



# Hampshire Bird Club, Inc. Amherst, Massachusetts

www.hampshirebirdclub.org

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## November, 2007

### In this edition:

- information about this month's **program**, and those coming up in the next few months,
- **field trip reports** and **coming trips**,
- a reminder about the must-do birding event of the winter: the **Christmas Count**,
- a chance to **help a local after-school program**,
- **Hitchcock Programs**, and
- a gathering from **recent ornithological research**. *I hope you find some of it useful!!*

## PROGRAMS

**Monday, November 12 at 7:30 PM**

**The Fall Mystery Presentation!!**

Immanuel Lutheran Church; 867 North Pleasant Street, Amherst.

Susan Russo, who was our scheduled speaker for November, has had to cancel. Fortunately, either **Beth Goettel** or **Sue Cloutier**, both of the Great Falls Discovery Center in Turners Falls, will speak to us instead. We won't know till after press time what the topic is, so serendipity will rule the day. Please join us for whatever the program will bring!!

## Coming Programs

**December 10, 2007.** Members Meeting

**January 14, 2008.** Don Kroodsma. More Fun With Bird Song: Local Heroes

**February 11, 2008.** Ed Neumuth. Palmyra Atoll Research

### **Kakapo Hopping on the Supplement Bandwagon!**

Mention of some birds is simply guaranteed to get my attention. One of these is the Kakapo. I first heard of this bird through a book published in 1985 by Douglas Adams and Mark Carwardine called "Last Chance to See." The authors traveled to several locations in the world searching for animals on the very edge of extinction.

The Kakapo is just such a creature. The largest known parrot, it is flightless, nocturnal, and ekes out a living in the depths of the New Zealand temperate rainforest. Almost extirpated by habitat reduction and introduced predators such as cats, this species declined until it was represented by only 51 individuals by 1995. The surviving individuals are mostly, if not entirely, confined to a few small islands which remain predator-free. It turns out that, along with their numerous other vulnerabilities, Kakapo breed only every 2-6 years, depending on the infrequent fruiting of either of two native tree species to provide enough nutrition to reproduce.

Now comes news of a radical attempt to increase the fecundity of breeding individuals. When fed a supplement created by zoologists from the University of Glasgow, the Kakapo dramatically increased the number of eggs laid, and thus their potential reproductive rate. With luck, and in tandem with other intensive efforts, this strategy may provide a glimmer of hope for one of our most priceless birds.

*Reference:* University Of Glasgow (2007, August 29). Saving The Remarkable Kakapo Bird From Extinction. *ScienceDaily*. Full article available on the web at [www.Sciencedaily.com](http://www.Sciencedaily.com).

## FIELD TRIPS

### Reports

#### **Hammonasset State Park, Connecticut: June 16, 2007**

On a bright and beautiful early Saturday morn in mid-June, an intrepid trio consisting of **Betsy Higgins** (trip leader), Helga Beatty, and Leslie Hoffman set forth on a birding trip to Hammonasset State Park on the Connecticut shoreline. The day proved to be a fruitful one with a total of 54 species. We were successful in spotting both Salt Marsh Sharp-Tailed Sparrows and Seaside Sparrows and had a lengthy and up-close-and-virtually-personal look at a stunning **Little Blue Heron**. Other marsh birds of note included Green Heron, Great Egret, Snowy Egret, and numerous **Glossy Ibis**. Shorebird sightings included Willets-Willets everywhere, Killdeer, and 2 Ruddy Turnstone with a single chick. Oystercatchers; Common and Least Terns; and Herring, Greater Black Backed, and Ring-billed Gulls rounded out the mix. Throw in a Sharp-Shinned Hawk, nesting Purple Martins, and a couple of Marsh Wrens playing hide and seek, and you end up with a truly good day.

Leslie Hoffman (who had 3 life birds for the day!)

#### **Cape May. Friday, October 5 to Monday, October 8, 2007**

**Participants:** **Scott Sumner, Dan Ziomek**, Valerie Miller, Emily Ziomek, Priscilla Moor, Helga Beatty, Sally Hills, Tom Gagnon, Bruce Callahan, Betsy Higgins, Donna Rickerby

The weather was the warmest ever for this trip. No gloves, warm hats or heavy coat were needed. We came away with 140 species, but no major early morning fallouts at Higbee Beach.

#### **Highlights**

American Wigeon: 100+

Blue-winged Teal: 6

Northern Shoveler: 25

Northern Pintail: 125+

Green-winged Teal: 300+

Ruddy Duck: 6

American White Pelican: 1 (Brigantine)

American Bittern: 1

Little Blue Heron: 2

Tricolored Heron: 6

Black-Crowned Night Heron: 18

**Roseate Spoonbill- 1** (Brigantine)

10 Species of Hawks including Peregrine Falcon-6/7 in view at once.

Clapper Rail: 2

19 Species of Shorebirds including **Marbled Godwit, Red Knots, American Golden Plover**

Caspian Tern: 37

Royal Tern: 25

Forster's Tern: 300+

Black Skimmer: 40

Black Billed Cuckoo: 1

Yellow-billed Cuckoo: 2

White-eyed Vireo: 1

Carolina chickadee: 17

**16 species of Warblers...Cape May Warbler: 3, Yellow-breasted Chat: 1**

Boat-tailed Grackle: many

Scott Sumner

### Coming Trips (see also the Fall Field Trip Schedule)

**Sunday, November 18. East Quabbin.** All day. Tom Gagnon and Larry Therrien head to the other side of the reservoir to see what they can find. You must be a Hampshire Bird Club member to go on this trip. Bring snacks, warm clothes, and a lunch. Call Tom (413-584-6353) well in advance to register and get meeting information. (M)

**Friday, November 23. Cape Ann: Turkey Trot.** All day. Al Richards and Bob Bieda help you work off those third helpings by seeing what they can find along the coast. Expect sea ducks, Purple Sandpipers, and a few alcids. Bring snacks and warm clothing. Call Al (413-665-2761) to register and get meeting information. (E)

**Sunday, December 9. Moran Wildlife Management Area: Feast-or-Famine Winter Birding.** Half day. Mike Locher goes to the almost-boreal habitat in Moran WMA to look for Northern Shrikes, crossbills, and other northern species. In the event of difficult snow conditions, the site may be changed. Wear boots, and dress warmly. Call Mike (413-585-5864) to register, and get meeting information and details. (M)

## LIBRARY

The HBC Library is located at the Hitchcock Center for the Environment in Amherst.

Hours are those of the Hitchcock Center:

9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. from Tuesday through Friday, and

9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. on Saturday.

The collection is catalogued on-line at [www.hampshirebirdclub.org](http://www.hampshirebirdclub.org).

The library contains birding resources in various media, including field guides, bird-finding guides to almost every major birding destination in the U.S., and overseas, natural histories, periodicals and videos. 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, if you give him a few days in advance. You can reach him at (413) 549 3722.

## CHRISTMAS COUNT, 2007

How could you keep track of changes in bird populations and distribution across the entire continent of North America? The annual Christmas Count aims to do just this. Birders all over the U.S., Canada, the Caribbean, Latin America and Pacific Islands come together every holiday season to count birds. It is one of the world's finest examples of citizen science.

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. This is basically a fine day of birding, with every observation becoming part of the longest-running database in all of ornithology. Both local counts end with a compilation session when the entire count group combines observations to create the data that's will be submitted to National Audubon. Interestingly enough, our numbers ultimately end up on the desk (metaphorically, of course) of our very own Geoff LeBaron who is the national Christmas Count coordinator for Audubon. If you want to contribute to bird conservation and the greater understanding of bird populations on this continent, there is no more satisfying way to spend a day.

*Here is one (admittedly optimistic) account of how the day might go!*

*3:30 AM.* Arrive at first owling site and begin playing tapes.

*3:40 AM.* Attempt to explain to local constabulary why you are parked in a housing development with a car full of maps, clothing, junk food, telescopes and audio equipment.

(continues on the next page ►►)

3:55 AM. Finally reach Mary Alice and explain bail request.

4:30 AM. Resume owling. Encounter one of these wonderful nocturnal animals through sound or even a glimpse of movement. Irreplaceable data and a lifelong memory!

6:30 AM. Pause for breakfast at local eatery. Maybe the owl was enough? Surely it can't get any better. After a pancake-mediated moment of doubt, gird up your binocs and get out into the field.

8:30 AM. Was that fifty Song Sparrows in the same thicket, or the same one going around fifty times? Better compromise.....

9:30 AM. Yep that was definitely one Fox Sparrow with them. Another data point down to you.

11:30 AM. Hmm that's a funny looking mockingbird. No – it's your first christmas count Shrike! A warm inner glow.

1:30 PM. "What happened to the warm inner glow? Smart Wool my foot!" Focus on frozen feet temporarily assuaged by finding a Lapland Longspur in with a bunch of larks.

4:30 PM. Start making your way back toward the church. You are smelling chili at a range of several miles. Could that be? No – not a Northern Oriole at someone's feeder. Surely not! "Do I dare count it?" Better call someone for an independent ID.

5:00 PM. Approaching the potluck in the fading light. "If I see another Song Sparrow I am going to scream." What was that shape bobbing like a marionette across the field? Short-eared Owl. What a culmination to the day.

5:15 PM. "This lasagna is even better than I thought!"

## Northampton Christmas Count Nitty Gritty

**Date:** December 16, 2007

**Information packets for Team Leaders:** handed out at the HBC meeting on November 12, mailed to those not present.

**Potluck Set-Up:** Immanuel Lutheran Church, 2 PM

**Potluck Supper:** Immanuel Lutheran Church, 4:30 PM

**Compilation of Results:** Immanuel Lutheran Church, 6-7 PM

## Help Wanted: Christmas Count

### Helpers Wanted

Let Sue Emerson (spe33@hotmail.com, 584-6736) know if you can help out by

- doing set-up at the church (2 PM)
- bringing food to the potluck (4:30)
- helping with the clean-up while the compilation is going on (6-7 PM)

### New Participants

Please contact Mary Alice Wilson (mwilson@k12s.phast.umass.edu, 548-9078) or Jan Ortiz (jtortiz@aol.com, 549-1768).

### And for the Over-Achiever.....

If you will be away mid-December to mid-January (or even part of that time), you can research Christmas Counts all over North, Central, and South America ([www.audubon.org/bird/cbc](http://www.audubon.org/bird/cbc)). While you are on the web, you can also learn more about the history and the scientific/conservation contributions of CBC data. If you want to learn more about the Northampton CBC, search for MANO. You can also go to the HBC website ([hampshirebirdclub.org](http://hampshirebirdclub.org)), click on Christmas Count and look especially at the summary chart and the map.

## The Care and Feeding of Young Birders!!

An after-school science program at Sunderland Elementary School is in need of gently used binoculars. The students in question are participating in the UMass-sponsored "STEMRAYS" (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math Research Academies for Young Scientists) program. Students are learning about local birds, monitoring bird feeders, and making reports on the Cornell website: eBird. This is a great opportunity to promote interest in birds amongst the youngest and most impressionable people in our area. *If you have optics you would like to donate, please contact **Dave Mako**: [massmakos@yahoo.com](mailto:massmakos@yahoo.com); 665 2999*

## HITCHCOCK PROGRAMS

### Special Travel Program

**The American Subtropics: South Florida and the Everglades  
A Natural History Excursion with John Green and Tom Tynning**

Dates: December 28, 2007 to January 4, 2008 (8 days, 7 nights)

Fee: \$1695/person (double occupancy), not including airfare.

A couple of spaces remain!!

**Meet Three Locavores:** *Paul Lipke, Lissa Greenough, & Mark Lattanzi*

Wednesday, November 14. Local Food Potluck 6 – 7 p.m. Presentation 7 - 9 p.m.

**Panel Discussion: Living with Solar:** *Chris Riddle, Aaron Hayden, Tom Hartmann*

Thursday, December 6, 7 - 8:30 p.m.

**Covey Wildlife Management Area Exploration:** *John Green*

Sunday, November 4, 8 - 10 a.m.

**Turtles of the Connecticut Valley:** *Lori Erb*

Thursday, November 8, 7 - 8:30 p.m.

**Slide Show: Nature's Will to Survive and Aquarius:** *John Green*

Thursday, November 29, 7 p.m.

**Qigong (Chi Kung) (Series 2):** *Rema Boscov*

Sundays, 8:30 - 9:30 a.m.: November 4, 11, 18, December 2, 9, & 16

*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).*

**Backyard Birds** (on Strong St. in Northampton) offers a wide range of birding books, audio resources, gifts, feeders, and other paraphernalia. They also offer a 10% discount to Hampshire Bird Club Members. Remember, when you shop locally, your money stays here!

That's it for this month. Brevity is the soul of wit.

Till next month, walk softly and carry a big scope! David Peake-Jones, editor.

[newsletter@hampshirebirdclub.org](mailto:newsletter@hampshirebirdclub.org); (413) 529 9541

American Birding Association's  
PRINCIPLES OF BIRDING ETHICS

Everyone who enjoys birds and birding must always respect wildlife, its environment, and the rights of others. In any conflict of interest between birds and birders, the welfare of the birds and their environment comes first.

CODE OF BIRDING ETHICS

**1. Promote the welfare of birds and their environment.**

1(a) Support the protection of important bird habitat.

1(b) To avoid stressing birds or exposing them to danger, exercise restraint and caution during observation, photography, sound recording, or filming.

Limit the use of recordings and other methods of attracting birds, and never use such methods in heavily birded areas, or for attracting any species that is Threatened, Endangered, or of Special Concern, or is rare in your local area;

Keep well back from nests and nesting colonies, roosts, display areas, and important feeding sites. In such sensitive areas, if there is a need for extended observation, photography, filming, or recording, try to use a blind or hide, and take advantage of natural cover.

Use artificial light sparingly for filming or photography, especially for close-ups.

1(c) Before advertising the presence of a rare bird, evaluate the potential for disturbance to the bird, its surroundings, and other people in the area, and proceed only if access can be controlled, disturbance minimized, and permission has been obtained from private land-owners. The sites of rare nesting birds should be divulged only to the proper conservation authorities.

1(d) Stay on roads, trails, and paths where they exist; otherwise keep habitat disturbance to a minimum.

**2. Respect the law, and the rights of others.**

2(a) Do not enter private property without the owner's explicit permission.

2(b) Follow all laws, rules, and regulations governing use of roads and public areas, both at home and abroad.

2(c) Practise common courtesy in contacts with other people. Your exemplary behavior will generate goodwill with birders and non-birders alike.

**3. Ensure that feeders, nest structures, and other artificial bird environments are safe.**

3(a) Keep dispensers, water, and food clean, and free of decay or disease. It is important to feed birds continually during harsh weather.

3(b) Maintain and clean nest structures regularly.

3(c) If you are attracting birds to an area, ensure the birds are not exposed to predation from cats and other domestic animals, or dangers posed by artificial hazards.

**4. Group birding, whether organized or impromptu, requires special care.**

Each individual in the group, in addition to the obligations spelled out in Items #1 and #2, has responsibilities as a **Group Member**.

4(a) Respect the interests, rights, and skills of fellow birders, as well as people participating in other legitimate outdoor activities. Freely share your knowledge and experience, except where code 1(c) applies. Be especially helpful to beginning birders.

4(b) If you witness unethical birding behavior, assess the situation, and intervene if you think it prudent. When interceding, inform the person(s) of the inappropriate action, and attempt, within reason, to have it stopped. If the behavior continues, document it, and notify appropriate individuals or organizations.

**Group Leader Responsibilities** [amateur and professional trips and tours].

4(c) Be an exemplary ethical role model for the group. Teach through word and example.

4(d) Keep groups to a size that limits impact on the environment, and does not interfere with others using the same area.

4(e) Ensure everyone in the group knows of and practises this code.

4(f) Learn and inform the group of any special circumstances applicable to the areas being visited (e.g. no tape recorders allowed).

4(g) Acknowledge that professional tour companies bear a special responsibility to place the welfare of birds and the benefits of public knowledge ahead of the company's commercial interests. Ideally, leaders should keep track of tour sightings, document unusual occurrences, and submit records to appropriate organizations.

PLEASE FOLLOW THIS CODE AND DISTRIBUTE AND  
TEACH IT TO OTHERS