



Hampshire Bird Club, Inc. Amherst, Massachusetts

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I wrote this a while back and even though it is not timely at this time of year, I just can't see it to go to waste. Ed.

The following quote is widely attributed to Chief Seattle of the Suquamish/Duwamish people in north-western North America.

*"If all the beasts were gone, men would die from a great loneliness of spirit, for whatever happens to the beasts also happens to the man."**

Seems to me that some of this loneliness is a fact of our lives now: most of the earth is given over to the works of man, with other species living in the shadows. However, especially if you work at it, you can find places on earth that are less lonely; where you can find other species flourishing, filling some albeit small corner of the earth with their presence, at least for now. If you stand almost anywhere in Addison County, Vermont, on an October/November day, you are almost sure to see Snow Geese descending from their aerial migration to rest and feed in the windswept fields of Dead Creek Wildlife Management Area and surrounds. For most, it is a vision that brings inspiration and joy.

But why, I wonder. I think it goes beyond the startling contrasts of white bodies and dark wingtips as they drift in under breathtaking blue skies. It goes beyond the high, barking chorus of voices speaking of the windswept tundra far to the north. It goes beyond the sense of peace as they descend like a great white bandage over the torn fields of our human landscape.

For me, the inspiration comes from not simply from looking at what they *are*, but in trying to understand what the geese are *doing*. When you look at Snow Geese one at a time, you find stocky birds with short-ish necks which would not look out of place in a farmyard, but these birds are anything but domesticated. Every single one of them is engaged in a dogged struggle which began at birth on the tundra, and which will continue, migration after migration, breeding season after breeding season, across all seasons and the landscapes of an entire continent.

There is a kind of thrumming in the fabric of the universe when one is in the presence of so many souls, all striving to find a way from day to day. To stand with the snow geese is to feel that thrumming in one's own soul.

*Like many of the great quotes that illuminate our history, the actual origin of this statement is now in question. It may, in fact, have been an embellishment of Chief Seattle's actual words, added by a television scriptwriter in 1971.

In this edition:

- The **program** introduction and the coming schedule. More changes.... See page 2,
- **Field trip reports** and the **Winter-Spring-Summer Field Trip Schedule**,
- The club's tribute to **Betty Peterson**,
- **Celebratory** news from the **Breeding Bird Atlas**, and
- No other tidbits.

I hope you find some of it interesting.

NEXT PROGRAM

Monday, January 13 at 7:15 p.m.

Geoff LeBaron delves into Hummingbirds at Home

Immanuel Lutheran Church; 867 North Pleasant Street, Amherst.

Weather-related cancellations announced via the HBC email list and local media.

This month's program will be all about hummingbirds: introducing Audubon's new *Hummingbirds at Home* program, and a screening of the *Nature* program "*Hummingbirds: Magic in the Air*."

Hummingbirds at Home is a new smart-phone app. that enables folks to survey their favorite "patch" and submit data on hummingbird-nectar source interactions. Audubon's long-term goal will be to develop recommendations so people across the continent can make their yards more hummingbird friendly.

The PBS/Nature program "Hummingbirds: Magic in the Air" captures fascinating aspects of hummingbird biology and behavior across the Americas.

Geoff LeBaron has been the Christmas Bird Count Director for the National Audubon Society since 1987. Prior to that, he worked for the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia, where he was Curator of Collections at Vireo.

Geoff has done field work on birds for Audubon in New Hampshire and Rhode Island, and spent over 3,000 hours documenting marine mammals, turtles, and birds off the eastern coast of North America. He has been an environmental educator in Rhode Island, and led seabird/whale watches off Cape Cod for three years. Geoff has a B.Sc. from the University of Miami in Florida, and a master's degree in Zoology from the University of Rhode Island.

Geoff has led natural history tours to Alaska; Big Bend and the Texas Hill Country; Baja California; Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands; Panama and Costa Rica; the Galapagos Islands and Ecuador; Argentina, the Falkland Islands, and Antarctica; and Australia and New Zealand. We know him best as an energetic and committed field trip leader, and our miracle-working Program Chair.

COMING PROGRAMS

February 10, 2014. Robert Jonas & Tom Adams. Harvey Allen & the Kestrel Land Trust.

March 10, 2014. Chris Dwyer. Common Eider Die-off in Massachusetts.

April 14, 2014. David Spector. Amherst's Ornithologist: Margaret Morse Nice.

FIELD TRIP REPORTS

Saturday, November 2, 2013. Saw-Whet Owl Banding, Uxbridge, MA.

Nine (9) Hampshire Bird Club members traveled to Lookout Rock in Uxbridge, MA to partake in the **mist-netting**, weighing, evaluation, **sexing**, banding and releasing of these elusive little owls. We were very fortunate that the weather was mild (50 degrees) with little wind while we witnessed the capture of 2 owls. As the weather changed in response to an incoming cold front, the crew closed the nets for the night, allowing us an earlier than usual return home (11:30 pm). Many thanks to Strickland Wheelock from Drumlin Farms Audubon and his crew - Beth, Paul & Bob - who made this adventure such a success. We wished bon-voyage to the owls, hoping for their return next year.

Sue Emerson and Janice Jorgensen

The field trip reports are out of chronological order because this little gem fit so nicely on this page. Ed.

October 27. The Halloween Extravaganza: Satan's Kingdom, Hell's Kitchen etc.

Josh Rose led the second annual Hampshire Bird Club pre-Halloween trip to Satan's Kingdom, Hell's Kitchen and various other hellish locations in Northfield and Turner's Falls, accompanied by a suitably demonic cadre including Harvey Allen, Tim Carter, and George Regmund. The trip tallied 52 species. A highlight was a quartet of **Pectoral Sandpipers** at Hell's Kitchen, a new Franklin County bird for Josh. We also crossed paths with two **Osprey**, three **Bald Eagles**, two **Pied-billed Grebes**, a heard-only **Winter Wren**, a couple of massive gobs* of Cedar Waxwings, a **Palm Warbler**, and James Smith's previously reported **Northern Shoveler** and trio of **Ruddy Ducks**.

Hell's Kitchen was generally our most productive spot of the day, yielding several species we did not see anywhere else. We failed to detect a reported Cackling Goose, but with well over 1,000 Canada Geese across three locations in Turners Falls (roughly 900 at the power canal alone), we easily could have missed it in the crowds. Most of Northfield Meadows was barren and posted with alarming "Do not enter, fumigation in progress" signs, but the south end of this area, around the nursery and not-yet-harvested cornfield, had our only Swamp and Savannah Sparrows of the day and more Song Sparrows than the entire rest of the day put together.

We also snuck in a tasty lunch break at the Wagon Wheel, though with a stiff and chilly breeze picking up at that point, opted to eat indoors rather than watching for more birds from the picnic tables outside...

Mysterious misses included Mourning Dove (absent for the entire day), House Sparrow and Rock Pigeon. I found myself scanning in vain for pigeons on the wires as we were leaving Turners Falls (does this mean that there is something mentally wrong with me?). Nor did we see a Starling until we got back to Hadley right before going our separate ways. Maybe the flock of 40+ Mute Swans in Turners Falls ate all of the other exotic birds in the area...

Some other highlights included:

Wood Duck - several at Satan's Kingdom.

Green-winged Teal - six at Hell's Kitchen

Lesser Scaup - a female at Barton Cove with a flock of geese.

Josh Rose

Josh hereby has the audacity to add a new collective ornithological noun to the lexicon, already replete with such wonders as a *siege* of herons, an *unkindness* of ravens, and a *wisp* of snipe. Now we have a *gob* of waxwings. Ed.



November 16, 2013. Dead Creek WMA and Addison County, Vermont.

Mike Locher, Andrew Magee and David Peake-Jones made their way through the Green Mountains of our northern neighbor and headed into Addison from the north, on a gorgeous morning. As we did so, a drifting cluster of white forms over the checkerboard farmlands north of the town heralded our first **Snow Geese**, meandering southward toward the refuge. Following them to the viewing area, we scanned across the group of about 3,000 birds for about an hour, taking in the diversity of birds which make up a flock of migrant geese. There were, of course, the clean, white adults with their ink-tipped wings, alternately feeding, and pausing to shake the grass clippings down their esophagi. Mixed in with the elders were many slightly gangly and variably grayish birds, for whom this was the first visit to the farmlands of Vermont. Amongst the white geese was a scattering of blue geese: non-conformist in terms of plumage, but otherwise going about the business-like chores of feeding and resting just like all the rest. We almost certainly saw at least one Ross's Goose in the flock. We just couldn't figure out which one it was!

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Dead Creek (continued)

As the morning wore on, the geese began getting up in groups and drifting away from the higher fields near the road toward the protected swales where they seem to prefer to spend the middle parts of the day. We spent a while at the end of Gage Road looking at a part of the flock, but eventually, we ourselves drifted off to look at other parts of Addison County. Berilyea Access was almost devoid of waterfowl with only a single female **Northern Pintail** and three **Green-winged Teal** to enliven a tiny group of Black Ducks and Mallards. We had a brief look at a distant **Rough-legged Hawk** plus occasional fly-by's of Horned Larks and **Snow Buntings**. The often windswept, raw shoreline of Lake Champlain was, on this day, stroked by gentle on-shore breezes, with glorious views away to the Adirondacks to the West. We came up with a single Common Loon, a few Common Goldeneye, lots of Horned Grebes, a possible Long-tailed Duck and a possible Lesser Black-backed Gull, but not a lot of waterfowl on the lake.

As sunset fell, we made our way back to the refuge, eventually ending up at the end of Gage Road, looking at dusk falling over the entire group of 3,000 geese with the Adirondacks as a back-drop. There are moments in birding when the binoculars and scope must be let fall; when one must, as the Little Prince entreated, look with the heart. This was clearly one of them.

David Peake-Jones

The **East Quabbin** trip report will appear in the February edition. Ed

Breeding Bird Atlas Is Ready to Read!!

What to do between Christmas Count and the dance of the woodcock?

Lots of good birding, of course, but there is also the wood stove and the completed Second Massachusetts Breeding Bird Atlas. There have been lots of BBA announcements since the project started, but this one is a cause for celebration. It only took 650 of us five years (43,000 hours) to collect the data and two years of staff time to turn out the finished document. Why not indulge yourself in a great read?

1. To look at the data for free, go to www.massaudubon.org, put BBA 2 in the search box and you should find the pages in a bird-by-bird format. It is not an incredibly friendly website, but the atlas data and a free copy of the new version of the State of the Birds is there.
2. To read it in an electronic book format, go to **itunes**, search for Mass Breeding Bird Atlas and you will quickly be able to exchange \$30 for an ebook which should work on whatever device you have.
3. There will be a way to order a print version (about \$100) and to download a pdf version for the non-ebook readers (not sure of cost), but those are not ready yet. Stay tuned and keep that wood stove warm.

Mary Alice Wilson

Remembering Betty Petersen

The Hampshire Bird Club has given a donation to the ABA's Birder's Exchange in memory of Betty Petersen. Many club members remember hearing Betty talk about the exchange at club meetings - and many have enjoyed time with her in the field. Her contributions to the birds and birders of Latin American through the Birder's Exchange and the translation and free distribution of *The Neotropical Companion* in Spanish was stunning. Members who would like to make an additional contribution in Betty's honor can go to aba.org/bettypetersen or mail to:

ABA Birder's Exchange, 1618 Colorado Avenue, Colorado Springs, CO 80904.

That's it for this month. Not even room for the full sign off! Happy New Year! David Peake-Jones

Hampshire Bird Club, Inc.
Winter-Spring-Summer Field Trip Schedule, 2014
Published 1/6/2014

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.*

JANUARY

***Saturday, January 25. Coastal Rhode Island.** All day. Geoff LeBaron repeats his annual cold-weather trip to the coast of Rhode Island, looking for gulls, ducks, Short-eared Owls, and whatever else may be there. Call Geoff (413-268-9281) for information and meeting details. (E)

FEBRUARY

Saturday, February 8. South Shore. All day. Al Richards and Mike Locher scour the coast south of Boston for seasonal specialties like Harlequin Ducks, Short-eared Owls, and other waterfowl and seabirds. Meet at Stop & Shop on King Street in Northampton at 6:00. For further information and to register, call Al (413-665-2761). (M)

MARCH

Saturday, March 1. Plum Island, Newburyport, and Salisbury. All day. Geoff LeBaron looks for migrants and residents at one of Massachusetts' premier birding locations. Call Geoff (413-268-9281) as the date approaches for meeting time and information. (E)

Saturday, March 15. Connecticut River Waterfowl. Half day. Al Richards and/or Bob Bieda seek out the ducks and geese migrating up the Connecticut River to their breeding grounds. Meet at Stop & Shop on King Street in Northampton at 6:30. Contact Al (413-665-2761) for more information and to register for the trip. (E)

APRIL

***Saturday, April 12. Ashley Reservoir: Early Warblers.** Half day. Mike Locher (413-585-5864) looks for early migrants like Pine and Palm Warblers, Ruby-crowned Kinglets, and Northern Waterthrushes. Meet in the Holyoke Elks parking lot (250 Whitney Ave.), near Exit 15 ("Holyoke Mall") off Rt. 91 at 7 a.m. (E)

***Sunday, April 13. Northampton Migrants.** Half day. Betsy Higgins (413-586-7585) goes to Look Park to find waterthrushes and other early migrants. Meet at the JFK Middle School parking lot (100 Bridge Road, Florence) at 7 a.m. (E)

Wednesday, April 23. Spring hawk watching at Goat Peak. Half day. Tom Gagnon climbs the tower on Mount Tom State Reservation and looks for northbound raptors. Meet at the old park headquarters building at 9 o'clock for a 20 minute walk to the tower. Please call Tom Gagnon (413-584-6353) or email tombwhawk-at-aol-dot-com. (M)

MAY

**On Tuesdays in May, there will be informal birding walks through the former Bri-Mar Stables grounds (now part of the Fort River Division of the Silvio O. Conte NWR). Dates, leaders, and start times are as follows: May 6, Janice Jorgensen, 7 a.m.; May 13, Bob Bieda, 7 a.m.; May 20, Al Richards, 6:30 a.m.; May 27, TBA. Meet at the Stables parking area (69 Moody Bridge Road, Hadley). (E)*

***Saturday May 3. Mitch's Way.** Half day. Josh Rose takes a walk along the River looking for neotropical migrant landbirds. Mitch's Way is easy walking; depending on turnout and interest, we could add a more challenging walk into adjacent Skinner State Park or could adjourn to nearby Barstow Creamery for lunch and ice cream. Meet at 7 a.m. at the parking lot of the Hadley Stop & Shop, Route 9 Diner, etc. (440 Russell St., Hadley). Any questions, contact Josh (413-835-0093 or opihi-at-mindspring-dot-com). (E/M)

***Sunday, May 4. Poet's Seat and Highland Pond.** Half day. Mike Locher heads to Greenfield to look for migrating warblers, tanagers, thrushes, and flycatchers. Be prepared for a short hike up to the tower at Poet's Seat, and for some leisurely walking on other (level) trails. Meet at Stop & Shop on King Street in Northampton at 6:30 a.m. (or at the Poet's Seat parking area around 7:15). Call Mike (413-585-5864) for more information. (M)

Saturday, May 10. Quabbin Park and East Quabbin. All day. Tom Gagnon leads his annual spring trip to the eastern side of the reservoir. Participation is limited and you must be a member of the Hampshire Bird Club to participate. To register, contact Tom (413-584-6353 or tombwhawk-at-aol-dot-com). Please register with Tom early. (M)

Sunday, May 11, Orchard Hill +/- Sylvan Woods. Half Day. Dave Mako leads a stroll through these popular migration hotspots on the UMass campus. Meet at 7 a.m. in the northwestern-most parking lot for the Orchard Hill Residential Area via Orchard Hill Drive. Contact Dave (412-665-2999 or massmakos-at-yahoo-dot-com) for more info and the donut count. (E)

Thursday, May 15. Mount Holyoke. Half day. Tom Gagnon leads a hike up Mt. Holyoke in search of Cerulean Warblers and other migrants. Plan to stop along the way to look at some of the flora of Mt. Holyoke. Meet at 7 a.m. at the gate of Mt. Holyoke. For information call Tom (413-584-6353) or email tombwhawk-at-aol-dot-com. (M)

Saturday, May 17. Bartholomew's Cobble. All day. Mike Locher travels southwest to the unique habitat of Bartholomew's Cobble. We'll look for both grassland birds in the fields and woodland migrants in the forests around the cobble. If I can learn my wildflowers by the time we go, I'll even point out a few of the many species that thrive around the cobble. Meet at Stop & Shop on King Street in Northampton at 6 a.m. and bring a lunch. Call Mike (413-585-5864) for further details. (M)

***Sunday, May 18. Mount Auburn Cemetery.** All day. Sharon Dombeck and Stephen Baker explore one of the premier migrant traps within the greater Boston area. On the way home, time and interest permitting, there will be a stop at Great Meadows in Concord. Meet at the Hitchcock Center (525 S. Pleasant St., Amherst) at 5:30 a.m. and bring a lunch and snacks. Contact Sharon or Stephen (413-268-7021) for details and to register. (E)

***Saturday, May 24. Hilltown Ramble.** All day. Bob Zimmermann (rzimmermann@hampshirebirdclub.org, 413-585-0405) and Dave Gross (dgross@hampshirebirdclub.org, 413-253-2897) visit migrant spots from Cummington through Moran Wildlife Management Area, to Savoy, Plainfield and Hawley. Some hiking will be done. Meet at the Northampton Stop & Shop on King Street at 6:30 a.m. to organize carpools. (M)

***Saturday May 31. Fort River Division of Silvio O. Conte NWR (Bri-Mar Stables).** Half day. Josh Rose enjoys one of the best Bobolink shows in the area, hopes to find a few breeding and migrating warblers and sparrows, and enjoys the refuge's newly built boardwalks and observation decks. Optional continuation to the Honey-pot, possibly after lunch and ice cream at Cook Farm. Meet at 6:30 a.m. at the stables (69 Moody Bridge Road, Hadley). Any questions, contact Josh (413-835-0093 or opihi-at-mindspring-dot-com). (E)

JUNE

Saturday, June 7. Westover Air Force Base. Half day. Bob Bieda and Mike Locher host the HBC's annual trip to New England's premier grassland habitat, looking for Upland Sandpipers, Bobolinks, Grasshopper Sparrows, and Eastern Meadowlarks. This trip is limited to Hampshire Bird Club members only. Call Bob (413-527-2623) at least two weeks ahead of time to register and check on the date and time for meeting. (E)

***Saturday June 14. Wentworth Farm.** Half day. Josh Rose leads an easy walk looking for breeding Orchard Orioles, Brown Thrashers, Bobolinks, Green Herons, and whatever else we can find. If the weather is suitable we will also probably look at butterflies and dragonflies. There is an optional continuation into the Amherst College Wildlife Sanctuary nearby, possibly after lunch nearby. Meet at 6:30 a.m. at the head of the Harvey Allen Trail, next to the ball fields and park (near 137 Stanley St., Amherst). Any questions, contact Josh (413-835-0093 or opihi-at-mindspring-dot-com). (E)

AUGUST

Thursday, August 7-Monday, August 11. Crown of Maine. Overnight trip. Geoff LeBaron leads his bi-annual trip to the mixed boreal and agricultural habitats of far northern Maine. This trip is limited to Hampshire Bird Club members only. Call Geoff (413-269-9281) for information, and contact Mike Locher (fieldtrip@hampshirebirdclub.org) to register and get cost information. (M)

Saturday, August 9. Hummingbird Banding. Half day. Bill Benner and Joe Wiscinski (413-320-4422) host a morning of hummingbird banding at their house. Usually, about 50 hummingbirds are mist-netted and banded. Meet at Bill and Joe's house (55 Webber Road, Whately) at 6 a.m. Parking is limited, so carpooling is appreciated. Raindate: Sunday, August 10. (E)