



Hampshire Bird Club, Inc. Amherst, Massachusetts

<http://hampshirebirdclub.org>

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The news media seem full of things “we” (the mythical general public) can no longer do. If we were thinking of retirement, we have to go on working till the stock market deigns to “recover.” Those of us who have already taken the big plunge into life as it was meant to be lived, are practicing the phrase, “Would you like to supersize that, sir?” We can no longer rely on the doyens of business, the harmlessness of a “skeeter” bite, hormone replacement therapy, or even that nice lady who used to do the centerpieces on TV.

Well, we can still bird, even if we have to slip something less conspicuous on over the yellow smiley vest. So buck up and get ready for yet another Fall. The nighthawks are probably loping their way through the buggy bliss of a still evening as you read this, and the rest of the migration is about to unfold.

It is now time to legitimize your guilty pleasure by sending some of your hard-won bread to the club, along with the time-honored membership form attached. If you joined for the first time after April 30 of this year, you are paid up until September of 2003, and this packet should contain a friendly reminder to that effect. In this package you will also find information about the various options for finding out what is being seen in the area, and the revitalized Birding Information Exchange, which will allow members to benefit from the experience of others when planning trips to specific birding locations. Included with this edition are the fall Field Trip Schedule, the Rare Bird Alert sign-up, and as much else as USPS will allow for thirty-seven cents.

NEWSLETTER AVAILABLE ON-LINE!!!

For the second year, the club will offer an on-line version of the newsletter for those who choose it.

“How does that work?”

Each newsletter will be posted on the HBC website. Participants will receive an email notification, whereupon they can view and/or download the newsletter from the website at their leisure.

“What’s the point?”

One venerable club officer recently commented, “I tend to put the paper copy in a pile (from whence it seems to migrate to points unknown), but I have not yet managed to lose my computer.” You also reduce the costs of printing and postage for the club, which keeps dues down for us all. After down-loading the on-line version, you may choose to remove all traces of dubious editorial humor without the use of unsightly marker!

“What if I encounter technical difficulties?”

Most users last year had no difficulty. In the event that you find the system does not work for you, a simple communication with the Membership Secretary will get you back on the “Hard Copy” mailing list.

“What are the computer/software requirements?”

The newsletter will be posted in PDF format. This means you will need Adobe Acrobat Reader 5.0 software. If you do not already have this on your system, it can be downloaded free via a link on the HBC website.

I signed up last year. Do I need to sign up again?

To reduce confusion, we are asking all members to decide each year on whether or not to get the on-line newsletter. Regardless of how you got the newsletter last year, please make your selection for this year on the membership form for this year.

“How do I sign up?”

Please indicate your wish to participate on the relevant section of the Membership Form.

Your Bird Club Thanks You!!

PROGRAMS

All programs are held at Immanuel Lutheran Church; 867 North Pleasant St., Amherst at 7:30 pm

On **Monday, September 9**, **Wayne Petersen** will open the program calendar for this year when he speaks on “**Iceland.**” It is often noted that the name of this extraordinary island misses the point. It is certainly chilly, but the presence of frozen water is greatly overshadowed by the fact that this tortured mass of young rock is a product of one of the most active volcanic regions in the world. If the bird life comes even close to the geology, we are in for a treat.

Wayne, a Massachusetts native, is Field Ornithologist with the Massachusetts Audubon Society. Throughout his career, Wayne has led trips and tours, lectured, and conducted birding workshops across North America. His tour leading experiences have taken him from arctic Canada to South America, Antarctica, Iceland, Africa, and Madagascar. Wayne is a past Vice President of the American Birding Association, past Chairman of the Massachusetts Avian Records Committee, and is a New England Regional Editor for *North American Birds*. His writing projects have included co-authoring *Birds of Massachusetts* (with Richard Veit), contributing to *The Audubon Society Master Guide to Birding*, and *The Sibley Guide to Bird Life and Behavior*, along with editing the *Massachusetts Breeding Bird Atlas* (in press), and writing the *National Audubon Society’s Pocket Guide to Songbirds and Familiar Backyard Birds (East)*.

Coming Programs

October 21: **Mara Silver** discusses *Connecticut River Valley Swallows*

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*

February 10: **Dave Stemple** speaks on *Scottish Bird Song*

March 10: **Paul Baisich** hails “*A Shade-Grown Coffee Future: Optimism for Birds*”

April 7: **Tom Litwin** discusses the *Harriman Expedition*

May 12: **Kenn Kaufmann** muses about “*Migration from the Bird’s Point of View*”

June 9: **Geoff LeBaron** sails to the *Galapagos*

Please note that the April program has been changed to April 7 since the program schedule was last published.

FIELD TRIPS

Reports

Bob Bieda and eleven others enjoyed beautiful weather, delicious fried clams, and a long day of birding **Plum Island** and the surrounding areas on **Saturday, May 25**. We started by hearing and briefly seeing a Clapper Rail as soon as we got on the refuge. We then had a nice assortment of fifteen species of warblers in the Hellcat and Pines areas. Many of these were females and various ages giving us a good education in warbler ID. We had at least three different plumages of Bay-breasted Warbler.

Other highlights were six Wilson's Phalaropes, two breeding-plumage Red Knots and a young Little Gull in excellent light and side by side with Bonaparte's Gulls for comparison.

Janice Doppler kindly sends this unique survivor’s story of the ill-fated inaugural **Connecticut Marshes/Bradley trip on June 1**, with **Al Richards**. The group started in the Station 43 area in Windsor, Connecticut where they found a pair of Least Bitterns that stayed in one area of the marsh for over 45 minutes and a pair of snapping turtles locked in the conjugal act for over an hour. Rails were conspicuously less conspicuous, even in response to a tape. However, Both Willow and Alder Flycatchers were singing in the area, and were compared both live and on tape.

After we left the marsh we went to Bradley. We were still on the first leg of our slow trip around the airport looking for Upland Sandpiper when we were surrounded by state police (actually only two cruisers, but it felt scary). We still managed to locate a small flock of turkeys while we were being escorted from the airport under police guard.

Editors Note: Experience suggests it is unwise to gesticulate and yell “Turkey” in the presence of Connecticut’s finest. Thanks, Janice!

Stacy Adams, reports that she and seven others toured **Mt Greylock** on **June 8**. They had 52 species of birds, including Mourning Warbler - “The Hard Way” (after beating through the blackberries for an hour) and Mourning Warbler - “The Soft Way” (teed up in a tree at Jones’ Nose). There were in fact several Mourning Warblers at the Nose, along with Indigo Buntings and a Field Sparrow.

Stacy has done a nice job of reporting the mundane details of the trip, but has remained coy about the most tantalizing question of the account. Just who is, ‘The very nice German guy whose name escapes me’? I bet he passed himself off as a ski instructor. Wir müssen diesen Mann finden. Wohin sind Sie und was mochten Sie mit die schöne Stacy?

On June 15, a dedicated group of five journeyed through the rain-shrouded Berkshires with **Dave Norton** to **Bartholomew’s Cobble**. Trustees of Reservations personnel welcomed us and gave a great introduction to some of the uncommon ferns that flourish in the alkaline soils around the outcrop. Kate Ryan of the Hoffman Bird Club then guided us through the singular geology and botany of the cobble for several hours. We battled to find 52 species, given the dank conditions, but were blessed by the unfortunate demise of a large cow on an adjacent farm. As we began, there were only a few Turkey Vultures showing interest, but when we returned closer to mid-day, there were around thirty Turkey Vultures and at least 4 Black Vultures around the carcass. We had a smattering of warblers (much more easily seen than heard) and all three of the common local empids in full voice to round out the day.

There is something wonderfully incongruous about finding masses of birds migrating in July. Six of us roused ourselves from mid-summer indolence to venture onto **New South Beach** in Chatham, Massachusetts on **July 27**. We were blessed with a cool, overcast day, but cursed with a high tide that fell at 5 PM, by which time we were, of necessity, back on the mainland. Despite this, we found healthy numbers of Red Knot. Many showed gentle apricot rouging of the breast, reminiscent of their recent breeding splendor. A comparable number of Short-billed Dowitchers sewed their mysterious ways across the quilted mudflats, along with innumerable Least-, and Semipalmated Sandpipers, Sanderlings, and modest numbers of Black-bellied Plovers. From the beach we could see numerous Storm Petrels plying the breakers.

For most, the highlights of the day came from amongst the numerous American Oystercatchers, including two downy chicks lurching comically among the pebbles of a raised sandbar, the feeding Black Skimmer (possibly more than one), and some thirty (30) Piping Plovers (including twenty in one group – probably a novel experiment in day-care). At the extreme limit of our southward progress, we came upon at least fourteen Hudsonian Godwits lurking in amongst a group of dowitchers.

Coming Trips

The Fall Field Trip Schedule is enclosed in all its Technicolor glory!!!

WHERE ARE THE BIRDS?

For those who want the latest on birds being seen in the valley and beyond, there are two options. The **Voice of Audubon** maintains a report on birds being seen statewide. Call **1-888-224-6444** for a synopsis of interesting birds being seen, organized by region. Jan Ortiz maintains the report for Western Massachusetts. She tries to create a comprehensive picture of what is being seen in the region, meaning all reports are welcome. Jan asks that you include the numbers of birds seen in your reports, not just the species list. Jan prefers to be reached by email at jtortiz@aol.com. Alternatively, you may call her at (413) 549 1768, or leave a message in the Western Mass. section of The Voice.

For hard-core chasers, the **Rare Bird Alert** is an email/phone tree run by HBC. Please see the cautions on the RBA form (enclosed) if you are considering being part of it.

BIRDING INFORMATION EXCHANGE

If you have birded a particular location, either locally or far afield, and would be willing to share information with other club members, please sign up in the "Birding Information Exchange" section of the membership form. A file matching birding areas and those who know about them will be kept at the library.

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 Saturdays. 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**.

HITCHCOCK CENTER

Coming Programs

Fall Birding, (Scott Sumner)

Wednesdays: September 11, 25; October 2, 16; November 6 from 7-9 PM

Field Trips: September 14, 28; October 5, 9; November 10 from 7 AM - noon

Monarch Tagging, (Jennifer Wiest): September 11, 18, 25 from 3:30 PM daily

Hawk Watch, (Guest Naturalist): September 14 from 8:30 AM - 1 PM

Wild Mushrooms, (Georgette Roberts): September 15 from 10 AM – 4 PM

Fly Fishing, (Jim Lafley): September 21 from 9 AM - noon

Full Moon Coffee House, (Lui Collins): September 21 from 8:30 AM

Keeping a Nature Journal, (Sarah Grant): September 28, November 2 (10 AM – noon)

Annual Meeting, (Keynote Address by Ellen Story): September 30 from 6:30 PM –9 PM

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.

IN MEMORIUM

We are saddened to report the passing of Margaret "Marnie" Price this past July. An active Hampshire Bird Club member from its inception, she served as a board member from 1986-1990, and when she was no longer able to attend meetings or to be active in the field, she continued to contribute by helping with the Rare Bird Alert. Her love of the outdoors and birds, her ready laugh, her good companionship, all this and much more will be missed.

(see next page for the forms enclosed with this edition)

Please see the other links on this Webpage for the:
Membership Form
Release Form
Rare Bird Alert Sign-Up

That is all we can afford for this month. See you on September 9 at the church!