



Hampshire Bird Club, Inc. Amherst, Massachusetts

<http://hampshirebirdclub.org>

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Membership and RBA Reminder

Membership forms for this year are due by **October 31**.

Registration for the **Rare Bird Alert** (telephone tree and email list) closes on **October 21** (the date of the October program).

PROGRAMS

This Month

On **Monday, October 21**, **Mara Silver** will provide a dash of local flavor when she describes her research on **“Bank and Cliff Swallows in Massachusetts: Bank Swallows on the Connecticut River and Cliff Swallows at Graves Farm Sanctuary.”**

Eroded river banks provide important nesting habitat for Bank Swallows. Mara checked banks along a section of the Connecticut River for three years, and tried to find out what physical characteristics attracted the birds to certain areas. Mara's work seems to show that one man's habitat destruction is another man's habitat creation. Important nesting sites (both present and potential) for Bank Swallows are being lost to bank stabilization. Cliff Swallows have been declining in Massachusetts for many years. The colony at Graves farm (a Massachusetts Audubon sanctuary) has been studied for the past decade to find out why the populations are struggling. Mara will describe some of what has been learned from this colony, and how careful management has helped increase the breeding success of the swallows at Graves Farm.

Mara Silver completed her Masters Degree in Wildlife and Fisheries Conservation at the University of Massachusetts in 2000. For her thesis project, she researched habitat use by Bank Swallows on the Connecticut River. She has also studied the same Cliff Swallow colony in Williamsburg, Massachusetts for the past 12 years, including several seasons with funding from the Massachusetts Audubon Society, Massachusetts Division of Fisheries & Wildlife, and Northeast Utilities. She currently works as an editor of scientific publications.

Coming Programs

November 18: **Bob Askins** looks at *“Ecology, Conservation of Birds of Open Habitats”*

December 9: Members Meeting

January 13: **Robert S. Ridgely** on the *Jocotoco Foundation*

Hampshire Bird Club Evening at WFCR

As we have done for the past couple of years, HBC will spend an evening answering phones at WFCR during their fund drive this fall. We will be taking calls at the station (in the studio with the on-air hosts) on Saturday, October 19, from 6-10 PM. It's easy (training is provided). It's fun (sometimes there is live music in the studio). Dinner is provided; all you need to do is bring yourself (and friend if you wish). *If you'd like to join the fun, sign up by calling or emailing Dave Gross at 253-2897 or dgross@biochem.umass.edu.*

Date: Saturday, October 19

Time: 6-10 p.m.

Location: WFCR studios, Hampshire House, UMass Campus.

World Premiere!!

In 1899, railroad tycoon Edward Henry Harriman, one of the most powerful men in America, decided to take a little vacation in the form of one of the most ambitious expeditions ever staged in America. Harriman invited twenty-five scientists, writers and artists to join him on a 9000-mile exploration of coastal Alaska.

In Summer 2001, a Smith College group, also accompanied by scientists, writers and artists, retraced Harriman's route. They explored some of the issues Harriman faced, and some he could not even imagine. Their mission was to examine 100 years of environmental and social change.

On **April 7, 2003**, **Tom Litwin** will provide a first hand account of this expedition at our monthly program, and cordially invites us to the World Premiere of:

***THE 1899 HARRIMAN ALASKA EXPEDITION RETRACED:
A CENTURY OF CHANGE***

7:00pm, Saturday, November 2, 2002
Wright Hall Auditorium, Smith College
Northampton, Massachusetts

This is a two-hour film produced by Lawrence Hott, Tom Litwin, and Diane Garey.

It is a Florentine Films/Hott Production in association with the Clark Science Center and Alumnae Association of Smith College

You can also visit the expedition Website at www.pbs.org/Harriman.

FIELD TRIPS

Reports

On **Saturday, August 24**, Bob Bieda and others visited **New South Beach** on Cape Cod. As always, this trip caught the shorebird migration in all its grandeur. Along the beach, we found eighteen species of shorebirds, including Hudsonian Godwit, Marbled Godwit, Dunlin, and White-rumped Sandpiper. The beach (in places) teemed with Red Knots, Short-billed Dowitchers, both yellowlegs, and innumerable "peeps". Wheeling overhead or dutifully pointing into the breeze on the sandbars were many Common- and Roseate Terns, with a few Least- and Forster's Terns thrown in. Alert observers realized that some of the brown gullish things cavorting overhead were actually way too "built" for that. They were, in fact, **jaegers** (most likely of the parasitic variety) harassing the terns. As if that weren't enough, **Cory's-** and **Greater Shearwaters** were clearly visible from the ocean side later in the day.

We might have been forgiven for simply soaking up the majesty of it all. However, pricking us to keep scanning the feathered multitudes, was the knowledge that a Curlew Sandpiper (a rare Eurasian visitor) had been reported in the previous few days. In mid-afternoon, Bob's restless gaze alighted on a medium-sized bird sitting amongst the knots. It was doing its best of course, to remain anonymous (head tucked, and constantly being obscured by other birds), but had traces of deep rufous plumage on the breast. This was our **Curlew Sandpiper**, and we had great satisfaction in sharing the discovery with the BBC who were also on the beach. Mike Locher took a second look at a peep, which seemed a little too ornate for our common fare. It just could have been one of the Red-necked Stints (another Eurasian visitor), which have become almost annual at South Beach in recent years. However, after spirited debate, our group decided that it would have to remain in the "coulda been" basket.



On **Wednesday, September 18**, Harvey and friends embarked on the **monthly, mid-week morning trip**. Near Atkins farms, the group found Cedar waxwings, Red-bellied Woodpeckers, and Robins gorging themselves on cherries. A Swamp Sparrow and a Green Heron were at ground level, and anonymous warblers bounced about in the tree-tops. The group arrived on top of Mt. Holyoke at about 9:45, just in time to catch at least **250**

Broadwinged Hawks rising majestically on the first thermals of the day over Northampton, UMass, South Hadley, and right around the mountain. These birds and the smattering of other raptors migrating by, plus post-breeding Dark-eyed Juncos, kept everyone happy until early afternoon, when union regulations required that they clock off for the day.

Editor's Note: This was one of the better days for hawks in the valley this fall. Observers on Mt. Tom also had good numbers of Broadwings (mostly to the east).



Saturday, September 14, should have been a good day for migrating songbirds. Bob Bieda and a large group entered **the west meadows of Northampton** on a crisp, foggy morning, with just that expectation. There were early fireworks in the Ibis Pool area, as a Merlin and one of the resident kestrels disagreed violently over some aspect of falconid territorial etiquette. After that though, the group walked disconsolately through the disquieting quiet which has been so characteristic of the early Fall this year. The only relief came when we encountered a small knot of Black-throated Green-, Magnolia-, and Chestnut-sided Warblers. The odd Redstart and Rose-breasted Grosbeak popped up as well. Conn warbler was conspicuous by its absence. It is well to remember that birding, like war, consists of long periods of boredom with occasional moments of extreme excitement.

Coming trips

Saturday, October 5. Geoff LeBaron will lead a leader's choice trip in the valley, as part of the continuing **"Leisurely and Local"** series. This weekend is a great time for late migrants and vagrants. Remember last year's Connecticut Warbler? Call Geoff at 413-268-9281 for details.

Wednesday, October 9. Morning Sweep of the Connecticut River Valley. Half day. On his monthly, mid-week trip Harvey Allen plans to visit a location in the valley for migrating sparrows, late warblers, blackbirds and hawks. Meet Harvey at 7AM across the street from the Atkins Farms, on the corner of Route 116 and Bay Road in Amherst. Call Harvey (413-253-7963) for further information.

11-14. Cape May, New Jersey. Scott Sumner, Danny Ziomek and others are returning to this Mecca of fall birding, which thrilled last year's participants. This trip is full!

Sunday, October 13. Poor Man's Cape May. Bob Bieda leads a new trip from **Race Point to Chatham**. Among the always-attractive common migrants, he will be searching for the snazzy interlopers which sometimes grace the thickets and beaches of the outer cape, like Parasitic Jaeger, Western Sandpiper, Orange-crowned Warbler, and Blue Grosbeak. This trip is planned as a fair weather event only. In case of inclement weather, Bob will cancel the trip. So, it will be blue skies and bonny shores! Meet at the Hadley Stop and Shop (Rte 9) at 5AM. Contact Bob (413-527-2623) or Shawn Smolen-Morton (413-863-4569) to register and for further details.

Saturday, October 19. Dead Creek. All Day. Al Richards plans to return to the Dead Creek Wildlife Management Area on gorgeous Lake Champlain in western Vermont, where groups from previous years enjoyed the spectacle of over twelve thousand migrating Snow Geese. In addition to the Snow Geese, Ross's Goose is regularly seen, and rarities (jaegers, uncommon gulls) are known to stop at Lake Champlain. Call Al at (413) 665-2761 to register.

Sunday, November 3. Berkshire Lakes Waterfowl. All Day. Tom Gagnon leads his annual and popular sweep of the lakes and ponds of the Berkshire Mountains. Last year, the group observed 20 species of waterfowl, including Black Scoters, a Northern Shoveler, and an Egyptian Goose (escape). Along the way, there are usually attractive sightings made at Bartlett's Apple Stand: fresh cider and donuts. Bring snacks, warm clothing and a lunch. Meet Tom in the Super Stop and Shop in Northampton on King Street (Route 5) at 6:15 AM. Call Tom (413-584-6353) to register and for further information.

CHRISTMAS COUNT

It's never too early to begin thinking about the Christmas Count. This, for those new to us, is an opportunity to contribute to the longest-running database in ornithology. Birders all over the U.S., Canada, the Caribbean, Latin America and Pacific Islands count all the birds within circular geographical areas over a 24-hour period. The results are collated and presented in a massive volume called "American Birds", which also includes results of research projects using the data.

The 102nd count last year saw the first ever Nashville Warbler in the Northampton area, and high counts for thirteen species including Wild Turkey, Eastern Bluebird and Hermit Thrush. The Quabbin diehards found great numbers of Ring-necked Ducks, Horned Grebes, and Northern Saw-whet Owls. They had a Black-headed Gull and two Boreal Chickadees.

For many birders, this is the most collaborative activity in which they participate. The sense of camaraderie and shared purpose during these events is palpable. The Northampton and Quabbin circles are divided up into smaller areas, each counted by an experienced leader or leaders, with assistants. Groups plan who will participate, for how long, and how to divide up the count area. 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. Both local counts culminate in a compilation session during which those still standing come together to pool results.

Mark These Dates!!

Northampton Count: Sunday, December 15.

Quabbin Count: Saturday, December 28

For further information, watch coming newsletters, or contact Jan Ortiz (413 549 1768; jortiz@aol.com, Northampton Count) and Scott Sumner (413 253 5999; ssurner@aol.com, Quabbin Count)

LIBRARY

Bill Clinton has one. George Bush Snr. has one. Ummm...the President before that has one. Some day, even G.W. will have one. More to the point, we have one!

A substantial library, that is. It is located at the Hitchcock Center for the Environment in Amherst. **Henry Lappen** maintains a collection of birding resources including field guides, bird-finding guides to almost every major birding destination in the U.S., and some overseas locations, natural histories, periodicals and videos.

Hours are 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. on Tuesday through Friday, and 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. on Saturdays. Items can be signed out and borrowed for a period of up to one month, or longer by arrangement. Henry is happy to bring items to meetings, given a few days notice! Call him at **(413) 549 3722**.

CONSERVATION

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

Help Document De Nile!

Massachusetts Department of Public Health is testing dead birds for the **West Nile Virus**. They are particularly interested in **crows, jays, ravens and Red-tailed Hawks**. The birds must have died within the past 24 hours and must not be frozen. They have a network of volunteers who will collect the specimens and transfer them to labs for testing. Please bag and keep cool (not frozen) until collection.

Call Massachusetts Dept of Public Health: (866) 627-7968, or visit www.state.ma.us/dph/wnv/wnv1.htm

HITCHCOCK CENTER PROGRAMS

Cape Ann Birding (Scott Sumner)

Saturday, December 7, 5:30 a.m. – dusk. (Rain Date: December 8)
Registration required. Fee.

Fall Foliage By Canoe or Kayak (James McNaughton of *Adventure In/Adventure Out*)

Saturday, October 19, 10:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.
Registration required. Fee.

Pumpkin Carving

Thursday, October 24, 6:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.

The Enchanted Forest: A Non-Scary Halloween Event (Hitchcock staff and volunteers)

Friday, October 25, 5:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.
Saturday, October 26, 5:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.
Fee.

Living With Black Bears (Lynn Rogers of the Wildlife Research Institute)

Tuesday, October 29, 7:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m. at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Hadley
Registration highly recommended. Fee.

ARCADIA PROGRAMS

Cellar Holes and Stone Walls: The Abandoned Farm Experience (Dietrich Schlobohm)

Slide Show: Tuesday, Oct. 1 at Arcadia; 7-9 p.m. Field Trip: Saturday, Oct.5; 9:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.
Registration required. Fee.

Beginning Birding (Anne Lombard and Patti Steinman)

Thursday, Oct. 17, 7:00 -9:00 p.m. and Saturday Oct. 19; 8:30 a.m.-12:00 p.m.
Registration required. Fee.

Teacher Workshop: Project WET (Staff from MAS, Northfield Mountain, and MDC)

Saturday, Nov. 2, 9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. Registration required. Fee.

Reading the Forested Landscape (Tom Wessels)

Sunday, Nov 3, 9:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m. at Arcadia. Registration required. Fee.

Big Trees at Arcadia (Bob Leverett)

Saturday, Nov. 9, 10:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m. at Arcadia.
Registration required. Fee.

OTHER IMPORTANT STUFF

Mt Holyoke Art Exhibit

The Mount Holyoke College Art Museum has just reopened its facility with an exhibit on Mount Holyoke itself. Since many of us spend time on the mountain, standing at the exhibit looking at how much others have enjoyed drawing, photographing, and visiting this marvelous place is a treat. Don't miss this (free) exhibit.

"To hunt for birds in the field is to hear the distant, muffled ticking of the great clock of the universe."
Brooks Atkinson, late theater critic, nature lover. Quoted in "Arizona Highways," September, 1992.

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. Remember, with local merchants, your dollar stays here!

Giant Hogweed

Some of you anglophilic television connoisseurs may remember when “Dr. Who” did battle with the “Crinoid.” This botanical overachiever went from an innocuous pod in an archaeological dig to a house-sized monstrosity, which rampaged homicidally through the English countryside. “What,” you ask testily, “is the point of this digression?” It seems we have our very own candidate for nasty plant of the decade right here in Massachusetts.

The **Giant Hogweed** (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*), native to Asia, is now popping up frequently in this state, and has been documented in Turners Falls, amongst other locations. It grows 8-15 feet tall, with deeply incised leaves to five feet across, and umbrella-shaped flower heads (a mere 2 ½ feet across). The stems can be 2-4” thick, with deep reddish-purple blotches and coarse, white hairs. The plant is classified as a public health risk, because the clear sap contains photo-activated toxins, which can cause painful contact dermatitis (with associated scarring), and temporary/permanent blindness if contact is made with the eyes.

*If you want more information, or want to report a possible occurrence, please visit the **Massachusetts Department of Food and Agriculture** website at www.state.ma.us/dfa. (The above description notwithstanding, do not call the Department of Defense).*

Welcome New Members!

Hany Aziz: 413 737 2925, barnswallow@attbi.com
 Lisa Marie Bertoldi: 413 268 7485, sayre@crocker.com
 Debra Donaldson & Brian Kelley: 781 391 5307, bkelly@wyeth.com
 Kate Elmer: 413 585 6066, womder_weasel_15@hotmail.com
 V.K Greenble: 413 256 6144, greenbie@larp.umass.edu
 Bruce Hart & Ilene Goldstein: 413 584 4176, bvnghart@aol.com
 Marilyn Hart: 413 367 0054, mhart@crocker.com
 Sterling Lamet: 413 259 1551, slamet@ipo.umass.edu
 Mary Beth Manning: 413 584 5859, lizbett@gtcinternet.com
 Bernice Rosenthal: 413 256 0844
 Elissa and Bernie Rubinstein: 413 549 5078, elissar01002@yahoo.com
 Helen Anne Sephton: 413 367 2253
 Mary Lou Simpson: 413 549 6022, marylsimpson@attbi.com
 Marjorie Tauer: 413 527 1838, mtauer@crocker.com
 Elizabeth Tullett: eltullett@the-spa.com
 Matthew J. Williams: 413 665 3981, mjw22@cornell.edu
 Ben Yost: blyjamin@hotmail.com

That’s it for now. Till next time, walk softly and carry a big scope!

David Peake-Jones, 413 529 9541
davidpj@the-spa.com