



Hampshire Bird Club, Inc.
Amherst, Massachusetts
www.hampshirebirdclub.org
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Dear reader, somehow we seem to have made it through November's election and its aftermath. Or at least so it seems. This awful year of 2020 is nearly at an end. My wife Julie saw an analogy for 2020 that I think is most fitting, particularly given the weather report that I have been hearing on the radio this morning. "If most years are like a cherry sno-cone, then 2020 is like a sno-cone made from the slush at the side of the road at the end of the winter – grey, salty and filled with grit."

You have been reading in past newsletters entries from our haiku contest last summer. In the spirit of the times and with thoughts of calmer political times, here's my contribution. Thanks to the Raven family that visits the cell tower near my house.

Raven calls "Barack,
Barack." Snow falls silently
like serene days past.

NEXT PROGRAM
Monday, December 14 at 7:15 pm via Zoom
Members' Meeting

Our December meeting is the time when members are welcome to share approximately 10 slides of birds or birding adventures. Join us this year for our annual slide show and cookie fest. (Note that you will need to provide your own cookies this year.) Because we must do this year's edition via Zoom, former club members who have moved away, and current ones who are unable to regularly participate in meetings due to mobility issues or long travel distances, may well be in attendance. There will also be a short presentation on the MANO Christmas Count with time for questions and answers.

HBC BOUTIQUE NEWS

If anyone needs anything from the Boutique, give me a call, email me, text me....whatever works best for you. We can arrange a socially distant pick up and payment. I am also willing to mail things to people if they pay postage. A new hat or a new shirt for the holidays....some lens cloths to keep your optics clean....the *Bird Finding Guide of Western MA*....HBC pins....binocular harnesses with the HBC logo....lots of goodies! hignik@comcast.net 413-320-2026 (call or text), or 413-586-7585 (call only).

Betsy Higgins

MEMBERSHIP NEWS

We are happy to welcome several new HBC members in the last month. Joining us are Ami Jean Aubin, Williamsburg; Kate Finn & Angela Conti, Greenfield; Kevin Grennan, Hadley; Eric Klopfer, Pelham; Heidi Scott, Northampton; and Rosemary Laporte, Easthampton. In January or February, date yet to be determined, we are planning to hold a special Zoom meeting so that new members can learn more about HBC and get to meet other members.

CBC PREP ZOOM MEETINGS

Three online meetings to prepare for this year's unusual MANO Christmas Bird Count will be held:

Area Leaders Meeting—Tuesday, December 15th, 6:30-7:30pm

We'll discuss Covid-19 protocols; whether you feel you have sufficient coverage for your area; the new form for data submission and determination of who from your team will submit it; owling; and Rare Bird forms/photos.

Feeder Watcher Meeting—Wednesday, December 16th, 7:00-8:15pm

This meeting will piggy-back on the Education Committee's "Feeder Birds and Birdfeeder Community Science Projects" workshop, at the tail end of the call. We'll continue the discussion of identifying common feeder birds; a brief overview of the CBC and its purpose; and the data submission form for feeder counts.

Participants Meeting—Friday, December 18th, 6:30-7:30pm

The last prep call will cover a brief overview of the CBC and its purpose; the new data submission form; the "how, where and when" of the count; Covid-19 protocols; maps; website and Rare Bird forms/photos.

To register for these free meetings, please email virtualbirding@hampshirebirdclub.org. The count will be on Sunday, December 20. Check the HBC website <https://hampshirebirdclub.org/cbc> and [HBC's Facebook](#) page for updates on the count.

EDUCATION COMMITTEE REPORT AND WORKSHOPS

Once again, the Education Committee held 3 virtual workshops in November, and we had the best attendance yet at the events. Robert Mesta's feather repository workshop was a quite different topic, and about 20 members really appreciated his presentation. Club member Sebastian Moreno shared his experiences in raising and releasing Kestrels and discussed the life history of these small falcons. Again, over 20 members signed up for his talk and found it informative and entertaining. The talk on "Local Places to Bird" included 7 presenters and there were many new attendees. This presentation covered well-known areas like Fitzgerald Lake and Hadley Cove as well as newly established conservation areas on both sides of the river. Most areas were new since the publication of the *Bird Finding Guide to Western Massachusetts*, making it clear that HBC members are out there exploring new birding sites.

We will hold two virtual workshops in December. Both are on Wednesday nights. You can sign up for these workshops by contacting the Education Committee at virtualbirding@hampshirebirdclub.org.

Wednesday, Dec. 9, 7:00 – 8:00 pm

Crows & Ravens

Patti Steinman

Crows and ravens are known as the brains of the avian world. Learn the difference between crows and ravens, their intelligence, and life histories. Explore the fascinating phenomenon of winter crow roosting, a nightly gathering that takes place from October to March. A large roost exists in Springfield with the location changing yearly, monthly or daily. We will discuss some of the more common places in Springfield to see winter crows roosts.

Wednesday, Dec. 16, 7:00 – 8:00 pm

Feeder Birds and Community Science Projects

Join various HBC presenters to explore the differences between some common but confusing birds that may visit your bird feeder. Then learn about ways that you may contribute to science by watching birds at your feeders. At the end of the program we will discuss how to be involved with the Christmas Bird Count (see above).

When we can once again meet safely in person for walks, the Education Committee would like to hold a series of them for new club members and some walks for beginning birders. Our goal for these walks is to assist club members in meeting other birders and to find new places to watch birds.

We welcome our new Education Committee members Cory Elowe, Lesley Farlow, and Robin Gurdak-Foley. They have generously volunteered to help us with our upcoming programs and projects.

MASSACHUSETTS YOUNG BIRDERS CLUB

Since HBC supported the revitalization of The Massachusetts Young Birders Club, we've been busy. Here, I'll share some exciting updates with you – and also a request!

Updates: We have been leading several bird walks and activities (all socially-distanced!) with the Holyoke Boys & Girls Club in partnership with the Eagle Eye Institute. Our website is receiving a major makeover as I write (hopefully up and running by the time you read this: <https://massyoungbirders.org>). We've worked through the logistics of running a club for youth in the midst of COVID, and feel confident that this winter and spring we are ready to expand membership safely. Next month, we are going to help facilitate two youth/family-oriented Christmas Bird Count feeder stations: one in Arcadia Wildlife Sanctuary, and the other at the Holyoke Boys & Girls Club.

That brings me to the request. We are looking for bird feeders to set up at the Holyoke Boys & Girls Club. We are also looking for tripods for scopes, and any optics for the Massachusetts Young Birders Club to use. In case you have recently upgraded your feeders, tripods, binoculars, or scopes, and want to donate your old equipment, please reach out to me at spool@umass.edu. Thanks, and I look forward to sharing more news with you all soon.

Jeremy Spool, co-coordinator of The Massachusetts Young Birders Club

A Mt. Skinner hike
with binoculars in hand
Cerulean joy

Haiku by Laura Beltran

brown creeper spirals
on deep furrows of white ash
cryptic and searching

Haiku by Marcia Merithew

AREA MAN MAKES DISCOVERY

Area man David Spector, Emeritus Professor, has reported a remarkable geological discovery at the Holyoke Range. In a recent ascent to the summit of Mount Holyoke, Prof. Spector found that over the course of the past several years “the slopes of the Holyoke Range get steeper every year.” The editor encourages Prof. Spector to report this remarkable finding to a scientific journal of higher repute than the HBC newsletter. A publication that comes to mind is *The Onion*.

In a separate meteorological finding, Prof. Spector noted that it “was windy, windy, windy” at the summit. Both of these notable observations occurred on November 3, 2020.

THIS JUST IN...

As of December 4, 2020, according to my chocolate Advent calendar, there are only 2 days left till Christmas. It's been one of those years.

Dave Gross, Editor
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