

Hampshire Bird Club, Inc.
Amherst, Massachusetts
<http://hampshirebirdclub.org>
Volume 18, No. 4: December, 2001.



“The mole decided he rather liked the country undecorated – hard and stripped of its summer finery. He had got down to the bare bones of it, and they were fine, strong and simple.”

So wrote Kenneth Graham in “The Wind in the Willows” as the small, enterprising hero of his story embarked on an early-winter journey to the Wild Wood. I’m often reminded of those words when birding the meadows at this time of year. The steely skies and dun-colored meadows seem a bit melancholy at times, but in the cutting edge of the air and the suddenly-big sky, there is always the promise of some wandering oddity among our hardy residents and late migrants. If waterfowl, geese, and lingering sparrows were not enough, we were blessed with a Western Kingbird in the West Meadows, an Allen’s/Rufous hummingbird in Granby, Boreal Chickadees fleeing starvation in the North and, no doubt, other treasures of the season. Hopefully the Leonids portend great birding this winter!

Where’s My Email Reminder?

Since we are distributing a paper copy of the membership list to all members this month, everyone gets the paper newsletter. Call it a touch of nostalgia, which also safeguards the privacy of your personal information from the rapacious hordes on the internet. If you really need the electronic newsletter, you may view it on the website as usual. These sheets of compressed, bleached and formed wood pulp with the quaint ink marks are your reminder.

PROGRAMS

December 3 is the annual **Members Meeting**. This is a chance to kick back, discuss the great birds of the year and, of course, the one that got away. Please bring your natural history slides (keep it to within twenty slides, please) and a snack or dessert to share.

If there are non-perishable leftovers, and if donors are willing, these will contribute to the bounty at the Christmas Count potluck. The meeting is also a chance to organize groups for the Christmas count.

And For Those With Calendars for Next Year.....

January 14: Dave Small on “Birds, Butterflies and Beyond”.

February 11: Bill Danielson about bird rehabilitation.

March 11: Lori Sanders goes behind the radio show.

April 8: Andrew Farnsworth explores radar ornithology.

May 13: Jeff Podos discusses Galapagos finches.

June 10: Marta Hersek illuminates Ovenbirds.

Even Further On.....

The remaining dates for calendar 2002 are:

September 9; October 21; November 18; and December 9.

Possible speakers on these dates include Bob Askins; Mara Silver; Wayne Petersen; Tom Litwin; Tom Martin and our own Geoff LeBaron.

Give a man a fish and he’ll eat for a day. Teach a man to fish and he’ll sit in a boat drinking beer all weekend.

Membership List

We enclose a copy of the membership list for all individual and family members of the club. Please note that the list is for the private use of HBC members and is not to be used for any commercial purpose.

In a club as large as we have become, some errors are inevitable in the printed list. If your information is incorrect, please advise Sue Emerson (413-584-6736; wle33@aol.com) as soon as possible.

FIELD TRIPS

Reports

We are becoming used to worrying about the declining abundance of many groups of birds. Some of those wishing to escape this anxiety for a day went to **Dead Creek on October 20**. Apparently, there were a few Snow Geese (more than ten thousand), at least one Ross's Goose, gorgeous Rusty Blackbirds, and good looks at Snipe. Some folks also got close enough to an immature White-winged Crossbill to see the overbite.

On **November 4**, Tom Gagnon and fifteen others toured the **Berkshire Lakes**. At Moran Wildlife Management Area they saw 2 Ravens, a Northern Shrike and a superb adult Northern Goshawk. On the lakes there were 5 Ruddy Ducks, 3 Lesser Scaup and 700-800 Ring-necked Ducks amongst modest numbers of 18 species of waterfowl. Numerous Torus-bodied Cider Donuts were observed briefly from Bartletts, before their timely demise.

The four birders in Harvey's **mid-week group on November 14** voted to go look at the hummingbird in Granby. They got 21 other species into the bargain!

Last-minute negotiating by Tom Gagnon allowed HBC to gain access to the **eastern Quabbin** reservoir on **November 18**. The group heard Red Crossbills and Redpolls, which eluded all the assembled eyes. They did see 6 Bald Eagles, 3 Pine Grosbeaks, 7 American Pipits, 11 Common Loons, 7 Common Goldeneyes, 15 Snow Buntings, 4 Horned Grebes, 12 Ruffed Grouse, and 52 Hooded Mergansers. However the bird to envy was an adult **Golden Eagle**.

As usual, Tom managed to rustle up 7 otters and a couple of porcupines, and was happy to find one (presumably complacent) Orange Sulfur butterfly.

Coming Trips

See also the Fall and Winter Field Trip schedules, sent previously, and on the web.

December 12. Morning Sweep of the Connecticut River Valley. Do you really need an excuse to go to Atkins this time of year? Half a day with Harvey Allen (253 7963), starting at 8 am across the road from Atkins.

January 5. North Shore: Cape Anne to Plum Island. Bob Bieda will be looking for sea ducks, including harlequins, both eiders, grebes and maybe even a Short-eared or Snowy owl.

January 16. Winter birding in January. With Harvey, from opposite Atkins at 8 am, for winter finches, Horned Larks, longspurs, Snow Buntings and all the fickle irruptives of the season.

January 19. Winter Finches. Shirley Hillborn will tailor this trip to likely sites for Purple Finch, siskins, redpolls and crossbills. Meet at Hitchcock Center at 8 am.

CONSERVATION

If you are interested in conservation of birds and birding habitat, you may like to share information and effort with others in the club. Anne Lombard is our conservation chair. She often coordinates volunteers in breeding-bird surveys, and is usually involved in various cutting-edge conservation issues. Contact her at (413) 586 7509, or annelombard@mediaone.net

CHRISTMAS COUNTS

Rain or shine, snow or sleet, ready or not, it's time for the 101st National Audubon Society Christmas Bird Count! Take this opportunity to contribute to the longest running database in ornithology! Join the more than 50,000 volunteers in the US, Canada, the Caribbean, Latin America and Pacific Islands as they take to the field to count birds! You don't have to be an expert and you don't have to devote the entire day to this effort. You can also contribute from the warmth and comfort of your own home by being a feeder watcher. Everyone is welcome!

The regions listed below have been divided up into areas which can be thoroughly counted by a small group in one day. Each area has a count-leader, who needs help to count all birds in the area. **THIS MEANS YOU!** In consultation with the leader, you can figure out how best to contribute. Some of the HBC December meeting is devoted to allowing area leaders and volunteers to get together and begin planning their efforts. For most, the day starts at dawn, but for the die-hards, the owling can start at midnight. There is typically a compilation of results which commences in the late afternoon.

Note: No two Christmas counts are ever the same, unlike this article which is exactly the same as last month's. Hey, some of us got day jobs.

The **Northampton Christmas Count** (in its 68th year) will be held on **Sunday, December 16**. For information contact Jan Ortiz (413) 549-1768 jtortiz@aol.com or Mary Alice Wilson (413) 548-9078 mwilson@k12s.phast.umass.edu. A potluck supper will be held at the Hitchcock Center in Amherst the evening of the count. If you cannot participate in the field but would like to help by preparing food that would also be appreciated.

Other Local Counts

The **Quabbin Count** will be held on **Saturday, December 29**. For information contact Scott Sumner (413) 253-7486 ssurner@aol.com. Please note that as of this writing, parts of the Quabbin Reservoir remain closed.

The **Springfield Count** occurs on **Saturday, December 15**. For information contact Bruce Kindseth (860) 745-9593) kindsebr@aol.com

The **Athol Count** happens on **Saturday, December 15**. For information contact David Small (413) 249-2094 dhsmall@gis.net.

The **Greenfield Count** takes place on **Sunday, December 30**. Contact Mark Fairbrother at (413) 367-2695

The **Sturbridge Count** is on **Tuesday, December 18**. There is a foul weather day (really!) on Wednesday, December 19. Contact Bill Cormier at Wild Bird Crossing: (508) 347 BIRD.

The **Westfield Count** transpires on **Saturday, December 22**. Contact Seth Kellogg at (413) 569 6029, or skhawk@mediaone.net

RARE BIRD ALERT

The **Rare Bird Alert** is working well, thanks to **Bob Bieda, Geoff LeBaron, Jan Ortiz and Scott Sumner**, any of whom may start the alert. **Merry Cushing** spends a lot of time maintaining the computer rba contact list and **Blanche Orrell** has the tough job of overseeing the telephone tree. The telephone tree is fixed until September 2002, but you may join the email list by contacting Merry (413-253-5266; cushing@oit.umass.edu). Don't forget the **Voice of Audubon at 1-888-224-6444**, which is a frequently-updated account of interesting birds being seen in our region. Jan Ortiz welcomes your reports (include numbers seen, please). You can reach her at jtortiz@aol.com or 413-549-1768.

LIBRARY

Anne Cann would like you to know that there has been some reorganization of the collection, which resides at the Hitchcock Center. Field guides have been grouped at the top of the bookshelf. Our collection of “Winging It” (the ABA newsletter) is undergoing a process of economic rationalization. The rationalized copies will be given away at the next bird club meeting. There are lots of field guides for local destinations, and those sunnier, warmer winter locales.

The collection is cataloged on our website. You can reach it in person during Hitchcock hours (9-3 Tuesday-Friday; 9-1 on Saturday). Please contact Anne (413-253-7753; cann@uhs.umass.edu) if you would like her to bring something to the December meeting.

MISCELLANEOUS

Don't forget that **Backyard Birds**, on Strong Avenue in Northampton, offers all members a **10% discount** on their extensive range of feeders, decorative items, books and other birdy paraphernalia. We appreciate their support. Please direct your business in their direction.

The **Holyoke Range Ecological Working Group** would like you to know about an exciting opportunity to learn about and participate in local wildlife conservation. Susan Morse, the Founder of Keeping Track, will present a program on **New England wildlife at 7 pm on Tuesday, December 4, 2001 at the Chapin Auditorium, Mt. Holyoke College** in South Hadley. The program is intended to introduce the animals of the region and techniques used in recording and monitoring their populations. Keeping Track, a conservation organization, based in Vermont, and active nationally, aims to establish a long-term wildlife-monitoring program on the Mt. Holyoke Range, employing trained local volunteers. The December 4 program will also introduce this effort.

If you would like to know more, please contact Kristin DeBoer of the HREWG at 413-253-6720, or kdeboer@restore.org.

Just four lousy bucks (or five, if you order by mail), buys you the all-singing, all-dancing **HBC field guide supplement**. This series of labels gives you crucial information on the local status of all species on the Mass. Daily Field Card, and is compatible with all popular field guides. Zese labels, zey are available from ze HBC Boutique at the back of every club meeting. After hours, ze Boutique, she is managed by Sue Fletcher (413-253-2102; scfletch@aol.com). Get zem while zey are 'ot.

Hitchcock Center has cancelled a proposed trip to Cuba, due to lack of interest, but still has openings for the trip to **Iceland**, from June 26-July 5, 2002. This tour covers much of the natural history of the country, including birds, arctic heath flora and volcanic geology, and will be run in collaboration with Cross Culture. Further information is available from Cross Culture at (800) 491 1148, or from Amy at the Hitchcock Center. *For details and registration for all Hitchcock programs, please contact the Hitchcock Center for the Environment, 525 South Pleasant St., Amherst MA 01002. Telephone (413) 256 6006, or on the web at www.hitchcockcenter.org.*

Arcadia Sanctuary, (on the civilized side of the river) is holding a **Solstice Celebration** on December 21 at 6 pm. The celebration involves multi-cultural readings, natural history, and community unity. There will be a bonfire if the weather conditions permit. Arcadia needs volunteers to help plan and facilitate this event, and asks participants to bring a food donation for the Food Bank of Western Massachusetts. *For more details, and to register for programs at Arcadia, contact **Arcadia Wildlife Sanctuary**, 127 Combs Rd., Easthampton MA 01027. Telephone (413) 584-3009.*

Final editor's note: I want to apologize for the embarrassing pidgin French in the previous section. As you know, the basis of successful marketing is to annoy the customer, so grind your teeth and buy those labels!