



# Hampshire Bird Club, Inc. Amherst, Massachusetts

www.hampshirebirdclub.org

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## March, 2010

In this edition:

- this month's **program** and the coming schedule,
- a **field trip report** and some **coming trips**,
- **Atlas** exhortations,
- **Hitchcock Programs**,
- a blurb for the **18<sup>th</sup> Annual Massachusetts Birder's Meeting**.
- two dubious forays into the world of humor.

I hope you find some of it useful!

### NEXT PROGRAM

**Monday, March 8 at 7:30 PM**

**Kathy and Miles Conway**

**Silk Road and Steppe Eagles: Birding in Kazakhstan**

Immanuel Lutheran Church; 867 North Pleasant Street, Amherst.

*Should bad weather force a cancellation, it will be announced on WHMP 1400 AM radio.*

Myles and Kathy Conway met in 1985 and were married in 1988. After building their house in Blandford they became interested in birds when a trip to the town dump yielded a bird feeder. A Peterson's guide helped them to identify the visitors to their feeder. Their first yard list is dated 1990-91. They were hooked!

One December, Myles called Seth Kellogg and volunteered to participate in the Cobble Mountain CBC by counting the birds in Blandford. Seth's prayers were answered! He wouldn't have to pay anyone else to do it! They joined the Allen Bird Club soon after that first count, and have been active members ever since.

Always avid travelers, now the Conways travel to go birding. They have birded throughout the United States including Arizona, California, Florida, Texas, and Washington. Outside this country they have enjoyed trips to Ecuador, Costa Rica, the Caribbean, Mexico, The Gambia, and Kenya. Their trip to Kazakhstan in 2007 was their first trip to Central Asia.

Join Myles and Kathy Conway as they travel across the steppes and mountains of the ancient central Asian nation of Kazakhstan in search of raptors, snowcocks, and more.

### COMING PROGRAMS

**April 12, 2010.** *Brandi van Roo.* Vireo Research.

**May 10, 2010.** *John van de Graaff.* Birds of the Massachusetts Coast: Piping Plovers and Much More.

**June 14, 2010.** *Geoff LeBaron.* The Route to Distant Islands.

## FIELD TRIP REPORTS

### Coastal Rhode Island. January 30, 2010.

Geoff LeBaron, Chris Ellison, Sally Hills and Sue Emerson.

Highlights of the day included a huge and very close Cooper's Hawk at Westerly, loons in the breachway at Misquamicut/Weekapaug, and spectacular loons, eiders and Red-breasted Mergansers feeding at Quononchontaug Pond. At Ninigret, we checked out our second **Red-Shouldered Hawk**, and enjoyed great looks at the now-regular **Lesser Black-backed Gull**, Bufflehead, Common Goldeneye, and a brief cameo by a beautiful drake **Barrow's Goldeneye**. A Great Blue Heron lurked at Cross Mills/Ninigret Pond, and a **White-crowned Sparrow** consorted with numerous more mundane spoggies at Moonstone Beach Road. We could scarcely contain our ghoulish delight in watching a **Peregrine Falcon** eating a pigeon right overhead in the Galilee/Point Judith area. We found singing Black Scoters (they are going to keep their day jobs) at Beavertail, along with **Red-necked Grebe** and some **Harlequin Ducks**. Harlequins were also in evidence, along with lesser Scaup, and a few fast-moving Purple Sandpipers as we ended our day at Sachuest Point.

Editor, based on notes from Geoff.

## COMING FIELD TRIPS

(see also the Winter-Spring-Summer Field Trip Schedule)

*Please register with the field trip leader(s) and check this schedule's information when a phone number is given.*

*The Field Trip Chair (Michael Locher – 413-585-5864) is always looking for new trip ideas and leaders.*

*The Hampshire Bird Club recommends carpooling whenever possible, and suggests that all riders share equally the per-car cost of 50¢ per mile, as well as tolls and parking. See also the "Field Trip Guidelines for Participants" (September newsletter or on the Website).*

*Some trips have been marked with an asterisk (\*), which indicates that they are good trips for beginning birders. All trips have been coded as Easy (E) or Moderate (M) to give a rough indication of the pace and/or terrain. Please check all information with the trip leaders.*

**Saturday, March 13. Plum Island.** All day. Geoff LeBaron goes east to see what's around Plum Island. Dress for cold weather. Call Geoff (413-268-9281) for meeting time and information. (E)

**Saturday, March 20. Connecticut River Waterfowl.** Half day. Al Richards looks for waterfowl migrating through the valley along the Connecticut River. Call Al (413-665-2761) for meeting information as the date approaches. (E)

**\*Sunday, April 11. Ashley Reservoir: Early Warblers.** Half day. Mike Locher (413-585-5864) hopes to find Pine and Palm Warblers, Ruby-crowned Kinglets, and other early migrants. Meet in the Friendly's parking lot, near the Holiday Inn, close to Exit 15 ("Holyoke Mall") off Rt. 91 at 7:00 a.m. (E)

A reporter seeking to cover fires in the Sierra Nevada called a local airport seeking a flight over the afflicted area. She was told a twin-engine plane would be waiting for him at the airport. Arriving there, she spotted a plane warming up outside a hangar. She jumped in with her bag, slammed the door shut, and shouted, "Let's go."

The pilot taxied out, swung the plane into the wind and took off.

Once in the air, the reporter instructed the pilot,

"Fly low over the fires and try to stay out of the smoke so I can get clear shots."

"Do we have to?" asked the pilot.

The reporter snarled

"Listen, I hired you to get me close to those fires and I ain't paying if I don't get pictures!"

The pilot was strangely silent for a moment. Finally he stammered,

"Are you telling me \_\_\_\_\_ you're ~~not~~ my flight instructor?"

## HITCHCOCK PROGRAMS

### **Spring Birding Course:** *Scott Sumner.*

Evening Classes: Wednesdays, February 24, March 10, 24, 31, April 7, 14, May 5, 12, 6:30 to 8p.m. Field Trips: Saturdays, February 27, March 13, 27, April 3, 17, 24, May 1, 8, 15, 22, start times vary between 5 a.m. and 7a.m.

Take advantage of this opportunity to get out and really observe the pageant of our spring bird migration, the myriad colors, plumages, and behaviors. Scott has taught this course for many years and is accomplished at gearing instruction for beginners and experienced birders alike. Evening classes preview species expected on the Saturday field trips using slides, stories from the field, and life history details. Field trips are planned to varied locations around the state, including two coastal trips on February 27 and May 22. Coastal trips begin at 5 a.m. and end at dusk. All field trips and classes meet at the Hitchcock Center. Registration is limited to 20. Pre-registration is required. Hitchcock Member: \$180. Non-member: \$210

### **Winter Tracking Expedition:** *Alan Edmond.*

Saturday, March 6, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. (snow date: Sunday, March 7).

### **The Puzzle of New England's Predators:** *John Foster.*

Thursday, March 11, 7 to 9 p.m.

### **Tales from the Life of An Animal Welfare Officer:** *Carol Hepburn.*

Tuesday, March 16, 7 to 8:30 p.m.

### **Salamander Egg Mass Survey:** *Ted Watt.*

A Saturday in April to be determined by the weather.

### *Book Release and Signing*

### **Tracks and Sign of Insects and Other Invertebrates:** *Charley Eiseman and Noah Charney.*

Thursday, April 1, 7:30 to 9 p.m.

### **The art of Mentoring and Nature Education:** *Frank Grindrod.*

Thursday, April 8, 6:30 to 8 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).*

## 18TH ANNUAL MASSACHUSETTS BIRDERS MEETING

### Hosted by Massachusetts Audubon

Saturday, March 6, 2010 at The LaCava Center, Bentley University, Waltham, MA

A full day of workshops, speakers, wildlife updates, vendors, and more. Lunch included!

In 2009 the Department of Interior produced The State of the Birds, a comprehensive synthesis describing the conservation status, threats, and recovery objectives for every major North American bird group. Since birds have long been a litmus test for environmental change, what's happening to birds could portend what the future holds for mankind. In this not-to-be-missed event, two leading environmental organizations examine how science, technology, and birds could offer the key to some of the greatest challenges facing our planet in the future.

For complete details, visit: <http://www.massaudubon.org/news/index.php?id=917&type=news>

## BREEDING BIRD ATLAS: Notes for the Over-Achiever.

### *"I want to atlas RIGHT NOW!"*

OK, first you might want to seek some professional help, but, if the impulse persists despite therapy and medication, here are some ideas:

1. **Look for the year-round-safe-date birds** (safe dates are January 1 to December 31): Ruffed Grouse, Wild Turkey, Rock Pigeon, Great Horned Owl, Pileated Woodpecker. (Next birds to make the safe date list will be Common Raven on March 20 and American Crow on March 25).
2. **Find birds that are nesting** (any of the CO-confirmed behavior trumps a dumb old safe-date.)
3. **Find birds that are courting:** PR(C). Can't use it for ducks, but can use it for anything else – for example, what about the woodcock that arrive in mid-March? That "peent" is courtship ("C")! Where to look? Fields (even those with some buildings), sometimes hedgerows next to fields, sometimes with water nearby. Start 10 minutes after sunset. Once you hear that marvelous peent, you can either stay around for the skydancing until it is too dark to see but not to hear - or you can drive to a field in the next block and get a double-header.

Mary Alice Wilson, with snide remarks by the editor.

## 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. Ten percent discount for members of the Hampshire Bird Club. Remember, with local merchants, your dollar stays here!

### Dear God!

*One morning, workers at the Easthampton Post Office were sorting the day's mail, when one of them came across a letter, addressed in a shaky hand to "GOD." Unable to deliver the item, and unable to contain himself, an employee opened the letter. He found a return address, and the following letter:*

*Dear God,*

*I'm about to turn 100 years old, but it's not going to be much of a celebration. I can no longer leave the house, and I'm down to my last pennies. If you could send me, say, \$100, I could at least afford a small party.*

*Yours sincerely,*

*Muriel.*

*The Post Office employees were deeply moved and passed the hat around the office. They mailed the resulting \$87 to Muriel, and went about their work with light hearts. A week later, another letter arrived, again addressed to "GOD" in the same unmistakable hand. The letter said:*

*Dear God,*

*Thank you so much for the money. We had a wonderful get-together here, and I'm ready for the next 100. By the way, there were 13 dollars missing. I bet it was those lousy sods at the Post Office!"*

That's all for now!

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

David Peake-Jones, Editor

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