



# Hampshire Bird Club, Inc.

## Amherst, Massachusetts

www.hampshirebirdclub.org  
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**June 2020**

Dear reader, here we are another month into social distancing restrictions that have upended the usual flurry of collective activity that we as birders practice during spring migration season. The HBC cancelled 9 field trips for the month of May including the one to Monhegan Island, Maine that has been a club staple since the very first year of the HBC. (See the interview with Scott Sumner for more about this history.) Still, the birds came back and are happily singing and raising their chicks. So at least some things lend a sense of normalcy in these unusual times.

As was mentioned in the May HBC newsletter, this year the Mass Audubon Bird-a-Thon was the Bird-at-home-a-Thon. I'm on a team with Dave Pritchard and our team leader Bob Zimmermann. We each hiked from our house to our local sites as per this year's rules: Haydenville, the Fitzgerald Lake area, and Pelham near the old town center. We saw or heard 76 separate species in total, with lots of overlap between our 3 lists. My best bird was a Cape May Warbler in a large spruce tree at the corner of the historic cemetery behind the Pelham meetinghouse (yes, the one that holds the US record for longest continuous use for annual town meetings, a record that gets longer each year and is approaching 280 years). I checked my records and found that the very first Cape May that I saw was on an HBC trip to, you guessed it, Cape May, NJ. And I also recall that last one I saw was on an HBC trip to Monhegan Island, also in a spruce tree. Were these coincidences? You tell me.

### **HBC BOARD ELECTION**

The final voting totals for the HBC Board election, as reported by election monitors Marcia Merithew and Jim Lafley, were 81 yes, 1 no, 0 abstain. All votes were online; no mail-in ballots were requested. The list of candidates who were elected include

#### Officers

President: Bob Zimmermann  
Vice President and Program Chair: Josh Rose  
Treasurer: Steve Winn  
Membership Secretary: Lissa Ganter  
Communications Secretary: Elaine Reilly

#### Members-at-large

Laura Beltran  
Dave Gross  
Jan Howard  
Amanda Kallenbach  
Carol Mardeusz  
Helen Symons

The new board assumes its duties on June 1, 2020 for a 1-year term. The board will meet on Thursday, June 4. No other meetings are currently scheduled, but the board will likely meet in August. The June meeting will be via Zoom. You may contact any board member to obtain instructions for joining a meeting.

### **A NOTE FROM THE MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY**

The club soon will be on summer hiatus, but always feel free to get in touch if you have membership questions. Through your participation, interest, and the knowledge that you share, HBC thrives. Thank you. I hope we get to actually meet in person again come the fall, and for now I wish each of you a safe, healthy and restorative summer! [membership@hampshirebirdclub.org](mailto:membership@hampshirebirdclub.org)

## UPCOMING PROGRAMS

The 2020-2021 meeting schedule is shaping up. Of course, there is still uncertainty about our ability to meet in person, but for now we are planning to have a regular meeting season. Our Program Chair Josh Rose has lined up the speakers who were scheduled for this year but whose programs were cancelled due to the restrictions on in-person meetings. Those speakers are

- Joan Walsh, speaking about how offshore wind development in MA is expected to impact our birds
- Ashley Green, speaking about MAPS banding stations, her own in Warwick plus the one at the Conte NWR/Fort River Trail which is operated by other ornithologists
- Matt Kelly, speaking about Trinidad & Tobago, where he spends every winter
- Chris Fisher, speaking about the Galapagos

Another speaker whose schedule didn't work for this year but who is tentatively scheduled is John Kricher, with topic to be announced.

Josh is working on an online program for our meeting scheduled for June 8. As we go to press plans are not finalized. If we do get a speaker lined up, information about the online meeting will be posted on the HBC website and on the HBC Facebook page.

## UPCOMING FIELD TRIPS

*Please check the HBC website or Facebook page for updates.*

**Thursday-Sunday, October 1-4, Monhegan Island.** Scott Sumner leads the Hampshire Bird Club's pilgrimage to Monhegan Island. This charming island and the variety of migrating birds can be astonishing. The weekend promises to be both memorable and enjoyable. The trip is limited to 15 Hampshire Bird Club members. Please contact Carol Mardeusz (camardeusz@yahoo.com) to register **on or after June 7**. Please contact Scott (413-427-8896) for further information.

**Other birding field trips** throughout New England may be accessed by going to [www.birdingcalendar.com](http://www.birdingcalendar.com).

## VIRTUAL BIRDING PROGRAMS REPORT

The Hampshire Bird Club Education Committee offered virtual birding programs each week on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Wednesdays through May. Birders connected on-line to share what they heard and observed in their neighborhoods, yards, or at their feeders. Casey Clark noted "I found the virtual birding sessions with you (Jim) and Laura very interesting, especially during this weird time of isolation. I also enjoyed hearing from experienced birders about the birds they have seen and their recent experiences." Additionally, Judy Hyde said "I enjoyed the details and viewing of Jim's backyard bird feeding...and glad to have someone to vent to about the silliness of not going birding together these days." Thanks to all who participated!

The virtual birding events will be continuing. Below are more dates for on-line birding (using Zoom) and chatting, so grab your coffee, a comfortable chair where you can watch birds, your computer, iPad or phone, and join us by registering (space is limited) at [virtualbirding@hampshirebirdclub.org](mailto:virtualbirding@hampshirebirdclub.org).

Virtual birding dates: Mondays, June 1, June 8, June 15, June 22, and June 29, 8:30 am – 9 am.

## A CHAT WITH SCOTT SUMNER

Scott Sumner has been a central participant in the activities of the Hampshire Bird Club. He was the club's first president and is well known as a trip leader, bird instructor, and go-to guy for bird identification. He and I met via Zoom for a chat in mid-May.

**Newsletter:** *So how did you become interested in birds and birding?*

**Scott Sumner:** Well, when I was a kid I liked nature and stuff. And I can remember when I must have been five or so, something like that, we rented an apartment on Grey Street and I vividly remember walking up to the window. There was a neighbor downstairs who had made a window feeder and put sunflower seeds in it. I can vividly remember the whole tray full of Evening Grosbeaks. I don't remember anything else about the place at that time, but I can remember those Evening Grosbeaks.

**N:** *Cool.*

**SS:** This was the point in time when they were really starting to explode into New England. This was the mid 60s or so. And I did various nature things and like camps and such. Then in the seventh grade, I took the birding segment offered at the high school, what they call middle school now. Jerry Bozzo offered that. We went out on field trips with these terrible binoculars. But we walked around Chestnut Street and areas like that. I started to get hooked. I said, "Hey, I can see this stuff and I can ID it." And off I went. That was in the early 70s.

And then I took a couple of the continuing ed classes that were being offered at the time. There were two in town then. Back in those days, there was the Hitchcock Center class that Steve Stan taught. I took it one year and then the next year I took a continuing ed class in Amherst that David Fisher was teaching it back in those days. I did that for, I think, a couple of years and then, by my senior year in high school, I took it over with Peter Yaukey and started leading those trips. There were many other local birders from whom I learned a lot. Tom Gagnon in particular stands out.

**N:** *Was that through Amherst College?*

**SS:** No, it was through the Town of Amherst continuing ed series. I don't know if they do that anymore. I know they don't do the birding course.

**N:** *How do you recall the beginnings of the Hampshire Bird Club?*

**SS:** Well in 1979 or 80 There was the Amherst Bird Club. Besides myself there was David Stemple and Peter Yaukey and several other people. We had a few successful meetings at the Hitchcock Center and then some of us went off to college. The club just seemed to fade away after a few years. Then in 1984 the Great Gray Owl showed up on Huntington Road in Hadley. The bird was around for something like six weeks. Hundreds if not thousands of people saw that bird.

My recollection is that Sally Venman and I were just looking at the bird and we started talking about the Amherst club that had failed. We didn't see why we couldn't get a bird club going because so many people were out looking at the owl. So we met at Sally's house. I think Jan Ortiz was there, and there were others who are not coming to mind right now. One of the discussions I remember was what to name the club and that's when we came up the Hampshire Bird Club to include all of Hampshire County. We had the first meeting at the Hitchcock Center. I think we had close to 100 people at that meeting and it just took off from there.

**N:** *You've been teaching birding for a while. What got you into that?*

**SS:** I don't know. I think it was that continuing ed didn't have anybody to lead at the time. Perhaps David [Fisher], who was graduating from UMass, had recommended that Peter and I could do it. And so we said, "Hey, sure. We'll try it." And off we went. Then we went to the Hitchcock Center. I did that for a bunch of years and then backed out of that for a while and then I came back in the early 2000s and I've been doing it since then.

**N:** *So you've led lots of field trips. I consider that also teaching about birding. What do you have to say about that?*

**SS:** I just like sharing the experience with people. Sure, there are those days when it's really slow. It might be really nice out but there's nothing singing – those days are a little slow. But then it's fun on those days when things are popping. Warblers coming through, or you have lots of shorebirds whatever the case may be. And then you can see in their faces “Wow, look at this!” especially the new folks. They'd only seen stuff their backyard and they just didn't realize what was the beyond their yard.

**N:** *Did you start the club's Monhegan trips?*

**SS:** I did. I went up in the spring of 80. Blair Nicula had told me about Monhegan. And I thought to myself, “Oh, this is off the coast of Maine and Blair is real Cape Codder. For Blair to pull himself off of the Cape and go up to Monhegan, well, this place must be pretty cool.” So in the spring of '84 we went up there. It was just a couple of us to scout it out. On that particular trip I had a beautiful male Dickcissel singing, my only one I think. That was at Tom Martin's feeding station. And then a Henslow's Sparrow that Jan Pierson pointed out. I happened to be walking near one of his groups. He called me over and there's a Henslow's Sparrow. Those two birds really stuck out. so we proposed to the club to do a trip and we did one that fall on Columbus Day weekend. Back then we always tried to do the trip on Columbus Day or Memorial Day weekend because a lot of our members at that time were working and time off was precious.

On that first trip we stayed in the annex at the Trailing Yew. We got there Friday night, saw some birds and ate. When we got up on Saturday morning it was 28 degrees. I don't remember my feet touching the ground, but they must have. I could hear moans throughout the house. We still had a wonderful weekend. For Yellow-rumped Warblers, we estimated we saw 10,000 birds.

The next spring we went on Memorial Day weekend. The majority of our trips over the years have been in the spring on Memorial Day weekend or slightly before. There's only one trip that comes to mind that was really slow. For most trips we've come away with something. There have been spectacular fallouts in the spring. We had a good one in 2013 and last

year's was good too. In 2013 we had some crummy weather, but we saw Acadian and Yellow-bellied Flycatchers on the beach, Redstarts, all sorts of stuff.

**N:** *So I believe you have been HBC President longer than anybody else in the club. You were President two different times, right?*

**SS:** Think I did it for five years in the very beginning and I think this last stint was for 10 years.

**N:** *Yeah, I was trying to figure that because you picked it up at the club's 25th anniversary. And I think you let it go at the 35th anniversary. How is the club different, or the same, now compared to what it was 30 some years ago?*

**SS:** Our membership seems to be greater. We have more money in the treasury. In the early years we barely had anything and it was always a struggle. Some times, to get the next year we had to get donations from people to get audio equipment and stuff like that. Nowadays we're in really good shape. It's nice to have enough so that we can splurge on a program or buy a new computer for the meetings.

In terms of field trips, I think they've been pretty consistent over the years. We've had lots of good leaders over the years.

Obviously the club's getting older. Back when we started, I don't know what it was, but I'm sure the average age was noticeably less than what it is today. Many of us have been with the club for over 30 years. The Board has had discussions about trying to get younger people involved.

When we started the club, one of the things that we wanted to do was, to the best of our ability, to have good monthly speakers. That was going to be our mainstay – that was what we were going to be known for. It's just amazing how many people show up for our meetings, compared to other bird clubs. I've done programs for other clubs, and there are seldom as many who show up.

Another thing that's changed is the birding. When the club first started out, we had a telephone hotline tree. It went from there to the Voice of Audubon where one would call in to find out what was being seen. Then the internet

showed up and Massbird was really the place to be. And now there is Facebook, you've got eBird. It's a bit watered down, now, in my opinion. We have to check Facebook, eBird, and maybe Massbird to see what's going on. People will report on one but not all of these. It's not all concentrated like it used to be.

*N: Well, so what's the future going to bring for you? Do you think you'll keep leading trips and doing the birding class and all that kind of stuff?*

**SS:** Not yet. I'll still lead trips and do the bird class.

*N: Is there something on your bucket list having to do with birding that you haven't done yet that you would like to do or see?*

**SS:** I wouldn't mind to go down to Central America, Costa Rica. I went to Belize in March. and got back just before the pandemic made travel difficult. We had a wonderful time. I'm often torn between going back to places I've been once and just loved. I'd love to go back to Alaska. I liked the Arctic and the tundra quite a bit.

## BIRDING APP WORKSHOPS

The Hampshire Bird Club Education Committee is offering on-line workshops using Zoom on birding apps for your phones. We will discuss basics of how to use each app, what we like about it, and any challenges. Please have the app already installed on your phone prior to the workshop. To register (space is limited), e-mail [virtualbirding@hampshirebirdclub.org](mailto:virtualbirding@hampshirebirdclub.org).

Wednesday, June 10, 9 am – 10:00 am

*Merlin Bird ID* with Laura Beltran

Please have the app already installed on your phone prior to the workshop. To get the app, go to <https://merlin.allaboutbirds.org/download/> and then install it.

Wednesday, June 17, 9 am – 10:00 am

*Raptor ID* with Janice Jorgensen

Please have the app already installed on your phone prior to the workshop. To get the app, go to <https://hawkwatch.org/blog/item/1164-raptor-id-app-now-free> and then install it.

Wednesday, June 24, 9 am – 10 am

*iNaturalist* with Laura Beltran

Please have the app already installed on your phone prior to the workshop. To get the app, go to <https://www.inaturalist.org/> and scroll to the bottom to install it.

## UPCOMING EVENTS OF INTEREST

### Arcadia Wildlife Sanctuary

The Arcadia trails are open, though buildings and rest rooms are not.

*Ducks* with Peter Redfern

Thursday, June 18, 7 – 8:30 pm

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

We are all familiar with a duck, but as a group we have many and they can be hard to identify. Ducks can live in salt or freshwater and some can be found in both. Ducks are divided into two main groups: divers and dabblers. Learn about the duck species found in Massachusetts and tips on identification in this online class.

*Birds and Bogs of the Upper Coast of Maine* with Patti Steinman and John Green

Wednesday, July 15 – Saturday July 18

Program is currently full. Call 413-584-3009 to place your name on the wait list.

Travel to the upper coast of Maine to see seabirds and their island habitats. Visit a northern New England bog, a spruce/fir forest, and coastal habitats. We will focus on birds and botany on this four-day, three - night trip. On the way we will stop at Scarborough Marsh, the largest salt marsh in the state, comprised of tidal marsh, salt creeks, freshwater marsh, and uplands. Weather permitting, we will visit Machias Seal Island, where we will have an opportunity to photograph Atlantic puffins and other seabirds such as razorbills and murrelets up close from small blinds. Another day we will visit Quoddy Head State Park and learn the botany of a raised coastal bog. We will take a walk at Cobscook Bay State Park where we hope to see eagles, mergansers, ospreys and more.

The fee for the program will include transportation from Arcadia Wildlife Sanctuary, Easthampton, lodging in a double room, admission fees, and the Puffin tour. Single rooms are available for an additional fee. Food is not included.

### Hitchcock Center for the Environment

The Hitchcock Center remains closed. Check the Hitchcock Center website for updates.

## **SOME VERY LAME BIRD JOKES**

One day, a blonde and his friend were walking through the park. Suddenly, the blonde's friend said, "Oh, look, a dead birdie!" The blonde looked up and said, "Where?"

"Look at that speed!" said one hawk to another as the jet fighter plane hurtled over their heads. "Hmph!" snorted the other. "You would fly fast too if your tail was on fire!"

Why did the birds want a snack?  
They were feeling a bit peckish.

Q: Why did the turkey cross the road?  
A: To prove he wasn't chicken.

Q: Why do hummingbirds fly south?  
A: It's just too far to walk.

A duck walks into a drug store and buys a chapstick. The clerk says, "Will that be cash or charge?" The duck says, "Just put it on my bill!"

Did you ever notice that when geese migrate in their Vee formation, one side of the line is longer than the other? Know why that is? There are more geese in it.

Q: How many HBC members does it take to change a lightbulb?

A: Five.

Q: Why five?

A: One to spot the bulb, one to set up the scope to look at it, one to post the sighting to eBird, one to write up the sighting for the newsletter, and one to screw in the new bulb.

Knock, knock!

Who's there?

Toucan.

Toucan who?

Toucan play at this game!

What do you call a formal dance for ducks?

A fowl ball.

Q: Which bird steals soap from your tub?

A: A robber duck.

Two birds were sitting on a perch.

The first bird said to the second "Do you smell fish?"

Last week I x-rayed a bird in Norway.

Yep. Scanned an avian.

Dave Gross, Editor  
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