



Hampshire Bird Club, Inc.

Amherst, Massachusetts

www.hampshirebirdclub.org

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Dear reader, this issue starts a new feature that will appear from time to time in the newsletter. I sat down with Jan Ortiz, former HBC President, Hitchcock birding class instructor, and Northampton Christmas Count compiler, for a chat about her memories of the beginnings of the HBC and her introduction to birding. There will be more member interviews, including one next month with a member who has been birding the Valley for over 50 years. This month, though, is my chat with Jan:

Newsletter: *I have heard stories about the beginnings of the Hampshire Bird Club. What are your recollections of how that came about?*

Jan Ortiz: I was a beginning birder. I was taking Scott Sumner's birding class. A Great Grey Owl was found in Hadley and the class went to see it. Sally Venman was there, and Scott and Sally were talking. They were saying "There was a bird club in the past. We should start another one. Look at all these people here to see the Great Grey Owl." So Sally had a meeting at her house. A lot of people were there – Jim Marcum, myself, Scott, Harvey – a lot of the birders who were around at the time. After that it just kept developing.

After that first meeting in the Fall of 1984 was the first trip to Monhegan Island, also.

N: *Really? I didn't realize that the first club-sponsored Monhegan trip was in the first year of the HBC.*

JO: Yes, it was a Fall trip. That was the inaugural Monhegan trip that then became a tradition within the club, usually going in the Spring but sometimes going in the Fall, and sometimes both.

The club started off by having great speakers, right from the beginning. That was one of the things that distinguished our club.

N: *Who started that? Did it just organically grow?*

JO: I can't remember who the first Vice

President was. I held that position at one point. I took various week-long classes from the Institute for Field Ornithology in Machias, Maine. When I later became Vice President, I was able to successfully invite some of the experts who taught the workshops at the Institute to speak at HBC. Those people included Wayne Peterson, Jon Dunn and Greg Budney from Cornell. We also got people from UMass like Don Kroodsma to speak.

Thinking back over 35 years it's hard to remember who all of the officers were. The club has that written down. I've done all of the officer jobs except for Secretary and Treasurer. All of our meetings were held at Hitchcock, but we outgrew that space. We would have some big-name-speaker meetings at the Junior High. Things really changed when Geoff LeBaron took over as Vice President. Don Kroodsma asked me "What is going on with all the great speakers?" I told him that the difference was, when I would call someone, sometimes they would call me back. When Geoff called someone, everyone would call him back.

There were classes at Hitchcock, and there was a lot of recruiting from those classes to help the club grow. At the start the club was a mixture of old-time birders, mostly males, and then more and more people got involved, mostly from the Hitchcock classes.

One of the things we were known for was the attendance at our meetings because we had such good speakers. They brought a lot of people in.

(continued on page 5)

NEXT PROGRAM

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

Joan Walsh presents

My Year at Sea: Offshore Wind and Massachusetts' Birds

Immanuel Lutheran Church, 867 North Pleasant Street

Offshore wind energy production is a newcomer to the waters of the United States, but it is a long-time source of energy in the UK and Europe. As our climate changes and we look for ways to reduce the worst drivers of climate change, the states in the northeast are adding offshore wind to their electricity producing portfolios. These efforts, led by Massachusetts and New York, are being done at a dizzying rate.

Before there were turbines in these waters, there was a rich and diverse wildlife. How will we navigate the complexity of protecting marine birds and other animals in a green future?

This talk will be a primer on this rapidly developing industry, summarize what we know about the birds in those areas likely to be developed, what we don't know, and review the opportunities for the conservation community in the Green Infrastructure.

Joan is Mass Audubon's Gerard A. Bertram Memorial History and Field Ornithology. She has been watching—and learning from—birds for over 40 years and was the Director of Bird Monitoring at Mass Audubon from 2006-2017. During her time at Mass Audubon, she focused on research that has direct implications for bird conservation. This interest led her to lead hundreds of citizen scientists for the creation of the highly regarded [Massachusetts Breeding Bird Survey](#) and two [State of the Birds of Massachusetts](#) reports.

She was a Farallon Island Laysan Albatross, and she studied Elephant Seals, Tufted Puffins, Brandt's Cormorants, Western Gulls, and a little Great White Shark work. She went to graduate school in Georgia, where she studied Great White Sharks, and was the former Director of Research at Cape May Bird Observatory in NJ. Her years as an ornithologist were spent on Great Gull Island, NY, home to the largest colony of Herring Gulls and Roseate Terns in the North Atlantic.

Joan has traveled to many places (only missing OK, HI and KY), Canada, Costa Rica, Belize, Mexico, Ireland, Europe, South Georgia Island and the Falklands (Malvinas). While being particularly keen about sea birds, her research has focused on wading bird ecology and behavior, Joan has never met a bird she didn't love. She travels with an eye for culture as well as nature, and can think of no better way to spend a day than to be in a new place, with new friends, simply watching birds.

UPCOMING PROGRAMS

April 13, 2020. Ashley Green. MAPS Banding Stations

May 11, 2020. Matt Kelly. Trinidad & Tobago

June 8, 2020. Chris Fisher. Journey to the Edge of the Earth – the Galapagos Islands

HBC ELECTIONS FOR BOARD MEMBERSHIP

At the March meeting we will announce the members on the nominating committee that will contact HBC members about becoming members of the board. There will be at least two openings for the 2020-2021 club year, one of which is HBC Treasurer and one of which is an at-large board membership. The board meets monthly to conduct club business, plan meetings and activities, and otherwise ensure that the club is solvent and operating according to its nonprofit status. If you are interested in joining the board, please contact a member of the nominating committee once members are announced. You can learn who is on the nominating committee by coming to the March meeting or checking in on the club Facebook page after March 9.

HBC EDUCATION COMMITTEE UPDATE

After substantial consideration and discussion, the HBC Board of Directors last month voted unanimous approval for the Education Committee's support and funding for the Western chapter of the Massachusetts Young Birders Club (MYBC). Our \$250 grant will come from funds donated for use by the Education Committee. An additional \$250 to the MYBC will come from HBC's general funds. This grant will defray costs of background checks for coordinators and guides, a website for club members and parents, five bird guides, and recruitment material. Manomet, a non-profit environmental and educational center in Plymouth, MA, will provide legal and financial support for MYBC. Club member Jeremy Spool is the Western coordinator. See the article below for more on the Western chapter of the MYBC.

Other programs in which we are involved or support include the Smith College Birders which have programs in March and April at Arcadia, exploring eBird with 20+ participants in three sessions during the last week of February, and an introduction to birds for the Williamsburg kindergarten class (so sweet) including setting up a feeder station at the school.

Volunteers to assist with the Smith College Birders are welcome. Please contact a member of the Education Committee for more information. There will be an opportunity for HBC members to support a field program with the Williamsburg kindergarteners and also support children and families on a Spring wildlife walk at Fitzgerald Lake Conservation Area in Florence. More information about these opportunities will be forthcoming in the April newsletter.

The Education Committee also offers financial support to attend a Birding/Natural History camp or conference to HBC members 12-18 years old.

Bruce Hart

MASSACHUSETTS YOUNG BIRDERS CLUB

Western Massachusetts has a rich birding community and fantastic outreach programs but does not yet have a club dedicated to young birders. That has now changed. The **Massachusetts Young Birders Club** (MYBC), which has Eastern and Western chapters, is now up and running. The club is designed to create and empower a sustainable community of young birders aged 11 to 18 by providing the structure for youth to build their understanding and love of birds and nature. Monthly field outings and developing camaraderie between local young birders are the core features of the club. The Education Committee of the HBC has provided funding to support the work of the MYBC.

Jeremy Spool and Kit Straley are co-coordinating the Western chapter of the MYBC. Jeremy and Kit are beginning to go about the tasks of (1) recruiting youth for the club and (2) obtaining optics for the club to use on field trips.

Here's how you can help us with these two tasks:

- (1) Spread the word! Pass this information and Jeremy's email (see below) along to parents and teachers who have or work with youth in our target age range (11-18 years old).
- (2) If you have a pair of binoculars or a scope collecting dust, you are welcome to donate them to the club (and donations are tax deductible).

To get in touch with Jeremy and Kit, send a note to spool@umass.edu. Thanks so much for your support and the support of the Hampshire Bird Club!

Jeremy Spool

VALLEY FAMILY BIRD FESTIVAL 2020

The 6th Annual Valley Bird Festival will be held at Mass Audubon's Arcadia Wildlife Sanctuary on Saturday, May 2, 2020 from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm. This year it will feature Tom Ricardi presenting a Birds of Prey program at 11:00 am and 1:00 pm. It will also include bird walks in the morning, bird banding, bird games and activities, children's crafts, a story walk and tents with educational information about birds, the Hampshire Bird Club, and Mass Audubon. The event is free.

MARCH AND APRIL FIELD TRIPS

Saturday, March 7, 8:30-10:30 a.m., Arcadia Wildlife Sanctuary. Share your joy of birds and birding with students from the Smith College Bird Club as leaders Laura Beltran and Jim Lafley look for early Spring migrants at Arcadia Wildlife Sanctuary. This trip is free and co-sponsored with Mass Audubon's Arcadia Wildlife Sanctuary. Meet at the main parking lot at Arcadia, 127 Combs Rd, Easthampton. (E)

****NOTE: Recent addition to the field trip list!****

Thursday, March 19, 9 a.m., All Day, Franklin and Worcester Counties. Waterfowl Quest. Join Josh Rose in a tour of lakes, rivers, ponds, and more across Franklin County and into northern Worcester County, aiming to encounter the peak of spring waterfowl migration. Meet at 9:15 a.m. at the parking lot for the Turners Falls Power Canal, just outside the gate on Migratory Way in Turners Falls. Be prepared to carpool. The trip will happen either rain or shine – more interesting waterfowl often show up on rainy days.... Contact Josh (opihi@mindspring.com or 413-835-0093) if you have any questions. (E/M)

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) 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 and has occasional benches for resting. Enter Moody Bridge Rd from the west end. (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, 8:30-10:30 a.m., Arcadia Wildlife Sanctuary. Share your joy of birds and birding with students from the Smith College Bird Club as leader Laura Beltran looks for early Spring migrants at Arcadia Wildlife Sanctuary. This trip is free and co-sponsored with Mass Audubon's Arcadia Wildlife Sanctuary. Meet at the main parking lot at Arcadia, 127 Combs Rd, Easthampton. (E)

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, See March 28 for details.

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 or 413-586-7585. (M)

Other birding field trips throughout New England may be accessed by going to <https://www.birdingcalendar.com>.

(Jan Ortiz interview continued)

N: *That's still true. Everyone seems to have a story about how they got hooked on birding. How did that happen for you?*

JO: On a trip to Plum Island. The Hitchcock spring birding class had rotating trip leaders, and Scott Sumner was one. Scott then taught a fall class. I debated whether to take it, and then I thought "Oh well, I guess I'll sign up for it." We went to Plum Island and there was a White-rumped Sandpiper. Scott said "Can anyone distinguish it from the others, and why?" I ended up in the back of a car, going through all of the field guides with a couple of other people. And I thought, "OMG, I'm acting just like those other people." I was pleased and horrified at the same time. That same day, our last stop was to see a Marbled Godwit in beautiful light. The combination of those two things got me hooked. From there it was more trips, and eventually being asked to teach the classes.

N: *You must have been interested, but not hooked yet, when you started.*

JO: I was just curious about the birds at the feeder in the back yard. I thought "Gee, I'd really like to know what these birds are and learn a little bit more about them." That was the reason for taking the class.

I remember thinking that Scott was a madman. The week that he led trip for the class that I took, we were driving through Quabbin and all of a sudden he stopped the car, jumped out, and started running up the slope shouting "Come on! Cerulian Warbler!" And I'm thinking "Wow! Not only does he stop all the time, he runs up the hill and yells for everybody to follow him." Of course, at that point I don't think I had any idea what a Cerulian Warbler was.

N: *You've done work on the MANO Christmas Count for a number of years.*

JO: I think this will be my 27th year.

N: *What got you started? What keeps you going?*

(Laughs) The second question is a good question. Chris Hill became a friend. And when he lived here he was very interested in owls. I went on some owl prowls, and later Chris and I led some owl prowls together. It just kept snowballing. I started to teach. I got very involved with

ornithology. I started taking week-long classes up in Maine at the Institute for Field Ornithology. I started taking some trips, long distance trips. The most exciting trip I took was to the High Arctic. Then I started doing the breeding bird census for the Town of Amherst and a couple of censuses for Manomet. It just kept going. People understood that I could identify some birds.

N: *Did someone invite you to start working on the Christmas Count?*

JO: Yes, Chris was the Christmas Count Compiler. He still is, down in South Carolina. Chris was leaving and he asked if I'd take it over. I've had the advantage of having tremendous co-compilers who are much more computer savvy. Mary Alice Wilson was the first person. I kept asking to resign and Mary Alice would say "No, no, no." Then she invited me over to her house one day and she said "I'm going to resign." She had talked to Janice Jorgensen who is another super-organizer and who is computer literate. Now I've been co-compiling with Janice who does the majority of the work. I review the rare bird reports and do a bit of the writing. Janice and I toss ideas back and forth, but she does the bulk of the organizing and compiling. So I've been asking Janice about resigning for I don't know how many years, and she says "Let's just keep it going. It works." As long as she does as much as she does, it's hard for me to say no.

I've also been on the Massachusetts Avian Records Committee, for 6 years. That was interesting. When they called up to ask me, I said "Is this a joke?" But it turned it wasn't. I was on for two terms.

N: *I know that there's a connection between you, Monhegan Island, and Zero Mostel's house. Are you willing to share with the readers that connection?*

JO: Zero Mostel's son Josh now owns the house. A group of us started renting the house from him. That was many years ago. We stopped for various reasons, but we do think about renting it again.

[Editor's note: The house sits on the harbor, looking toward Manana Island. It's a lovely location, and the first place ever that I saw a Lark Sparrow, just 20 yards from the deck of the Mostel house.]

UPCOMING EVENTS OF INTEREST

Arcadia Wildlife Sanctuary

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.

Ducks with Peter Redfern

Saturday, March 21, 9 am – 1 pm

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

With temperatures rising and ice melting, more ducks are returning to our region. Join birder and waterfowl enthusiast Peter Redfern for a presentation, followed by a walk around the Arcadia Marsh in search of hooded mergansers, wood ducks, and common goldeneyes. Dress to be outdoors for half of this program.

Bird Sounds: Songs and Calls with Patti Steinman

Thursday, April 16, 7 – 9 pm

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

Learning to identify the calls of birds can be overwhelming because they often sound alike. Many tricks to learn bird songs do exist, and we will share them in this introductory mini-course. Learn the differences among the three mimics and the five Robin sound-a-likes. For bird identification, see how listening goes hand in hand with knowing the species' behavior. We will also review some of the resources available to aid your developing bird sound identification skills.

Hitchcock Center for the Environment

Woodcock: Skydancer with Dan Ziomek

Friday, March 27, 6:30 – 8:30 pm

[Register online](#)

Have you heard the telltale peep of the woodcock looking for a mate to do its early spring sky dance? If not you are in for a treat that will likely become an annual tradition, you'll be hooked. Join bird song radio personality and our favorite garden advisor Dan Ziomek to enjoy this special spring event. Recommended for adults and young people 4th grade and up.

Birding for beginners and families (and those who prefer a slower pace) with Dan Ziomek

Saturdays, April 18 – May 16, 7am -12pm

[Register online](#)

This class will consist of five Saturday mornings (7am- 12pm) during the peak of spring migration. We will visit five local hot spots and try to highlight not only the birds but the habitats that they prefer. We will walk at a leisurely pace and look and listen for the many species that use our valley as a migration highway. Check out the weekly schedule and the Hitchcock Center website:

<https://www.hitchcockcenter.org/programs/community-programs/>.

Dave Gross, Editor
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