



**Hampshire Bird Club, Inc.**  
**Amherst, Massachusetts**  
www.hampshirebirdclub.org  
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Dear reader, what's a birder to do when it's cold, inclement, and inhospitable outside? Simple. Get your favorite hot beverage, find a comfy chair by a window, and look at your feeder. That's what the Cornell Lab of Ornithology recommends for the weekend of February 14-17. That Friday through Monday, which is Presidents Day, over 150,000 observers will be counting and reporting the birds that they see during the Great Backyard Bird Count. Like the Audubon Christmas Count, this citizen-science activity provides essential data on bird numbers and distribution, data that will inform research on climate change and changing numbers of our winter birds.

Participants can count for any amount of time at any locations they wish. Data reporting is straightforward on the Great Backyard Bird Count website. Data from around the globe is available in real time as are photos submitted by observers. You can find out more about the count and see the data at the count website: <https://gbbc.birdcount.org>.

If that's not enough excitement and adventure for you, start your planning for our March and April field trips that you can read about on page 5. If that's STILL not enough excitement and adventure for you, read the Conservation Notes piece on page 3 and write some letters!

## **NEXT PROGRAM**

**Monday, February 10 at 7:15 p.m.**

**Susannah Lerman presents**

**Let's Talk About the Birds and the Bees: Backyard habitats in suburban yards**

Immanuel Lutheran Church, 867 North Pleasant Street, Amherst

Urban and suburban development results in the loss and alteration of vegetation, and is one of the leading causes for severe declines of birds, bees and other wildlife populations. However, backyards have the potential to mitigate some of the detrimental impacts by providing wildlife habitat. Although these green spaces result in small fragments of non-cohesive parcels, collectively, they have the greatest potential for increasing and enhancing habitat in urban and suburban areas. Thus, individual households, in particular, their associated landscaping decisions, have a role to play in improving the capacity of backyards for supporting wildlife and other ecosystem services. This seminar will describe research that has demonstrated how wildlife has responded to landscape design variation, highlighting native plant and native bird relationships, lawn mowing frequency and bee abundance, and wildlife responses at a continental scale. Improving habitat in private yards has implications for human well-being as well since this is where people have their primary interaction with the natural world. Increased exposure and participation in field science programs can further enforce the importance of conservation initiatives and policies aimed at improving habitat in our cities and suburbs.

Dr. Susannah Lerman is a Research Ecologist with the USDA Forest Service in the Communities and Landscapes of the Urban Northeast unit. Susannah earned her B.A. in American History from the University of Delaware in 1994, an M.S. in Conservation Biology from Antioch University in 2005, and a

Ph.D. in Organismic and Evolutionary Biology from the University of Massachusetts in 2011. Her research explores the links between human management of urban green spaces (e.g. yards, neighborhood parks and open space) and the health and success of native wildlife populations, and how these impacts subsequently feedback to influence people due to the role of biodiversity in delivering ecosystem services. Susannah translates the application of scientific information into management tools and integrates a citizen science approach with the ultimate goal of improving the sustainability of urban environments for birds, bees and other wildlife, and advancing human well-being through reconnecting people with nearby nature. Susannah seeks opportunities to explain scientific findings to varying audiences while trying to facilitate connections between the public's personal lives and the urban ecosystem.

## UPCOMING PROGRAMS

**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.

Note: A PDF copy of the slides from the January HBC meeting talk by Brian Rusnica is available on the HBC website. The link can be found on the "Resources" page of the website: "Eastern Mass Hawk Watch – Watatic presentation by Brian Rusnica January 2020".

## RIDE SHARING

Some of our club members cannot drive to meetings. Others of us have ready transportation with seating available. If you fall into either of these categories, perhaps you would like to take or provide a ride to and from an HBC meeting. The HBC Board would be happy to connect riders and drivers. If you would like a ride or if you are available to provide a ride to someone who needs one and lives in your vicinity, then send a note to the HBC membership secretary, Lissa Ganter, at [membership@hampshirebirdclub.org](mailto:membership@hampshirebirdclub.org). If you already have an arrangement for ride sharing, there is no need to contact Lissa about that.

## DINING WITH MONTHLY SPEAKERS

Most of our monthly speakers have supper with some board members and meeting setup crew members. Would you like to be included in the group, usually numbering 6-8 diners? The suppers usually start around 5:45 PM and are done with plenty of time to get to the meeting. Our Program Chair and Vice President Josh Rose will keep a list of members who would like to join in the pre-meeting suppers. If there is space at the table for more diners, Josh will contact members on the list. Please contact Josh at [programs@hampshirebirdclub.org](mailto:programs@hampshirebirdclub.org) to express your interest and to get on the list. (Note that this is Dutch treat – all diners except the speaker and her or his guest pay for their own meals.)

## HBC NOMINATING COMMITTEE

The HBC Bylaws require the HBC President to convene a nominating committee for the purpose of proposing to the membership at its annual meeting in May a slate of candidates for club offices and the at-large board. That committee is composed of three club members of whom one must be on the board and one must not be on the board. Please let the President ([president@hampshirebirdclub.org](mailto:president@hampshirebirdclub.org)) or another member of the board ([board@hampshirebirdclub.org](mailto:board@hampshirebirdclub.org)) know by the February members' meeting (Monday, February 10) if you would like to be considered for membership on the nominating committee, which will be selected by mid-February.

## CONSERVATION NOTES: SUPPORT THE *MIGRATORY BIRD PROTECTION ACT*

The National Audubon Society has told us that the North American bird population has plummeted by over 25% – more than 3,000,000,000 birds – since 1970. But are you aware that our government is now trying to make life for birds even harder? The Department of Interior has directed the Fish and Wildlife Service to end a well-established policy of the 100-year-old Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) prohibiting the inadvertent but often predictable killing of birds which is frequently (and euphemistically) referred to as “incidental take”? This would mean, for instance, that an electric power company would no longer have to take into account the consequences of erecting transmission towers in a major avian flyway even though these structures can be predicted to kill large numbers of birds. To put this in perspective, it has been estimated that annual bird deaths resulting from collisions with power lines and towers may be as high as 65 million in the U.S. alone. There are many other causes of bird mortality attributable to commercial or industrial activity.

To counter this proposed policy change, Rep. Alan Lowenthal (D-CA) has introduced a bill called the *Migratory Bird Protection Act* that would explicitly amend the MBTA to prohibit incidental take in five broad industrial sectors. The new bill, HR 5552, was recently approved by the House Natural Resources Committee by a strongly bipartisan majority and is now on its way to the full House. This measure is also backed by a host of conservation organizations, including the National Audubon Society, Sierra Club, American Bird Conservancy, Environmental Defense Fund, Natural Resources Defense Council, Endangered Species Coalition and many others – in short, a Who’s Who of the country’s environmental protection community. Despite this backing, it’s likely that the bill will encounter strong opposition from industry and provoke especially strong pushback in the Senate.

Now here’s where we come in. Since bird conservation underlies the pastime that we all love and enjoy, it’s time to advocate – and advocate strongly – for passage of the *Migratory Bird Protection Act*. Please take up your pen, mobile device or computer and write our congressional representatives to let them know of your unambiguous support for HR 5552.

Postal addresses, email addresses and phone numbers of our representatives in Congress are:

Rep. James (Jim) McGovern

[www.mcgovern.house.gov/contact](http://www.mcgovern.house.gov/contact)

408 Canon Office Building

Washington, DC 20515

202-224-3121

or

94 Pleasant St.

Northampton, MA

413-341-8700

Senator Elizabeth Warren

[www.warren.senate.gov/contact](http://www.warren.senate.gov/contact)

309 Hart Senate Office

Building

Washington, DC 20510

202-224-4543

or

1550 Main St., Suite 406

Springfield, MA 01103

413-788-2690

Senator Edward (Ed) Markey

[www.markey.senate.gov/contact](http://www.markey.senate.gov/contact)

255 Dirksen Senate Office

Building

Washington, DC 20510

202-224-2752

or

1550 Main St, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor

Springfield, MA 01103

413-785-4610

And if you have a chance, please send a note of thanks to Rep. Lowenthal for introducing HR 5552. You can email him at [lowenthal.house.gov/zip-code-lookup?form=/contact/email-me](mailto:lowenthal.house.gov/zip-code-lookup?form=/contact/email-me).

For more information: [www.audubon.org/news/a-new-bill-aims-counter-rollback-bedrock-bird-law](http://www.audubon.org/news/a-new-bill-aims-counter-rollback-bedrock-bird-law).

Bob Zimmermann

## HBC EDUCATION COMMITTEE PROJECTS

The following are some of the projects that the Education Committee is actively engaged in creating:

**Massachusetts Young Birders Club (MYBC)** – Jeremy Spool has been building support for this new endeavor with the Manomet Bird Observatory and our committee has endorsed a \$500 grant to support start up activities. The mission of the MYBC is “to support and empower a sustainable community of young birders” and the purpose is “to guide youth in building their understanding and love of birds and nature.” The plans for the MYBC and our grant proposal have been submitted to the HBC Board and is under consideration.

The **Valley Family Birds Festival** is May 2 at MA Audubon at Arcadia. As has been the case since its inception, both the Education Committee and HBC general funds will help defray costs of the festival with a \$500 gift. The committee is planning to offer a program there.

Discussion continues with the Robin Foley at the **Anne Dunphy School** in Williamsburg in support of her efforts to explore birds and birding with her students.

Education Committee members distributed a **survey** and recorded responses from over 50 HBC members at a previous members’ meeting. Some of our future projects will be based on your responses. Maybe the first workshop will be on navigating eBird, led by Janice Jorgensen. A workshop on our best birding locations, guides and companies was also in high demand, as were workshops on warblers, sparrows and shorebirds.

We need you support! Along with Broad Brook Coalition we are planning to run a bird walk this spring at the Fitzgerald Lake Conservation Area in Northampton. We could use your support in assisting our leader to *get the kids on the bird*. Individuals with elementary birding skills are welcome. Assistance with supporting kids, perhaps with a birding book, images, photos, binoculars, or a long finger pointing out where the mystery bird is would be helpful. Also, do you know any young birders who might be invited?

Bruce Hart

## BIRD OBSERVER AUTHORSHIP

The bimonthly birding journal *Bird Observer* is looking for authors for Where to Go Birding, Field Notes, and feature articles. The *Bird Observer* editor, Nate Marchessault, is looking for authors to write articles on their favorite birding patches and areas. Where to Go articles are generally 4-10 pages (2000-5000 words) and which give readers insight in where and how to bird at a specific location in New England. Much of the format of the article is up to the author. Authors can choose to write about one specific location or several within a geographical area, within a specific season or year-round, and even focus on a particular group of species. Articles from anywhere in New England are welcome, with articles focusing on Western and Central Massachusetts particularly wanted. An example would be an article on the hills and mountains of Western Mass.

Samples of Where to Go articles, feature articles, and Field Notes can be found on the *Bird Observer* website. Where to Go articles can be accessed at [www.birdobserver.org/Where-to-Go-Birding/Bird-Observer-Keyword-Index](http://www.birdobserver.org/Where-to-Go-Birding/Bird-Observer-Keyword-Index). Articles from issues more than three years old are available to all, even nonsubscribers. Anyone interested in writing an article can email Nate at [natemarchessault@gmail.com](mailto:natemarchessault@gmail.com). Nate will be in touch to discuss details.

## QUABBIN CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

This year’s Quabbin Count, which was held on December 28<sup>th</sup>, included forty-five observers and two feeder watchers. The count day featured unusually nice weather with temperatures in the range of 31-44 °F and wind out of the WNW ranging from 0-15 MPH with a few gusts near 20 MPH. It was generally cloudy throughout the day but there were some breaks in the clouds in the afternoon. For most locations in the count circle, snow cover was basically non-existent, which is incredible since there had been over

20” on the ground on December 3<sup>rd</sup>! The main body of the Quabbin was open, but smaller bodies of still water (coves, beaver ponds, etc.) were frozen while most streams were open. There were no new species found on the count, but there were 4 new high counts. The overall numbers were generally down.

Many thanks to everyone for helping out, and, if you like to plan ahead.....next year’s Quabbin count will be on January 2, 2021.

### **Count Results**

Participants in the 2019 Quabbin Christmas Count found 5201 individual birds of 60 species. The largest number of individuals found for a single species was 660 (Black-capped Chickadee). Five species had all-time high counts: Ring-billed Gull (288), Carolina Wren (20), Eastern Bluebird (119), Gray Catbird (2) and Yellow-rumped Warbler (1, tied with two other years). Unusual species found during count week were Greater Scaup, Great Black-backed Gull, Eastern Phoebe and Ruby-crowned Kinglet.

Scott Sumner

## **MARCH AND APRIL FIELD TRIPS**

**Wednesday, March 25, 5:00 a.m., All Day, Moose Bog, Vt.** Join Scott Sumner on this all day trip to look for boreal species such as the Spruce Grouse, Black-backed Woodpecker, Canada Jay, and Boreal Chickadee. You must be an HBC member. Limit is 12 participants. Please email Scott ([ssurner@aol.com](mailto:ssurner@aol.com)) to sign up. (E/M)

**Saturday, March 28, 8:00-10:00 a.m., Fort River Refuge.** Meet George Regmund (413-255-0628), Jim Lafley, Derek Allard, and Janice Jorgensen in the lower parking lot at the Refuge, 69 Moody Bridge Rd, Hadley to look for early Spring migrants. The entire Fort River Trail, 1.2 miles, is fully accessible, including boardwalks, and has occasional benches for resting. Enter Moody Bridge Rd from the west end. Since the U.S. Fish and Wildlife demolished the stables at Fort River, this site may no longer be a good place to see large numbers of barn swallows. (E/M)

**Wednesday, April 8, 7:30-9:30 a.m., Fort River Refuge.** Meet George Regmund (413-255-0628), Jim Lafley, Henry Lappen, and Janice Jorgensen in the lower parking lot at the Refuge, 69 Moody Bridge Rd, Hadley to look for early Spring migrants. See above for more Fort River information. (E/M)

**Sunday, April 12, 7:00 a.m., Half Day, Ashley Reservoir.** Join Mike Locher as he looks for early migrants like Pine and Palm Warblers, Ruby-crowned Kinglets, and Louisiana Waterthrushes. Meet in the Holyoke Elks parking lot (250 Whitney Ave.), near Exit 15 (Holyoke Mall) off Rt 91 at 7 a.m. Contact Mike (413-585-5864) for more information. (E/M with one optional S section)

**Saturday, April 18, 7:30-9:30 a.m., Fort River Refuge.** Meet George Regmund (413-255-0628), Jim Lafley, Sasha Auer, Kevin Barnes, and Janice Jorgensen in the lower parking lot at the Refuge, 69 Moody Bridge Rd, Hadley to look for early Spring migrants See above for more Fort River information. (E/M)

**Saturday, April 25, 7:00 a.m., Half Day, Look Park.** Join Betsy Higgins for a half day trip to Look Park in Florence to look for Louisiana Waterthrushes and other Spring migrants. Meet at 7 a.m. in the JFK Middle School parking lot on 100 Bridge Road, Florence, MA. We’ll walk some paved paths and some wooded, uneven paths along the river and look and listen for anything with wings or fur or any other treats that Spring brings. Please contact Betsy at [hignik@comcast.net](mailto:hignik@comcast.net) or 413-586-7585 with any questions. (M)

**Other birding field trips** throughout New England may be accessed by going to <https://www.birdingcalendar.com>. A special thank-you goes out to Jan Howard who has worked diligently to get HBC trips posted on this site.

## UPCOMING EVENTS OF INTEREST

### Arcadia Wildlife Sanctuary

*Birding Plum Island and Surrounding Area* with Patti Steinman and John Green

Friday, February 7, 7 am – 6 pm

[Register online](#) or call 413-584-3009 to register by phone.

Plum Island offers spectacular winter birding opportunities. Starting at the Parker River National Wildlife Refuge, we'll look for waterfowl, songbirds, and raptors, hoping to see northern harriers and snowy owls. Depending on bird reports, we may visit other productive locations in the region.

*Winter Raptors of the Connecticut River Valley* with Dan Russell

Saturday, February 15, 9 am – noon

[Register online](#) or call 413-584-3009 to register by phone.

Winter is a great time to observe raptors flying over fields in search of food. The east and west meadows in Northampton are ideal spots for us to view these birds, including red-tailed hawks, northern harriers, and even hardier falcons that frequently visit our site. Depending on hawk sightings and snow cover, our location may change, carpooling to Hadley or other locations.

*Warblers for Beginners* with Laura Beltran

Wednesdays, March 11, 18, 25 and April 1, 7 – 9 pm

[Register online](#) or call 413-584-3009 to register by phone.

Warblers are the jewels of the bird world. Learning some basics can prepare you to enjoy the waves of spring migrants coming our way. During this series, we'll explore the keys to identification of spring warblers; learn some of their songs; and discover how knowledge of their life histories can enrich our birding experience.

### Hitchcock Center for the Environment

*Owl Prowls* with Dan Ziomek

Friday, February 7, 7:30 – 10 pm

[Register online](#)

Dress INCREDIBLY warmly because we'll be standing around in the dark a lot. Bring your sharp ears, a flashlight, and a thermos of something hot to drink. We will meet at the Hitchcock Center at 7:30 and then carpool to the site. *Weather makeup day will be Saturday February 8th if needed.*

*Spring Birding Class* with Scott Sumner

Evening classes at Hitchcock: Wednesdays, 6:30-8pm, February 12, April 1, April 15, June 10

Fieldtrips: see schedule at the Hitchcock Center website: <https://www.hitchcockcenter.org/programs/>

Registration opens online [HERE](#) January 15 at 9am. Follow the link to set-up a registration reminder!

Join this Hitchcock tradition! Scott has been leading classes since 1979. Space is limited and in high demand. As of January 30 there were only three more slots open!

Dave Gross, Editor  
newsletter@hampshirebirdclub.org