



# Hampshire Bird Club, Inc.

## Amherst, Massachusetts

<http://hampshirebirdclub.org>

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**February, 2002**

As you read this, an extraordinary search is underway in Louisiana. In April of 1999, an LSU forestry student named David Kulivan reported to colleagues that he had seen and heard a pair of very large woodpeckers in the swampy bottomlands of the Pearl River Wildlife Management Area. Mr. Kulivan is a capable birder, and his detailed descriptions of the birds matched the Ivory-billed Woodpecker to a feather. Since that time, scientific and media interest have swelled to international levels, culminating in an exhaustive search of the region by six crack ornithologists, with the backing of several institutions and a prominent manufacturer of optical equipment. Satellite imagery, aerial photography and permanent remote listening devices have all been enlisted to maximize the chance of finding the bird. The actual footslogging began on January 17, 2002. Needless to say, no ivorybills have yet been found.

The whole thing is touched by modern phenomena such as electronic communication and corporate sponsorship. Armed as the searchers are with digital video cameras, any records they claim will likely be definitive. This likelihood may well doom the venture to fail, since our mythical beasts prefer to show themselves to the unprepared, the touched, or the second-shift rural commuter whom no one will believe. And if they actually find these birds, what then? What if it is the last one, or they are the last two? How could we possibly know? Should we risk intervening as we have with the Condor, knowing that the very intervention might be the death knell?

Forget the questions for now, and let's just hope to be around for the most incredible reprieve of the century. For some of us, there is a tiny flame of hope that survives amidst the dark certainty that they are gone. Now is the time to cup our hands around that tiny flame, and let it flicker a while longer, to dream of ivorybills calling in those distant woods.

You can look further into the search for the Ivory-billed Woodpecker by going to <http://www.museum.lsu.edu/LSUMNS/index.html> and you can follow the daily progress reports of the searchers at <http://www.zeiss.com/optical/sports>. The pick of the printed coverage is an article called "The Ghost Bird" by Jonathon Rosen in *The New Yorker*, 14 March, 2001; pp. 61-67.

### LIBRARY

There has been a changing of the guard at our fine lending institution. **Anne Cann**, whose name is virtually synonymous with our collection, is hanging up the horn-rims after years of hard work. In recognition of Anne's service to the club, a copy of the Sibley Guide to Bird Behavior has been donated to the library in her name.. She says she is looking forward to freeing up the back room of her home, and coming to meetings unencumbered. Henry Lappen has kindly offered to take over as librarian.. **Thanks, Anne and welcome, Henry!**

**There is a program this month.** It would normally be described on this page, but owing to that romantic interlude about those pesky woodpeckers, the program note has been relegated to page two. If you are not in the habit of reading past page one, **please go at least to page two this month. It's important. Thank you**

## PROGRAMS

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

**On Monday, February 11, Bill Danielson will present “Stories of a Wildlife Rehabilitator: Getting to Know Animals Up Close and Personal.”** I think Bill can introduce himself.

“I was raised in Amherst and went to Amherst Regional High School, where I was an average student. At that time my passions were nature and ice hockey. I made the varsity hockey team as a freshman and became the team captain as a junior.

After high school, I attended UMass and studied Wildlife Biology. I worked on many different projects, including the Maryland Colonial Waterbird Project, and pursued a career with the National Parks Service. I worked for two seasons as a Law Enforcement Ranger at the Sandy Hook Unit of Gateway National Recreation Area in New Jersey, before I came to my senses and headed back into the mountains. I worked for a summer in the White Mountains, as a researcher for the US Forest Service, studying predation on bird eggs. This led to my graduate research, which also focused on egg predation. This, incidentally, was also my first work with cameras.

After I received my Masters degree I faced the same constellation of problems faced by anyone with a degree in the field of Wildlife Biology – no jobs. I bounced around from place to place, looking for work that I enjoyed. It was during this time that I started writing a column for *The Recorder* in Greenfield. I currently work as a ranger at Savoy Mountain State Forest, but I still find my column to be the most fulfilling aspect of my “professional” life. My decision to write a book was based largely on the response of my readers, who have been outstandingly supportive over the past five years.”

Bill has drawn many of the columns he wrote for *The Recorder* into a book entitled, “**Speaking of Nature.**” He will have copies of the book for sale and signing at the meeting. If you want to be ahead of the game, the book is available at many local retailers, including our supporters at *Backyard Birds*. You can view the introduction, contents and excerpts at [www.speakingofnature.com](http://www.speakingofnature.com).

### Coming Up

**March 11:** Lori Sanders goes behind the radio show.

**April 8:** Andrew Farnsworth explores radar ornithology.

**May 13:** Jeff Podos expounds on Galapagos finches.

### Word Warp

If you remember the last edition, you may remember a reference to the Washington Post Invitational Word Warp. To recap, (for those who were not paying attention), the Post asked readers to take a word, alter it by adding, subtracting, or changing one letter, and then create a new definition. Here are a few more from their list of notable entries:

**Reintarnation:** coming back to life as a hillbilly.

**Giraffiti:** vandalism spray-painted really high up.

**Innoculatte:** an emergency method of administering caffeine when running late.

## FIELD TRIPS Reports

### January 5. North Shore.

This was one of those days when everything fell into place. It was a gorgeous day, and wonderful birds just kept appearing. At Joppa Flats we found Eurasian Widgeon, Common Snipe and a female Northern Shoveler. Black-legged Kittiwakes and Red Crossbills swooped daintily over the whitecaps and picked their way through the pines, (respectively) at Salisbury State Park. At Andrews Point, we found a King Eider and Harlequin Ducks. A Barrows Goldeneye and an Eared Grebe bobbed around amongst the sea-ducks at Niles Beach, and a Ring-necked Duck was eking out a living on the shrinking open water at Niles Pond. The only tern of the day was the sudden one made by Bob to get down to Andrews Point.

We found two Snowy Owls on this day. The later one by the lighthouse at Eastern Point was fairly conspicuous, and we were directed to it, but credit for the first goes to Mike Locher, who maintains that he caught a lucky glimpse of the bird as we sped out of Salisbury State Park. I want to know if there are such things as paternal hormones, and whether they have some effect on visual acuity.

**Harvey's mid-week group on January 16** battled strong winds to get great looks at Horned Larks in the east Meadows. After adjourning to Arcadia, they found the sheltered woods full of Robins and Cedar Waxwings.

Shirley Hillborn joins the Leaders Hall of Fame with this unsolicited trip report concerning **January 19**. "Eight HBC birders trekked with me to **Royalston** and were immediately rewarded with a view of over 20 Wild Turkeys in a field across from the library. To the left of the field we saw approximately nine (9) Pine Grosbeaks (including one spectacular male), ten (10) or so Evening Grosbeaks and two Pine Siskins. As we walked to the feeders around the corner, we had two (2) House Finches, more Pine Siskins and lots of Blue Jays. At the feeders, (amongst other things), we had two (2) Tree Sparrows and two (2) Common Redpolls. At one point we had a goldfinch, a redpoll and a siskin using the feeder at the same time, allowing a good comparison. Our second stop was on Brooks Road in Hardwick, where the group had a pleasant hike, but no birds of note."

### January 26. Coastal Rhode Island.

Twenty-one birders in a cumbersome convoy of six vehicles made its way from Westerly, R.I. to Sachuest Point, through Geoff LeBaron's old stomping ground. Despite mild temperatures, and quiet conditions in the valley, we found a stiff offshore breeze sweeping the inshore waters almost clean of birds by the time we reached Napatree Point. Highlights as we made our way eastward were Turkey Vulture, Northern Gannet, Great Egret, Great Blue Heron, Green-winged Teal, Northern Pintail, wonderfully close views of Bonaparte's Gulls and Red-throated Loons at Ninigret and Point Judith, and frustrating looks at wave-obscured Razorbills at the same locations. At Ninigret, an adult Lesser Black-backed Gull obligingly compared itself with the neighboring Greater, but only those with quick reflexes got a look at a Great Horned Owl flying over the cedars. The Lady Luck bird of the day was the Common Black-headed Gull which appeared at a range of six feet in the parking lot of a McDonalds near Pt Judith. Hypothetically speaking, would it be ethical to bring birds in using french fries?

As the day ended at Sachuest, we gawked at the Harlequins, found five Ruddy Turnstones sheltering amongst about 120 Purple Sandpipers in the lee of the rocks, and heard very ambitious Woodcock displaying near the carpark.

## Coming Up

**February 2. Maine's southern shore.** All day. Scott Sumner will again lead this ever-popular trip in search of winter specialties. Last year, the group observed Canvasback, Peregrine Falcon, Iceland Gull, Razorbill, and Black Guillemot. Previous trips have been lucky enough to see lovely birds like Great Grey Owl, Ivory Gull and Tundra Swan. Wear plenty of warm clothing, bring a lunch and snacks. Call Scott at (413) 253-7486 for the time and place of departure.

**February 9. Plymouth / Falmouth.** All day. Al Richards and Shawn Smolen-Morton explore southeastern Massachusetts, usually from Falmouth to Daniel Webster Wildlife Sanctuary. Last year, the trip tallied 64 species. Highlights from previous years include Yellow-breasted Chat, Eurasian Wigeon, Redhead Duck, Red-shouldered Hawk, Rough-legged Hawk, Glaucous Gull, Long-eared and Short-eared Owls. Meet at Al's house at 5:30AM. Call Al (413-665-2761) or Shawn (413-863-4569) for further details or directions.

**February 13. Midweek half-day in the Connecticut Valley: Early Arrivals.** Meet Harvey Allen at 8:00 AM across the street from the Atkins Farms, on the corner of Route 116 and Bay Road in Amherst. Will his group find the first Red-winged Blackbirds of the year? Heavy snow or rain will cancel this trip. Call Harvey (413-253-7963) for further information.

**March 2. Plum Island.** Whole Day. Geoff LeBaron will lead this **NEW TRIP** to the island for late winter species. In addition to the usual wintering birds, Geoff will have an eye out for Rough-legged Hawk, Barrow's Goldeneye, Little Gull, Common Black-headed Gull, Glaucous Gull, and Snowy Owl. Dress warmly and pack a lunch. Call Geoff (413-268-9281) for further details and registration.

## Overnight Trips

*It is time to start thinking about overnight trips. Scheduled for this year are Monhegan Island in May, Connecticut Lakes in June, and Cape May in the Fall. Registration begins now for the first two trips, which are introduced below. Sign up early to avoid disappointment.*

### **Monhegan Island, Maine. May 24 to May 27 (Memorial Day weekend), 2002**

After fifteen annual visits, this is still one of the flagship events run by the club and represents a unique kind of birding trip. The island lies at the end of a 12-mile ferry ride from Port Clyde, on the central Maine coast. This is a legendary birding location, and the club has witnessed both some spectacular fallouts and startling rarities, especially in conjunction with certain weather patterns.

A hardy group of lobster fishers and artists lives in the village of Monhegan, clustered around a small marsh which is the only source of fresh water on the island. We will join them in relying entirely on our own legs to bird through the village, and along the hiking trails which criss-cross the island. We will stay in rustic accommodations at the fabled Trailing Yew, which offers us two prepared meals a day as part of their bargain-priced service.

This trip forces us to slow down and be patient. There is no jumping in and out of cars here. We wrap ourselves in the quiet of the island, poke around along the trails for whatever may lurk amongst the apple and spruce trees, and anticipate the new arrivals each new morning may bring. There is time to learn new species, or just soak up known ones. When the birding is quiet, participants are free to explore the mysteries of the Enchanted Forest, the local art galleries, or the spectacular cliff-top trails independently.

*For further information, and/or to register, please contact one of the leaders:*

**David Peake-Jones;** (413) 529 9541; [davidpj@the-spa.com](mailto:davidpj@the-spa.com); or **Andrew Magee;** (413) 369 9920

### **Connecticut Lakes, New Hampshire. June 14 – June 16, 2002.**

These lakes lie in the extreme northeastern corner of New Hampshire, just south of the Canadian Border. They are the headwaters of the Connecticut River. This is not the first time HBC has visited the area, but the trip has not been offered for some years. This is your chance to get into a whole new region, with a whole new suite of birds. There are good opportunities to see breeding boreal species such as Gray Jay, Boreal Chickadee, Black-headed Woodpecker, Three-toed Woodpecker and winnowing Common Snipe. I have a funny feeling that moose and butterflies may work their way into this equation somehow, too.

The group will depart the valley early on Friday, June 14 and return late on Sunday, June 16. The trip is limited to 12 people, and will undoubtedly fill up fast.

*For more information, and/or to register, please call one of the leaders:*

**Harvey Allen:** (413) 253 7963, or **Tom Gagnon:** (413) 584 6353; [tombwhawk@aol.com](mailto:tombwhawk@aol.com)

## **CONSERVATION Massachusetts Birder's Meeting**

This meeting is intended to create awareness of the Massachusetts Important Bird Areas (IBA) program and will also feature "Birds in Art" displays. Registration will take place from 8:00 to 8:45 am. **Wayne Petersen** will then provide a General Introduction and Welcome. **Bob Durand**, Secretary of Environmental Affairs in this state, will address the forum on the subject of "Biodiversity in Massachusetts." **Henry Woolsey** and **Robert Askins** will then follow with presentations concerning the Massachusetts Biomap Project, and "Restoring New England's Birds," respectively.

Perhaps the big hook for many will be the keynote address, given by **David Allen Sibley**, followed by workshops on birds in art and a book signing

**Date:** Saturday, February 2, 2002 at 8 am

**Location:** Ecotarium, 222 Harrington Way, Worcester, MA 01604.

For information/registration, please call (781) 259 9506 ext. 7401, or go to [www.massaudubon.org/iba](http://www.massaudubon.org/iba).

The cost is \$24 for Mass. Audubon members, and \$30 for non-members. Space is limited.

## **Great Backyard Bird Count**

Have you always believed that, at least in winter, you and a steaming hot mug of soup should never be more than one arm's length apart? So far so good. But what if the birder in you insists that you contribute to the growing body of knowledge being collected and shared across the continent via the internet? What to do? Perhaps the Great Backyard Bird Count is for you.

The fifth annual count will take place from **February 15 – 18**, and is organized collaboratively by Cornell Lab of Ornithology and National Audubon. To participate, birders use a specific protocol to record the birds visiting their feeders, and then submit the results online. The ultimate aim is to use the enormous amount of effort that goes into observing birds nationally to contribute to a deeper understanding of the distribution and movement of those birds. Amongst the patterns evident over the first five years is a correlation between the depth of the snow pack and the winter distribution of American Robins in some northern locations.

Last year, there were over 50,000 checklists completed, documenting over 4 ½ million individuals of 442 species. *If you are considering taking part this year, please go to [www.birdsource.org](http://www.birdsource.org) for further information and/or to register.*

## HITCHCOCK CENTER

**Winter Festival** - Hitchcock Center staff and local storytellers

Saturday, February 2 from noon-3 pm

**An Icelandic Evening** - Ted Watt (naturalist); Marybeth Bridegam (Cross Culture, Inc.)

February 12, 2002 at 7:00 pm

**In Pursuit of the Vikings – Newfoundland and Labrador** – Marion Gorham, Al Shane

Tuesday, February 26 at 7:30 pm

**Salamander Tunnel Maintenance Day** – Jennifer Wiest

Sunday, March 3 from noon – 3 pm

**Spring Birding Class** - Scott Sumner, Birder

*Our ever-popular Spring Birding Class is back for the 24th year. Scott has been birding for over 25 years, served as the President of the Hampshire Bird Club, and the Voice of Audubon for Western Mass. During this 10-week course, Scott will emphasize identification, bird topography, distribution, and overall migration patterns. The majority of the field trips will be half days with an all day trip to Plum Island at the end of May.*

Indoor Classes: Wednesdays 7 - 9 pm. March 27, April 3, 10, 17, 24, May 1, 8, 15, 29.

Field Trips: Saturdays 7am - noon. March 30 - June 1, 2002.

Members: \$145. Non-members: \$175

Time is running out for you to get in on the ground floor for the **Icelandic Adventure**, from **June 26 to July 5, 2002**. This is a comprehensive tour of Iceland which includes birds, volcanic geology and much, much more. **There is an early registration discount which applies until February 28.**

*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 <http://www.hitchcockcenter.org/>.*

## ARCADIA

Upcoming activities sponsored by Arcadia include:

(1) **Winter Tracking** with **David McLain** on the following dates:

Saturday, February 9 at Graves Farm, and

Saturday, February 23 at M.S. Lynes sanctuary

(2) **Winter Birding in the Connecticut River Valley** with **Geoff LeBaron**

Sunday, February 10 from 8 am-12 noon

(3) **Creating a Garden for Butterflies** with **Lisa Ferree and Clivia Pasek**

Saturday, February 16 from 1-2:30 pm

(4) **Winter Crows** with **Patti Steinman**

Saturday, March 2 from 3-6pm

**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.*

## MISCELLANEOUS

Hanging with the in-crowd at Fitzwilly's, luxuriating at the Eastside Grill, raging at Pearl St., trying to get away with parking next that funky diner across the street? As if you needed any other reason to visit Strong Ave. in Northampton, the valley's premier birding store is there. **Backyard Birds is locally owned and operated, and offers you, as a member of HBC, 10% discount on everything from Bill Danielson's book to birdsongs on tape.** Stop in next time before you pay that self-deluding visit to Runner's World (just around the corner).

Not that you would, but you could microscopically examine the folds and staples of newsletters since September of last year and find the occasional sloughed-off human epidermal cell. If you analyzed the DNA, you might find matches with the following individuals:

**Sue Emerson, Betsy Higgins, Iris Higgins, Sally Hills, Andrew Magee, Joanne Parker, and Mary Alice Wilson.** Collating the newsletter goes a lot faster with many hands. I thank all of these people (and those I may have forgotten).

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A final word on **word warping**. I have more of this stuff from the original contest which I will be happy to share in future editions. However, I also have a few which have brought me bolt upright in bed at ungodly hours of the night. These I will also be forced to share with you, dear reader, but I promise to give first priority to the creations of our readership. **Please send me your own efforts.** Until next time then, in the immortal words of FDR, "Talk softly and carry a big scope!"

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