



Hampshire Bird Club, Inc. Amherst, Massachusetts

<http://hampshirebirdclub.org>

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In the February issue we described the early stages of a collaborative effort by Zeiss, Louisiana State University, Cornell and others to find living Ivory-billed Woodpeckers in the Pearl River Wildlife Management Area of Louisiana. Six searchers have finished the foot-slogging stage of this search. The lack of international jubilation would seem to suggest they have been unsuccessful. There are no pictures of the bird, no sightings, and no observations of definitive Ivory-billed vocalizations.

However, reading the reports of the searchers (Zeiss Search for the Ivory-billed Woodpecker, Summary Statement, www.zeiss.com) suggests otherwise. *“In the first ten days of searching we found some recently dead trees with tight bark scaled off. Bark scaling is the primary foraging method used by Ivory-bills. On January 27, the eleventh day of the search, at 3:30 pm, four team members were walking in an area with bark scaling, when they heard a series of loud signal taps of a woodpecker on a tree. They heard four double raps, separated by 20-30 seconds, followed by a single rap, followed by four consecutive raps.”* Dr. Van Remsen of LSU Museum of Natural History commented that the recordings “sent chills up my spine. I have been around Pileated Woodpeckers nearly daily..., but I have never heard them make a sound that came close to this in terms of both power and rhythm.”

The team heard similar intriguing raps two days later. They also documented numerous areas of bark scaling consistent with Ivory-billed behavior, and many large cavities, again consistent with those made by living Ivory-bills on the 1940s. Some 6000 hours of audio recorded by Cornell’s Acoustic Recording Units are now being examined.

Nothing found by the team can be definitively ascribed to living Ivory-billed Woodpeckers, but the accounts of the searchers suggest they are grasping at something more substantial than straws. The team recommends further searches, and the most likely areas are now well known. So, if you have been cupping your hands around that tiny flame of hope, hang on a little longer.

PROGRAMS

On Monday, April 8, Andrew Farnsworth will speak about **“Radar Ornithology.”**

Andrew developed a keen interest in birds, more specifically bird migration, at a young age, and by age five he was birding around his home in Rye, New York. Since that time, he has had the good fortune to travel extensively in Europe and the Americas in search of birds. He received a B.S. in Natural Resources from Cornell University and an M.S. in Zoology from Clemson University, using surveillance radar and acoustic sensors to study nocturnal bird migration for his thesis research. At present, Andrew lives in New York City and works for the National Audubon Society as the Audubon Science Fellow.

Andrew’s talk will focus on radar ornithology, meteorology and nocturnal bird migration. He will discuss the utility of Doppler radar as a tool for studying nocturnal bird migration, how to interpret radar imagery, and how to forecast bird migration from synoptic weather maps and radar images. The talk will draw heavily from his work on the BIRDCAST (www.birdcast.com) project, his thesis work at Clemson University, and his experiences observing birds and bird migration over the last 20+ years.

There is a remote possibility that Andrew will be unable to join us owing to other commitments. In this event, Geoff LeBaron will step into the breach.

Coming Programs

May 13: Jeff Podos on Galapagos Finches. June 10: Marta Hersek discusses Ovenbirds.

FIELD TRIPS

Reports

On **March 2**, Geoff LeBaron led a group of eleven others to **Plum Island**. You just can't have a bad day there (at least not outside of greenhead season). We stopped first at Joppa Flats, where a group of Lesser Yellowlegs and at least one Common Snipe have overwintered and were most obliging. On the island itself we found two Snowy Owls (a pure white male, and an adult female), a pair of Barrows Goldeneyes at Emerson Rocks, and a flock of Snow Geese bobbing incongruously on the ocean. One was holding a sign saying, "We stay here till you bring back the white stuff!" At the yacht club, someone coined a term (also applied to police informers) for the pigeons hanging around the sewage treatment works.

Vera Crane was accosted by a bunch of enthusiastic pre-teens on the boardwalk in Newburyport. They had the effrontery to ask if she could provide the signature of a seventy-year old they needed for their scavenger hunt. After smacking 'em up side of the head with a scope, Vera obliged with dignity. We also had a Rough-legged Hawk and a Merlin fly by here. In a "briskening" late afternoon at Salisbury Beach, we finished off with two adult Iceland Gulls on the breakwater (different sub-species), and two or three more Snowy Owls. Lots of other nice things too, including splendid looks at Pintail and Red-throated Loon. Fifty eight species in all!

Coming Up

April 6. David Spector will lead a **NEW TRIP** for the club, in search of **American Woodcock and owls**. Depending on his early reconnaissance, David will choose a location in the valley, probably east of the river. The trip is most likely to begin at 6:00 PM. Flashlights are a good idea. Very warm clothing and footwear are more important. Call David (413-323-4885) in advance for the exact time and place of meeting. Call early, registration may be limited.

April 10. Midweek, half-day in the Connecticut River Valley: Duck soup by Harvey Allen. Meet at 7:30 AM across the street from the Atkins Farms, on the corner of Route 116 and Bay Road in Amherst. Harvey plans to explore Ludlow Reservoir. Heavy rain will cancel this trip. Call Harvey (413-253-7963) for further information.

April 13. Ashley Reservoir: early warblers. Half to three quarters of a day. Bob Bieda will continue the traditional search for the first warblers of the spring. Possibilities include Pine and Palm warblers, as well as Broad-winged Hawk, Osprey, Chipping Sparrow and Ruby-crowned Kinglet. Meet at the Holiday Inn parking lot, exit 15 ("Holyoke Mall"), off I-91 at 7 AM. Be prepared for the fickle spring weather. Call Bob at 413-527-2623 for more details.

April 20. Leisurely and local Saturday mornings. Half day. Shawn Smolen-Morton plans to stick close to the water, from Barton's Cove to Great Pond in Hatfield. He'll be looking for waterfowl and early neotropical migrants. Meet him at the Family Dollar/Food City parking lot at 7AM. For details and directions call 413-863-4569.

April 27. Almost May. Half day. Betsy Higgins will lead a **NEW TRIP** for the club, in search of a diversity of migrants, from warblers to the first orioles and Rose-breasted Grosbeaks. She plans to start at Look Park in Northampton and then to finish at Arcadia Wildlife Sanctuary, time permitting. Meet Betsy at 6:30 AM in the parking lot of the JFK Middle School on Bridge Road, in Northampton. Call her at 413-586-7585 for details and directions.

Wildwood Walks

Not far (but just far enough) from the keg- and furniture-strewn wasteland of the frat district, lies a gentle, wooded rise, upon which lies the Wildwood Cemetery. Migrating songbirds are drawn to this little island, and each year the club hosts morning bird walks here during May, each led by a club member. This year walks are scheduled for the following:

Tuesdays: May 7, 14, 21

Thursdays: May 2, 9, 16, and 23

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

May 4. Leisurely and local Saturday mornings. Half day. Shirley Hilborn and Ann Lombard will continue to lead members to their favorite local hot spot, Grave's Farm. Perhaps, the first Cliff Swallows will have arrived. Meet Shirley and Ann either at 6:30 AM at the Hitchcock Center or at 7:00 at Graves Farm.

May 11. The Quabbin Reservoir: spring migration. Full Day. Tom Gagnon plans to lead this traditional search of the Quabbin area for migrating neotropical birds. Due to access restrictions, the trip is limited to five vehicles. The Quabbin Reservoir has been closed to such trips in September and October 2001, and the trip is dependent on the lifting of these most recent restrictions. Call Tom (413-584-6353) in advance to make reservations and to get the details of time and place.

May 12. (Sunday). Bird-song. Half day. Don Kroodsma will revive his popular early morning exploration of bird-song as migration peaks and breeding begins. Before and during the dawn, birds make a wonderful array of songs, some of which are heard only at this time. Don will help us sort them out and identify the unique patterns. Of course, visual observation will not be discouraged. Meet at 5:00AM in the bike path parking lot on Station Road in South Amherst. You can call Don at 413-253-5519 for further details.

Nominating Committee

*The nominating committee is now in session and has the job of developing a slate of prospective Board members for the upcoming club year. The membership will elect the new Board at the Annual General Meeting on May 13. The committee consists of **Jim Marcum, Sally Venman, and Jan Ortiz**. If you have an interest on serving on the Board, or want to suggest a potential nominee, please contact one of them.*

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 breeding-bird surveys, and is usually involved in various cutting-edge conservation issues. Contact her at **(413) 586 7509**, or **aslombard@attbi.com***

Word Warping

You were warned! In the absence of any submissions, a selection from the editor's "Bolt Upright at Midnight" collection.

Eskimate: When an ice fisherman begins wearing furs and eating raw seal blubber.

Pillage idiot: Viking who could never bring himself to steal.

LIBRARY

Unbeknownst to many, the library has cassette tapes of some past programs, which may be borrowed like the written materials. These do not yet appear in the catalog on our website, but Henry Lappen can probably tell you which are available.

Henry tends our collection at the Hitchcock Center (525 South Pleasant St., Amherst). It contains:

Field Guides	Bird Finding Guides (East and West)
Foreign Field and Bird Finding Guides	Natural and Life Histories
Miscellaneous (including humor)	Videos, Cassettes, LPs and CD ROMs
and <i>Birding</i> magazine.	

Library hours are 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. on Tuesday through Friday, and 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. on Saturdays. Don't forget you can view the catalog on our website at <http://hampshirebirdclub.org>. Items can be signed out and borrowed by HBC members for a period of up to one month, or longer by arrangement. Henry is happy to bring items to meetings, given a few days notice! Call him at **(413) 549 3722**.

Local and Live

The **Rattlesnake Gutter Trust** invites you to attend a program entitled "**Birds of Prey**," presented by local raptor expert **Julie Grow-Collier**, assisted by **Jim Parks**.

Time: Sunday, April 7, 2002, 2:00 PM

Place: Leverett Elementary School Gymnasium, 85 Montague Road, Leverett.

There will be a small admission charge.

Julie Collier grew up in Leverett, attending Leverett and Amherst schools. She is a licensed raptor rehabilitator who gives presentations at schools and functions in the New England area. Live hawks, falcons, eagle and owls are brought out of their cages, described and displayed, accompanied by a lively, loving, humorous narrative, with a Native American flavor. This program is very popular with both children and adults.

The Rattlesnake Gutter Trust is a local land trust, working to preserve natural habitat in the Amherst-Leverett area. Their Annual Meeting will be held in the cafeteria, prior to the program. Refreshments will wind up the evening. Visitors are most welcome.

If you would like to know more about the Rattlesnake Gutter Trust, please call Annette Gibavic at (413) 548 9082, or write to them at Box 195 Leverett, MA 01054.

Welcome New Members!

Dr. Elizabeth Tulett: eltullett@the-spa.com

William Sweet: 413-582-7094; yaaziel@berkshire.net

Ethan Carr: 413-549-6624; ecarr@larf.umass.edu

Address Changes

Please note that all email addresses which ended in "@mediaone.net" now end in "@attbi.com"

Hawk Migration Conference

Several HBC members attended the Seventh Regional Northeast Hawk Migration Conference on Saturday, March 9 at Holyoke Community College. The precise location on campus turned out to be a closely guarded secret. Some of the highlights are described here.

Deborah Allen provided a photographic account of Cooper's Hawks nesting in the Bronx last season. 2000 and 2001 saw the first successful nesting by this species in the New York metropolitan area since the 1950s. Deborah believes the increased success may be due to the sudden reduction in the number of jays and crows caused by West Nile virus. The abundance of Rock Doves certainly does not hurt.

Mariko Yamasaki correlated the lack of active management of forests with the increasing abundance of late-succession forests in New England. Almost all raptors use a variety of habitats including open grasslands, and edges. She believes far more active management of the New England landscape is necessary to create more habitat diversity.

Jane Seymour and Joan Morrison discussed American Kestrels. Both breeding bird censuses and migration counts in this region show the species in decline locally. Interestingly, in areas of the mid-west such as Iowa, where large numbers of nesting boxes have been installed on interstate highway signs, kestrels are doing quite well. The predominance of grasslands in this region is probably also a major part of the explanation.

Iain MacLeod began by describing the epic, sometimes violent, and ultimately successful struggle to protect nesting Ospreys from egg collectors in his native Scotland. Iain now lives in New Hampshire, where he devotes himself to encouraging Ospreys to return to areas like the Merrimack Valley by creating man-made nests. With the help of a professional climber, Mr. MacLeod modifies existing trees, and builds stick nests. He has found that young male ospreys are far more likely to set up territories and court females in the presence of these "starter nests" than in the presence of platforms alone, or no existing nest structures. There are now ten nests established south of the White Mountains in New Hampshire, six of which are in beaver swamps. Apparently, once a certain habitat is selected by colonizing male Ospreys, this becomes the fashion for others.

BirdSource (a website established by Cornell and National Audubon) is pioneering the sharing of hawk migration data over the Internet. Records from dozens of fall migration watches throughout North and Central America are being entered into an electronic database, which replaces an inaccessible paper archive. Graphics depict the number of a given species (e.g. Broad-winged Hawk) at each site over one-, five-, or ten-day periods from August through November. As this system becomes established, it will be possible to view the entire North American migration almost as soon as the sites send in their data. If you are interested, go to www.birdsource.org, and select the "Autumn Hawk Watch" option from the "Birdsource Projects" listbox.

The final event of the day, a panel discussion on accipiter identification, reassured this attendee that the debate over Sharpie-Cooper-Gos will sustain us in the field for many years to come.

Grand Opening: Peregrine Nest Box

A second nesting box for Peregrine Falcons has been put up at UMass. It is on Thompson Hall facing east. If you are standing at the campus pond, Thompson Hall is the tallish brick building to the right. While the nest is actually at the top of the building, there is a multi-story parapet above it. Hence, the site should meet the birds' requirement for a nest 30 feet from the top. *Please report any activity you notice at the box to **David Ziomek: Great Falls Discovery Center, 413-863-3221.***

Hitchcock Center

Reading the Forested Landscape - Tom Wessels, Ecologist, Author and Professor
Saturday, March 30: 1:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.

Nature Photography - John Green, Guild Studio School
April 1, 15, 29 and May 20: 6:30 - 9:30 p.m.; April 6, 20 and May 11, 7:30 - 10:30 a.m.

River Days - Exploring the Connecticut River from Source to Sea - Michael Tougias
Tuesday, April 2: 7:00 p.m.

EcoTeams - Jennifer Wiest, Teacher/Naturalist
Monday, April 8: 7:00 p.m.

The Art of Sustainability - Terry Tempest Williams, Naturalist and Nature Writer
Wednesday, April 10: 7:00 p.m., Amherst College-Buckley Recital Hall

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

Natural History of Vernal Pools: Patti Steinman, Educational Coordinator
Thursday, March 28: 7:00 pm

The Night for Salamanders: Dan Schell, Mt. Tom Citizens Advisory Committee
Date: To be determined by weather, meet at 6:pm. Please register, and become part of a telephone tree to be notified at short notice when the program will take place.

Spring's Wild Edibles: Blanche Derby, Author/Illustrator
Sunday March 30: 1:00-2:30 pm

Berkshire Sanctuaries are sponsoring **Spring Migration on the Great Plains**, a tour encompassing the prairie wetlands of Kansas and Nebraska, focusing on such enthralling migrants as Sandhill Cranes, Snow Geese, and Greater White-fronted Geese. Tour leaders are Rene Laubach and Bob Prescott. The tour runs from March 30 through April 7, 2002. Call (413) 637 0320 for a more detailed itinerary.

*For more details, and to register for programs at Arcadia, contact **Arcadia Wildlife Sanctuary**, 127 Combs Rd., Easthampton MA 01027. Telephone (413) 584-3009.*

Wetlands Fest

Volunteers are needed for the HBC table at the 2002 Pioneer Valley Wetlands Fest, on June 1. This event is organized by a collection of local conservation organizations including the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. It includes displays by any and all local organizations and individuals involved with wetlands, and last year it included a bird walk through Lawrence Swamp. The people at our table will need to be able to field basic questions about the club, and should also be versed in the gentle art of identifying birds for the public. Please contact Mary Alice Wilson if you can give an hour or so. This is a great way to make ourselves known to potential new members.

Until next time, walk softly and carry a big scope. David Peake-Jones: (413) 529 9541. davidpj@the-spa.com