 26, No. 5

January, 2010

“Think globally but act locally.”

This axiom applies to no-one more than birders. In the past few weeks, many of us have participated in the Audubon Christmas Count, either here, elsewhere, or both! Whether by straining our frozen ears to pick up the ethereal whinny of a Screech Owl across the windswept expanses of frozen fields, or patiently watching feeders for the briefest of visitors, or searching the icebound crannies of the valley for avian jewels, we have taken ownership of these: OUR birds.

The information we have gathered since the inception of the Christmas Count has illuminated the slide northward of many species in response to global climate change. These range shifts illustrate the resilience of bird species in the face of environmental change, but they also raise the question of whether there are limits to the adaptability of species, and whether some of our birds are coming close to those limits.

The sense of ownership we feel when we count birds, and the sense of belonging we have when we venture into the wild corners of our crowded landscapes will be essential if we are to hold onto our wild heritage, and our place in it. As birders in the new year, we can enjoy the beauty and wonder birds bring to our lives. We must also be aware that our duty to conserve birds and their habitats has never been more urgent.

In this edition:

- an introduction to this month's **program**, and the upcoming **program calendar (page 2)**,
- coming **field trips**,
- **Northampton Christmas Count** highlights and thanks,
- an **Interim Report** from the **Massachusetts Breeding Bird Atlas**,
- an important **birthday**,
- an **Amherst Breeding Bird Survey route** in need of a volunteer, and
- pending **legislation** you might want to know about.

I hope you find some of it useful!

COMING FIELD TRIPS

Saturday, January 9. North Shore: Cape Ann to Plum Island. All day. Bob Bieda leads his annual New Year's pilgrimage 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 30. Leader's Choice. All day. Geoff LeBaron chooses between Coastal Rhode Island, Plum Island, and other interesting locations for his annual winter outing. Call Geoff (413-269-9281) several days before the trip for more information. (E)

Saturday-Sunday, February 6-7. Leader's Choice: Coast of Maine or Cape Cod. Two days. Scott Sumner will lead a two-day trip to either the coast of Maine or Cape Cod, depending on which appears to be better. Overnight accommodations will be arranged by participants. Call Scott (413-256-5438) for details as the date approaches. (M)

NEXT PROGRAM

Monday, January 11 at 7:30 PM

The Challenges of the Wildlife Photographer

Immanuel Lutheran Church; 867 North Pleasant Street, Amherst.

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

The most frequently asked question of a wildlife photographer is "How did you get that shot?" This digital slide presentation addresses that question and many other issues and obstacles involved in capturing extraordinary wildlife images.

Mark discusses everything - from the use of his homemade floating blind, using portable blinds, using your vehicle as a blind, equipment selection, to just plain hard work and plenty of patience!

See stunning images of all species of wildlife: birds, reptiles, amphibians, large and small mammals, and more, all presented in their wild and natural environments with no captive or enclosed subjects. He will share his techniques and tricks with the audience while relating many interesting and personal experiences he has had while photographing wildlife.

Mark Picard, a self taught wildlife and nature photographer, has been capturing images for over 30 years - specializing in his exquisite work on moose. He is noted for his creativity in the field; not only in composition and lighting, but also in his use of unique equipment, blinds and knowledge of animal behavior.

His images have appeared in numerous national and international magazines, including *Audubon*, *Animals*, *Maine Scene*, *Birder's World*, *Wild Life*, *Bird Watchers Digest*, *Northern Woodlands*, *Ontario Out of Doors*, *Wildlife Conservation*, *Ranger Rick*, *Yankee* and others. He has contributed to publications by the Sierra Club, The Canadian Wildlife Federation, The Nature Conservancy, Defenders of Wildlife, Scholastic, The National Wildlife Federation, and Tidemark Press. Along with the many private collectors of his work, Mark has an impressive list of commercial clients including Ambercrombie and Fitch, the United States Postal Service, the National Wildlife Foundation and the Northeast Kingdom Travel and Tourism Commission.

Mark leads personalized photo group workshops/tours and individual one-on-one instruction sessions in the North Woods of upstate Maine as well as local photo workshops.

COMING PROGRAMS

February 8, 2009. Bill Benner. Birding In Thailand.

March 8, 2010. Kathy and Miles Conway. Kazakhstan Exploration.

April 12, 2010. Brandi van Roo. Vireo Research.

Breeding Bird Survey Route Available (Amherst Conservation Department)

The Wildwood Route, consisting of twelve specified points primarily along the railroad tracks between Strong Street and Pine Street, is available for a birder with an interest in volunteering for this activity. Responsibility consists of surveying the route on two mornings between June 1 and June 17, starting between 6:00 and 7:00 am. At each point the volunteer will stop and count all birds seen or heard for exactly five minutes. Data sheets are provided for recording counts.

I have surveyed this route for the twenty years the survey has been conducted. However, since my hearing is not as good as it once was, I am seeking someone to take over the route. Please call or email me or with your questions at 413-549-1613 or marcums@cns.umass.edu if you are interested.

Jim Marcum.

Northampton Christmas Count. December 20, 2009.

Highlights (provisional)

The owling hours were windy and very cold with light snow overnight. The daylight hours were cold and mostly cloudy with moderate to high winds. Very cold weather in the weeks preceding the count resulted in a scarcity of open water.

Species shown are as follows:

- Those regarded as “**UNUSUAL**” (**UPPER CASE, BOLD**)
- Those for which **high counts** were recorded this year (**bold**), and
- Other selected species of interest.

Species	2009 Count	Previous High Count (s) and Year(s)
SNOW GOOSE	1	32 (2008)
Northern Pintail	1	10 (1991)
Bald Eagle	9 (High Count)	8 (2002, 2003)
Northern Harrier	4	10 (1989)
RED-SHOULDERED HAWK	1	4 (1957)
Red-tailed Hawk	135	139 (2008)
WILSON'S SNIPE	1	12 (1990)
American Kestrel	4	31 (1974)
Peregrine Falcon	1	4 (2004, 2006)
LONG-EARED OWL	2	3 (2004)
Belted Kingfisher	8	23 (2001)
Common Raven	13 (High Count)	13 (2006)
RUBY-CROWNED KINGLET	3	6 (1967, 1973)
AMERICAN PIPIT	1	61 (2006)
YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER	1	9 (1982)
CHIPPING SPARROW	1	11 (1974)
CLAY-COLORED SPARROW	1 (High Count)	1 (1988, 1996, 2004)
Fox Sparrow	4	20 (1943)
LINCOLN'S SPARROW	1 (High Count)	1 (1992)
Swamp Sparrow	3	23 (1992)
LAPLAND LONGSPUR	1	31 (1989)
Common grackle	(count week)	

106 participants found 78 species in total and counted 37, 348 individual birds!

We claim to have walked for a total of 175.1 (party) hours and covered 162.75 miles!

Complete results will be posted at www.hampshirebirdclub.org/christmas count.

Nine Decades and Counting!

Barbara Tiffany turned 90 on New Years Eve.

Barbara has been a club stalwart for many of those 90 years. She participated in the annual club trip to Monhegan Island for 21 consecutive years, from its inception to 2004. She helped write the HBC club song, which is still sung on every Monhegan trip, and is a quiet but regular presence at almost every meeting. Happy Birthday, Barbara!

Christmas Count Compilation Pot-Luck

We all enjoyed a great feast at the compilation pot luck. Thanks to everyone who shared delicious dishes with us, and thanks to everyone who helped with set-up and take-down. We could not have done it without you!

Happy New Year from Sue Emerson and her elves:

Sally, Merry, Mary Alice and Bill!

(Tolkien fans will note that Merry is, in fact, a hobbit, and Bill is a pony. The others have suspiciously ordinary names for elves....)

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 are catalogued in the "About" section of the HBC Website and 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! Contact him at library@hampshirebirdclub.org; or (413) 549 3722.

HITCHCOCK PROGRAMS

Winter Nature Photography: *John Green.*

Saturdays, January 23, 20 and February 6, 8:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. Fee.

Energy Efficient Home Exploration and Afternoon Tea: *Vivienne Carey and Roger Webb.*

Sunday, January 24, 2 to 4 p.m. No Fee.

Emergency Preparedness and Household Self-Sufficiency: *Frank Grindrod.*

Held at Sirius Community, Baker Road in Shutesbury.

Saturday, January 30, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Fee.

Transition Towns: Increasing Community Resilience in a Time of Change: *Tina Clarke.*

Sunday, January 31, 7 to 9 p.m. Donation Requested.

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.

Breeding Bird Survey Route Available (Amherst Conservation Department)

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Jim Marcum.

BREEDING BIRD ATLAS

The Second Massachusetts Breeding Bird Atlas survey period began in 2007, and is scheduled to run through the 2011 field season. You can get a sense of the results emerging from this crucial and exhaustive study of the breeding birds of the state from the atlas blog, artfully named “Distraction Displays,” at <http://massaudubonblogs.typepad.com/massbirdatlas/>. Here is another Interim Report (excerpted).

Interim Report Number 14: Hooded Merganser

This fetching bird has long bred in the state of Massachusetts, but the arrival of European colonists rained on its parade. As the trees it nested in were felled for agriculture and development, the Hooded Merganser retreated to those few wooded wetlands in the heart of the state to await a more auspicious climate. That climate, it would seem, has come.

Hooded Merganser suffered many of the same pressures as Wood Ducks. Both are cavity-nesting waterfowl that depend on wooded freshwater wetlands to breed and raise their families. As these habitats disappeared throughout the state, the Hooded Merganser disappeared with them. As any hunter can tell you, however, Mergansers have one big advantage over Wood Ducks: they taste terrible! A diet of fish and marine invertebrates makes Merganser flesh oily and odorous, so the Hooded Merganser was spared the extreme hunting pressure that nearly extirpated Wood Duck from Massachusetts. As of Atlas 1, breeding Hooded Merganser was concentrated mostly in the central part of the state.

Hooded Merganser may have suffered the same pressures as Wood Ducks, but this relationship works both ways. When programs are put in place to protect Wood Duck territory and create Wood Duck nest boxes, Hooded Mergansers also benefit. In fact, these two species will often lay eggs in each others’ nests, and because their eggs have the same incubation time, the young all hatch together and are raised by the mother of one species. These “mixed broods” actually have a fairly decent chance for survival. With Massachusetts reforestation and beaver-created wetlands proliferating, it should come as no surprise that Hooded Merganser’s star is rising as of Atlas 2.

Hooded Merganser has consolidated its position in Worcester, Franklin, and Hampshire Counties. Berkshire County now has a decent number of confirmed breeders as well, and Hooded Merganser is creeping into western Middlesex County.

Hooded Merganser	Atlas 1	Atlas 2
% of Blocks Possible	1.6	10.4
% of Blocks Probable	0.5	3.2
% of Blocks Confirmed	0.4	10.0
Total % Blocks Occupied	5.5	23.6

(For a full version of this, and other interim reports, go to <http://massaudubonblogs.typepad.com/massbirdatlas/>)

The Endangered Species Act In Massachusetts: Endangered

Massachusetts H.R. 4167 is currently working its way through the state legislature. The bill is deceptively simple and brief, adding just 31 words to the Endangered Species Act. These words are:

"The director [of the Mass. Division of Fisheries and Wildlife] shall not impose any project review or permit requirement upon any land unless such land is located within an area which has been duly designated as a significant habitat."

The proposed legislation would radically alter the way development is regulated in this state. The reason hinges on the technical definitions of the terms "Significant" and "Priority" as applied to habitats by the Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program (NHESP), which evaluates proposed developments under the framework of the Endangered Species Act.

Currently, only the rarest and essentially irreplaceable habitat types qualify for the *potential* designation of "Significant." Examples might include barrier beaches for species such as the Piping Plover. Development would be essentially prohibited in these areas. As such, designation of habitat as "Significant" allows no room for negotiation, compensatory conservation set-asides, and other compromise measures typically used in negotiations between regulators and those wishing to develop land. The regulations applying to "Significant Habitat" are so stringent, that the NHESP has yet to designate any habitat in the state as "Significant!"

Far more widespread are areas denoted as "Priority Habitat": important for specific species which have been recorded in them, but able to be developed under some circumstances. The NHESP maintains that it negotiates with owners of "Priority" designated land, to allow some development while maintaining habitat values.

The proposed legislation would remove the ability of the NHESP to place any restrictions on development in "Priority Habitat", thus leaving most natural habitat in the state without any meaningful protection under the Endangered Species Act. MassAudubon calls the bill "the most egregious attack on our Endangered Species Act" that the organization has ever seen, and, along with sixty-seven other environmental groups in the state, has urged the legislature to vote down the bill.

H.R. 4167 cannot be dismissed as the work of vested interests or folks who oppose conservation in general. On the contrary, supporters seem motivated not so much by opposition to endangered species protection per se, but by widespread dissatisfaction with the way the NHESP reviews developmental proposals under the framework of the Endangered Species Act. The numerous supporters contend that NHESP applies capricious and arbitrary limitations to development in Priority Habitats, and that, in some cases, the "Priority" designation itself is made on unscientific grounds. **Supporters essentially claim that the NHESP permitting process is so biased and flawed that it needs to be abandoned.** The bill has a powerful group of co-sponsors from across the political spectrum, including a great number of legislators from Western Massachusetts.

H.R. 4167 represents the most dramatic change to Endangered Species protection in Massachusetts since the origin of the Act itself, and regardless of our individual positions on the legislation, we owe it to endangered species to understand the legislation and be involved with it.

You can read more at "Fighting for Habitat". Maureen Turner. *The Valley Advocate*: November 26, 2009.

<http://www.valleyadvocate.com/article.cfm?aid=10912>

That's all for now.

Until next month, 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 26, No. 6

February, 2010

In this edition:

- **programs and field trips,**
- the **Hitchcock Spring Birding** course, and other Hitchcock offerings,
- **atlas exhortations,**
- an update on **Cape Wind,**
- the reopening of the **Hog Island camps** in Maine, and
- a few other bits and pieces.

I hope you find some of it useful!

NEXT PROGRAM

Monday, February 8 at 7:30 PM

Bill Benner extols the virtues of **Birding In Thailand**

Immanuel Lutheran Church; 867 North Pleasant Street, Amherst.

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

Every speaker we invite to the club brings us something special, but there is a special sense of pride when we host one of our own. Since he will be behind the podium at the next meeting, we managed to persuade Dr. Benner to introduce himself. Despite the self-deprecating style, there is more to Bill than meets the eye.....

Bill Benner was born and raised in southeastern Pennsylvania on a small farm--and one of his first words was "mockingbird", so his mother says. He spent most of his childhood tramping through the woods and fields of his home, helping tend the gardens and his many assorted pets, from salamanders to monkeys. He then wandered through a series of jobs and adventures before deciding to return to college to study bird biology. He graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in Biology from Delaware Valley College in 1987, then went to Cornell University to study ornithology. He maintained a captive research flock of House Finches while he was there, and through them he became involved with the Cornell veterinary community. That led to a Masters Degree in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology in 1991, and a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine in 1995. He currently practices small and exotic animal medicine in South Hadley.

Bill has traveled extensively over the years, birding in 45 of the 50 states as well as overseas locations ranging from Latin America to Russia to Madagascar to Australia. Birds and butterflies are the main focus for his photography--he is the current president of the Massachusetts Butterfly Club--but he has a keen interest in all of nature. His trip to Thailand was his first visit to Asia.

COMING PROGRAMS

March 8, 2010. Kathy and Miles Conway. Kazakhstan Exploration.

April 12, 2010. Brandi van Roo. Vireo Research.

May 10, 2010. John van de Graaff. Birds of the Massachusetts Coast: Piping Plovers and Much More.

June 14, 2010. Geoff LeBaron. The Route to Distant Islands.

COMING FIELD TRIPS

(See also the Winter-Spring-Summer Field Trip Schedule)

Saturday-Sunday, February 6-7. Leader's Choice: Coast of Maine or Cape Cod. Two days. Scott Sumner will lead a two-day trip to either the coast of Maine or Cape Cod, depending on which appears to be better. Overnight accommodations will be arranged by participants. Call Scott (413-256-5438) for details as the date approaches. (M)

Saturday, February 20. South Shore: Plymouth and Falmouth. All day. Al Richards leads birders to the coast south of Boston to find ducks, gulls, owls, and whatever happens to be around. Dress warmly. Call Al (413-665-2761) for meeting information. (E)

Saturday, March 13. Plum Island. All day. Geoff LeBaron goes east to see what's around Plum Island. Dress for cold weather. Call Geoff (413-269-9281) for meeting time and information. (E)

Saturday, March 20. Connecticut River Waterfowl. Half day. Al Richards looks for waterfowl migrating through the valley along the Connecticut River. Call Al (413-665-2761) for meeting information as the date approaches. (E)

Hitchcock Center for the Environment

Spring Birding Course with *Scott Sumner*

If you are new to birding, or old to birding and in need of a pick-me-up, the Spring Birding Course is for you. Many of the club's most illustrious names (and some of us also-rans as well) are alumni of this extraordinary class experience, which will undoubtedly enrich your birding life and may even tip you over into the realm of the die-hards..... Well worth a shot!

Evening Classes: Wednesdays, February 24, March 10, 24, 31, April 7, 14, May 5, 12, 6:30 to 8p.m.

Field Trips: Saturdays, February 27, March 13, 27, April 3, 17, 24, May 1, 8, 15, 22. Start times vary between 5 a.m. and 7a.m.

Take advantage of this opportunity to get out and really observe the pageant of our spring bird migration, the myriad colors, plumages, and behaviors. As the weeks pass, new species arrive, adding to the spectacular biodiversity of our area. Scott has taught this course for many years and is accomplished at gearing instruction for beginners and experienced birders alike. Evening classes preview species expected on the Saturday field trips using slides, stories from the field, and life history details. Field trips are planned to varied locations around the state, including two coastal trips on February 27 and May 22. Coastal trips begin at 5 a.m. and end at dusk. Call the Center for more field trip details. All field trips and classes meet at the Hitchcock Center. Registration is limited to 20. Pre-registration is required; please call (413) 256-6006.

Member: \$180. Non-member: \$210.

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

The HBC Library is 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. Our librarian, **Henry Lappen**, is happy to bring items to meetings, if you give him a few days in advance. You can reach him at library@hampshirebirdclub.org or (413) 549 3722.

BREEDING BIRD ATLAS

(Hampshire-Franklin Counties have 143 Blocks)

"I know it's a noble cause, but how can I help?" (we hear you cry...)

- **Finish** one of the 13 blocks which are yet to have 20 hours time reported (total hrs. needed? 91.6), **OR**
- **Add species** to an additional 7 blocks that have 20 hours, but not yet recorded 70 species. (species records needed? 46), **OR**
- **Upgrade** levels of confirmation so that the % of **PR**obable plus **CO**nfirmed in each block = 70% (How many additional blocks need this kind of work? 26), **OR**
- **Start a new block** in Hampden or Berkshire County – block busting on an HBC field trip or just heading out and doing it alone or with friends, **OR**
- **Share** an account of some endless, thankless, and soul-destroying responsibility in your life with the long-suffering and much-maligned Regional Coordinator. (ed.)

Have no idea what this is all about? Go to hampshirebirdclub.org, click on Breeding Bird Atlas and follow the links. Or ask one of the 110 folks who have worked on the atlas in Hampshire and Franklin Counties during the past 3 years. Or contact your regional coordinator (Mary Alice Wilson at).

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Ray Chapin -----Greenfield
Henry & Shirley Atwood -----Florence
Richard & Sally White -----Northampton
Frank Valier -----Springfield
Peg Ross -----Shutesbury

Join the club as a new member anytime between now and September 1, 2010, and pay no further dues till September 2011. Kinda like getting eight months for free!

HITCHCOCK PROGRAMS

Animal Tracking Slide Show: *Alan Emond, Little Cree Spy Excursions*

Tuesday and Wednesday, February 9 and 10, 7 to 9 p.m.

(snow date: Thursday, February 11)

Winter Nature Walk: *John Green*

Saturday, February 13, 8 to 10 a.m.

Spotted Salamanders and Amherst's Famous Amphibian Tunnels: *Ted Watt*

Thursday, February 25, 7 to 9 p.m.

Spring Birding Course: *Scott Surner*

Please see details in the separate blurb in this newsletter.

Winter Tracking Expedition: *Alan Edmond, Little Cree Spy Excursions*

Saturday, March 6, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

(snow date: Sunday, March 7)

The Puzzle of New England's Predators: *John Foster, New England Naturalist Training Center*

Thursday, March 11, 7 to 9 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.

Bottom Up or Top Down? The Origin of Flight in Birds

There has long been debate over how flight evolved in birds. There have been two competing theories. The "ground up" idea (which until the last few years has dominated the discussion) suggests that ground-dwelling ancestors of birds took to the air. The "trees down" idea is that bird-ancestors living in trees began gliding, much as modern gliding lemurs and lizards do.

Some fairly convincing evidence for the "trees down" possibility has recently come to light, courtesy of a high-flying collaboration between scientists from the University of Kansas, and the northeastern University in China. This group studied one of the transitional forms between dinosaurs and birds: the Microraptor, from spectacularly preserved Chinese fossils. The fossils reveal that this species was essentially four-winged, and flight tests on models prepared from casts of the fossils, suggested that it could only have glided from an elevated position, in a sprawling (horizontal) position. The other alternative: that Microraptor launched itself from the ground, with the four limbs arrayed vertically (like a bi-plane) seems impossible owing to the presence of seven-inch flight feathers on the hind limbs, hardly adaptive equipment for a running start!

You can read more here:

University of Kansas (2010, January 26). 'Microraptors' shed light on ancient origin of bird flight. *ScienceDaily*. Retrieved January 26, 2010.

You can also read the story, and watch a video of the flight tests (a bit homespun, I have to say) at

www.features.ku.edu/microraptors

Famed Hog Island Audubon Camp Reopens In Maine

The National Audubon Society will reopen its legendary Hog Island for four adult ornithology sessions and one teen bird studies session during the summer of 2010. The Hog Island camp first opened in 1936, with Roger Tory Peterson as its first bird instructor.

Dr. Steve Kress, Audubon's VP for Bird Conservation will direct the 2010 sessions. He will be joined by some of the country's top ornithologists, including **Kenn Kaufman**, **Pete Dunne**, and **Scott Weidensaul**. There will be two new sessions offered in association with Exploritas (formerly Elder Hostel) where participants will assist Project Puffin biologists to census gulls, eiders and cormorants at several nearby seabird nesting islands. Participants in the September session will learn about land and seabirds through bird banding and presentations and assist with a habitat management project for endangered terns and storm-petrels at Eastern Egg Rock. They will also assist a Saw Whet Owl banding project.

Participants live in authentic, turn of the century housing on the 330 acre spruce-covered island. Here, they will enjoy three superb home-cooked meals per day, served in an historic island farmhouse that overlooks Muscongus Bay. During the five-day sessions, small field groups will go on a variety of trips and boat cruises, and attend presentations on topics ranging from migration and the identification of warblers to the restoration of Atlantic Puffins and terns on nearby Eastern Egg Rock. Participants will have the opportunity to learn about bird banding, sound recording and bird photography from leaders in their fields.

Visit <http://projectpuffin.org/OrnithCamps.html> to get further details, dates, sessions, instructors, and registration for the Hog Island camps this year.

Feeding Evolution?

Feeding birds is a common but surprisingly controversial practice. Evidence from Europe suggest that handouts for our feathered friends may even affect their evolution!

Researchers studying the **Blackcap** (*Sylvia atricapilla*, analogous to our chickadee) in Europe found that there are now two distinct and reproductively isolated populations of these birds, which appear to have developed as a result of differing wintering strategies. Some birds migrate to the northwest from Europe, and end up wintering in the United Kingdom, where bird feeding is common. Other individuals migrate in a south-westerly direction to Spain, where few people feed birds. The English-wintering birds have evolved shorter, more rounded wings, and longer, narrower bills, which seem to function well in a setting with abundant feeders, but they are less well equipped to survive longer migrations to areas where there is no provided food.

These two populations have become quite reproductively isolated within fewer than thirty (30) generations, and researchers speculate that, unless the Spanish develop a penchant for feeding birds, the two could well become sub-species or even species within a relatively short time.

Cell Press. "By Feeding the Birds, You Could Change Their Evolutionary Fate." ScienceDaily 4 December 2009. <<http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2009/12/091203132144.htm>>.

Note: no word yet on why some European Blackcaps show a hankering for tapas and a good cheap red wine, while others seem to prefer scones and a nice cuppa tea. (ed.)

Cape Wind: Decision Nears

If you are anything like me, you may have lost track of developments in the long-running debate over whether to authorize the Cape Wind power development in Nantucket Sound. In mid-January, Interior Secretary Ken Salazar announced that a final decision on the project is to be made within three months by the Department of the Interior. Mass Audubon has been deeply involved in the controversy, submitting highly detailed studies of the impact on birds and other elements of the Nantucket Sound ecosystem. Here is an abridged version of a recent MassAudubon press release.

Response to Obama Administration's Position on Cape Wind

*In the wake of today's Cape Wind stakeholder meetings with US Department of the Interior Secretary Ken Salazar in Washington, DC, Mass Audubon continues to encourage Mr. Salazar to make a timely **and positive** decision on Cape Wind based on the merits of the project. (emphasis mine, ed.)*

"A positive Cape Wind decision from the Obama Administration will be a giant leap forward for America as it finally and seriously participates in reducing the effects of climate change and sends a strong message to the international community," said Jack Clarke, Mass Audubon's director of public policy and government relations.

"Cape Wind should begin to open up global markets for offshore renewable energy in this country and smooth the way for other offshore proposals in the Northeast, mid-Atlantic and Great Lakes," he continued. "Wind resources in these three regions alone are capable of providing 900,000 megawatts of electricity—an amount equivalent to the nation's current total installed capacity. And they are located near the country's largest centers of energy use where, up until now, little energy is produced and carbon emissions are high. This is a decision long overdue." Mass Audubon has been involved with the Cape Wind project since August 2001. We have submitted extensive review comments and independent field research and issued a Cape Wind Challenge. We have performed careful environmental reviews of Cape Wind and other wind energy projects.

(Excerpted from Massachusetts Audubon Press Release. January 13, 2010)

Interesting stuff.....Ed.

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 (mercifully) all for this month.
Until next month, talk softly and carry a big scope!

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

STOP PRESS: Save the Date!

18th Annual Mass Audubon Birder's Meeting

A full day of workshops, speakers, wildlife updates, vendors, and more. Lunch included!

In 2009 the Department of Interior produced The State of the Birds, a comprehensive synthesis describing the conservation status, threats, and recovery objectives for every major North American bird group. Since birds have long been litmus for environmental change, what's happening to birds could portend what the future holds for mankind. In this not-to-be-missed event, two leading environmental organizations examine how science, technology, and birds could offer the key to some of the greatest challenges facing our planet in the future.

Meeting details:

Saturday, March 6, 2010

The LaCava Center

Bentley University, Waltham, MA

For complete details, visit: <http://www.massaudubon.org/news/index.php?id=917&type=news>.

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Hampshire Bird Club, Inc. Amherst, Massachusetts

www.hampshirebirdclub.org

Volume 26, No. 7

March, 2010

In this edition:

- this month's **program** and the coming schedule,
- a **field trip report** and some **coming trips**,
- **Atlas** exhortations,
- **Hitchcock Programs**,
- a blurb for the **18th Annual Massachusetts Birder's Meeting**.
- two dubious forays into the world of humor.

I hope you find some of it useful!

NEXT PROGRAM

Monday, March 8 at 7:30 PM

Kathy and Miles Conway

Silk Road and Steppe Eagles: Birding in Kazakhstan

Immanuel Lutheran Church; 867 North Pleasant Street, Amherst.

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

Myles and Kathy Conway met in 1985 and were married in 1988. After building their house in Blandford they became interested in birds when a trip to the town dump yielded a bird feeder. A Peterson's guide helped them to identify the visitors to their feeder. Their first yard list is dated 1990-91. They were hooked!

One December, Myles called Seth Kellogg and volunteered to participate in the Cobble Mountain CBC by counting the birds in Blandford. Seth's prayers were answered! He wouldn't have to pay anyone else to do it! They joined the Allen Bird Club soon after that first count, and have been active members ever since.

Always avid travelers, now the Conways travel to go birding. They have birded throughout the United States including Arizona, California, Florida, Texas, and Washington. Outside this country they have enjoyed trips to Ecuador, Costa Rica, the Caribbean, Mexico, The Gambia, and Kenya. Their trip to Kazakhstan in 2007 was their first trip to Central Asia.

Join Myles and Kathy Conway as they travel across the steppes and mountains of the ancient central Asian nation of Kazakhstan in search of raptors, snowcocks, and more.

COMING PROGRAMS

April 12, 2010. Brandi van Roo. Vireo Research.

May 10, 2010. John van de Graaff. Birds of the Massachusetts Coast: Piping Plovers and Much More.

June 14, 2010. Geoff LeBaron. The Route to Distant Islands.

FIELD TRIP REPORTS

Coastal Rhode Island. January 30, 2010.

Geoff LeBaron, Chris Ellison, Sally Hills and Sue Emerson.

Highlights of the day included a huge and very close Cooper's Hawk at Westerly, loons in the breachway at Misquamicut/Weekapaug, and spectacular loons, eiders and Red-breasted Mergansers feeding at Quononchontaug Pond. At Ninigret, we checked out our second **Red-Shouldered Hawk**, and enjoyed great looks at the now-regular **Lesser Black-backed Gull**, Bufflehead, Common Goldeneye, and a brief cameo by a beautiful drake **Barrow's Goldeneye**. A Great Blue Heron lurked at Cross Mills/Ninigret Pond, and a **White-crowned Sparrow** consorted with numerous more mundane spoggies at Moonstone Beach Road. We could scarcely contain our ghoulish delight in watching a **Peregrine Falcon** eating a pigeon right overhead in the Galilee/Point Judith area. We found singing Black Scoters (they are going to keep their day jobs) at Beavertail, along with **Red-necked Grebe** and some **Harlequin Ducks**. Harlequins were also in evidence, along with lesser Scaup, and a few fast-moving Purple Sandpipers as we ended our day at Sachuest Point.

Editor, based on notes from Geoff.

COMING FIELD TRIPS

(see also the Winter-Spring-Summer Field Trip Schedule)

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 50¢ 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. Please check all information with the trip leaders.

Saturday, March 13. Plum Island. All day. Geoff LeBaron goes east to see what's around Plum Island. Dress for cold weather. Call Geoff (413-268-9281) for meeting time and information. (E)

Saturday, March 20. Connecticut River Waterfowl. Half day. Al Richards looks for waterfowl migrating through the valley along the Connecticut River. Call Al (413-665-2761) for meeting information as the date approaches. (E)

***Sunday, April 11. Ashley Reservoir: Early Warblers.** Half day. Mike Locher (413-585-5864) hopes to find Pine and Palm Warblers, Ruby-crowned Kinglets, and other early migrants. Meet in the Friendly's parking lot, near the Holiday Inn, close to Exit 15 ("Holyoke Mall") off Rt. 91 at 7:00 a.m. (E)

A reporter seeking to cover fires in the Sierra Nevada called a local airport seeking a flight over the afflicted area. She was told a twin-engine plane would be waiting for him at the airport. Arriving there, she spotted a plane warming up outside a hangar. She jumped in with her bag, slammed the door shut, and shouted, "Let's go."

The pilot taxied out, swung the plane into the wind and took off.

Once in the air, the reporter instructed the pilot,

"Fly low over the fires and try to stay out of the smoke so I can get clear shots."

"Do we have to?" asked the pilot.

The reporter snapped

"Listen, I hired you to get me close to those fires and I ain't paying if I don't get pictures!"

The pilot was strangely silent for a moment. Finally he stammered,

"Are you telling me _____ you're ~~not~~ my flight instructor?"

HITCHCOCK PROGRAMS

Spring Birding Course: *Scott Turner.*

Evening Classes: Wednesdays, February 24, March 10, 24, 31, April 7, 14, May 5, 12, 6:30 to 8p.m. Field Trips: Saturdays, February 27, March 13, 27, April 3, 17, 24, May 1, 8, 15, 22, start times vary between 5 a.m. and 7a.m.

Take advantage of this opportunity to get out and really observe the pageant of our spring bird migration, the myriad colors, plumages, and behaviors. Scott has taught this course for many years and is accomplished at gearing instruction for beginners and experienced birders alike. Evening classes preview species expected on the Saturday field trips using slides, stories from the field, and life history details. Field trips are planned to varied locations around the state, including two coastal trips on February 27 and May 22. Coastal trips begin at 5 a.m. and end at dusk. All field trips and classes meet at the Hitchcock Center. Registration is limited to 20. Pre-registration is required. Hitchcock Member: \$180. Non-member: \$210

Winter Tracking Expedition: *Alan Edmond.*

Saturday, March 6, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. (snow date: Sunday, March 7).

The Puzzle of New England's Predators: *John Foster.*

Thursday, March 11, 7 to 9 p.m.

Tales from the Life of An Animal Welfare Officer: *Carol Hepburn.*

Tuesday, March 16, 7 to 8:30 p.m.

Salamander Egg Mass Survey: *Ted Watt.*

A Saturday in April to be determined by the weather.

Book Release and Signing

Tracks and Sign of Insects and Other Invertebrates: *Charley Eiseman and Noah Charney.*

Thursday, April 1, 7:30 to 9 p.m.

The art of Mentoring and Nature Education: *Frank Grindrod.*

Thursday, April 8, 6:30 to 8 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.

18TH ANNUAL MASSACHUSETTS BIRDERS MEETING

Hosted by Massachusetts Audubon

Saturday, March 6, 2010 at The LaCava Center, Bentley University, Waltham, MA

A full day of workshops, speakers, wildlife updates, vendors, and more. Lunch included!

In 2009 the Department of Interior produced The State of the Birds, a comprehensive synthesis describing the conservation status, threats, and recovery objectives for every major North American bird group. Since birds have long been a litmus test for environmental change, what's happening to birds could portend what the future holds for mankind. In this not-to-be-missed event, two leading environmental organizations examine how science, technology, and birds could offer the key to some of the greatest challenges facing our planet in the future.

For complete details, visit: <http://www.massaudubon.org/news/index.php?id=917&type=news>

BREEDING BIRD ATLAS: Notes for the Over-Achiever.

"I want to atlas RIGHT NOW!"

OK, first you might want to seek some professional help, but, if the impulse persists despite therapy and medication, here are some ideas:

1. **Look for the year-round-safe-date birds** (safe dates are January 1 to December 31): Ruffed Grouse, Wild Turkey, Rock Pigeon, Great Horned Owl, Pileated Woodpecker. (Next birds to make the safe date list will be Common Raven on March 20 and American Crow on March 25).
2. **Find birds that are nesting** (any of the CO-firmed behavior trumps a dumb old safe-date.)
3. **Find birds that are courting:** PR(C). Can't use it for ducks, but can use it for anything else – for example, what about the woodcock that arrive in mid-March? That "peent" is courtship ("C")! Where to look? Fields (even those with some buildings), sometimes hedgerows next to fields, sometimes with water nearby. Start 10 minutes after sunset. Once you hear that marvelous peent, you can either stay around for the skydancing until it is too dark to see but not to hear - or you can drive to a field in the next block and get a double-header.

Mary Alice Wilson, with snide remarks by the editor.

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!

Dear God!

One morning, workers at the Easthampton Post Office were sorting the day's mail, when one of them came across a letter, addressed in a shaky hand to "GOD." Unable to deliver the item, and unable to contain himself, an employee opened the letter. He found a return address, and the following letter:

Dear God,

I'm about to turn 100 years old, but it's not going to be much of a celebration. I can no longer leave the house, and I'm down to my last pennies. If you could send me, say, \$100, I could at least afford a small party.

Yours sincerely,

Muriel.

The Post Office employees were deeply moved and passed the hat around the office. They mailed the resulting \$87 to Muriel, and went about their work with light hearts. A week later, another letter arrived, again addressed to "GOD" in the same unmistakable hand. The letter said:

Dear God,

Thank you so much for the money. We had a wonderful get-together here, and I'm ready for the next 100. By the way, there were 13 dollars missing. I bet it was those lousy sods at the Post Office!"

That's all for now!

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

David Peake-Jones, Editor

529 9541

newsletter@hampshirebirdclub.org

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Hampshire Bird Club, Inc.

Amherst, Massachusetts

www.hampshirebirdclub.org

Volume 26, No. 8

April, 2010

In this edition:

- programs and field trips,
- Monhegan 2010,
- announcing the 2010 Crown of Maine overnight trip,
- the Nominating Committee,
- Hitchcock Programs and the Salamander Soiree,
- our very own Pileated Woodpecker: an interim Bird Atlas report,
- Atlas exhortations, and
- a couple of gleanings from the scientific literature.

I hope you find some of it useful!

It's a relief that birds are not as easily influenced by screwy weather as we are. As we ventured out of our back doors into 70 degree weather on March 19, some of us were already contemplating the start of the gardening season, at a time when we would normally be praying that the snow-blower could hang on for another month. Birds, of course, have a life-or-death investment in being resistant to the siren song of short-term weather fluctuations. If this were not so, the duck migration would be already be over, and we would be greeting the first warblers. Fortunately, though they are no doubt a little bemused by the balmy conditions, the parade of Ring-necked Duck, Northern Pintail, Green-winged Teal, mergansers, Bufflehead, and the other jewels of our early spring wetlands are, more or less, staying with their time-honored timetables. The Wood Ducks, Common and Hooded Mergansers, and a few other species manage to reproduce here in Massachusetts, but most of the waterfowl who grace our valley at this time of year are on their way to the wetter and wilder places where they breed.

These sturdy avian citizens are the first reminders of the miracle that occurs every year. Despite the fact that wetlands are, in our part of the world, tiny refuges in a mosaic of suburbs, farms, and shopping malls, the birds find them and somehow manage to find enough rest and sustenance to sustain their journey. I was well within earshot of I-91 earlier this month when I crept to the edge of a belt of trees in the East Meadows and set up my scope. There is an almost imperceptible crease in the earth there, often dry, and containing at most a few inches of water on this, a day of rain. At first, I could find only a few mallards, but as the minutes went by, the scope revealed several Northern Pintail, Green-winged Teal, American Wigeon, and a multitude of Wood Ducks fossicking quietly amongst the old corn stalks.

Minutes later, as I backed out along the muddy track toward the safety of the pavement, I was forced to veer left to avoid a fellow hurtling along the road on an ATV; the same fellow who flushed every single duck from that hidden and surprising refuge. As I extracted myself from the car, and before I had time to realize that I was inextricably stuck, I watched about 350 ducks swirl and bank in the rain-soaked sky, before scattering into some other, hopefully-safe corner of the valley. Onward, you denizens of marsh and puddle, and safe journey to you all!

Overnight Trips: Seriously!!

The Crown of Maine trip is announced on page 4. This is an unbeatable opportunity to look for boreal species in a wonderful area. The trip will likely fill quickly, so don't delay.

There is still time to sign up for Monhegan Island, 2010 (page 5). This trip never fails to surprise, and the bird lists can be truly stunning, so don't put it off another year!

NEXT PROGRAM

Monday, April 12 at 7:30 PM

Brandi Van Roo sheds light on Reproductive Behaviors and Hormones in Vireos

Immanuel Lutheran Church; 867 North Pleasant Street, Amherst.

Birds are unusual among animals in the number of species in which males contribute to the care of their young. Although males of some species, like the hummingbirds, provide no care for the young, males of other species, such as ostriches, stand out for their exemplary dedication to caring for the young. Why does this variation in male parental behavior exist? What prompts males to demonstrate various kinds of parental care? What is physically different between males of closely related species that differ in this one key attribute? The answers to these questions involve, in part, varying levels of avian hormones. By studying several closely-related species that demonstrate a continuum of male care and comparing their hormone levels during these behaviors, we can begin to understand the physiological basis of parental care in males.

Dr. Brandi Van Roo is an Associate Professor at Framingham State College. She has studied breeding behaviors and hormones in vireos for over 10 years and will share her current insights and questions in this ongoing research.

COMING PROGRAMS

May 10, 2010. *John van de Graaff.* Birds of the Massachusetts Coast: Piping Plovers and Much More.

June 14, 2010. *Geoff LeBaron.* The Route to Distant Islands.

FIELD TRIP REPORTS

Plum Island. March 13, 2010.

Geoff LeBaron, Jesse Brownback, Justin Baldwin, Joan and Larry Duprey, Carol and Jim Gabranski, Joseph Nidnin, & Al Richards.

The group began at Plum Island in deteriorating weather, hoping to sneak the trip in ahead of a major nor'-easter. The Pannes had a nice selection of waterfowl, and a **Snowy Owl** held vigil over the saltmarsh, visible from the Pines. We reminded ourselves what storms are all about by darting out to Emerson Rocks in rising winds! We found more waterfowl amongst the storm-ravaged chaos at the northern end of Plum Island. At the yacht club we found not one but two **Iceland Gulls**.

Just when we thought we had seen the full force of the wind, we ventured out onto more exposed territory at Salisbury Beach. The rising gales did not prevent us from enjoying some "eastern" morph (light-bellied)

Brant. Our remaining stops yielded up-close and personal views of driving rain and sleet.

Other highlights: American Wigeon, Northern Pintail, Green-winged Teal, Common Eider (350), Long-tailed Duck, Red-throated Loon, Red-necked Grebe, all three scoters, and **Merlin**, amongst a respectable total of 58 species.

Editor, from notes by Geoff LeBaron.

NOMINATING COMMITTEE

It takes a lot of work to keep the Hampshire Bird Club flourishing, and we need people to help with this work. The good news is that you don't have to shoulder the whole burden yourself. There are a variety of things that need to be done, and you can ease into it gently. We will be announcing a slate of board members and officers for 2010-2011 in the May newsletter and voting on the slate at the May meeting. The Committee this year is chaired by Scott Turner. If you, or someone you know (hint, hint) would like to serve on the board, please let Scott know: president@hampshirebirdclub.org, or (413) 256 5438.

COMING FIELD TRIPS

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 50¢ 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. Please check all information with the trip leaders.*

***Sunday, April 11. Ashley Reservoir: Early Warblers.** Half day. Mike Locher (413-585-5864) hopes to find Pine and Palm Warblers, Ruby-crowned Kinglets, and other early migrants. Meet in the Friendly's parking lot, near the Holiday Inn, close to Exit 15 ("Holyoke Mall") off Rt. 91 at 7:00 a.m. (E)

***Saturday, April 17. Early Migrants.** Half day. Betsy Higgins (413-586-7585) looks for migrants, starting around Look Park in Northampton. Meet at 6:30 a.m. in the parking lot of the JFK Middle School on Bridge Street in Northampton. (E)

Sunday, May 2. Connecticut River to Mt. Sugarloaf. Half day. Dave Mako explores the fields and hills around Mt. Sugarloaf looking for migrants and a few local specialties, including Common Ravens, Peregrine Falcons, and Worm-eating Warblers. Call Dave (413-665-2999) for meeting time and place. (M)

Friday, May 7. South Quabbin Park. Half day. Tom Gagnon (413-584-6353) birds the southern end of the reservoir for vireos, warblers, and whatever else shows up. Meet at the Quabbin Visitor's Center parking lot at 7:00 a.m. (E)

Erratum

In the February edition, I referred to a study which found that evolution in the Blackcap (*Sylvia atricapilla*, a European bird) was being largely controlled by different bird-feeding regimes between the two major areas in which the birds winter.

I made the mistake of saying that the Blackcap was "analogous to our chickadee."

Chris Yerlig, bright spark and expatriate denizen of Europe that he is, horse-collared me at the February meeting and pointed out that the Blackcap is, in fact, an "old world warbler", and thus in no way analogous to the chickadee. This got me wondering what an old world warbler is and to which, if any, new-world species it might be related.

Mullarney, et al. (1999), (rather unhelpfully), suggest that the old-world warblers are relatives of the thrushes, but that the group itself is "almost certainly artificial." Sibley (2001) points out that the family Sylviidae is composed of two sub-families. If these, the Sylviinae, or old-world warblers, are represented in North America, only by the Arctic Warbler (which breeds in western Alaska), and the Dusky Warbler, a rare visitor to the west coast from Asia. The other subfamily is the Polioptilinae, or gnatcatchers and gnatwrens. There is, indeed a local gnatcatcher with which most of us are familiar, but Sibley points out that the Syviinae and the Polioptilinae "may not be each others closest relatives, and might be placed in different families in the future" (page 453)

So I guess, for a purist, the Blackcap is "analogous to our Arctic Warbler." Wow, that really clarifies matters! Ed.

References:

Mullarney et al. (1999). Birds of Europe. Princeton University Press. Princeton, New Jersey.

Sibley, David. (2001). The Sibley Guide to Bird Life and Behavior. Alfred A. Knopf, New York.

OVERNIGHT TRIPS

Announcing Crown of Maine, 2010

Thursday, June 24th, 2010 through Monday, June 28th, 2010

Leaders: Geoff LeBaron and Bill Sheehan (of Woodland, ME, our local expert).

You must be a Hampshire Bird Club member to go on this trip.

This wonderful HBC field trip will bird the Crown of Maine region, a wonderful area of mixed boreal and agricultural habitats. There is much boreal forest, wooded bogs, farmland, riparian woodlands, human-made ponds that attract unusual breeding waterfowl, and the Aroostook National Wildlife Refuge—the former Loring Air Force Base—complete with large expanses of grassland and shrub-land habitat.

We will spend one full day driving to Caribou, Maine, which will be our base of operations. From there we will spend one day in the New Sweden-Woodland-Caribou area, one day at Presque Isle and the Aroostook N.W.R., and the third day birding the Maine North Woods boreal timber forest lands west of Fort Kent, Maine.

Target bird species will include boreal forest specialties around New Sweden (**Black-backed- and American Three-toed woodpeckers, Yellow-bellied and Olive-sided flycatchers, Gray Jay, Philadelphia Vireo, Tennessee-, Bay-breasted-, Cape May-, and Blackpoll warblers**, etc), wetland, grassland, and shrub-land species around Presque Isle and Aroostook N.W.R. (nesting **Redhead** and **Ruddy Ducks** amid a myriad of other waterfowl, **American Bittern, Upland Sandpiper, and Mourning Warbler**), and especially **Spruce Grouse** among other boreal species in the Maine North Woods. Other wildlife likely to be encountered will be moose, black bear, coyote, and voracious black flies and mosquitoes (the latter two an overwhelming guarantee). Our visit will also likely coincide with the peak of wildflowers; lupines will be in bloom everywhere, and we have a good chance of seeing up to four species of lady-slipper orchids.

Lodging: Participants should make their own room arrangements, and maximize sharing rooms. Preferred lodging is the Russell's Motel in Caribou (207) 493-4658. Donna Murchison, Prop. The second choice is the Caribou Inn and Convention Center (www.caribouinn.com; (207) 498 3733). Rates will vary according to room sharing arrangements. ***Russell's fills up quickly, so we need to make reservations as soon as possible.***

Travel: 500 miles each way to Caribou via I-95; 1000 miles round trip minimum; an additional 250-300 miles birding during the three days. Total trip mileage around 1500.

HBC Cost Estimate: Participants will pay HBC a trip fee of approximately \$50, depending on how many people sign up. This fee covers the leader fee for Bill Sheehan, a share of leader's costs for Geoff, and the club insurance contribution.

Additional Costs:

- lodging will run from \$120 - \$200 per person for the trip, if Russell's Motel is used. Accommodation at the Convention center will be more expensive.
- meals, and
- transportation (car pooling highly recommended).

Registration Period: Trip pre-registration begins at 6 PM on April 1. Please call or email the Field Trip Chair (Mike Locher; fieldtrip@hampshirebirdclub.org or 585 5864) to register. The trip will be first-come, first-served after registration begins, and participants after 14 will be wait-listed.

If you need further information prior to registering, please contact the following:

Geoff LeBaron: programs@hampshirebirdclub.org; 413 268 9281.

MONHEGAN ISLAND, Maine

Memorial Day Weekend (May 28-31), 2010.

Monhegan Island lies about twelve miles off the coast of Maine and is a fabled migrant trap. HBC has visited this enchanted place every year since our inception in 1984. It is arguably the best bang for your buck of any location in the north-east!

We will travel to the island by ferry on the Friday of Memorial Day weekend. 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. There is plenty of exploring to do if the birding slows down.

We'll stay at the rustic Trailing Yew, which will lay on breakfast and dinner each day, including a local lobster dinner. This is an opportunity not to be missed for birders at any level!

To sign up, contact Mike Locher (fieldtrip@hampshirebirdclub.org; 585 5864).

For details, including cost estimates, contact Betsy Higgins (hignik@comcast.net; 586 7585) or Andrew Magee (andrewfmagee@gmail.com; 586 1509).

HITCHCOCK PROGRAMS

Tracks and Sign of Insects and Other Invertebrates: *Charley Eiseman and Noah Charney.*
Book Release and Signing. Thursday, April 1, 7:30 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Salamander Egg mass Survey: *Ted Watt.*
A Saturday in April to be determined by the weather

The Art of Mentoring and Nature Education: *Frank Grindrod, Earthwork Programs.*
Thursday, April 8, 6:30 to 8 p.m.

Geology of Franklin County: *Joe Kopera, Geologist at UMass-Amherst.*
Field Trip. Saturday, April 17, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Spring Bird Walk: *John Green.*
Sunday, April 18, 7 to 10 a.m.

The First Annual Amherst Sustainability Festival.
Held on the Town Common and around town.
Saturday, April 24, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Celebrating Amherst Conservation Lands: *Harvey Allen*
Sunday, April 25, 2-4 p.m. Robert Frost Trail south from Station Road.

Woodswalking and the Written Word: A Nature Writing Workshop: *Wally Swist, Poet.*
Sunday, April 25, 1 to 4 p.m.

Low Maintenance Design With Native Plants: *Owen Wormser, Landscape Designer.*
Saturday, May 1, 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.
Held at the New England Wild Flower Society's Nasami Farm in Whately.

Fort River Festival.
At Groff Park, Amherst. Sunday, May 2, 10 a.m. to 2 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.

Atlas Block-Busting

HBC is planning two Atlas block-busting field trips on Sunday, June 13 and Saturday, June 26. Destinations and leaders are as follows:

Sunday, June 13: *Mike Locher*

North Adams 5 (a section of Route 2, and southward up the slopes of Mt Greylock).

Saturday, June 26: *David Gross*

North Adams 6 (The summit of Mt Greylock and east to the edge of Adams).

Each of these blocks will need a minimum of 20 hours (cumulative between parties) of coverage. Each trip will involve one or more parties visiting the various habitats in the block and collecting as much data as possible. This is a special part of the state, and the possibility exists for some sexy (no pun intended) records to be established! The day will conclude with a compilation session to collect all the data. There may be a mop up session or two to tidy up loose ends.

Do join us for one or both of these fabulous opportunities to further the scientific understanding of breeding birds in Massachusetts. Further details will follow as the trips approach!

Need Your Block-Busting Appetite Whetted?.....

Second Massachusetts Breeding Bird Atlas

Interim Report #107: Yellow-bellied Flycatcher

The Yellow-bellied Flycatcher is a member of the genus *Empidonax*. This genus has five breeding representatives in the Bay State, and these birds are perhaps best known for looking incredibly similar to one another. The Yellow-bellied Flycatcher is the most distinctive of the lot, due to the abdominal pigmentation for which it is named. It is also the rarest breeder - so rare, in fact, that it has yet to receive even a single Atlas confirmation. These birds were seen in appropriate habitat (shady bogs of relatively high elevation) on Mount Greylock in Berkshire County during Atlas 1. ***Atlas 2 brings us a Probable block, also on Greylock, and a few Possibles. Can we confirm Yellow-bellied Flycatcher before time runs out?***



Excerpted from Massachusetts Audubon. Atlas Blog: Distraction Displays.
<http://massaudubonblogs.typepad.com/massbirdatlas/>

THE FIFTH ANNUAL SALAMANDER SOIREE

A Benefit for the Hitchcock Center for the Environment

Friday, April 23, 5:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

Lewis-Sebring Commons, Valentine Hall, Amherst College

Hearty Hors d'Oeuvres, Wine & Beer Tasting, Vacation Get-Away Auction, Raffle, and Door Prizes. Fun, fancy, formal or informal black and yellow attire is encouraged in honor of Amherst's famous Spotted Salamanders!

Please RSVP by April 16 to (413) 256-6006.

Tickets \$30 per person; \$35 at the door.

Seems like we should check in on our very own emblem. Another interim report from the Atlas.....

Massachusetts Breeding Bird Atlas 2

Interim Report #104: Pileated Woodpecker

The largest and most striking of Massachusetts' breeding woodpecker species is also the most reclusive, preferring to dwell in areas of old growth and heavy cover. Although they were often victims of hunting pressure from a variety of sources, Pileated Woodpeckers have recovered well. Now, they are facing a new challenge in the face of Massachusetts' ever-changing landscape.

Pileated Woodpeckers are year-round residents in Massachusetts, and they often return to the same territory year after year. Curiously, they rarely reuse cavities, but will often nest very close by the previous year's nest, sometimes even in the same tree! Males do the majority of the excavating, which usually occurs through March and April. Pileated Woodpeckers lay only three or four eggs at a time, and these are incubated for about 18 days before hatching. Young birds stay with their parents until dispersing to find their own territories in the fall and winter.



The Pileated is the largest woodpecker in New England. This impressive stature was not lost on some Native American tribes, who hunted the woodpeckers for their crimson crests, which were believed to bestow courage and hunting skill upon their possessors. The birds were also reputed to be good eating, and European colonists gleefully joined in the shooting both for meat and to prevent the birds from damaging their homes. Although their numbers were severely reduced during this period, their fortunes reversed after receiving protection in the early twentieth century. Safe from shooting, the birds were able to take advantage of remnant and regenerating forest patches, mostly in western Massachusetts, during the time of Atlas 1.

So can the Cock-of-the-Woods find a home for itself in the woodlands of present-day Massachusetts? The Atlas 2 survey data strongly suggests that it can. Pileated Woodpeckers are now breeding all over the Connecticut River Valley, throughout Worcester County, and into the Middlesex and Suffolk suburbs of Boston itself. Noticeably, Pileateds seem almost entirely absent from the south-east coastal plain, the Cape, and the Islands, which are devoid of the large, old trees the birds seem to require. As we work on finishing Atlas 2, it will be useful to know just how far Pileated Woodpeckers have expanded their breeding range since the last Atlas.

Pileated Woodpecker	Atlas 1	Atlas 2
# Blocks Possible	47	159
# Blocks Probable	76	195
# Blocks Confirmed	26	56
Total Blocks Occupied	143	410

Excerpted from Massachusetts Audubon Atlas Blog: Distraction Displays.
<http://massaudubonblogs.typepad.com/massbirdatlas/>

That's all for this month.
 Until next month, 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 26, No. 9

May, 2010

In this edition:

- **programs and field trips** including **two new trips**,
- last chances for **Monhegan** and **Crown of Maine**,
- a **pelagic trip** opportunity,
- the official **AGM** announcement,
- **Hitchcock** programs
- **Atlas** exhortations, and a happy progress report, plus
- a few items of general interest.

I hope you find some of it useful!

NEXT PROGRAM

Monday, May 10 at 7:30 PM

**John van de Graaff presents Birds of the Massachusetts Coast
(Piping Plovers and Much More)**

Immanuel Lutheran Church; 867 North Pleasant Street, Amherst.

Here is John's program introduction, in his own words....



This presentation draws on the thousands of images that I have captured on the Massachusetts coast in the last few years. I hope you enjoy them, learn from them, and above all end up caring more about the welfare of the birds portrayed. The main focus of this show is on piping plovers and least terns, but it also includes various other shorebirds and terns, gulls, ospreys, and some passerines. Most of the shots are from Mass Audubon's Allen's Pond Sanctuary in Westport, my favorite coastal spot, which I've visited regularly since 2005. Some twenty pairs of piping plovers nest there each season, cheek by jowl with up to 200 pairs of least terns. Both species are listed as threatened—the plovers at the federal

level and the terns by the state. I've tried to show especially the birds' characteristic activities, including courtship, nurturing and feeding behaviors.

I began photographing birds seriously in 2001, and it has been at times an all-consuming activity, with frequent travel. I've made frequent digital slide presentations to birding and photography groups, including the CCBC and other major bird clubs in Massachusetts. My images have been widely used by Mass Audubon in support of their activities. The Burnett Gallery in Amherst hosted a key exhibition of my bird photos in 2007. Some images from this presentation hung at the Fish and Wildlife Service in Hadley last summer. I'm a member of the Hampshire Bird Club and the Pioneer Valley Photographic Artists (PVPA). My website is easily remembered: www.birdsbyjohn.com. In addition, I recently joined blipfoto, a site where I post one (and only one!) current photo per day; it serves me as a kind of blog, at www.blipfoto.com/vandegraaff.

COMING PROGRAMS

June 14, 2010. Geoff LeBaron. The Route to Distant Islands.

FIELD TRIP REPORTS

Early Migrants at Ashley Reservoir . April 11, 2010

This year's trip to Ashley Reservoir was noteworthy both because of the birds that were present, and because of some that weren't. Among those present were all the target warblers. **Pine Warblers** were frequently heard, and we even got a few good looks at several individuals. We found one large group of **Palm Warblers** high in the trees that had a beautifully-colored Yellow-rumped (Myrtle) Warbler tagging along. And for me, the highlights of the trip were two or three **Louisiana Waterthrushes**, singing loudly.

Other notable finds were a patch of woodland with all our common woodpeckers (Pileated-, Downy-, Hairy-, and Red-bellied Woodpeckers, Northern Flickers and Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers). We had glimpses of a few raptors (**Broad-winged Hawk**, **Osprey**, Turkey Vulture), and other small woodland species (Brown Creepers, Golden-crowned and Ruby-crowned Kinglets).

Waterfowl were missing. We saw only a few Mallards and Canada Geese, and heard a single Wood Duck. There were only a handful of Tree Swallows over the water, and not a single flycatcher in the woods. All-in-all, though, a great morning of birding!

Mike Locher



Look Park. April 17, 2010.

I did not want to disappoint anyone by breaking with tradition, so I conjured a bit of rain for my Look Park early morning walk. Six of us set out to find some spring birds. We had 33 species, including **Hermit Thrush**, Kingfisher, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, **Blue-headed Vireo**, Yellow-rumped Warbler, a pair of Common Mergansers and last but not least, the **Louisiana Waterthrush**. The Waterthrush sat and sang beautifully for us. We were able to find him in the scope and watch until we'd had enough (if that is possible), at which point we left him singing and went happily on about our business. A nice morning of birding in good company.

Betsy Higgins

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The HBC **Annual General Meeting** will occur at Immanuel Lutheran Church in Amherst at 7:30 p.m. on May 10, 2010. Alert readers will note that this is immediately prior to the scheduled program on that date. HBC members present at the meeting will be asked to elect the HBC Board for 2010-2011. The search committee nominates the following slate of officers:

President – *Scott Turner*

VP/Program Chair - *Geoff LeBaron*

Membership Secretary - *Sue Emerson*

Treasurer - *Janice Jorgensen*

Communications Secretary - *Elissa Rubinstein*

Members-At-Large (in descending order of hirsuteness)

Jan Ortiz ▼

Bruce Hart ►

David Peake-Jones ▼

Jaap van Heerden ►

Joe Wicinski ▼

Mike Locher

I hope you will all join with me in thanking **Larry Therrien** for his service on the board!

COMING FIELD TRIPS

Sunday, May 2. Connecticut River to Mt. Sugarloaf. Half day. Dave Mako explores the fields and hills around Mt. Sugarloaf looking for migrants and a few local specialties, including Common Ravens, Peregrine Falcons, and Worm-eating Warblers. Call Dave (413-665-2999) for meeting time and place. (M)

Friday, May 7. South Quabbin Park Half day. Tom Gagnon (413-584-6353) birds the southern end of the reservoir for vireos, warblers, and whatever else shows up. Meet at the Quabbin Visitor's Center parking lot at 7:00 a.m. (E)

Saturday, May 8. Spring Migration in the East Quabbin. All day. Tom Gagnon and Larry Therrien guide birders through the woods of East Quabbin in search of spring migrants. This trip is limited to Hampshire Bird Club members. Call Tom (413-584-6353) well ahead of time for meeting information and to register, since participation is limited. (M)

New Trip

Sunday, May 16. Groovy New Place. Half day. Mary Alice Wilson and Sally Hills explore a new addition to the Sylvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge on the north side of Moody Bridge Road in Hadley. The site is great for grassland and shrubland birds and according a website, it hosts "federally endangered dwarf wedgemussels and other rare species. These include the bridle shiner dragonfly and several species of state-protected turtles." Meet at the site (69 Moody Bridge Road, formerly Bri-Mar Stables) at 8 a.m. Contact Mary Alice, mwilson@umassk12.net, 413-548-9078 (home) or Sally shills44@aol.com, 413-549-5550 (home) to register. (E)

Tuesday, May 18. Mount Holyoke. Half day. Tom Gagnon leads a walk up the venerable old hill looking for spring warblers (think Cerulean) and wildflowers. Meet at the entrance at 7:30 a.m. Call Tom (413-584-6353) for more information. (M)

Overnight Trip

Friday, May 28 – Monday, May 31. Monhegan Island. See the blurb later in this newsletter.

Saturday, May 29. Poor Man's Monhegan. All day. Bob Bieda takes birders to Plum Island. 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 5. Westover Air Force Base. Half day. Pending permission, Bob Bieda will lead his annual trip into New England's premier grassland habitat, looking 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)

Sunday, June 6. October Mountain State Forest. Half day. Ed Neumuth explores the habitat on October Mountain. Recent cutting has made the area a prime spot for Mourning Warblers, as well as a number of other unusual species. Call Ed (413-884-4961) around trip time for meeting time and place. (E)

New Trip

Wednesday, June 9. Birds and Fishes

Let's check out the Connecticut River at the Holyoke Fish Ladder for some fish eating birds and check in on the Shad Run. Hopefully, if we are real lucky, we will get to see an Atlantic Salmon. Meet at the "Park and Ride" parking lot in Northampton on Bridge Street near the Northampton Airport at 12:30 p.m. and car-pool from there. Questions? Please call Tom Gagnon at 413-584-6353.

Visions of Greatness

When we encounter birds at the dinner table, it is usually we that are sitting at the table, and the birds which are upon it. Whatever the reasons for this situation, it is certainly NOT because we have better vision.

Researchers at the Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis have confirmed, based on studies of the humble chicken, that birds have far better color vision than we do. We have only three (3) kinds of color sensitive “cone” cells, which detect red, blue, and green wavelengths, respectively. Birds are also able to detect violet wavelengths directly (including some ultraviolet), and have unique “double cone cells” which seem to be involved in the detection of motion. In addition (the humiliation continues), the color-sensitive cells of birds are arrayed to maximize color vision across the entire field of vision, whereas humans see color primarily in the center of the field of view. Our peripheral vision is mostly confined to detecting light, dark, and motion, (which perhaps explains why I failed to see the bright red Mini Cooper I backed into the other day).

The authors of this and other related studies theorize that mammals (including humans) fell behind relative to birds and dinosaurs in color vision because, when we were at the bottom of the food chain during the Mesozoic, mammals were largely nocturnal. As such, there would have been less selection pressure for color vision, which is useless at night.

Washington University School of Medicine (2010, February 17). Chickens 'one-up' humans in ability to see color. *ScienceDaily*. (online)

Journal Reference: Kram et al. Avian Cone Photoreceptors Tile the Retina as Five Independent, Self-Organizing Mosaics. *PLoS ONE*, 2010; 5 (2).

OK, maybe we don't have double cones in our retinas, but we definitely got dibs on the ice-cream double cone! Next time I'm enjoying a double-barreled hit of Ginger Supreme at Mt. Tom Dairy, I will be less inclined than ever to share any with the local House Sparrows! Ed.

OVERNIGHT TRIPS

Last chance for.....

Monhegan Island

Memorial Day Weekend (May 28-31), 2010.

Monhegan Island lies about twelve miles off the coast of Maine and is a fabled migrant trap. HBC has visited this enchanted place every year since our inception in 1984. It is arguably the best bang for your buck of any location in the north-east!

We will travel to the island by ferry on the Friday of Memorial Day weekend. 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. There is plenty of exploring to do if the birding slows down.

We'll stay at the rustic Trailing Yew, which will lay on breakfast and dinner each day, including a local lobster dinner. This is an opportunity not to be missed for birders at any level!

The trip is almost full. To sign up, contact Mike Locher (fieldtrip@hampshirebirdclub.org; 585 5864). For details, including cost estimates, contact Betsy Higgins (hignik@comcast.net; 586 7585) or Andrew Magee (andrewfmagee@gmail.com; 586 1509).

Last chance for.....

The Crown of Maine

Thursday, June 24th, 2010 through Monday, June 28th, 2010

Leaders: Geoff LeBaron and Bill Sheehan (of Woodland, ME, our local expert).

You must be a Hampshire Bird Club member to go on this trip.

This wonderful HBC field trip will bird the Crown of Maine region, a wonderful area of mixed boreal and agricultural habitats. There is much boreal forest, wooded bogs, farmland, riparian woodlands, human-made ponds that attract unusual breeding waterfowl, and the Aroostook National Wildlife Refuge—the former Loring Air Force Base—complete with large expanses of grassland and shrub-land habitat.

We will spend one full day driving to Caribou, Maine, which will be our base of operations. From there we will spend one day in the New Sweden-Woodland-Caribou area, one day at Presque Isle and the Aroostook N.W.R., and the third day birding the Maine North Woods boreal timber forest lands west of Fort Kent, Maine.

Target bird species will include boreal forest specialties around New Sweden (**Black-backed- and American Three-toed woodpeckers, Yellow-bellied and Olive-sided flycatchers, Gray Jay, Philadelphia Vireo, Tennessee-, Bay-breasted-, Cape May-, and Blackpoll warblers**, etc). We'll seek out wetland, grassland, and shrub-land species around Presque Isle and Aroostook N.W.R. (nesting **Redhead** and **Ruddy Ducks** amid a myriad of other waterfowl, **American Bittern, Upland Sandpiper**, and **Mourning Warbler**), and especially **Spruce Grouse** among other boreal species in the Maine North Woods. Other wildlife likely to be encountered will be moose, black bear, and coyote. Our visit will also likely coincide with the peak of wildflowers; lupines will be in bloom everywhere, and we have a good chance of seeing up to four species of lady-slipper orchids.

HBC Cost Estimate: Participants will pay HBC a trip fee of approximately \$50, depending on how many people sign up. This fee covers the leader fee for Bill Sheehan, a share of leader's costs for Geoff, and the club insurance contribution. Additional costs include lodging, meals and transportation.

Registration. The deadline to sign up (including paying the HBC fee) is Friday, May 21. We need to know who is going, in order to facilitate planning. Please call or email the Field Trip Chair (Mike Locher; fieldtrip@hampshirebirdclub.org or 585 5864) to register.

If you need further information prior to registering, please contact Geoff LeBaron: programs@hampshirebirdclub.org; 413 268 9281.

ATLAS BLOCKBUSTING

"You want me to bust a block?"

We do. Join us for a day of focused birding in a gorgeous place. Each day teams will complete the 20 hours required for an Atlas block, compile a great bird list, and have a good time. Pre-register for one or both of the days by contacting the leader:

Sunday, June 13th, North Adams 5 (route 2 and south up the slopes of Mt. Greylock), contact David Gross, dgross@biochem.umass.edu, 413-253-2897 (home).

Saturday, June 26th, North Adams 6 (top of Mt. Greylock and east to edge of Adams), contact Mike Locher, mlocher@yahoo.com, 413-585-5864 (home).

HITCHCOCK PROGRAMS

Celebrating Amherst Conservation Lands: 2 to 4 p.m.

May 16 -- *Lawrence Swamp with Caroline Arnold.*

June 20 (Father's Day) -- *Holyoke Range Conservation Area with Elisa Campbell.*

July 18 -- *Wentworth Farm with John Green.*

August 15 -- *Eastman Brook with Harvey Allen.*

Low-Maintenance Design with Native Plants: Owen Wormser

Saturday, May 1, 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Held at the New England Wild Flower Society's Nasami Farm in Whately.

Landscape Drawing In the Field: Lorna Ritz, Teacher and Painter.

Saturday, May 1, 1 to 4 p.m.

Fort River Festival: At Groff Park, Amherst.

Sunday, May 2. 10 a.m. to noon: Guided Canoe Trip. Noon to 2 p.m.: Festival.

Falconry Up Close: Chris Davis.

Saturday, May 8, 10 to 11:30 a.m.

Chocolate Pies and Tiny Flies: A Natural History of Chocolate: Faith Deering.

Thursday, May 13, 7 to 8:30 p.m.

Biothon 2010.

Any 24-hour period during May 14-16 or May 21-23.

PV Primer (The Mechanics of Photovoltaics): Philippe Rigoliaud.

Saturday, May 15, 10 a.m. to noon.

The Dynamic Landscape: Creating Powerful Photographs: Michael Zide.

Thursday, May 20, 7:30 p.m.

Birding By Ear: John Green.

Saturdays, May 22, June 12 & July 17, 7 to 9 a.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

David Brown	Warwick.
Joanne Dwyer	Leeds.
Ilana Schmitt	Amherst.
Rama Janaswamy	Amherst.
Todd Wiley	Turners Falls.
Bobbin Young & Eric Weber	Williamsburg.
Nidhin Joseph	Amherst.

Seabird & Whale Tale Trip

Sunday, June 13th. 8 am - 4 pm

Departing from Plymouth Town Pier, Plymouth Harbor, MA

This is an all day (rough or smooth) marine excursion aboard a 110' whale-watching vessel to view seabirds, whales, dolphins, basking sharks and ocean sunfish along the Mass coast. It is an annual fundraising event for the non-profit organization, the **New England Coastal Wildlife Alliance (NECWA)**. All proceeds go to support marine wildlife research and education.

There will be guided wildlife commentary by David Clapp (Natural History Services), Jim Sweeney (South Shore Bird Club) and Joanne Jarzowski (Capt. John Boats). During the trip, there will be a plankton tow and demonstrations, and chumming for seabirds.

Costs

Tickets are \$90 till May 31 and then \$100 after May 31, 2010.

Further Information and Registration

You can go to www.necwa.org, and look for the link to "Seabird and Whale Tales Excursions". For yet more trip information, you can call Krill Carson at NECWA directly at 508-566-0009.

You will have to download the registration form and mail it to NECWA with your payment. No online registration.

Special Hotel Offer. Stay at Hampton Inn & Suites in Plymouth on Saturday night for only \$89 plus tax. Included is an "On the House Hot Breakfast" on Sunday morning as well as shuttle bus service to the boat! If you want to take advantage of this offer, you should call the hotel directly (1-508-747-5000), and make a reservation. Mention the NECWA trip to get the discounted rate.

Broad Brook Coalition Programs

Gentle Bird Walk. Fitzgerald Lake Conservation Area.

Sunday, May 9, 7:30 – 10:30 a.m.

David Peake-Jones leads this walk, aimed primarily at those starting out in birding. We will focus on basic identification of birds by appearance and song. Bring binoculars if you have them, and dress for the weather. Meet at the North Farms Road entrance.

LIBRARY

The HBC Library is 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. Our librarian, **Henry Lappen**, is happy to bring items to meetings, if you give him a few days in advance. You can reach him at library@hampshirebirdclub.org or (413) 549 3722.

Massachusetts Breeding Bird Atlas 2 Interim Report #124: Common Raven

Whatever Common Raven populations may have been in Massachusetts prior to European settlement, the bird was almost entirely extirpated from the state in short order. During the first Breeding Bird Atlas in 1974, ravens were found in only two blocks (both in Berkshire County), and there was no confirmation of breeding. Considering the Common Raven's less-than-appealing habits of stealing grain and pecking the eyes of newborn livestock, their persecution by farmers in bygone days is perhaps understandable.



The first modern confirmation of breeding Common Raven did not come until 1982. Parents feeding newly fledged youngsters at Quabbin Reservoir confirmed that Common Raven was returning to the state. Now, as Atlas 2 surveys proceed, Common Ravens are a regular sight in the western part of the state and are expanding eastward. Berkshire County, the Upper Connecticut River Valley, and Worcester County are all flush with breeding ravens. Essex and Middlesex counties are beginning to see significant activity, as well.

The nests of Common Ravens can usually be found on cliffs and steep escarpments, but they also nest in tall trees on occasion. The nests are composed mainly of twigs, but may also include metal wire, mammal fur, and any number of other interesting additions. Nests may be reused from year to year, either by the same pair or by different birds. After a nest is built or repaired, between three and seven (typically five) eggs are laid and incubated for about three weeks. The chicks develop fairly slowly, and typically do not fledge for five to seven weeks. The fledglings may stay with their parents and receive food from them for as little as one week, or the family may remain together through the winter, sometimes with a yearling assisting in the rearing of next year's brood.

When searching for Common Ravens, tell them apart from crows in flight by their wedge-shaped tails and characteristic soaring flight. Their voice is a deep, hoarse *crawk*, quite unlike the strident *caw* of the American Crow. Ravens are also noticeably larger than crows, but this is not always a reliable character, particularly at a distance.

Common Raven	Atlas 1 (1974)	Atlas 2 (present)
# of Blocks Possible	1	124
# of Blocks Probable	1	35
# of Blocks Confirmed	0	62
Total # of Blocks Occupied	2	221

Excerpted from Massachusetts Audubon Atlas Blog: Distraction Displays.
<http://massaudubonblogs.typepad.com/massbirdatlas/>

That's all for this month.
 Until next month, 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 26, No. 10

June, 2010

Picture yourself birding on a cool, clear June morning in the pristine forests of the Berkshires. You might make out the vivid red splash of a Scarlet Tanager high in the sun-dappled canopy. You might recognize the sound of a squeaky wheelbarrow where no wheelbarrow should be, and pick out a trim Black-and White Warbler working its way over the trunk of a dark, healthy hemlock tree. Further on, a beautiful male Black-throated Green Warbler could be extolling the virtues of "Trees, Trees, Murmuring Trees." You'd likely be drawn into the ferny depths of a watercourse by the ethereal, flute-like tones of a Veery, regarding you shyly from the other side of a tree. You might eventually find the pair of Brown Creepers whose almost imperceptible whisperings have led you on a merry dance through the quiet woods. You might be tempted to leave on this note, to make these gentle and untrammelled moments the memories you will keep of this day.

But you might be beckoned on by the joyous, cascading trills of a tiny bird, surprised as the search for the singer leads you not toward more tranquil depths, but into the harsh glare of the sun, and to within earshot of a road. Stumbling now over fallen trees and tangled brambles, you might ask the still-elusive creature what had possessed it to venture into the devastation of a logging area, and whether it might have considered sparing you this unwelcome reminder of the ways of man. Despairing, ready to turn back, you might suddenly see a small brown bird, not singing now but scuttling back and forth amidst the debris. Fighting the black flies and mosquitoes issuing from stagnant puddles, you might finally discern a pattern in the movements; the urgency so great that the bird, despite its silence, cannot conceal its purpose. As you get beyond the setting, to the real story being told, you might realize that this male Winter Wren is carrying moss and hemlock needles to, of all places, a wheel rut in a logging road. He is lining a tiny spherical opening excavated into the side-wall of the rut. Here, in the spoor of an implacable machine, is an offering this bird is making to its mate. It is one of several nests, amongst which she will choose, and which will allow these creatures to raise young this year.

We would all prefer to have found this bird nesting amidst the roots of a fallen forest giant, in some untouched part of the forest. We would be reassured that at least some part of our planet was "as it should be." But that is not how the world works. The wren survives not by finding the perfect nest site, but by finding something that works. The redwood cannot endure by living forever: it must find a place to regenerate in the world left to it by man. Birds in the gulf cannot survive the oil, but they will find a way back when it is gone.....

The ancient order of things can still be found in nature from time to time. It is often beautiful, and we can be thankful for it when we find it. But we must be even more thankful for tenacity, adaptability, the ability to make-do. These things are the real miracles of the natural world, its only hope, our only hope.



In this edition:

- the **program introduction** and the **schedule** for next year (page 2),
- **field trip reports** and the **trips still to come** this year, and
- some other items of general interest.

I hope you find some of it useful....

NEXT PROGRAM

Monday, June 14 at 7:30 PM

Accompany **Geoff LeBaron** on **The Route to Distant Islands**

An Expedition Across the South Atlantic

Immanuel Lutheran Church; 867 North Pleasant Street, Amherst.

Please join us for an expedition cruising voyage from the southern tip of South America to the southern tip of Africa--4600 nautical miles across some of the most active and un-traveled waters on Earth. Only in recent years have expedition cruising ships had the range to do this amazing trip, filled with seabirds and oceanic wildlife.



We'll visit the storied Falkland Islands, South Georgia (a fascinating and exceptionally beautiful island filled with the lore of Antarctic exploration, whaling, and immense penguin colonies), and Tristan da Cunha, the most remote human outpost on Earth. We end the voyage visiting many locations in Western Cape Province of South Africa, a region bustling with cultural history and an amazing array of endemic species.

Geoff LeBaron has been the Christmas Bird Count Director for the National Audubon Society since 1987. Prior to that, he has worked for the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia, where he was Curator of Collections at Vireo.

Geoff has done field work on birds for Audubon in New Hampshire and Rhode Island, and spent over 3,000 hours conducting aerial surveys of marine mammals, turtles, and birds off the eastern coast of North America. He has been an environmental educator in Rhode Island, and led seabird/whale watches off Cape Cod for three years. Geoff has a B.Sc. from the University of Miami in Florida, and a master's degree in Zoology from the University of Rhode Island.

Geoff has led natural history tours to Alaska, Big Bend and the Texas Hill Country, Baja California, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands, Panama and Costa Rica, the Galapagos Islands and Ecuador, Argentina, the Falkland Islands/Antarctica; and Australia/New Zealand. We know him best as an energetic and committed field trip leader, and our outstanding Program Chair.

2010-2011 Provisional Program Schedule

September 13, 2010. John Green. My Favorite Slides.

October 18, 2010. Sam Fried. Florida Birds & Wildlife.

November 8, 2010. Josh Rose. Birds of the Lower Rio Grande Valley.

December 13, 2010 . Members Meeting. Slideshow.

January 10, 2011. To Be Announced.

February 14, 2011. Tom Bancroft. Bird Research in Florida/White-crowned Pigeons

March 14, 2011. Don Kroodsma. (topic to be determined).

April 11, 2011. Scott Surner. HBC Yellowstone trip.

May 9, 2011. John Kricher. Speciation of Birds in the Neotropics.

June 13, 2011. David Spector/John Van de Graaff. (topic to be determined).

FIELD TRIP REPORTS

Connecticut River to Mount Sugarloaf. Sunday, May 2.

Dave Mako.

Black-and-White was the warbler of the day on Mt. Sugarloaf, heard from seemingly everywhere as the morning opened with a fresh wave of migrants. But **Worm-eating Warbler** was the star - it teed up nicely and sang for the intrepid group of 5 HBC birders. Other warblers were surprisingly sparse, but we did have a good vireo show, including a **Yellow-throated Vireo** for which Nancy Goodman provided great visual directions: "Look at the sun, and then a little bit to the left..."

We saw a kettle of 5 broad-winged hawks circling past the mountain and a nice variety of other birds. Harvey Allen helped refresh our memories on the calls of a few First of the Year birds that we couldn't find in the early foliage: Great-crested Flycatcher, Rose-breasted Grosbeak and Yellow Warbler. Perhaps the most interesting avian interactions were between an adult Bald Eagle that wandered into Mt. Sugarloaf airspace, a Common Raven that raced back to the cliff to guard its nest and a **Peregrine Falcon** that flew up to intercept the intruder and turn it away. A total of fifty species were logged during the morning walk on a beautiful spring day.

Dave Mako



Moody Bridge Road. Sunday May 16.

Mary Alice Wilson and Sally Hills

Two dozen birders braved perfect weather conditions to visit a former horse farm on Moody Bridge Road – now part of the Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge. We had two goals: (a) to see and hear as many birds as possible and (b) to provide the Conte staff with suggestions for the management of this early-successional shrub land. We accomplished both. Special birds included: Least and Willow Flycatcher, **Brown Thrasher**, Blue-winged- and Yellow Warblers, Field Sparrow, and Indigo Bunting. Along the forest edge were 2 Red-tailed Hawks in a tree, one briefly-seen Cooper's Hawk, Wood Thrush and Scarlet Tanager singing, and both **Orchard** and Baltimore Oriole.

Mary Alice Wilson



Mt Holyoke: Birds and Wildflowers. May 18th, 2010.

Tom Gagnon

Twelve people made the trek up the venerable old hill. We had great looks at **Cerulean Warblers**: not one but three (two males and a female near the top of the mountain). Not to be content with this, we got eye level views of a singing male **Tennessee Warbler** and a Hermit Thrush sang right over our heads! There were also great views of a singing **Yellow-throated Vireo** and a fly-by **Black-billed Cuckoo**. To add to the color of the day, the male Indigo Buntings were brilliant and vocal along with several Rose-breasted Grosbeaks. Several Scarlet Tanagers came close with one female actually gathering nesting material 12 feet away from us! Wildflowers were of interest to several members on the walk and were enjoyed by all.

Tom Gagnon



Poor Man's Monhegan (Plum Island). Saturday, May 29.

Bob Bieda.

Six Hampshire Bird Club members tallied seventy nine (79) species on a very nice late spring day on Plum Island. Highlights included both **Seaside-** and **Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrows**, **Orchard Oriole** on and about a nest, **Sora** calling in the marsh and good views of **Piping Plover**. Generally the birding was quiet with no fallouts, late migrants or recent rarities (White-faced Ibis, Wilson's Phalaropes, Purple Gallinule) present.

Bob Bieda

COMING FIELD TRIPS

Wednesday, June 9. Birds and Fishes

Let's check out the Connecticut River at the Holyoke Fish Ladder for some fish eating birds and we will also check in on the Shad Run. Hopefully, if we are real lucky, we will get to see an Atlantic Salmon. Meet at the "Park and Ride" parking lot in Northampton on Bridge Street near the Northampton Airport at 12:30 p.m. and car-pool from there. Questions? Please call Tom Gagnon at 413-584-6353.

Saturday, June 12. Hammonasset Beach State Park, CT. All day. Betsy Higgins goes to the coast of Connecticut to find sparrows, rails, and other seaside denizens. Call Betsy (413-586-7585) for meeting time and place as the date approaches. (E)

Sunday, June 13. Atlas Blockbusting trip. Half day. Join a team that spends the morning scouring North Adams 5 (Route 2 and up the slopes of Mt Greylock). Contact Dave Gross (dgross@biochem.umass.edu or 413-253 2897) if you are interested. Block-busting provides both a great day of birding and a great contribution to the Massachusetts Breeding Bird Atlas. (E)

Saturday, June 26. Atlas Blockbusting trip (2). Half day. Help collect breeding bird data in a unique location: North Adams 6 (top of Greylock and east to the edge of Adams). Contact Mike Locher (mlocher@yahoo.com or 413-585-5864) if you are interested. Block-busting provides both a great day of birding and a great contribution to the Massachusetts Breeding Bird Atlas. (E)

***Saturday, August 7. Knightsville Dam.** Half day. Betsy Higgins leads a new trip to Knightsville Dam WMA. This is a rich habitat where almost anything could turn up. Call Betsy (413-586-7585) for meeting details. (E)

Saturday, August 21. New South Beach. 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. Note: the date may change depending on the tides. Call Bob (413-527-2623) to register. (M)

NEW BOARD

The AGM on May 10 of this year was, as usual, an epic affair. Egged on by a **Red Poll** showing he could **Whip-Poor-Will** in the **primaries**, a rather **Cross-Bill** was quick to **Shrike**.

"He may have had a **Little Stint** in office, but the voters are more than a **Bitterned** off right now. I never **Sora** a politician show so **Little Egret** for his failed policies. When it comes to the deficit, voters want a **Sharp-shinned Hawk**, not a **Mourning Dove**. We don't need some **Scarlet Tanager** huffin' and **Puffin** his way through another term. We want a **Greater Sage**. **Grouse** all you want, then vote for me: **Razor Bill!**"

After all that, the following were elected to the Board for 2010-2011:

President: *Scott Surner*

VP/Program Chair - *Geoff LeBaron*

Membership Secretary - *Sue Emerson*

Treasurer - *Janice Jorgensen*

Communications Secretary - *Elissa Rubinstein*

Members-at-Large:

Jan Ortiz

Bruce Hart

David Peake-Jones

Jaap van Heerden

Joe Wicinski

Mike Locher

LIBRARY

If you need some light reading to while away the long summer days, 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 meetings, given a few days notice! Call him at **(413) 549 3722**.

ATLAS

Your long-suffering Atlas regional coordinator, Mary Alice Wilson, is strangely quiet this month. However, it goes without saying that these are the salad days for Atlas work. You can hardly step outside your door without finding birds procreating. So enjoy the work and push for as much as you can this month! Note again the following opportunities to “Bust a Block.”

Sunday, June 13. Half day. Join a team that spends the morning scouring North Adams 5 (Route 2 and up the slopes of Mt Greylock). Contact Dave Gross (dgross@biochem.umass.edu or 413-253 2897) if you are interested.

Saturday, June 26. Half day. The group will cover some unique territory: North Adams 6 (top of Greylock and east to the edge of Adams). Contact Mike Locher (mlocher@yahoo.com or 413-585-5864) if you are interested.

BROAD BROOK PROGRAMS

Non-Native Invasive Species - What's the Big Deal? *Janet Bissell.*

Sunday, June 13, 1 p.m.

Fitzgerald Lake Conservation Area, North Farms Road, Northampton.

Join Janet on a walk around Fitzgerald Lake and explore the non-native invasive plants that have become unwelcome guests in the lake and the surrounding woods and fields. Learn why some non-native plants become invasive and why they are a threat to our native habitats. We will talk about the identification of invasive species as well as their natural histories and some strategies for coping with them.

HITCHCOCK PROGRAMS

Coyotes Are Everywhere! *Laura Hajduk, Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife.*

Thursday, June 10, 7 to 8:30 p.m.

Herb Walk: Wild Plants and their Roles as Medicines and Foods: *Chris Marano, Herbalist.*

Saturday, July 24, 9 a.m. to 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.

Seabird & Whale Tale Trip Sunday, June 13th. 8 am - 4 pm

Departing from Plymouth Town Pier, Plymouth Harbor, MA

This is an all day (rough or smooth) marine excursion aboard a 110' whale-watching vessel to view seabirds, whales, dolphins, basking sharks and ocean sunfish along the Mass coast. It is an annual fundraising event for the non-profit organization, the **New England Coastal Wildlife Alliance (NECWA)**. All proceeds go to support marine wildlife research and education. There will be guided wildlife commentary by David Clapp (Natural History Services), Jim Sweeney (South Shore Bird Club) and Joanne Jarzowski (Capt. John Boats). During the trip, there will be a plankton tow and demonstrations, and chumming for seabirds.

Costs

Tickets are \$90 till May 31 and then \$100 after May 31, 2010.

Further Information and Registration

You can go to www.necwa.org, and look for the link to "Seabird and Whale Tales Excursions". For yet more trip information, you can call Krill Carson at NECWA directly at 508-566-0009.

You will have to download the registration form and mail it to NECWA with your payment. No online registration.

Special Hotel Offer. Stay at Hampton Inn & Suites in Plymouth on Saturday night for only \$89 plus tax. Included is an "On the House Hot Breakfast" on Sunday morning as well as shuttle bus service to the boat! If you want to take advantage of this offer, you should call the hotel directly (1-508-747-5000), and make a reservation. Mention the NECWA trip to get the discounted rate.

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 is about it for now. I hope you will have a wonderful summer, to which end I offer you a brief but well-earned respite from this publication until mid- August when, as the nighthawks reach the peak of their exodus, hawk migration looms, and the kids get ready to return to school, HBC will swing into action again. We will once again ask you to reach into your wallets to make a small but critical contribution to our coffers, and Mike will once again come up with a tantalizing selection of field trips for the fall. Our first program of the new club year will feature local photographer and naturalist John Green showing us some of his favorite images on September 13.

I will leave you (if you will but turn to the next page) with what seems to me a suitably optimistic interim report from the Bird Atlas.

Till next time, as always, talk softly and carry a big scope!

David Peake-Jones, Editor

529 9541

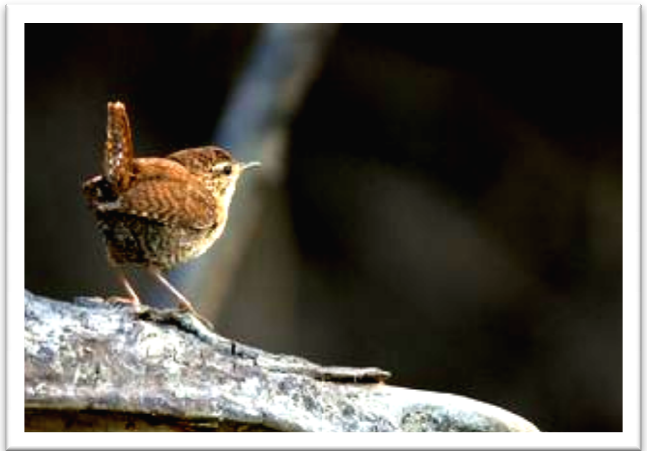
newsletter@hampshirebirdclub.org

MASSACHUSETTS BREEDING BIRD ATLAS (2)

Interim Report #139: Winter Wren

The scientific name of the Winter Wren, *Troglodytes troglodytes*, conjures to mind images of a brutish, savage, and primitive creature. Winter Wrens are none of these things; rather, they are tiny and elusive birds whose vibrant and ebullient song has enchanted generations of birders. The Latin name originates from the Winter Wren's attraction to holes, crevices, and other cavelike openings in their old-growth forest habitat.

Winter Wrens inhabit stands of mature and old-growth conifers wherever they occur. As one might expect, such forests occurred in very few places indeed once the face of the landscape was transformed by farming. For many years, Winter Wrens found refuge in the high montane forests of the Berkshires, but as the woods of Massachusetts have aged, Winter Wrens have reclaimed maturing forests across the state.



The Northern Connecticut River Valley and the northern part of Worcester County are now inundated with Winter Wrens which, though tiny and found within the deepest, darkest woods, can still be found without too much trouble by the prepared Atlaser. The reason for this, of course, is their exceptional song, seemingly far too large to come from such a tiny bird. It is somewhat variable, but is always a high-pitched series of pleasing melodic whistles and trills. The first males arrive in April, but courtship and nest-building are not usually underway in earnest until May. The male leads the female to any one of the several nests he has built, and if she approves of the location, she will accept it and begin work on completing the nest. The nest is often located amongst the exposed roots of a downed tree, but may also be in cavities of standing trees, rotting logs, hanging moss, the banks of a creek, or simply sitting out on the branch of a tree. Nests are quite large and their entrances rather small, with the actual nest cup being lined with soft fur and feathers.

The female lays four to seven eggs and incubates them for a little over two weeks on average. The nestlings are fed mostly beetles found crawling over the fallen, rotting trees that are typical of old growth forests. Their diet is often supplemented with caterpillars, true bugs, ticks, spiders, and the occasional water insect. The young birds fledge after about 19 days, but the parents continue to travel with and feed them for some time after that. Most young and adults alike migrate south for the winter when the weather cools in October, but some hardy individuals do appear in the winter, mostly in the southeast.

Winter Wren	Atlas 1	Atlas 2
# Blocks Possible	15	90
# Blocks Probable	76	195
# Blocks Confirmed	26	56
Total # Blocks Occupied	143	410

Excerpted from Massachusetts Audubon Atlas Blog: Distraction Displays.
<http://massaudubonblogs.typepad.com/massbirdatlas/>



Amherst, Massachusetts
Hampshire Bird Club, Inc.
www.hampshirebirdclub.org
Volume 27, No. 1

September, 2010.

Hampshire Bird Club is embarking on its 27th year and, my goodness, there is some serious vibrancy in this organization! This fall, we have some quality field trips happening, including a new nocturnal offering that may knock your socks off! Geoff LeBaron has put together another tantalizing set of speakers to incite our curiosity, including a big name or two, and the club is breaking new ground through the Education Committee, which seeks to bring the wonders of birds and birding to a wider audience.

Your first task is to help us get the new year off to a flying start financially, and deal with a couple of other simple administrative tasks to make all our lives easier. Membership dues finance the programs for which we are justly famous, and the other costs of keeping our plucky little organization going. Your membership status is shown on the cover page, and will tell you if you need to pay dues this year.

- 1) Choose your membership contribution for this year,
- 2) Make a donation for the work of the Education Committee if you wish,
- 3) Complete the Membership Form and the Field Trip Release Form on the back,
- 4) Check the "Bird Finding In Western MA" form (sign up for the Rare Bird Alert if you wish), and
- 5) Mail all these things (with your check if necessary) to the club, or bring them along on Sept. 13.

Your membership status is shown on the cover page. Please renew before October 1 by mail, or at the September meeting. Thanks!

NEXT PROGRAM

Monday, September 13 at 7:30 PM

John Green shares **My Favorite Slides**

Immanuel Lutheran Church; 867 North Pleasant Street, Amherst.

John Green needs little introduction for members of HBC. John is a local but widely travelled wildlife photographer and naturalist. He has presented natural history programs both locally at Hitchcock and further afield, and takes photographs of outstanding beauty. He is also well known to many of us for running the compilation (complete with avian sound effects) for the Northampton Christmas Count.

His favorite slides just might be worth seeing.....!

COMING PROGRAMS

Oct 18, 2010 Sam Fried

Florida Birds & Wildlife.

Nov 8, 2010 Josh Rose

Birds of the Lower Rio Grande Valley.

Dec 13, 2010 Members' Meeting Members Slide Show

Jan 10, 2011. Joanna Bailey-Hodgman/Jo Miles Shuman. A Spicing of Birds: Poems by Emily Dickinson.

FIELD TRIP REPORTS

Monhegan Island. Memorial Day Weekend. 2010.

Marty Espinola, Rachel Greenwood, Isabel Higgins, Leslie Hoffmann, Rick McNeil, Marcia Merithew, Ed Olmstead, Lou Peugh, Josh Rose, Ilana Schmitt, Judy Smith, Sandy Woodrow, **Betsy Higgins** and **Andrew Magee**.

This year's Memorial Day Weekend field trip to Monhegan Island had its drama, but almost none of it referred to any bird sighting on the island itself. (The tally tied, perhaps, with my lowest recorded numbers ever at 95, and the birds' quantity and general visibility in the remarkably advanced foliage were similarly low. The early migration and lack of any real fall-outs seemed to be the deal).

My own drama came and went with remarkable speed: a too-long piece of rare roast beef (being consumed in the dining rooms of the Trailing Yew) became caught in my windpipe, and was expelled only after a deft Heimlich maneuver was performed on me by our own Ilana Schmitt M.D. I note that this report and all others in which I now partake and shall ever after, are in the post-Heimlich era of my life (assuming I am to have but one Heimlich, that is). Praise be to God and Ilana!

Having said all that, there was a remarkably available view of a spring **Philadelphia Vireo** (uncommon) for a few of us. And a fairly brief visit by a very-rare spring **Western Kingbird**, seen by many. There were also boat birds to see, despite the many misses. (It was not that we were not "ept." In our whole time there, there were only three species reported as seen on the island, that we did not see!)

The side trip to see the puffins on Eastern Egg Rock was extremely successful: not too wavy, and probably 80 or so Atlantic Puffins, many very close for good photography. (There are now 108 breeding pairs of puffins on the island, the most ever). Especially beautiful was a lovely little blood-red-billed **Arctic Tern** floating on a piece of driftwood right in front of the boat.

The weather was peachy, the lilacs and lupine show unbelievably rich the island ultra-charming, and the company kind, gracious, fun and cooperative. Thanks in particular to Josh Rose for his steady increase in our bird species numbers.

Andrew Magee



We will have to wait till October to read Leslie's charming account of the **Knightville Dam** trip. Ed.

COMING TRIPS

Please see the attached **Fall Field Trip Schedule**.

THE GULF: FIRST HAND

Shawn Carey, who has spoken to the Hampshire Bird Club in the past, felt he needed to see the devastation caused by the Deepwater Horizon disaster first hand. He visited the Louisiana coast in late July, where he inspected various locations, including Brown Pelican colonies, and interviewed local fishermen, park rangers, and others. This is disturbing stuff, but Shawn hopes that by educating themselves on the catastrophe, birders will be better able to participate in the far-ranging debate we, as Americans, must have on the issue. Please visit Shawn's website at www.shawnpcarey.com, where he has posted several folios of photographs from the gulf, as well as an account of his visit.

Shawn is hoping to present the information and visual media he collected on his trip to local audiences in New England. HBC is negotiating with other conservation organizations in the valley to see if we can co-sponsor Shawn's program. Stay tuned!

EDUCATION COMMITTEE REACHES OUT

How to attract more young people to birding? Do most HBC presentations really hold childrens' interest? How do we get kids out into the field? What to do when physical issues due to aging, illness or accident won't allow one to participate at meetings or in the field as before?

In answer to these troubling questions, the HBC board has created an Education Committee to function in an outreach capacity. We hope that, through innovative, targeted programming and collaboration with other organizations we can help address these issues.

School presentations, senior walks and programs, live bird interactions (captive and wild), visits to raptor centers, learning about falconry, organizing boy & girl scout merit badge events, member workshops, purchasing and/or reading natural history and bird books to children, these are just a few of the ideas on the table. You can donate to support the work of the committee via your membership form, but just as importantly, we need your input and energy. What ideas do you have? Let us know! Or better still, join the committee! Contact **Bruce Hart**: bhart@hampshirebirdclub.org or call 584-4176.

"The purpose of the HBC is to help members and the general public enjoy birding and to educate them about birds, bird watching, and bird habitats."
(HBC Bylaws)

Welcome New Members

Here are the folks who have joined us for the first time during this calendar year. They receive membership for 2010-2011 free of charge!

Sara Haynes	Amherst	Bobbin Young and Eric Wheeler	Williamsburg
Kate and Peter Lamdin	Pelham	Nidhin Joseph	Amherst
Catherine Volpe-Proctor	Belchertown	Jamie & Galen Frank-Bishop and Dan Frank	Plainfield
Loiuse Colligan	Amherst	John and Linda Danielson	Amherst
Todd Wiley	Turners Falls	Frank Valier	Springfield
Joanne Dwyer	Leeds	Richard and Sally White	Northampton
Ilana Schmitt	Amherst	Ray Chapin	Greenfield
David Brown	Warwick, MA		
Rama Janaswamy	Amherst		

NEWSLETTER AVAILABLE ON LINE

Though all members receive this first newsletter of the year as a hard copy via USPS, over half our members last year read most of the newsletters on-line.

This creates important savings in printing and postal costs for the club, and reduces the wear and tear on the editorial staff. It's really rather simple. For each month from October through June, on-line recipients receive a reminder email when the newsletter is posted, and read/download it via a link at the HBC Website. If this turns out not to work for you, a simple communication to the Membership Secretary will return you to the comforting world of the paper newsletter. If you want to continue with the on-line newsletter, or try it for the first time, please check the box on this year's membership form.

Thank you!

That is all we have space for this month.

The following page is devoted to remembering Chris Ellison. You can learn more about Chris' relationship to the landscapes of the Quabbin at "Birding Central Massachusetts and Beyond" (tpirro.blogspot.com, entry from August 4). There is also a link there to some of Chris' writings.

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

Remembering Chris Ellison

Chris, a long-time member of HBC, died late in July. We at Hampshire Bird Club saw only part of this talented and enigmatic man, but his passing leaves a space that is unlikely ever to be filled.

Chris was a fixture at bird club programs in recent years. He invariably sat close to the front, often in his trademark suspenders and sometimes with his binoculars on, as if there might be a sighting even during the meeting. He could be relied upon to question the speaker perceptively, putting more than one of them (pleasantly) on the spot over the years! He was also perhaps the most active field birder in the recent history of the club, sometimes signing up for trips a year in advance. Geoff LeBaron and Tom Gagnon remember, *"Usually when a trip was posted, I would expect to hear from Chris within an hour, or certainly on the first evening. He often signed up for every one of series of newly posted trips."* and, *"Chris was ALWAYS the first to sign up for our Quabbin Reservoir trips. It was his favorite place to spend a day in the field."*

Car journeys with Chris were a hoot. He had an extraordinary repertoire of comedy and music and would seize the slightest opening to launch into anything from a critique of a Black Sabbath album to a rendition of some sketch long-lost to the scourge of reality TV. His tastes ranged from Benny Hill to Stanley Kubrick, missing no corner in between, tied impeccably to the conversation at hand, and at a pace that could be exhausting. He was not only a master of content, but also of accent, bringing anyone from a New York cab driver to a Scottish highlander to life at will. Tom Gagnon recalls, *"Chris and I also connected in another field - British comedy. We both loved 'Keeping Up Appearances' and 'Are You Being Served?'. He would often address me as Captain Peacock, and I would reply, 'Yes, Rumbolt.'"*

Larry Therrien tells us that, despite living so far from the customary assembly points for trips, Chris would frequently spend several hours owling before a trip, and that the two of them often birded together before anyone else showed up. Chris Buelow confides that he had to dissuade Chris from starting his East Quabbin Bird Club trips at 4 AM, in an effort to spare the potential participants! Few could fail to notice his oversized binoculars, and the gunstock-mounted scope he took with him to the coast or the Berkshire lakes, nor the way he assiduously packed it into its travel case between every stop on a trip.

Chris was a relentlessly curious, intrepid birder, far more concerned with the aesthetics of birds, and the intricate relationship between birds and landscape than he was with the length of a bird list. He clearly found beauty in the natural world, and would share simple, yet often profound impressions about the color of a fall Bobolink, or the motion of a Short-eared Owl, insights which left us vowing to pay better attention next time. Not surprisingly, he was a key player in the East Quabbin Land Trust and loved the landscapes of Hardwick deeply. He could describe every conservation holding in his town and the changes taking place in them, often down to the level of individual shrubs.

Underlying Chris' potent sense of humor was a gentle capacity for teaching and sharing. Chris Buelow reminds us that Chris could often be found on a bird trip, patiently assisting a new birder with the vagaries of using binoculars or locating subtle field marks. Bob Bieda recollects, *"Along with his engaging wit and robust enthusiasm, what most comes to my mind about Chris was that he always made you feel special. We were special in his eyes and he will be in mine."*

Chris, you have left us too soon, but we are thankful for the time we shared with you. We can say farewell only through these words and in the quiet of our own memories. There will be a place reserved for you on the next three Quabbin trips, so you do not need to call. We will think of you as the first hawks soar over Barre Mountain in September, and we will hear your voice in the woods and fields, always. Hbc

Date received:	Payment: ___ cash, ___ check, \$ _____	Release Form signed?	Newsletter Choice?	Data entered:
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For administrative purposes only

HAMPSHIRE BIRD CLUB, INC. MEMBERSHIP FORM: 2010-2011

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

Name(s):	<p>Please select ONE of the two options below to receive the newsletter:</p> <p>_____ I will download the newsletter from the HBC Website (club will send monthly reminders)</p> <p>_____ Send me the newsletter via US mail</p> <p>Please check any activities listed below in Which you would like to participate:</p> <p>_____ Occasionally provide refreshments</p> <p>_____ Conservation Committee</p> <p>_____ Field Trip Committee</p> <p>_____ Lead field trips</p> <p>_____ Share information on birding locations</p> <p>_____ Education Committee</p> <p>_____ Other (describe)</p>
Address:	
City:	
State: ZIP:	
Home Phone(s):	
Work Phone(s):	
E-mail(s)	
Please check this box ONLY to exclude your contact information from the published club membership list (distributed to members only) <input type="checkbox"/>	

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 @ \$18.00

\$ _____
\$ _____

Family @ \$30.00

MEMBERSHIP – SUPPORTING: Tax deductible

Downy Woodpecker @ \$40.00

\$ _____

Northern Flicker @ \$60.00

\$ _____

Red-bellied Woodpecker @ \$100.00

\$ _____

Pileated Woodpecker @ \$250.00 or more

\$ _____

OUTREACH ACTIVITY

Donation to Education Committee (Optional)

\$ _____

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.

RELEASE FORM: 2010-2011

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 between August 31, 2010 and October 1, 2011.

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

.....
(Signatures of all participating family members)

Please print names:

Bird Sightings in Western Massachusetts

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 **1-781 259 8805**

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 HBC Rare Bird Alert (RBA).

This operates by email ONLY. You will need at least one active email address.

To join before October 11:

Fill in the form below. Return it with your membership form or turn it in at the Sept./Oct. meetings.

To join anytime:

Provide name/s and email address/es to the HBC Webmaster at webmaster@hampshirebirdclub.org

.....

Rare Bird Alert (RBA) Form: 2010-2011

Date: _____

Name(s): _____

You may provide as many email addresses as you like (within reason, please). Participants automatically receive all RBA announcements.

email address/es (1) _____

(2) _____



Hampshire Bird Club, Inc. Amherst, Massachusetts

www.hampshirebirdclub.org

Volume 27, No. 2

October, 2010.

October brings shortening days, welcome rain, and sometimes phenomenal movements of birds heading south. The meadows and other habitats in the valley play host to an ever-changing host of migrants at this time of year. We have seen the massive hosts of Broad-winged Hawks, swirling like eddies into a funnel, gradually ebbing away to the south, we are now seeing the tail end of the song-and shore-bird migrations, and soon, we'll be watching the waterfowl making their own way south.

It's a time for the determined and aesthetically-minded birder. Gone are the gaudy, singing males of spring, and in their place, eclipsed adults and ratty-looking juveniles, seeking nothing more than a surreptitious retreat to warmer climes. Gone is the riotous extravaganza of new life we see in May, and in its place, the valley gently sheds its summer finery for the bare bones of winter. At this time of year, we have to search hard in unlikely places. We must brave the potato trucks in the meadows, seeking out the smallest puddles, for the avian jewels that gleam in the muddy shallows, and we must distinguish the silhouettes of falcons and accipiters against the crystalline blue horizons of the fall.

In this edition:

- our **next program** on October 18 (introduction on page 2),
- **field trip reports** and **coming trips**,
- the **HBC Field Trip Policy and Guidelines**, and
- a few other tidbits. I hope you find some of it useful!

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS!!!!

The HBC season is now well underway and memberships are now overdue. If you wish to join for the first time this year, or have yet to renew, please do so at or before the October meeting. Membership forms can be downloaded at the HBC website, and will be available at the October meeting.

NEWSLETTER AVAILABLE ON LINE

Last year, over half our members read most of the newsletters on-line!

This creates important savings in printing and postal costs for the club, and reduces the wear and tear on the editorial staff. It's really rather simple! For each month from October through June, on-line recipients receive a reminder email when the newsletter is posted, and read/download it via a link at the HBC Website. If this turns out not to work for you, a simple communication to the Membership Secretary will return you to the comforting world of the paper newsletter. **If you want to continue with the on-line newsletter, or try it for the first time, please check the box on this year's membership form.**

Thank you!

COMING PROGRAMS

(This month's program is introduced on Page 2).

Nov 8, 2010. Josh Rose. Birds of the Lower Rio Grande Valley.

Dec 13, 2010. Members' Meeting. Members Slide Show.

Jan 10, 2011. Joanna Bailey-Hodgman & Jo Miles Shuman. Birds in the Poems of Emily Dickinson.

NEXT PROGRAM

Monday, October 18 at 7:30 PM

Sam Fried discovers **Winter Birds of Florida**

Immanuel Lutheran Church; 867 North Pleasant Street, Amherst.

Traveling along the east coast of Florida from St. Augustine to the Everglades, I visited some of the best birding spots in the state and came up with a bundle of excellent photographs of our feathered buddies that make Florida their winter home, as well as a few rarities. Sit back and enjoy the splendor of Florida's winter wildlife.

Sam Fried is a Past-President of Hartford Audubon Society. He has published hundreds of photographs and over 50 feature articles published in field guides, books, newspapers and magazines worldwide, including *National Audubon*, *Birder's World*, *Bird Watcher's Digest*, *Birding* and *Living Bird Quarterly*. Sam wrote several chapters of the *Insight Guides* book on birding in North America, published by *The Discovery Channel* and is now a golf and fishing writer as well! As if the foregoing were not enough, Sam founded *Flights of Fancy Adventures, Inc.*, a birding, photography, natural history and golf travel company offering trips to North, Central and South American destinations.

Sam has seen 738 bird species in North America, and photographed 717 of those!

FIELD TRIP REPORTS

Saturday, August 7, 2010. Knightville Dam (Huntington, MA).

Betsy Higgins, Ann Lombard, Helga Beatty, Sally Hills, Leslie Hoffmann, Nidhin Joseph, David Peake-Jones

The day featured blue skies, low humidity, gentle breezes, and a very respectable number of birds.

Knightville Dam, built along the Westfield River, fills only in the spring. By early summer, the basin is open and dry save for the lovely and meandering river. Soon thereafter, plants spring up with great vigor to coat the valley floor. Unfortunately, these include a whole series of invasive species such as Japanese Knotweed, Black Swallow-wort and a little known but scary newcomer called Chocolate Vine (*Akebia quinata*). Even so, beauty persists. As summer begins to draw to a close, Joe Pye Weed has turned lowland areas into a sea of mauve. The river—featuring gentle rapids, a few natural beaches, some tempting-looking swimming holes, and numerous intriguing rock formations—winds placidly along, disturbed (on this morning) only by the strafing of swallows and Cedar Waxwings snapping up insects for breakfast.

As it happens, we were treated to this beautiful new birding spot courtesy of the Massachusetts Breeding Bird Survey. Located in Huntington, Knightville Dam is one of the blocks that Betsy Higgins has been surveying for the past several years. Our first stop at the lip of the basin featured a woodland border and an impressive view of the flood plain before us. We found American Redstart, Black and White Warbler, Yellow Warbler, Common Yellow Throat, Gray Catbird, Cedar Waxwing, Baltimore Oriole, Rose-Breasted Grosbeak, American Goldfinch, Blue-Headed Vireo, Red-Eyed Vireo, Ruby-Throated Hummingbird, Alder Flycatcher, Least Flycatcher, Willow Flycatcher, and two **Green Herons** (likely juveniles) perched on a snag.

Moving further down into the basin, we were treated to the aerial antics of Tree, Bank, and Barn Swallows, and spied a hawk perched atop a dead tree. After much consideration (and thanks to the bird finally revealing its tail in full spread), we determined that this was a **Broadwinged Hawk**—one of three spied that day and the first of two excellent looks at this same raptor.

Back on the road, we crossed a small bridge over a fingerlet of the river in order to get a better look at it. Here we spied a male Indigo Bunting, disturbed the—in MY opinion—rather hysterical boundary issues of a Belted Kingfisher [☺], and were chided by the raucous calls of American Crows.

Returning to the main road, we drove north along the basin to a parking area for the 6 mile-long East Branch Trail connecting the Knightville Dam flood plain with Chesterfield Gorge. The trail loosely follows the path of the Westfield River, through a variety of habitats. Highlights of this stage included the guttural rasps of a Common Raven, the spotting of another unidentified accipiter, 2 Black-Throated Green Warblers, soaring Turkey Vultures, 2 **Spotted Sandpipers**, and the somewhat distant but persistent calls of what Betsy was later able to confirm was a **Yellow-Billed Cuckoo**.

Other birds seen and/or heard during our trip included Rock Dove, Downy Woodpecker, Flicker, Black-Capped Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, White-Breasted Nuthatch, Northern Cardinal, Blue Jay, Eastern Towhee, Eastern Kingbird, and last but not least, a female **Bobolink**. Our morning's species count came to 42 plus the unidentified accipiter. Speaking for the group, our thanks go out to Betsy for sharing her new-found birding spot with us. I predict that, in the months and years to come, Knightville Dam will become a frequent destination for a growing number of HBC-ers.

Leslie Hoffmann



Saturday, August 21, 2010. New South Beach, Chatham.

Bob Bieda, Sue Emerson, Sally Hills, Helga Beatty, Andrew Magee, David Peake-Jones.

We were blessed with a beautiful day as we motored out of Outermost Harbor marine and sped off parallel to New South Beach toward our drop-off point. As we approached the southern end of the beach, we were reminded of the eternally shifting landscape in this part of the world. We could see that the channel which existed as recently as two years ago between South Monomoy Island and the beach is now entirely silted in, and South Monomoy is now effectively part of the mainland.

Alighting on the sandy beach, now much quieter than it was when boats could use the now closed channel to the ocean, we started out to the south, exploring several bays with a scattering of shorebirds. These included good numbers of **White-rumped Sandpipers**, who obligingly posed with their smaller and stockier brethren, allowing us the comforting (but all too fleeting) impression that we could actually tell the difference! We found our largest aggregations of shorebirds at what is now a cul-de-sac at the isthmus between South Monomoy and New South Beach. We were delighted to discover at least 220 **Red Knot**, many still with the apricot breasts of their breeding plumage on the shore of South Monomoy. This would be a great number even during the traditional height of their migration in July, and to find these beleaguered creatures in this abundance so late in the season was just fantastic. Close by, we found at least four **Hudsonian Godwits**, and two **Marbled Godwits**, plying the water with their rapier-like bills. A **Black Tern** loped by overhead, and we caught glimpses of an immature male Northern Harrier stalking the dunes.

Moving back along the beach, we found a scarcity of shorebirds, but the usual suspects were certainly present, from the diminutive and warmly colored Least Sandpipers to the peripatetic Sanderlings, Semi-palmated Sandpipers, and lanky Greater Yellowlegs. Ruddy Turnstones were unusually abundant, and we enjoyed the boisterous antics of several families of **American Oystercatchers**. Whimbrels strolled in and of the dune grass and terns were in abundance, in all stages of maturity, including good numbers of slender-billed **Roseate Terns** with their long tails and pale backs. We found another Black Tern, and amongst the hosts of burly gulls was a perky **Bonaparte's Gull** which allowed us a brief perusal before vanishing. Unable to resist the lure of the ocean, we slogged across the dunes to the ocean beach at one point, and were told by a birder who had been there some time that we had just missed watching a whale, remarkably close inshore, tail-slapping for some ten minutes. We had heard this sound from the inshore side, but had failed to understand its significance. We caught a few glimpses of two **Humpback Whales**, more sedate now, swimming amid a myriad of curious boaters.

We also spied several **Wilson's Storm-Petrels** and a couple of **Manx Shearwaters** skimming the wave tops close inshore, but there was no sign of the Great White Shark which has been frequenting these waters for much of the summer.

After the traditional death march towards the end of the day, we managed to arrive at the boat pick-up right on time, and were soon enjoying a variety of unhealthy fare at the Cream and Kone. You just can't have a bad day on New South Beach, and we left well satisfied.

David Peake-Jones



September 18, 2010. East Meadows.

Bob Bieda, Howie Foerstein, Jan Lamberg, Mary Lou Splain, Andria Wolf, Arn Krugman, Juliana Vanderwielen, Betsy Higgins, David Peake-Jones.

Our little caravan wended its way into the meadows at the very civilized time of 7:50 AM. At this early stage of the day there was a light northerly breeze, and the story of the early morning was a series of **American Kestrels**, an **Osprey**, and at least three **Merlins** migrating determinedly over the cornfields. One of these paused close to us in a tree, to our great delight. We made our way over to the business end of Hockanum Road, and then picked our way along the ORV highways of the meadows, which gradually gave up their secrets. At least two **Lincoln's Sparrows** gave meager glimpses to a few of us, by contrast with several **Swamp- and White-throated Sparrows** which were much more accommodating.

At Hockanum Ponds we saw a Green Heron devour a frog, and took a moment to speculate over a curious looking raptor, which turned out to be a Red-tailed Hawk with no belly band. We found an **Indigo Bunting** doing a tremulous post-breeding version of its song, and already having shed most of its breeding splendor for the starting chestnut of the fall. Likewise, there were several **Scarlet Tanagers** looking distinctly yellow, Blue-headed and Warbling Vireos (the latter still singing avidly), Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, and a couple of Belted Kingfishers. There was a scattering of warblers, including a **Connecticut Warbler**, seen by only a couple of people despite a determined stakeout.

By the time we returned to the cars in late morning, we had tallied 50 species. Not an easy day's birding, but, as with most things, the rarity of the rewards only makes the experience all the richer. Oh, and by the way, here is an excerpt from Tom Gagnon's log from Goat Peak that same day: "*Broad-winged hawk: 5106.*" WOW!

David Peake-Jones

COMING TRIPS

(Please see also the Fall Field Trip Schedule)

Friday, October 29. Saw-whet Owls. Evening.

Janice Jorgensen and Sue Emerson will join Strickland Wheelock and crew at Lookout Rock in Northbridge, MA for an evening of netting and banding Saw-whet Owls. Visitors help check the nets for owls every 45 minutes, then observe as crew members weigh, measure, and band the owls. Visitors often participate in releasing the owls. Bring a camera to record a great evening in the outdoors and, with luck, an owl or two. More info. will be available at the September meeting. This trip is limited to 12 participants and costs \$20. For information and to register call Sue Emerson (413-584-6736) and to reserve a place send a non-refundable check for \$20 payable to "HBC" to Janice Jorgensen (HBC; 150 River Drive; Hadley, MA 01035). (E)

Sunday, November 7. Berkshire Lakes: Migrating Waterfowl. All day.

Tom Gagnon goes to the lakes and ponds of Berkshire County to find ducks and other migrating waterfowl. There may be a side trip to Blueberry Hill if hawk-watching conditions seem favorable. Meet at Stop & Shop in Northampton at 6:15 a.m. Call Tom (413-584-6353) to register and get more information. (E)

HITCHCOCK PROGRAMS

Fall Birding Trip. Plum Island Region: *Scott Sumner*

Saturday, October 30, 5:30 a.m. An all-day trip carpooling from the Hitchcock Center.

The Sixth Annual Larch Hill English Style X-Country Classic

A Benefit for the Larch Hill Collaborative.

Saturday, October 30, at the Bramble Hill Farm, Amherst (adjacent to the Hitchcock Center).

Falconry Up Close: *Chris Davis,*

Sunday, November 7, 10 to 11:30 a.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.

OTHER GROUPS WHO ARE ALL ABOUT BIRDS.

This list focuses on groups who provide programs and/or field trips on birds and birding in Massachusetts, and list these on active websites. Addresses given are those for current programs and/or trips. Only monthly programs or special events are listed here (****).

Arcadia Sanctuary. Easthampton, MA. Field Trips/Programs.

Programs/trips at www.massaudubon.org/PDF/newsletters/Arcadia_117.pdf

Cape Cod Bird Club. Brewster, MA. Field Trips/Programs. www.massbird.org/ccbc

Programs held at 7:30 PM at Cape Cod Museum of Natural History, 869 Rte. 6A, in Brewster, MA.

****October 11, 2010. **Herb Raffaele - "Paradise Lost? Not yet!: Saving the Caribbean's Birds."**

Brookline Bird Club. Brookline, MA. Field Trips. www.brooklinebirdclub.org

Athol Birding and Nature Club: Athol, MA. Field Trips/Programs. www.millersriver.net/events/index/html

[Programs at](#) Millers River Environmental Center: 100 Main Street, Athol, MA 01331. Ph 978 248 9491.

****October 13 at 7 PM. **Weasels.**

Allen Bird Club: Springfield, MA. www.massbird.org/allen

Meetings held at the Tolman Wing of the Springfield Science Museum (The Quadrangle).

Hoffmann Bird Club. Berkshire County, MA www.hoffmannbirdclub.org/events/html.

Meetings at 7 p.m. in Pittsfield or Lenox, MA. Check website for monthly location.

****Tuesday, October 12. **Paul Siefert (UMass). N. Pacific Albatrosses**

****Tuesday, November 2. **Richard Prum (Yale). Birds as Dinosaurs.**

CHRISTMAS COUNTS

Tired of birding with the valley in full leaf? Do you long to bird when you will be mercifully untroubled by Nature's little carbon fixers? Well folks, you are hereby invited to contribute to the noble cause of citizen science in a season when the bare bones of our happy little valley are laid bare, along with the birds which call this halcyon place their home.

Every December, we get together to count all the birds in a circle of radius five miles around the Northampton GPO. The count circle is 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.

To take part, all you really need is a willingness to cope with the vagaries of December birding, and a willingness to count everything in a scientific manner. The coordinators can hook you up with a team that needs members in your area. The Northampton count culminates in a pot luck and compilation session at the Hitchcock Center in Amherst during which those still standing come together to exult/commiserate and pool results. The sense of camaraderie and shared purpose is palpable and rarely equaled in birding! And you won't feel the blisters till your feet actually thaw, usually only a matter of a few days!

Believe it or not, there is also a count in the Quabbin region for those who want better birds and cushy weather!

Mark These Dates!!

Northampton Count: Sunday, December 19.

Quabbin Count: After Christmas, exact date to be finalized).

This will give you enough time between the two counts to start and finish your Christmas shopping, and to return all the ghastly gifts the other side of the family gave you!

For further information, watch coming newsletters, or contact **Mary Alice Wilson** (413 549 1768; mwilson@k12.phast.umass.edu, Northampton Count) and **Scott Sumner** (413 253 5999; ssurner@aol.com, Quabbin Count)

Checking Out Chickadees

We can't tell the difference between male and female chickadees just by looking at them. Not surprisingly though, the chickadees can!

Daniel Mennill and colleagues at the University of Windsor showed that the genders look significantly different if the viewer can detect UV light. Chickadees can do just that, and to them, males have significantly brighter white and gray areas, larger bibs, and a stronger contrast between pale and dark areas than do females.

According to Mennill,

"After a decade of working with these birds, I still can't distinguish a male from a female, or a high-ranking from a low-ranking male, even if I'm holding them in my hand. However, the spectrometer uncovers things that are hidden to our eyes. Birds' eyes are so superior to ours that we expect that they pick up on these differences readily."

Source: Cornell University: "All About Birds" www.allaboutbirds.org

That's all for this month. The Field Trip Policy and Guidelines follow on the next two pages.
Until next month, talk softly and carry a big scope!

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

HAMPSHIRE BIRD CLUB, INC. FIELD TRIP POLICY: 2010-2011

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

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

Overnight Trips (2 or more days, reasonable driving distance) are planned by the Field Trip Committee and approved by the HBC Board at least 3 months in advance (see #5 below). Such trips generally require more planning by the trip leader, including, for example, arranging for lodging and travel. Participants will be charged an amount equal to actual predetermined costs (including liability insurance) plus a prorated amount to cover reimbursement of the leader's expenses (see #5 below). All fees, including the trip deposit, shall be paid to the HBC Treasurer. In the event of a cancellation, if the vacancy can be filled, the trip fee will be refunded, less a 10% processing charge. If the vacancy cannot be filled, the trip fee will be refunded, with the following exceptions:

- a) the portion of the trip fee that covers a share of the leaders costs,
- b) the portion of the fee that covers the insurance charge, and
- c) any portion of the fee which has already been paid to another party and cannot be recovered by the club.

Any excess fees remaining after costs have been met will be refunded, unless they are less than ten dollars per person, in which case they will revert to the HBC treasury. Overnight trips are open only to HBC members who have signed a release form and who have completed a medical information form.

4. The HBC Board recommends that passengers reimburse owners of vehicles used on HBC trips for costs associated with vehicle operation. The maximum recommended reimbursement is the federal government employee mileage reimbursement rate, rounded down to the nearest 10 cents, plus tolls and parking to be shared equally by all persons in the car including the driver. The participants (not the leader) are responsible for making carpool arrangements.

Continues on Page 2 ►►

5. Leaders of Overnight Trips shall:

- a. Submit a trip plan to the Field Trip Committee, which must be approved by the Board at least 3 months in advance of the trip. The plan should describe in writing the nature of the trip as completely as possible. Include an itinerary, estimated cost, conditions of lodging and lead time needed for reservations, roughness of terrain, pace of the trip, extra costs not covered by the fee, date of deposit and final payment, date after which fee is not refundable, and provide a list of any specialized items that participants should take on the trip. Repeat trips led by the same leader need only submit necessary changes to the previous plan. The Board can waive the 3-month planning time if there is a special birding opportunity.
 - b. Consult with the membership secretary before the trip to make sure that all participants have signed the HBC Release Form and obtain a signed Medical Information Form from each participant.
 - c. Be reimbursed for all costs associated with planning (i.e. long-distance calls, postage), lodging, and transportation during the trip. The maximum reimbursement for automobile travel shall be one quarter of the costs incurred by a single vehicle under clause 4 of this policy.
 - d. Upon return, provide the HBC Board with an itemized account of all income and expenses related to the trip including receipts for major expenses.
6. The Field Trip Chair will send all participants in overnight trips the Field Trip Evaluation Form and a Medical Information Form. The completed evaluation form, to be returned to the Field Trip Chair, will help the Field Trip Committee plan future trips and provide feedback for leaders. Participants should give their signed Medical Information form to the trip leader prior to departure.
7. Leaders of both Day and Overnight Trips are asked to submit a Trip Highlights Report to the newsletter editor for publication in the next HBC newsletter.
8. HBC may ask professional bird touring organization to organize trips further away than the Overnight Trips. All responsibilities for planning the trip and all liability will be assumed by the touring organization. Such trips must be approved by the Board at least 6 months in advance.

Hampshire Bird Club, Inc.

Field Trip Guidelines for New Field Trip Participants and Drivers: 2010-2011

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

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

All Participants:

1. Most trips described in the newsletter ask you to call the trip leader in advance. Please do so. It helps the leader plan the trip and you learn about any special arrangements or any change of plans.
2. Check with the leader before bringing children on a trip. Many of the trips are not appropriate for children. (All minor children (under 18) must be accompanied by a parent/guardian or an adult who has written authorization to be responsible for the child's care and conduct. See the Field Trip Policy for more information.)
3. All HBC members are asked to sign the HBC Release Form each year. If you did not receive a copy, please contact the Membership Secretary or check the "Join" section of the HBC Website
4. Be on time at the meeting place. If you plan to leave the trip early, you must inform the leader in advance.
5. Be prepared with binoculars, appropriate clothing (including protection from ticks), food and water. Assume the weather will be more extreme on the trip than at home and prepare accordingly.
6. Do not bring pets.
7. HBC encourages participants to carpool, both to reduce the environmental impact of the trip and to make the trip as safe as possible for all participants. We ask that the cost (presently \$0.50/mile plus tolls and parking) be shared equally among the driver and all passengers. You should estimate the probable cost of the trip so that you will be able to reimburse the driver at the end of the trip. The participants (not the leader) are responsible for making carpool arrangements.
8. HBC always encourages new birders to participate in trips. It is the responsibility of all trip members, leader and participants, to help new birders learn both identification techniques and bird observing skills.
9. All participants are responsible for their own safety. Use common sense if you feel that any part of the trip is too arduous for you. Always check with the trip leader if you have any questions or medical concerns about the trip.

Drivers:

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

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

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

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

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

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



Hampshire Bird Club, Inc.

Amherst, Massachusetts

www.hampshirebirdclub.org

Volume 27, No. 3

November, 2010.

“Just the facts, ma’am!”

Many of you will be relieved to hear that this edition is going to be very much the bare bones. Time is short owing to the unusually small gap between our last meeting and the next, and space is short owing to the inclusion this month of the HBC membership contact list. The editorial staff will content itself with letting you know about the November meeting, our field trips this month, and precious little else. Rejoice in this brevity: literary self-indulgence could rear its ugly head again any time.

Please note: the membership contact list is included to facilitate birding-related contact between our members. PLEASE make sure the list is not used for any commercial or intrusive purpose.

Thanks!

NEXT PROGRAM

Monday, November 8 at 7:30 PM

Josh Rose visits with the **Birds of the Lower Rio Grande Valley**

Immanuel Lutheran Church; 867 North Pleasant Street, Amherst.

Josh is a relative newcomer to our club, and he brings some awesome birding skills and enthusiasm.

The Rio Grande Valley is a fascinating place to bird, being on the margin between our familiar North American birding region, and the alluring central American tropics. All sorts of things can show up, and probably did during the years Josh spent in the Lower Rio Grande Valley as an interpretive naturalist. We can expect an insider’s insight into this intriguing region!

COMING PROGRAMS

Dec 13, 2010. Members’ Meeting. Members Slide Show.

Jan 10, 2011. Joanna Bailey-Hodgman & Jo Miles Shuman. A Spicing of Birds: Poems by Emily Dickinson.

Feb 14, 2011. Tom Bancroft. FL avian research/White-crowned Pigeons.

HITCHCOCK PROGRAMS

Falconry Up Close: *Chris Davis, Master Falconer*

Sunday, November 7, 10 to 11:30 a.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.

COMING FIELD TRIPS

(Please see also the Fall Field Trip Schedule)

Sunday, November 7. Berkshire Lakes: Migrating Waterfowl. All day. Tom Gagnon goes to the lakes and ponds of Berkshire County to find ducks and other migrating waterfowl. There may be a side trip to Blueberry Hill if hawk-watching conditions seem favorable. Meet at Stop & Shop in Northampton at 6:15 a.m. Call Tom (413-584-6353) to register and get more information. (E)

Saturday, November 13. November. Plum Island. All day. Geoff LeBaron heads to one of Massachusetts' premier birding spots to see what's flying along the coast. Call Geoff (413-268-9281) to register and get meeting information as the date approaches. (E)

Saturday, November 20. East Quabbin. All day. Tom Gagnon and Larry Therrien go to the east side of the reservoir to see what they can find. You must be a Hampshire Bird Club member to go on this trip. Call Tom (413-584-6353) well in advance to register and to get meeting information. The rain/snow date is Sunday, November 21. (M)

CHRISTMAS COUNTS

If you want to contribute to one of the most important (and certainly the largest) research efforts into bird distribution world-wide, the Christmas Count may be for you. There are several counts in this region every December, and HBC plays a key role in the Northampton and Quabbin counts.

Every December, we get together to count all the birds in a **BIG**** circle around some point in Hadley. The count circle is 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.

Believe it or not, there is also a count in the Quabbin region for those who want better birds and cushy weather! ** Oh, and if you need to know what 'BIG' really means, drop Mary Alice a line. She is itching to fill you in!

Details!!

Northampton Count: Sunday, December 19. *Mary Alice Wilson* (413 548 9078; mwilson@k12.phast.umass.edu),

Quabbin Count: Saturday, January 1. *Scott Surner* (413 253 5999; ssurner@aol.com)

Until next month, 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 27, No. 4

December, 2010.

Our bird club reflects every person who has ever been a member of it. Over the past month we have lost Sally Venman and Marion Gorham. Each, in different ways, helped create the bird club we have today.

Sally Venman died unexpectedly on November 13. She was one of the founders of the Hampshire Bird Club and her contribution to the organization we are today was immeasurable. It was at the site of the Great Gray Owl in Hadley in 1984 that Sally and a few others considered starting a local club. Sally was a natural organizer; serving as communications secretary and newsletter editor, she helped guide and build the club to make it the friendly, active organization it is today. For 18 years Sally wrote the HBC newsletter. It reflected her quick wit, playful sense of humor and love of birding. Sally's run down of the birding news was laced with jokes, puns and tongue in cheek fun. A local columnist once said that it was worth the price of an HBC membership just so one could get Sally's newsletter.



We remember sharing birds with Sally, in Hitchcock Center birding classes, on Christmas Bird Counts in Amherst, at Plum Island, on Monhegan, and at many other locations in the Connecticut Valley and beyond. Sally enjoyed watching birds, appreciated their beauty, and did not hesitate to express her awe at nature. She was not one to feign indifference to common birds, but always maintained the sense of wonder that goes with a beginner's enthusiasm.

Conversation with Sally meant laughter with Sally. Even the most serious moments never seemed far from laughter. We recall her description of feeding a couple of dozen different skunks, and one raccoon, at her house, and keeping careful track of her striped visitors. We remember her enthusiasm for a joke, even those at which others might groan, and her inclusion of many in the club newsletter. Sally and Bill were among the very few to laugh at the punch line, "No soap, radio."

Whether it was writing the club newsletter, chasing a rare bird or spending a leisurely day in the field, Sally attacked all with enthusiasm and a sense of playfulness. She loved the natural world and the world of birds and birding. It was our honor to call her friend and to have had the opportunity to spend many, many hours in the field with her. She will be dearly missed.



Long-time club member **Marion Gorham** passed away on Friday, November 26 after a prolonged illness. She was an artist, and perhaps best known to many of us as an accomplished and fearless cyclist. She, in fact, authored "Bicycling the Pioneer Valley and Beyond," and, with her husband Al Shane on their trademark tandem bicycle, was a familiar site on the highways and by-ways of Leverett, and in the Pioneer Valley in general.

Marion served as publicity chair for HBC for a time, helping bring our activities to public notice. She and Al presented a program on cycling in Iceland for the club some years ago which was enough to convince us that for anyone but this intrepid duo, there may be less arduous ways of exploring that volcanic landscape, but few that would impart the same intensity of experience. Marion and Al participated in number of HBC trips and I well remember enjoying the unique perspective she brought to birding while strolling the highways and by-ways of Monhegan. We will miss her dynamic personality and the vigor she brought to our club..

We send our condolences to Al and others in Marion's family.

NEXT PROGRAM

Monday, December 13 at 7:30 PM

Members Meeting: Members Slide Show

Immanuel Lutheran Church; 867 North Pleasant Street, Amherst.

This month the entertainment is US!!

Here's how to participate:

- 1) **Please bring some sort of snack to share.** Sally and Helga are taking a well-earned break this month.

If we don't bring stuff, we will go hungry!!

Please bring some slides to share. They can be of birding exploits, other adventures in natural history, or even just some scenic wonders you visited during the year. As in past years, please limit your show to 15 or fewer slides. Please contact either **Jaap van Heerden** (jvanheerden@hampshirebirdclub.org) or **Geoff LeBaron** (programs@hampshirebirdclub.org) by 6 p.m. on Sunday, December 12. Please let them know:

- Are your slides digital or 35 mm format?
- If digital, are the images in Powerpoint format or just stand-alone images?

If you bring digital images, please have them on a memory stick or CD-ROM disk.

COMING PROGRAMS

Jan 10, 2011. Joanna Bailey-Hodgman/Jo Miles Shuman. Birds in the Poems of Emily Dickinson.

Feb 14, 2011. Tom Bancroft. White-crowned Pigeons in Florida

Mar 14, 2011. Don Kroodsmma. Does the topic matter?

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!

CHRISTMAS COUNT POTLUCK

There is going to be a fantastic potluck supper for Hampshire Bird Club members and other birders at the Hitchcock Center on Sunday, December 19 at 4:30 p.m.

The committee is in need of several salads and main dishes (some vegetarian).

Please contact Sue Emerson (membership@hampshirebirdclub.org or 413-584-6736) for donation suggestions or to sign up. Sue will be at the center at 3:30 Sunday for drop off.

Oh, and by the way, in order to participate in the potluck we ask that you first participate in an obscure international citizen-science event called the Northampton Christmas Count. It just requires a few hours out in the balmy fields near Northampton, counting birds. Well, actually, it runs for twenty-four hours starting at midnight on the 18th, but some folks only count till they lose their first major extremity. If you are interested in this, contact Mary Alice Wilson (mwilson@k12s.phast.umass.edu; 413 548 9078) and she will put you in touch with a group of fellow crazies enthusiasts.

Sally's Legacy

There is no better way to pay tribute to Sally than to revisit her writings, which graced the monthly newsletter for so many years. It is my intention to revisit these for over the balance of this club year, and in doing so, I have been searching for a title which will help identify her inimitable offerings. I found the title in a musing Sally wrote while closing the newsletter in April, 2001.

*"So, that should about do it for this month. I hear that we are going to be treated to a nice gentle rain tonight sometime around midnight. I think I might meander up to Henry Street and see what's happening at the salamander tunnel. I need to make sure that the spotted salamanders get safely across the street, especially the wild and crazy ones that opt not to use the tunnels. I call this **sallymeandering**."*

So I hope you will enjoy a little **sallymeandering** with me between now and June of next year.

FIELD TRIP REPORTS

Saw Whet Owl Banding.

October 29, 2010. Northbridge, MA.

Despite what promised to be a cool fall evening, fourteen hardy birders led by **Sue Emerson and Janice Jorgensen** piled into a van for a trip to Lookout Rock in Northbridge, Mass to observe the banding of saw-whet owls by Strickland Wheelock and Beth Milke.

Upon our arrival the evening was cool and quite windy, leaving some in our group to wonder if we would be lucky enough to witness the capture and banding of any owls.

After our hosts had provided us with background information on the number of owl 'captures' in the area, the 'technique' of netting owls, and the importance of record keeping, we were led along a leafy path in the woods to examine some capture nets that had been previously erected. Although the nets were empty on our first visit, on the second visit we were rewarded with a hatch-year female saw-whet. This diminutive owl was easily banded and silently disappeared in the darkness when it was released.

On the next visit we found that the nets had captured another female saw-whet. This tiny owl was quickly banded, we all having an opportunity to hold her, stroke her soft feathers and the owl apparently so much enjoyed the attention of the group that it was reluctant to fly away. Instead of immediately taking flight, to the amusement of the group it chose instead to remain perched on Ian Davies' arm for several minutes. As all good things must come to an end, in the wink of an eye (pun intended), she too silently glided off into the night. A perfect ending to a perfect day.

Janice Jorgensen

Field Trip Reports (continued)

Berkshire Lakes. Saturday, November 7.

Tom Gagnon and *too many participants to name* followed the scent of cider donuts into the Berkshires on a brisk but clear fall day.

Moran was scenic but shrike-less. The gated expanses of Cleveland Pond supported only one elegant **Red-throated Loon**, floating in serene solitude with its bill raised in oh-so-hoity-toity a fashion toward the blue skies. However, three Hooded Mergansers and one Great Blue Heron were eking out a living from the more blue-collar beaver marsh on the other side of the tracks.

The northern end of Hoosac Lake in Cheshire was disappointing, but three Pine Siskin flew over our heads as we shivered on the breezy causeway, watching a line-up of American Coots on a log. The real perpetrator was obviously a lone Bufflehead, floating surreptitiously in the southern half of the lake, far from scrutiny. At the Summer Street crossing, we found a series of Black Ducks among the mallards, and a couple of beautiful **Northern Pintail** dipping their elegant necks into the muck with the rest of the hoi-poi.

The crowd of birds visible from Murphy's Bar on Pontoosuc included the customary hordes of Canada Geese, Mallards, as well as Common- and Hooded Mergansers. The more skilled amongst us were able to pick out four sturdy Gadwall, one American Wigeon, a Pied-billed Grebe, and the truly blessed could make out a distant **Red-necked Grebe**.

From the Causeway on Narragansett Ave we added a beautiful, if distant group of **Green-winged Teal** on the mudflats, and some more Bufflehead.

At the Onota Causeway we found some splashy Wood Ducks and another tardy Great Blue Heron, and from Burbank park we could just make out a distant raft of **Black Scoter** and, yes, more Bufflehead.

By the time we marched down through the woods to Mudd Pond, I was starting to drift off. By now, the atmosphere was a miasma of donut aroma. Ian Davies' Lesser- and Greater Scaup fell into the 'take your word for it' basket. There may well have been thirty or so **Ruddy Ducks** silhouetted against the far shore, and I think someone called out **940 Ring-necked Ducks**. Finally we pulled into Bartletts and hungrily wolfed down the sacred comestibles. Anticipation and salivation gave way to blessed satiation. Revitalized, renewed, and resurgent, we tore off down to Richmond Pond to find a lone **Common Goldeneye**, more Coot, and a surly Loon.

The last leg of the journey was over-hill and down dale to the rarified environs of the Kripalu Yoga center, Tanglewood, and the Stockbridge Bowl. The lake was almost deserted save for another Ruddy Duck and yikes, some Bufflehead. However as we paused at the Lily Brook inflow on the eastern shore, we found a couple of birds worth writing home about. There in amongst the spent cattails were two dazzling **Common Snipe**, delicately striped and barred, miracles of russet, buff and brown: striking yet disruptively colored to the point of invisibility. This species is normally seen only in headlong retreat after flushing from some anonymous and distant divot in a cow pasture, but here they were, up close and personal, defying the season, delighting the crowd. The bird of the day for this humble observer.

It is always a fall delight, this sojourn amongst the Berkshire Lakes, never predictable, always entrancing.

David Peake-Jones

"Today was a spring rain, and in my backyard, a Robin was giving an earthworm an object lesson in food chain position." Sally V. editorial, March 12, 1985.

Field Trip Reports (continued)

Quabbin. November 20.

Tom Gagnon and Larry Therrien only sent me a trip list. OOH goody!

- 10 Common Loons cruising cautiously.
- 1 Horned Grebe hopefully hornswoggled.
- 19 **Tundra Swan** titillating Tom (off Gate 5)
- 1 (female) Wood Duck wallowing wonderfully.
- 83 Black Duck bantering belligerently.
- 32 Ring-necked Duck roiling the ripples.
- 10 Black Scoter being bawdy.
- 1 (female) **Surf Scoter** seriously smutty.
- 78 Hooded Merganser (hip headgear).
- 21 Common Merganser clutching cutthroats.
- 1 Ruffed Grouse retiring rapidly.
- 18 Wild Turkey wandering willfully
- 1 Barred Owl barking brazenly.
- 1 Northern Flicker nursing gnarled noggins.
- 5 Red-breasted Nuthatch not nonplussed.
- 8 Golden-crowned Kinglet gallivanting gleefully.
- 2 Fox Sparrow foraging fiercely.

COMING TRIPS

December has been set aside for shopping, Christmas Counts and watching the last gasps of our democracy.

Enjoy!!

The Winter-Spring-Summer Field Trip Schedule should be here soon!

"It happened again! I woke up this morning and discovered that it is THE MIDDLE OF AUGUST! No-one warned me, no-one even suggested to me that the summer days were nearing an end. The shock of this realization was quickly followed by the booming voice of reality (sounded amazingly like Scott) saying "Write the bird Club letter!" So I guess I'll put aside my bathing suit, trash novel and wine cooler (for the moment) and get on with it."

Sally, from the editorial, August 20, 1986

THE LIBRARY IS EXPANDING!

If you are travelling, the HBC library has got something for you. Check out (literally) the following new books:

A Bird Finding guide to Costa Rica

Birds of Peru

Birds of southern Africa, and

Stalking the Ghost Bird (the search for the Ivory-billed Woodpecker).

Plus many more! Call or email Henry Lappen (who can bring titles to meetings) or visit the Hitchcock Center (open Tuesday - Saturday 10-4) to take out a book.

Anticoagulant Rodenticide Exposure in Birds of Prey in Massachusetts

Tufts Wildlife Clinic in Eastern Massachusetts is sounding an alarm about anticoagulant rodenticide poisoning in birds of prey in New England, and presumably, throughout North America.

Anticoagulant rodenticides are used to control rodent populations in various settings, including urban, suburban, and agricultural areas. These rodenticides disrupt blood clotting pathways, specifically those involving vitamin K, resulting in excessive bleeding and death. These poisons can also cause mortality in non-target species of mammals and birds that ingest the bait (primary exposure) or ingest poisoned animals (secondary exposure).

Brodifacoum is a second-generation anticoagulant rodenticide that is currently available for household use in a variety of forms, including bait blocks and pellets. This compound presents a high risk for unintended poisoning of wildlife due its long persistence time in liver tissue, and has been found in numerous birds of prey suffering from anticoagulant rodenticide toxicosis that have been treated at Tufts Wildlife Clinic (TWC). These birds are suffering from uncontrolled and persistent bleeding and bruising. Treatment can be effective, but protecting the birds from further exposure is impossible, assuming the rodenticides continue to be used.



The most frequent species treated at TWC for anticoagulant rodenticide toxicosis is the Red-tailed Hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*), which predominantly feeds on small- to medium-sized mammals but will also consume birds. Barred, Great-horned- and Eastern Screech Owls are also presumably at high risk and are included in a long-term study being conducted through the clinic. Obviously, the risk of anticoagulant toxicosis is a factor we need to consider when planning rodent control in residential, industrial, and agricultural situations.

Peering over the shoulders of migrating Ospreys

On a clear morning in early September 2008, a three-month-old female Osprey named Penelope pushed off from Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts, and flew, alone, 2,700 miles to French Guiana in 13 days. She touched down in coastal Maryland and North Carolina for three days, lazed along the Bahamas for four, then blew through the Dominican Republic in 29 hours. At dusk she launched out over the Caribbean, flying all night and the next day to a tiny island off the coast of Venezuela. A week later she was exploring rainforest rivers in French Guiana, her home for the next 18 months.

We know this because Penny is one of 150 Ospreys which have been tracked via satellite transmitters over the past ten years by Mark Martell at Minnesota Audubon and Rob Bierregaard at the University of North Carolina, Charlotte.

The data, not surprisingly are providing a unique window into the vicissitudes of migration for Ospreys. For example, like many adolescent raptors, juvenile Ospreys wander, loiter, and even get lost, crossing open ocean when they don't have to. Adults fly faster and more direct routes, more sure of where they're headed. Key threats for Ospreys are fish farms throughout the Americas, where they are often shot by farmers trying to protect their stock.

If you would like to see detailed maps of Osprey migration routes for birds from several tracking years, you can visit <http://www.bioweb.uncc.edu/Biorregaard/migration.htm>.

OTHER GROUPS WHO ARE ALL ABOUT BIRDS.

This list focuses on groups who provide programs and/or field trips on birds and birding in Massachusetts, and list these on active websites. Addresses given are those for current programs and/or trips. Only monthly programs or special events are listed here (****).

Arcadia Sanctuary. Easthampton, MA. Field Trips/Programs.

Programs/trips at www.massaudubon.org/PDF/newsletters/Arcadia_117.pdf

Cape Cod Bird Club. Brewster, MA. Field Trips/Programs. www.massbird.org/ccbc

Programs held at 7:30 PM at Cape Cod Museum of Natural History, 869 Rte. 6A, in Brewster, MA.

******December 13, 2010. Members' Night - Members' Slides, Silent Auction, Door Prizes.**

Brookline Bird Club. Brookline, MA. Field Trips. www.brooklinebirdclub.org

Athol Birding and Nature Club: Athol, MA. Field Trips/Programs. www.millersriver.net/events/index/html

**** **"Who's in Your Back Yard--and Beyond?"** (Wildlife of Local Woodlands) Bill Byrne.

Thursday, December 9, at 7:00PM at the Unitarian Church in Petersham.

Allen Bird Club: Springfield, MA. www.massbird.org/allen

Meetings held at the Tolman Wing of the Springfield Science Museum (The Quadrangle).

****Program information not available.

Hoffmann Bird Club. Berkshire County, MA. www.hoffmannbirdclub.org/events/html.

**** **Monday, December 6, 2010 at 7 p.m.** Berkshire Life Insurance, 700 South St., Pittsfield

Members Meeting and Christmas Count Preview.

"I have a new toy. It's a bird feeder with one-way glass that fits in a window, inside the room. The birds can feast without being aware that I am watching their every move, just a few inches away. This is a mixed blessing. I have it set next to my desk and all I want to do is watch the birds. There hasn't been a bill paid since the feeder was installed. It is by sheer agonizing discipline that this letter is being written at all. My cats are on the verge of nervous breakdowns; my husband is claiming desertion, and I suspect that Christmas night may not happen at the Venman's this year...." Sally, from the editorial, November 28, 1986.

That's all for this month.

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

David Peake-Jones, Editor

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newsletter@hampshirebirdclub.org