



Hampshire Bird Club, Inc.
Amherst, Massachusetts
www.hampshirebirdclub.org
Volume 34, No. 1
September, 2017.

I have had the pleasure, in recent years, to bird on occasion with a young person who might otherwise be tempted to think of me only as a creepy uncle. On a family camping trip recently, I was doing the sausage and coffee prep one morning when I was suddenly forced to drop everything and rouse my poor niece from slumber. Despite it being before 10 AM, she groggily threw on a pair of flip-flops and joined me on a brisk walk toward an ethereal sound that intermittently cut through the mundane stirrings of humans at camp. Soon enough, we struck off the camp road into a deep, dark stand of hemlock, leaving the sunlight and human noise behind. Here, more of the sound was discernible and, like hounds on a scent, we tried to track the source. Every minute or so we paused, spellbound, as a series of bubbly, cascading, bird songs beckoned us ever further into the shadowy woods. I was at pains to whisper, during the silences in between soliloquies, that we might never catch a glimpse of the singer, Winter Wrens being what they are. After half an hour of quartering back and forth this turned out to be the truth. We retreated back to the sunlight and (mercifully), the breakfast someone else had prepared.

To find the magic in the lives of Winter Wrens, we need look no further than the extraordinary contrast between their physical secretiveness and vocal exuberance, and the fact that males build several nests each season, from which the female chooses. But almost every bird out there carries mystery of some kind beneath its wings. Our bird club is, above all else, a way to help each of us explore these mysteries, whether through the great speakers who come our way each month, or the quiet assistance we get with that tricky call note during a club trip. I hope you will **renew your membership** promptly, or perhaps **join us for the first time** and that this year may bring you magic, courtesy of the birds and Hampshire Bird Club. Sorry, we can't help you with sausages and coffee!

Please Renew Your Membership NOW (or join us for the first time).

- Your **membership status** is shown on the cover page. Check to see if you owe dues this year.
- Complete the **Membership Form**. This will involve deciding on your membership contribution for this year, any additional support you may want to provide for the Education Committee, and also keeping us updated with important information about your membership. Please note that even if you got the ONLINE newsletter last year we ask all members to make a choice of newsletter options on the membership form this year as well.
- Fill out the reverse side of the Membership Form, which includes the **Field Trip Release Form** and **Rare Bird Alert** sign up,
- Fill out the **HBC Member Skills Survey**,
- Write a **check** for the required funds (if any), and
- Mail** the forms and check as shown on the Membership Form, or bring them to the first program.

Our first program for this year is on MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 11 (details p. 2)
The Fall Field Trip Schedule is enclosed, too!!

NEXT PROGRAM

Monday, September 11 at 7:15 p.m.

Richard Prum delves into

The Evolution of Beauty:

How Darwin's Forgotten Theory of Mate Choice Shapes the Natural World—and Us

Immanuel Lutheran Church; 867 North Pleasant Street, Amherst.

Few of us would be birders if it were not for sexual selection. I am not, dear reader, referring to the mysterious forces which may have drawn our (more or less) eccentric parents together. Darwin famously came to his understanding of evolution, in part, by examining the beak characteristics of an obscure group of “little brown jobs” in the Galapagos. However, if birding was all about variations in bill length, most of us would be butterflying instead. Darwin's finches notwithstanding, even the great naturalist himself understood that, when it comes to evolution, sex is always, if not the culprit, certainly a willing accomplice.....

The bewildering range of colors, mating behavior and songs that draw us to them owe their origins to a mode of natural selection called **sexual selection** which has been a prime factor in driving the evolution of many bird species. Based upon his recent book of the same name, **Richard Prum** will look at how “a taste for beauty” has guided the development of the extraordinary ornamentation we see in the natural world.

Dr. Prum received an A.B. (1982) from Harvard University and a Ph.D. (1989) from the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor. He is the William Robertson Coe Professor of Ornithology, Ecology, and Evolutionary Biology at Yale University, where he also serves as curator of ornithology and head curator of vertebrate zoology at the Peabody Museum of Natural History.

Collaborating with scientists from many disciplines, Dr. Prum is responsible for some of the most respected theories on how feathers evolved, and for the discovery that blue coloration in birds is due to structural, not chemical properties of their feathers. Dr. Prum has also shown that the behavior of birds sheds light on their evolutionary relationships, and that variation in vocal apparatus between different groups of birds gives rise to different singing behavior.

COMING PROGRAMS

October 16, 2017. John van de Graaff. Beautiful Birds.

November 13, 2017. Brooke Bateman. Audubon's Climate Watch.

December 11, 2017. Members' Meeting.

EDUCATION COMMITTEE: The Mission

The Education Committee is looking to develop school presentations, senior walks and programs, live bird interactions (captive and wild), visits to raptor centers, falconry demonstrations, boy & girl scout merit badge events, member workshops; in fact ANY activities that will bring the wonder of birds to new people. You can contribute with your donation (via the Membership Form) and by sharing your ideas with the committee. You can reach them at education@hampshirebirdclub.org.

That's all for this month. **Please send us your membership renewal NOW!**

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

David Peake-Jones, Editor

529 9541

newsletter@hampshirebirdclub.org

FIELD TRIP RELEASE FORM.

Required if you will participate in field trips.

We need members to share responsibility for their own safety and the safety of others during field trips. The signed release will be filed with the club secretary. For family memberships, all participating members should sign.

Release Of All Demands - Hold Harmless

I hereby acknowledge that as a participant in field trips with the Hampshire Bird Club, Inc. (HBC) I may be exposed to significant risks. These may include, but are not limited to, vehicular travel over land and water, foot travel over difficult terrain, and hazardous weather conditions. I may also encounter poisonous plants, dangerous wildlife, and/or disease-carrying insects. In the event of injury, I understand that I may face considerable delays in reaching professional medical help.

I/we fully accept these risks and agree to hold the Hampshire Bird Club, Inc., its officers, directors, volunteers, employees, and agents free from any and all liability for injuries and/or loss which I/we may incur, directly or indirectly, while on field trips run by HBC within one (1) year of the date below.

EXECUTED freely and voluntarily this day:.....,,,
(month) (day) (year)

All participating family members, please sign and print name:

- 1)..... print name▶
- 2)..... print name▶
- 3)..... print name▶

RARE BIRD ALERT FORM: Optional

The Rare Bird Alert is an optional email-only alert system that informs you when and where rare birds are sighted in the valley, or, in some cases, the broader region.

To join via this form

Complete the form and return it with your membership form or turn it in at the Sept./Oct. meetings.

To join online:

Provide name/s and email address/es to membership@hampshirebirdclub.org

You may provide as many email addresses as you like (within reason, please). Participants **will need to provide us with at least one (1) active email address.** automatically receive all RBA announcements. Please email membership@hampshirebirdclub.org if your email changes.

I would like to receive RBA alerts . email address/es (1) _____
(2) _____

Return with membership form to HBC, P.O. Box 716, Amherst, MA 01004-0716 or turn in at the September/October meetings.