



# Hampshire Bird Club, Inc. Amherst, Massachusetts

www.hampshirebirdclub.org

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## November, 2005

### PROGRAMS

#### This Month

**Blair Nikula speaks about Antarctic Seabirds**

**Monday, November 14 at 7:30 PM**

**Immanuel Lutheran Church; 867 North Pleasant Street, Amherst.**

Blair Nikula, a native of Cape Cod and life-long birder, is a former regional editor for *American Birds* (now *North American Birds*), a past-president of the Cape Cod Bird Club, and currently serves as a member of the Mass Avian Records Committee and an associate member of the Massachusetts Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program Advisory Committee. Blair has also been studying and photographing dragonflies and damselflies for about 15 years. He co-edits *Ode News*, a newsletter about the odonates of southern New England, co-authored the *Stokes' Beginner's Guide to Dragonflies and Damselflies*, and *A Field Guide to the Dragonflies and Damselflies of Massachusetts*. He is currently working on a revision of *The Birds of Cape Cod*.

Earlier this year, Blair had an opportunity to spend four weeks on a Russian ship in Antarctica assisting in seabird research. In this program he will share some of his images and experiences from this exciting trip.

#### Coming Up

**December 12, 2005. Members' Meeting** (Field Trip Forum and Slide Show).

**January 9, 2006. Nancy Weiss.** The ABC/Bird Conservation Alliance.

**February 13, 2006. Gregor Yanega.** Hummingbird Bills.

### FIELD TRIPS

#### Reports

On a miserable **October 22**, Larry Duprey, Joan Duprey, Chris Ellison, Sue Emerson, Betsy Higgins, Don Kroodsma, Dan Marchant, Elaine Pourinski, and Al Richards, under the expert guidance of **Geoff LeBaron**, toured **coastal Rhode Island**. At Avondale farm in Westerly, a very pale Red-tailed Hawk led to whispers of "Kridler's Hawk", but remains, officially, a blonde red-tail. Among the multitudes of sparrows were numerous **White-crowned-** and a few **Lincoln's Sparrows**. **Red-throated Loons** streamed by out over the water, and a Marsh Wren skulked.....

At the Misquamicut beaches, a Peregrine Falcon overhead nearly caused an accident and at Ninigret N.W.R., a more cooperative **Marsh Wren** made amends for its reclusive predecessor. At Trustom Pond, the thickets held several flocks of mixed kinglets, a Brown Creeper, a Red-breasted Nuthatch, plus abundant "Myrtle" Warblers, and five **Northern Harriers** were in view at the same time out over the marsh. The pond held hundreds of **Ruddy Ducks**, American Coots, various scaup, an immature **Red-necked Grebe**, and a distant second-winter **Lesser Black-backed Gull**.

Finally, as the day ended in rough weather at Point Judith, a flock of all three **scoters** flew by, with **Northern Gannets** visible further out.

In all, the group tallied 83 species under atrocious conditions. Not bad!



**Al Richards**, Sally Hills, Helga Beatty, Elizabeth McAnulty, and David Peake-Jones met at the **Dead Creek NWR on October 15** to see Snow Geese. After a week of seemingly incessant rain in the northeast, we were owed a break. NOT! Drizzle was never more than a few minutes away throughout the day. There were several thousand geese at fairly close range, and many thousands of others forming a spectacular backdrop. Once, the birds got up *en masse* in response to some unknown goosy impulse, and huge numbers drifted in loose skeins toward the mist-wreathed hills to the east. We contented ourselves with observing these beautiful and enigmatic creatures for some time at the viewing area, as well as a **Peregrine Falcon** defending a kill from a very ambitious **Northern Harrier**, then set off down the back roads of Addison county in search of other seasonal fare.

Tree lines along the roads were swarming with Yellow-rumped Warblers, and roadside weeds were replete with a variety of small brown jobs including good numbers of **White-crowned- and White-throated Sparrows**. **Green-winged- and Blue-winged Teal** dotted numerous small washes and cat-tail marshes throughout the refuge and surrounds. Along West Road we came across a lone **Rusty Blackbird** surveying the drizzle with a jaundiced eye and making its unique rusty-gate call. At Button Bay, we surveyed a huge raft of Canada Geese, numerous **Common Mergansers**, and distant **Bonaparte's Gulls**. We spent a little more time back at the viewing area before setting out for home.

### Coming Trips

*Please register with the trip leader(s) and check this schedule's information when a phone number is given. The Hampshire Bird Club recommends carpooling whenever possible, and suggests that all riders share equally the per-car cost of \$0.40 per mile, as well as tolls and parking. See also the "Field Trip Guidelines for Participants" (in the October newsletter or on the website).*

*Trips have been coded as Easy (E) or Moderate (M) to give an indication of the pace and/or terrain, but check all information with the trip leaders. An asterisk (\*) denotes a trip that is particularly good for beginners.*

*Please contact the Field Trip Chair (Michael Locher-413-585-5864 or via email at the club website) with either feedback or ideas for new trips, **and please volunteer to write a trip report for the newsletter.***

**Sunday, November 6. Berkshire Lakes.** All day. Tom Gagnon leads his annual trip to the lakes and ponds of the Berkshires looking for migrating waterfowl. Bring snacks, warm clothing, and a lunch. Meet at the Northampton Stop 'n' Shop on King Street at 6:30 AM. Call Tom (413-584-6353) to register and for further information. (M)]

**Wednesday, November 16. Connecticut River Valley.** Half day. Harvey Allen will seek out migrants on his monthly sweep. Meet at 8 a.m. across the street from Atkins Farm, at the corner of Route 116 and Bay Road in Amherst. Call Harvey (413-253-7963) for further information. (E)

**Sunday, November 20. East Quabbin.** All day. Tom Gagnon ventures to the far side of the reservoir on this annual late fall trip. Bring snacks, warm clothes, and a lunch. The trip will be limited to 15 participants, who must, as mandated by the Quabbin authorities, be members of the Hampshire Bird Club. Call Tom (413-584-6353) to reserve a place and make arrangements for meeting. (M)]

**Friday, November 25. Turkey Trot: Cape Ann.** All day. Al Richards and Bob Bieda lead this annual trip to the north shore searching for wintering sea ducks, Purple Sandpipers, seabirds, and perhaps a Snowy Owl. Bring snacks and warm clothing. Call Al (413-665-2761) or Bob (413-527-2623) to register. (M)

**\*Saturday, December 10. Owling in the Valley.** Evening. Mike Locher will go out in search of our most common local owl species (Screech, Barred, Great Horned, and possibly Saw-whet). Dress so that you can stand still for long periods in cold weather. Call Mike (413-585-5864) for meeting place and time. (E)

**FIELD TRIP FORUM**  
**December 12, 2005. 6:30 PM**

**Immanuel Lutheran Church, North Amherst**

Immediately before the December HBC meeting, this forum is a chance for HBC members to share ideas about new or improved field trips the club might consider in the near future. Mike Locher (Field Trip Chair) needs ideas for trips at any level from local, part-day jaunts to long-range overnight jobs (within a 6-hour driving radius of the valley). If you have any ideas to offer, and especially if you can proffer leadership/organizational skills, please attend!

**NORTHAMPTON CHRISTMAS COUNT NEEDS YOU!**

**Sunday, December 18, 2005.**

If you participated last year, you will be receiving the forms for this year's Count shortly.

We encourage you to join us for this extraordinary event. All levels of birding skill are welcome. You can choose to go owling, go birding during the day, do a feeder count, or all of the above. At the end of the day there is a potluck supper and compilation (tallying of results) at the Hitchcock Center.

The best way to learn more about the Count is to read last year's international report (last year's participants have their copies, additional copies will be available at the November meeting). You can also read about the Northampton Christmas Count over the years at [hampshirebirdclub.org](http://hampshirebirdclub.org). Click on Christmas Count and then on Report. The map of the count circle is also there. You may contact the count coordinators, **Jan Ortiz** ([jtortiz@aol.com](mailto:jtortiz@aol.com), 549-1768) or **Mary Alice Wilson** ([mwilson@k12s.phast.umass.edu](mailto:mwilson@k12s.phast.umass.edu), 548-9078) for more information.

*(The Coordinators are also looking for an additional coordinator. If you would like to be an apprentice elf\*, contact them).*

**CHRISTMAS COUNT POTLUCK NEEDS YOU EVEN MORE!!**

OK, it is a poorly kept secret. The real reason for the CBC is to provide an excuse for the potluck. **Sue Emerson** ([membership@hampshirebirdclub.org](mailto:membership@hampshirebirdclub.org); 584 6736) will be coordinating this happy event this year, with a band of dedicated "elves,"\* and needs volunteers to prepare dishes. Those who have staggered into the Hitchcock Center and cupped the frozen remnant stumps of their hands around a steaming bowl of potluck soup or chili will attest to the fact that this catering is noble work. Sue will pass around a sign-up sheet at a coming meeting, or you can take the bit between your teeth and contact her of your own volition.

**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**.

\* I just want to point out that there are no fewer than two references on this page to elves, with the implication that these creatures are the epitome of diligence and unquestioning obedience. I might just point out that, as loyal readers of Harry Potter already know, the house-elf community has been battling the repression associated with this stereotype for centuries, and are only now beginning to reap the benefits of organized labor and the "elf rights" movement. I'd like to propose that we shift the burden to some hitherto-overlooked fantasy creature. When cheap labor is required, we should co-opt some of those stony-faced mythomorphs with the pointy hats which otherwise lounge about in our landscaping. I refer, of course, to the not-so-humble *gnome*. They have had it too good for too long. (Ed.)

## BROAD BROOK COALITION

### A Chance to Enhance the Fitzgerald Lake Conservation Area

As you may recall, Bill Schafer, longtime member of the Hampshire Bird Club and the Broad Brook Coalition, passed away last December after a lengthy battle with cancer. In his will, Bill stipulated that his estate would donate \$10,000 to the Broad Brook Coalition for the acquisition of land for the Fitzgerald Lake Conservation Area (FLCA) in Northampton, if the BBC could raise an equal amount within a year. Altogether, this would mean the addition of \$20,000 to the BBC's Land Acquisition Fund.

Over the years, the BBC and its Land Acquisition Fund have made a big difference to the FLCA. Since 2000, nine parcels of land, totaling 97 acres, have been added to the conservation area, bringing the total to almost 600 acres. The BBC's Land Acquisition Fund has contributed over \$44,000 toward these purchases, which the City of Northampton would never have been able to make otherwise.

It was an important part of Bill's wishes that his challenge be met by those who know and use the FLCA. At this point, roughly 80% of the needed funds are in hand, but there are only a few months left in which to complete the job. ***Please help to make the Fitzgerald Lake Conservation Area bigger and better by sending your contribution to the Broad Brook Coalition, P.O. Box 60566, Florence, MA 01062, and note that it is to be applied to the Bill Schafer Challenge.*** All contributions to the Broad Brook Coalition are tax deductible.

Bob Zimmermann

## HITCHCOCK PROGRAMS

**CLIMATE CHANGE IN THE ARCTIC:** Steve Roof, Hampshire College Department of Natural Science  
Tuesday, October 11, 7 p.m.

**SUSTAINABLE SUNDAYS: MENDING OUR FRAGILE PLANET WITH RENEWABLE ENERGY AND COMMUNITY ACTIONS:** Peggy MacLeod, Center for Ecological Technology  
Sunday, November 13, 1 - 3 p.m.

**SECRET LIFE OF BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEES:** Susan Smith, Mount Holyoke College  
Monday, December 5, 7 p.m.

**GREEN STENTOR CAVORT OFF THE BIKE PATH:** Lynn Margulis, UMass  
Thursday, December 8, 7 p.m.

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](http://www.hitchcockcenter.org).



## SOFFER COLLECTION AT AMHERST COLLEGE

The Richard L. Soffer Class of 1954 Ornithology Collection, is now part of the Amherst College archives. This very large collection, containing some seminal works in ornithology, is coming to the College in installments. The first installment arrived last year and is catalogued and available. A description of what the College presently has can be found at <http://www.amherst.edu/library/archives/exhibitions/soffer/index.html>

John McDermott

John was kind enough to announce this news at the October HBC program. (ed.)

## ARCADIA PROGRAMS

**COMPOSTING AND HEALTHY LANDSCAPING:** *Saturday, Nov.5; 10 a.m.-12 noon, Ann McGovern. To be held at Arcadia.*

**STORIES OF THE LAND:** *Sunday, Nov.6; 10:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m., Kevin Kopchynski. To be held at Laughing Brook.*

**TREES WITHOUT LEAVES:** *Saturday, November 12, 1-4 p.m., Patti Steinman. To be held at Laughing Brook.*

**MUSIC FROM NATURE FAMILY PROGRAM:** *Friday, Dec.2, 7-8:30 p.m. Kevin Kopchynski. To be held at Arcadia.*

*For more details of these and other programs go to [www.massaudubon.org](http://www.massaudubon.org) (select "Sanctuaries", then "Choose a Sanctuary: Arcadia") or call the sanctuary at the number below. To register for programs contact **Arcadia Wildlife Sanctuary**, 127 Combs Rd., Easthampton MA 01027. Telephone **(413) 584-3009**.*

## GREAT FALLS DISCOVERY CENTER PROGRAMS

**November 18 – December 3: Junior Duck Stamp exhibit in the Great Hall**

**November 19, Saturday, 11 am: Art Opening: The Duck Stamp Story**

**November 25 & 26, Fri & Sat, 1 pm: Talking Turkey**

*GFDC is located at 2 Avenue A, Turners Falls, MA 01376*

*Open Fri & Sat 10am-4pm*

*For further information, contact the center at 413-863-3221*

## MISCELLANEOUS

### Winter Finches: Irruption Imminent!

Below is a quote from a knowledgeable Canadian, suggesting we should expect plenty of northern visitors to feeders this year.

*"There should be a moderate to good flight of most (not all) winter finch species out of Ontario's boreal forest this fall and winter. .... Cone crops and birch seed crops range from poor to good across northern Ontario. Very few northern areas have excellent crops. Many crops are patchy or spotty with some trees having good crops while nearby trees have poor crops. On the Canadian (Precambrian) Shield of central Ontario including Algonquin Park, seed crops are very poor on most species. In much of urban and agricultural southern Ontario, seed crops are generally poor so expect finches at feeders this winter."*

I have lost the information that would allow me to acknowledge the source of this information, so we will simply have to have faith that this knowledgeable Canadian is not fibbing! (ed.)

That's it for this month.

Until next time, talk softly and carry a big scope!

David Peake-Jones, Editor

(413) 529 9541

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