



Hampshire Bird Club, Inc.
Amherst, Massachusetts
www.hampshirebirdclub.org
Volume 36, No. 4
December 2019

Dear reader, with sincere apologies to Clement Moore or Henry Livingston, I give you “A Visit From St. Nicholas (revised)”:

‘Twas Christmas Count night, when along thro’
the wood
No creature was stirring, so long as we stood.
Wool stockings on feet and muffler on ear,
In hopes that an owl hoot soon would we hear.
The day birds were nestled all snug in their beds
While visions of sugar plums danc’d in our
heads.
The north wind it blew cold and started to howl
And still we heard nothing, not even an owl.
The moon on the breast of the new fallen snow,
Gave the lustre of mid-day to objects below.
The wind knifed us harder and clouds could be
seen,
The day broke o’re us with a small sun, and
mean.
It’s time to move on our dear leader did say;
Get into the car, now we must be away.
Ahead on a long walk we marched through the
field,
We beat on the bushes and nought did they yield.
No sparrow, no bluebird, no junco, no finch,
We counted no eagles; it must be the Grinch.
And then in the distance, with accent so thick
We heard a voice echo, it must be St. Nick!
“Now! Dasher, now! Dancer, now! Prancer, and
Vixen,

“On! Comet, on! Cupid, on! Donder and Blitzen;
“To the top of the porch! to the top of the wall!
“Now dash away! dash away! dash away all!”
So up to the house-top the coursers they flew,
With the sleigh full of toys - and St. Nicholas
too.
We counted them one and we counted them all
We marked in our checklist, Rare Bird was the
call.
No more did we find, try as hard as we might
‘Fore long it got dim and our thoughts turned
toward night,
And compiling went we with a wink and a toast
To upstage the hot shots who find birds the most.
“How many birds found you?” we ever were
asked;
We shook our heads no, and we dropp’d back to
last.
So then came rare birds and off to the races:
We had a good one, and smiles lit our faces.
We were second to last; our sighting we said
Was a first for the count, and put us ahead.
The last group looked on, and with grin and with
glee
They said that they found, well, the Easter
Bunny.

CHRISTMAS COUNT POTLUCK

After the Northampton Christmas Count on December 15, please gather for a hearty and delicious potluck dinner, beginning at 4:30 p.m. at the Hitchcock Center. It’s a fun time, fine food, and we get to hear the reports from all the teams (including the rare birds). For the potluck we need **main courses, salads, desserts, and beverages**. If you can contribute food or drink, please contact Lissa Ganter, lissa.ganter@gmail.com, or 413-253-1337. We also need a few helpers for an hour or so the day before (Saturday) to help set up the tables. Hope to hear from you!

NEXT PROGRAM

Monday, December 9 at 7:15 p.m.

Members' Meeting

Immanuel Lutheran Church, 867 North Pleasant Street, Amherst

This is the one you've been waiting for since last December. It's the HBC Members' Meeting where you get to show off your photographs and tell the story behind them. There will be goodies to eat, lots of fellowship, and planning for the December 15 Northampton Christmas Count. Please bring your pictures, up to about 10 in number, in standard digital format (JPG, TIFF, etc.) compatible with the club's Windows computer on a thumb drive. Pictures embedded in Powerpoint presentations are also fine.

UPCOMING PROGRAMS

January 13, 2020. Brian Rusnica. Mount Watatic Hawk Watching.

February 10, 2020. Susannah Lehrman. Topic to be announced.

March 9, 2020. Joan Walsh. Topic to be announced.

April 13, 2020. Ashley Green. MAPS Banding Stations

May 11, 2020. Matt Kelly. Trinidad & Tobago

June 8, 2020. Chris Fisher. Topic to be announced.

NEWS FROM THE HBC BOUTIQUE

Hi from the HBC Boutique! Christmas and Hanukkah are just around the corner... The boutique is freshly stocked with new hats and has other HBC-themed goodies. What better stocking stuffer than an HBC hat in another color? See you at the meeting!

CONSERVATION COMMITTEE UPDATE

Anyone interested in forming and participating in the HBC Conservation Committee please contact Sharon Dombeck at sdombeck@hampshirebirdclub.org. Currently the committee's focus is on conserving and protecting habitat for grassland birds.

NORTHAMPTON CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

In recent years approximately 200 volunteers have surveyed the Northampton (MANO) circle, which is 15 miles in diameter, centered in Hadley, to identify and count anything with feathers and a pulse. There are 36 separate areas within the MANO count circle, each of which is covered by one or multiple teams of volunteers. All results are tallied by count compilers and submitted to the National Audubon Society. These data are incorporated into a comprehensive data base that supports research like the [State of the Birds](#) report and the National Audubon Society's [Birds and Climate Change](#) report.

The 2019 Northampton (MANO) Christmas Bird Count will take place on **December 15, 2019**. If you would like to participate in the count, please contact the MANO organizers Janice Jorgensen and Jan Ortiz at cbc@hampshirebirdclub.org. You can join a team in the field or do a feeder count if the feeder is within the count circle. Anyone can participate.

The CBC is a fun day of birding. Every bird you hear and see counts. Our overall goal for the day is to count at least 89 species. Come and join us.

Janice Jorgensen and Jan Ortiz

CBCs AROUND THE AREA

There are a number of counts happening in Western Massachusetts during the CBC count period. An interactive map of count circles with contact information and in some cases count date is at the National Audubon CBC [website](#). For more information on local counts, contact the compilers listed below.

Saturday, December 14, *Athol* (MAAT, Dave Small, dave@dhsmall.net); *Central Berkshire* (MACB, Holly Higinbotham, higinbo@hotmail.com); *Springfield* (MASP, George Kingston, gcking@yahoo.com)

Sunday, December 15, *Northampton* (MANO, Jan Ortiz & Janice Jorgensen, cbc@hampshirebirdclub.org); *Kid's CBC* at Hitchcock Center and Arcadia (see Events of Interest)

Tuesday, December 17, *Sturbridge* (MAST, Mark Lynch, moa.lynch@charter.net)

Saturday, December 21, *Northern Berkshire* (MANB, Pam Weatherbee, pambweath@gmail.com)

Saturday, December 28, *Quabbin* (MAQB, Scott Turner, ssurner@aol.com)

Sunday, December 29, *Greenfield* (MAGR, Mark Fairbrother, bogelfin@crocker.com)

Saturday, January 4, *Westminster* (MAWE, Chuck Caron, caronenv@aol.com)

Dates not yet known: *Cobble Mountain* (Westfield), (MACM, Seth Kellog, skhawk@comcast.net); *Southern Berkshire* (MASB, Rene Wendell, renewendell@hotmail.com)

FIELD TRIP REPORT

Turners Falls Halloween Birding Trip with Josh Rose.

Heading into my October 27 Halloween trip, I had two concerns. First, the weather forecast was for rain all day and temperatures below 40. Second, I was expecting the largest turnout ever. In the end, Harvey Allen, Peter Gagarin, and I met up at the power canal in Turners Falls. The birds there were unremarkable, but at least it was not raining much... yet.

Our next stop was a little roadside marsh in Northfield. This place had an astounding number of sparrows, mostly Song, a few White-throats, a Chipping just as we arrived, a Field which appeared near the end, and several Swamp, one surprisingly approachable. The rain picked up and was chasing us back to the car when I saw a bird pop up, which turned out to be a **Palm Warbler**. As we pursued the warbler, we came across something even more noteworthy, a late **Blue-headed Vireo**.

A quick visit to Sawyer Ponds yielded a couple of dozen Wood Ducks before we continued to Hell's Kitchen. We failed to find a Pectoral Sandpiper, a species that this trip had observed three years in a row. However, we did find one each of **Solitary** and **Least Sandpiper**, both flagged as unusually late by eBird. The place was alive with Green-winged Teal, at least two dozen of them, and an even larger number of Wood Ducks. After this stop we were thoroughly cold and wet. We broke for lunch, and with the rain letting up a bit we continued to Pauchaug Brook WMA. We found a flock of blackbirds in the trees along the field edge; and while most were Red-winged, a few **Rustys** popped up for some nice spotting scope views! We finished the day with 47 species, not too bad for a day of rain and mud.

Josh Rose

UPCOMING FIELD TRIP

Saturday, May 23, All Day, Hilltown Rambles. Join Dave Gross and Bob Zimmermann as they ramble around the Berkshire hilltowns to look for those migrants that prefer higher elevations than the valley provides. We'll be on the lookout for American Bittern, Sandhill Cranes, Blackburnian Warblers and Spotted Sandpipers along with anything else we can turn up. There will be a bit of hiking at the Moran Wildlife Area. Meet at the Northampton Stop & Shop parking lot at 6:30 am. Pack a lunch or pick one up at our stop at the Cummington Creamery. For information or to sign up contact Dave (djgross@gmail.com 413-687-8161) or Bob (zimmermann@biochem.umass.edu 413-626-3381). (E/M/S)

(Note: This is the ONLY field trip so far for Spring 2020. Leaders for trips are needed!)

THE HADLEY PACIFIC-SLOPE FLYCATCHER

On October 23rd I was wrapping up a routine birding mission checking out various farm fields in Hadley. Often one of the stops I make when I'm on route 47 is a little, seldom-birded path that leads down to a nice river view. Even though I'd never had the super find I'd hoped for drifting down the river, I kept going back because I figured I was due! On this day though, before I made it down to the water, I stopped and watched birds cross the path and land all in the same tree decked out in fall foliage. After a couple of sparrows I locked in on a Blue Headed Vireo and took a couple of pictures. Another bird popped in a couple of feet away and I snapped a bunch of pics while my brain tried to ID it.

I cycled through the flycatcher possibilities and got excited that I had finally found my first Hampshire county Yellow-Bellied Flycatcher. Then my excitement faded because the eye ring just didn't look right and it just didn't look like other Yellow-Bellieds I'd seen elsewhere. When I got back to my car I typed flycatcher into my iBird app and looked at photos of every possible one. When I got to a picture of the Pacific Slope Flycatcher it matched my photo better than any of the others, which gave me assurance that I was fully unqualified to figure out what it was. I didn't even consider for a second that it would be a such a rarity since I've never found anything close to that rare.

I sent pics out to friends for input and filed my eBird list intending to sort the bird out later. eBird flagged it and at that point I realized that any flycatcher is rare for the date. Not long after filing it (with a note that photos would follow), Larry Therrien contacted me wanting to see the photos. He thought right off it looked like a western flycatcher. I gave him the exact location where I had viewed the bird (it did not call while I was looking at it). Larry went back there on the 24th and was able to nab a distant but promisingly clear recording of the PSFC ch-wee sounding call. I then spoke to Scott Sumner about it and he suggested filing a report with the MARC (Mass Avian Records Committee). I did, and right away was contacted by Sean Williams on the MARC who wanted to come out with Maili Waters the next morning, Friday the 25th, and try to re-locate the bird. Not long after they arrived Maili spotted it and more folks got pics and recordings. All of the experienced birders there at the time were convinced that it was in fact a Pacific-Slope Flycatcher. And, I became much less sad at my failure to get a Yellow-Bellied Flycatcher.

The whole experience has been a lot of fun and somewhat unbelievable. I looked at the list of the top 100 birders in Massachusetts in the days following the confirmation of this bird and about 40 of them had come to see it. The only disconcerting aspect is knowing the little celebrity is facing tough odds this winter with its internal compass all goofed up. I wish it was feasible to take it on a road trip south but apparently that is neither legal or likely to succeed. I will forever be reminded of the bird because my former eBird non-hotspot is now labeled "Pacific Slope Stakeout".

Joe Oliverio

MASS AUDUBON'S "TAKING FLIGHT"

Dan Boudreau is the youth education coordinator for Mass Audubon's Museum of American Bird Art (MABA) in Canton, Massachusetts. Each year, MABA hosts a juried youth bird art exhibition for children ages 4-18 called "Taking Flight". MABA receives submissions from all over the United States and has even had a few international entries. This is the fifth year for MABA hosting the exhibit, and a goal is to have even broader participation than in previous years. The exhibition will be on display at the MABA and the hope is that it will foster the next generation of artists who love birds and wildlife.

If you know of any young artists who might be interested in submitting, Dan would really appreciate it if you could pass this information along to them and share it with others. This year's theme is "Your favorite bird, or what birds mean to you," and most non-digital media are allowed. MABA will be accepting entries from January 15 through June 15, 2020. The show will be exhibited at the museum in the fall of 2020. More information and application instructions can be found on the [Taking Flight](#) page of the MABA [website](#).

UPCOMING EVENTS OF INTEREST

Arcadia Wildlife Sanctuary

Arcadian Rhythms: Reflections on a Year at Arcadia

Wednesday, December 4, 7 – 8:30 pm,

[Online](#) or phone (413-584-3009) registration is required.

Arcadian Rhythms is a reflection on time, place and connection from a year at Arcadia Wildlife Sanctuary. Join local artist and naturalist Claire Dacey as she shares the fruits of her year of daily visits to the same patch of woods. Celebrate the intricate beauty of our local landscape, and 75 years of stewardship by Mass Audubon's Arcadia Wildlife Sanctuary. Free, with suggested donation of \$10.

Holiday Craft Workshop

Saturday, December 7, 9 am – 12 pm,

[Online](#) or phone (413-584-3009) registration is required.

Join us for a morning of holiday gift making. Children, accompanied by an adult, will make two nature crafts that will make ideal gifts for parents, siblings, grandparents or friends. All materials included and we try to use as many recycled, non-plastic materials as possible. Bring your imagination and we'll supply the rest! Adults are free, children \$10 (member), \$12 (nonmember).

Christmas Bird Count for Kids and Families (see also CBC for Kids in the Hitchcock list below)

Sunday, December 15, 10 am – 2 pm.

Short bird walks will take place at 10:30 and 12:30. We will also be watching birds at our feeders from indoors, see the different types of feeders and food, have bird activities, and hot chocolate for all! This is a free event. No registration required, just stop by. As with the HCE program, this one is also supported by the Hampshire Bird Club Education Committee.

Winter Solstice Celebration

Saturday, December 21, 5:30– 8:30 pm,

[Online](#) or phone (413-584-3009) registration is required.

People have celebrated the shortest day of the year and the start of longer days for ages. In the Valley, people have celebrated the winter solstice at Arcadia for decades. Join us for candle-lit trails, music, fire, kids' crafts and community togetherness. Free.

Hitchcock Center for the Environment

New England Forests Film: Eastern White Pine – The Tree Rooted in American History

Wednesday, December 4, 7 – 8:30 pm,

Screening followed by panel with filmmakers Ray Asselin and Bob Leverett, [registration appreciated](#)

In colonial American times, stately eastern white pines were among the most valuable trees on the planet. They were an imposing presence in the primeval forests of eastern North America. This new documentary film tells the story of our native white pine, and the significant part it played in America's founding and history, using archival footage, stunning photography, and aerial views. It also answers such questions as:

- Why *were* these pines so valuable?
- How were these pines important to the lives of the first settlers?
- What role did they play in the the American War of Independence, and founding of the US?
- What is the status of this great tree species today?
- How is it important to wildlife?
- Why is walking among white pines in the forest *good for you*?

- What is the tallest living thing in the northeastern United States?
- Is there any hope of seeing these trees as they once were, 400 years ago?

Find the answers to these questions and more in the newest film by the makers of The Lost Forests of New England, *Eastern White Pine ... the tree rooted in American history*. [Learn more](#) and [watch the trailer](#).

Natural History Hike in the Quabbin with Ted Watt

Sunday, December 8, 9 am – 12 pm.

[Registration](#) required, \$30.

We'll hike into the Quabbin wilderness, getting a deeper understanding of the habitats that are preserved there, and the plants and animals that live there. If there is snow we will follow some of the creatures moving through and learn more about their lives.

Christmas Bird Count for Kids and Families (see also CBC for Kids in the Arcadia list above)

Sunday, December 15, 1 – 3 pm.

[Registration](#) appreciated.

At this program, we'll meet at the Hitchcock Center for an indoor program about how to recognize common birds, followed by an outdoor bird count. Educator Katie Koerten will facilitate a bird count for kids and their families on the grounds of the Hitchcock Center – we'll count every bird we see! Stay as long as you wish. Later that evening Katie will report the data we collect at the official CBC compilation meeting. Don't miss this opportunity to contribute to a real bird census! This event happens rain, snow, sleet or shine. Families may stay for as long as they wish but we recommend that you come for the indoor portion in order to get introduced to the common winter species we are likely to see. Binoculars welcome but not required. Thanks to the Hampshire Bird Club Education Committee for its generous support of this program!

Nature Study Club 2019

Sundays, once per month, 9 am – 12 pm

[Registration](#) required. Sign up for the year: \$140 members/\$170 non-members or \$30 per session.

January 13: *Bark: Getting to Know Trees in Winter with Michael Wojteck*. Michael will help us look more closely at the bark of local tree species. Furrows, ridges, plates and more will provide a vocabulary and train your eye for these characters. You'll gain confidence in your skills at identifying trees without their leaves. Michael is the author of *Bark: A Field Guide to Trees of the Northeast* and has lots to share about these wonderful plants!

HELP WITH HBC MEETINGS SETUP

We are grateful for the many members who, over the years, have volunteered to help get the room in shape before and after our monthly meetings! Our thanks to several new members, Tom, Ruth, and Ellie, who have come forward this year to help with chairs setup and the refreshment table. And thanks especially to Meghadeepa, another new member, who provides AV technical support. We are still seeking storage space between meetings for our AV equipment. If you can offer space, or if you would like to be part of the set up team, please contact Lissa Ganter, lissa.ganter@gmail.com.

That's all for this month. The 2019-2020 HBC membership list is included with mailed copies. Be safe when you go out birding during this winter season!

Dave Gross, Editor
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