



Hampshire Bird Club, Inc.

Amherst, Massachusetts

www.hampshirebirdclub.org
Volume 36, No. 9
May 2020

Dear reader, as I write this a bit after noon on April 30 it is raining, the temperature is below 40° F, and a fire is in the wood stove in front of me. The Goldfinches, Purple Finches, Red-winged Blackbirds and squirrels have half-emptied the feeders that I filled yesterday evening and a Black-capped Chickadee is poking around in the lilac just outside the window, a lilac that is just beginning to show some life in this long, cold spring. So goes life on the hill in Pelham.

I've been working on the newsletter most of this morning. But I don't want you to think that this is a solo endeavor. Far from it. By my count at least 12 HBC members besides myself have contributed words or images to this newsletter. Once the final draft is ready later today, our President Bob Zimmermann and Membership Secretary Lissa Ganter will look it over and point out my typos, awkward phrases, and factual errors as they have done for all of the other newsletters this year. When the corrections are finalized, the newsletter will be sent to either Lissa or Jan Howard who then will submit it for printing while I post the newsletter on the HBC website followed by an email to our online-only members that the new issue is available. In these coronavirus times the print shop will handle the collation and mailing of the newsletter hardcopy. In happier times the printed newsletter was picked up by Lissa who then got a group together to collate, seal, address, stamp and mail it. As they say, it takes a village...

HBC BOARD ELECTION

As required by the HBC Bylaws, the HBC Nominating Committee has delivered to the President a slate of candidates for the HBC Board for 2020-2021. The slate is as follows (incumbents are indicated by (I) and nominees who will be new to the board are in italic):

Officers

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

Members-at-large

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

The HBC Bylaws require a vote for the slate of candidates at the May meeting. Given that gatherings of more than 10 are not allowed due to the current COVID-19 pandemic and thus there is no in-person May meeting, the HBC Board has voted to move the election to an online format, with an option for mail-in voting. The online ballot may be accessed at <https://tinyurl.com/HBC2020vote> where members will be asked to verify their membership by indicating their name and vote for or against the slate as if this was a vote at the in-person May meeting. Online voting closes on midnight on May 23. Members who wish to vote by mail may request a ballot via email (membership@hampshirebirdclub.org) or USPS mail (PO Box 716, Amherst, MA 01004-0716). Mail-in ballots must be requested by May 13, postmarked by May 23 and received by May 27.

Two election monitors (Marcia Merithew and Jim Lafley) will observe the online voting and will review the results to confirm that only club members have voted.

UPCOMING PROGRAMS

7:15 pm, May 11, 2020. Susan Myers. Borneo: A Virtual Birding Tour

*This **online meeting** takes the place of our previously scheduled May meeting. To join the meeting, you **must pre-register** at <https://tinyurl.com/HBC-May-register>. After registering and about 24 hours prior to the meeting you will receive an email with meeting login information. (Direct questions to newsletter@hampshirebirdclub.org.)*

Borneo is home to a spectacular assortment of birds, from the Pygmy Ibon to the Rhinoceros Hornbill, Mountain Blackeye to Whitehead's Spiderhunter, Blue-crowned Hanging-Parrot to Dulit's Frogmouth. The island has well over 650 recorded species, more than 40 of them endemic. Come on a virtual tour of Borneo's geography, habitats, and birding highlights.

Susan Myers has been a birder and naturalist since her childhood in Australia. The author of 'A Field Guide to the Birds of Borneo' and 'Wildlife of Southeast Asia', as well as a number of scientific papers and popular articles, she has over 30 years' experience in several Asian countries. She speaks fluent Indonesian and Japanese, and in addition to the birds is enthusiastic about Asia's other wildlife, languages, cultures, and food. She currently works for WINGS, leading birding tours in not only Borneo but Vietnam, Japan, the Philippines, Cambodia, India, and several other countries, plus SCUBA tours of the Great Barrier Reef.

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

As of now no decision has been made about holding the June meeting. There will be announcements on both the HBC website and the HBC Facebook page as our plans develop. The June newsletter will have information about the status of the June meeting.

MICRO FIELD TRIP REPORTS

We've had no HBC-organized field trips for a while, and that will continue through May (except for the virtual field trips – see the Education Committee section below). But we're birders, and we watch birds. Some observations during this migration season have been submitted by HBC members. If you have a micro report, please send it in (to newsletter@hampshirebirdclub.org) for publication in the June or September newsletters. And now, for the reports...

Just two of us, my son and I, went to Farley Ledges in Erving State Park on 4/16 The cliffs are beautiful, and popular among rock climbers though few were out that day. Peregrines, Ravens and TVs nest on them. In fact, we watched a Raven pair enter under an overhang where I presume they are nesting. The trail goes up moderately steeply and then winds through some lovely woods. We heard 3 Winter Wrens and 2 Sapsuckers drumming. Otherwise it was quiet with only scattered Chickadees and Titmice, and a pair of Phoebes making a nest. But we did see some beautiful hepatica blooming and trillium budding up. At the top, the view is outstanding and the TVs were soaring back and forth at very close range.

Henry Lappen

Birding during Covid-19: April 1...guess it's time to take down the feeders...hmmm, there hasn't been much evidence of bears...maybe I'll leave them up for a while. The Juncos are on their way but here and there a Goldfinch. April 8...18 Goldfinches; April 13...30 Goldfinches; April 17...40 Goldfinches; April 21...50 Goldfinches! They're everywhere, on the feeders, on the ground, in the trees – transient yellow flowers against the bare branches. What a treat!

Bob Zimmermann

I have a Sapsucker drumming on my wind chime every morning.

Jan Howard

We've had a Broad-Winged Hawk visiting our yard every day for the past couple of weeks. It prefers to sit on the Bluebird box from which it spies and then grabs bugs on the ground. The Bluebird is not happy with this arrangement. We've also been observed by the Ravens that hang out on the cell tower near our house. When we go out to work in the yard, a Raven scout flies over, amusedly chatting to his mate about the odd-looking, pale bears that seem to like to scratch the dirt. I don't blame him for being amused.

Dave Gross

Nash Hill Rd. April 17, Friday, 5:48 a.m.; sunrise in 20 minutes. I'm standing in the middle of a Louisiana Waterthrush territory, waiting for him to awake and begin his day. *In flight* he sings, past me, headed downstream, not just the standard song but the full song with the extended twitters on the end. After that burst of exuberance (perhaps only mine, not his), he offers only his simple song for the next few hours. What a way to begin the day (for both of us)!

Don Kroodsmma

A mystery bird appeared at my feeders on 1/18/20 which I reported on the Western Mass Birders FB page a day or so later after seeing it a second time. I described the bird as brownish with two wingbars, a broken white eye ring, brown legs and toes, clear light breast, and a forked tail. I posted a rather poor photo. My guess was that it might be a Pine Warbler. But what was it doing here now? I suspected that it had come with the flock of American Goldfinches or Dark-eyed Juncos that arrived earlier that week.

On 1/23/20 Larry Therrien stopped by to take some photos and confirmed that my guess was correct and a few days later Scott Sumner also visited to take a look. By his 2/23/20 visit, Larry determined that it was a female! No surprise that he was correct.

She managed to survive the bitter cold nights we had in January and February, along with the snow, and fed primarily on a peanut flavored suet cake and occasionally millet seed on the ground. Dried, loose mealworms or those in the form of a cake seemed to hold no appeal for her; nor did the sunflower, finch mix, or thistle seed. On 4/10/20 one lone male appeared mid afternoon at the suet cake and wasted no time in singing to establish territory while sitting on one of the top branches of the lilac shrub next to the feeders. By 4/11/20 the female appeared with him on the suet. Apparently, he did a good job of wooing her as well as defending his territory, which he continues to do each time he comes to the suet cake.

Starting 4/16 the two have appeared frequently at the suet cakes during the times I have checked the feeders from my living room window. Presumably, she has been constructing a nest at the end of a high branch in a White Pine trees near my home. According to the Cornell and Audubon sites, nest building takes about 14 days. She will then lay 3-5 white, grayish or greenish white eggs with brown speckles, each of which took 24 hours to form. For ten days both parents will incubate the eggs and then for ten days both will feed the nestlings. I wonder if they will bring the babies to the feeders. Time will tell.

Carol Mardeusz

Report for 6 April driveway HBC trip. Participants: Magda Bechar and David Spector. On the return hike from the mailbox we noted a "stick" emerging from a crude nest 30 feet up in a white pine that proved to be a Cooper's Hawk tail. A couple of weeks later, despite some days with heavy precipitation and strong winds, the female (a yearling on her first nest) is still incubating, and we hope to have hawklets soon. A Cooper's pair that conducts itself well should meet with no resistance unless temperatures go beyond a critical point or the wind proves to be too strong a physical phenomenon. [Editor's note: This is a super report. It might even merit a Nobel Prize, like that awarded in 1972 for BCS theory. (Look it up.) And second editors note: When I was in grad school at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in the late 70s, in the Physics Library I would often see John Bardeen reading the New York Times as I was perusing recent journal articles. (Look him up, too.)]

David Spector

WORDS AND DEEDS FROM THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Paradise at Semaphore Hill, Panama, 2001

by Phyllis Katz

In mid-October that year
my husband and I lived for a week
below a radar tower. You might think
this was not an ideal place
for good birding, since the tower
had been used in wartime
by the US Airforce,
guardians of the Canal
against all enemies,
and was not of course,
seen then
as a birder's paradise.

Now the Canopy Tower,
is a delightful small hotel,
radar tower surrounded
by a broad walkway,
place for views of sky above
and woods below.

Here late October brings to Panama
kettles of thousands of raptors,
especially Broad-winged
and Swainson's,
and tens of thousands
of Turkey Vultures
filling the sky
swirling from dawn
to dusk above the tower.

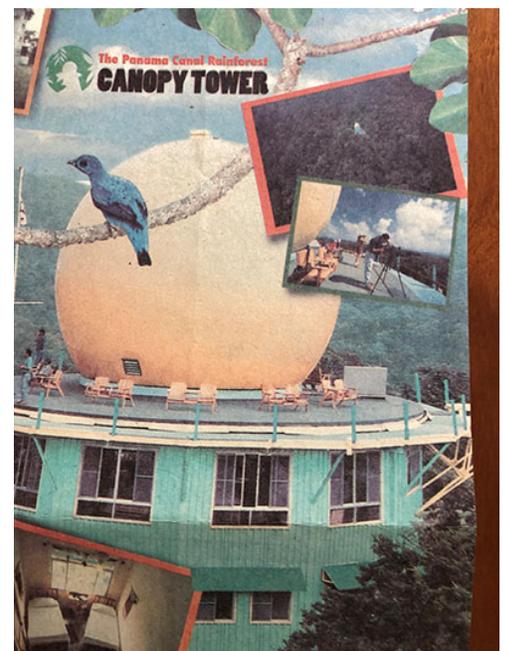
Author's Notes

Our week at the Canopy Tower was a naturalist's paradise
of birds, various reptiles, amphibians, butterflies and
mammals, among them Howler Monkeys, Sloths, and a
Wooly Opossum.

The frosting on this delicious the cake: Our group bird
count was 264 species.

Clouding the sky as they fly,
single groups joining others
find the way to South America,
as the kettles widen,
the air a music of beating
wings and throated calls,
until the sun dips
slyly into the night
and the birds drop
down to rest in the trees.

Rising early next day
they fly on
before we breakfast,
to find safety
in a warmer world
until spring when their wings
carry them north again
to build their nests and raise
their young and as the cold returns,
teach them the way to Paradise.



An early advertisement for the Canopy Tower's new function as a small hotel.

Virtual Field Trips!

The Hampshire Bird Club Education Committee is offering virtual birding each week. Enjoy watching birds and sharing what you see while virtually chatting with others through your computer, phone or tablet. Pre-registration is required since space is limited. Register by e-mailing your name, cell phone number, and which day you'd like to join to virtualbirding@hampshirebirdclub.org. Please try to choose one time per week since we'd like to offer these to as many folks as possible and space is limited.

Mondays starting May 4: 8:30 a.m. - 9 a.m. using Zoom (Host: Laura Beltran)

Tuesdays starting May 5: 8:30 a.m. – 9 a.m. using Skype which must be downloaded on your device prior to the event (Host: Jim Lafley)

Wednesdays starting May 6: 8:30 a.m. – 9 a.m. using Facetime and you must have an iPhone or Mac (Host: Janice Jorgensen)

These virtual field trips will continue through the month of May.

Bird Feeding Tips

I tried a couple of new ideas for my feeders this year as I no longer have a tray feeder. One idea I got from "Bird Watcher's Digest." I put a cinder block on end and placed a mix of food in the two openings. It protects the seed from the rain and snow and the birds don't seem to mind either reaching in or climbing in to get the food.



The other idea was to layer black oil sunflower and millet or fine cracked corn in a tube feeder. The finches, titmice, and chickadees only want the sunflower so they spread the other seed on the ground for the sparrows and doves.

Jim Lafley

PUBLICATIONS OF INTEREST

Two books on birdsong have been published this Spring by local ornithologists. David Sibley has come out with *What It's Like to Be a Bird: From Flying to Nesting, Eating to Singing--What Birds Are Doing, and Why*. This book is geared for a general audience, and it includes many new illustrations that for most species are life-sized. The book answers frequently asked questions about birds such as "Do Robins hear worms?" The book is available from Amazon: www.amazon.com/What-Its-Like-Bird-Singing-What/dp/0307957896/ref=sr_1_1?crid=1S52W2VQ9IDUA&dchild=1&keywords=david+sibley+bird+books&qid=1587052948&prefix=david+sibley%2Caps%2C142&sr=8-1.

Don Kroodsmas's new book is *Birdsong for the Curious Naturalist* that comes with an accompanying website (www.birdsongforthe curious.com/). From that website the book is described as "a basic, how-to guide that teaches anyone, from beginning to advanced bird-lover, how to listen to our singing planet. The approach is organized concept by concept, and nested within concepts, species by species." It, too, is available from Amazon: www.amazon.com/Birdsong-Curious-Naturalist-Guide-Listening-ebook/dp/B07SZBFXR9/ref=sr_1_1?dchild=1&keywords=kroodsmas&qid=1587052977&sr=8-1.

MAY FIELD TRIPS

All May field trips have been cancelled. Please check the HBC website or Facebook page for updates.

The Education Committee has organized some virtual field trips as noted on page 5.

Other birding field trips throughout New England may be accessed by going to www.birdingcalendar.com.

UPCOMING EVENTS OF INTEREST

Bird-A-Thon

Mass Audubon's Bird-A-Thon this year will focus on birding near home to maintain safety and to reduce our impact on the climate. It will still be held over a 24 hour period on May 15-16. We will rely on cooperative teams working in their yards, neighborhoods, and natural areas within walking or biking distance of their homes. You can bird individually, with a partner, or as part of a family/household. Fundraising will happen as usual. The Arcadia team is open to birders from anywhere in the state or across the county. Those who give or raise \$250 or more during Bird-A-Thon win an invitation to a birding outing here in the Valley led by David Sibley & Joan Walsh.

Many of the members of the Hampshire Bird Club are involved in organizing and participating in the event and we would like as many HBC members as possible to join us in counting as many species as we can in one day.

Bird-A-Thon funds are used by Arcadia's Sanctuaries to protect land, educate about the environment, and act to address climate change. Arcadia maintains 140 of acres of grasslands for Bobolinks, American Kestrels, and Eastern Meadowlark as well as climate change mitigation.

For more information or to sign up please email Patti Steinman at psteinman@massaudubon.org

Arcadia Wildlife Sanctuary

Arcadia, and all Mass Audubon sanctuaries, are closed until further notice.

Hitchcock Center for the Environment

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

Dave Gross, Editor
newsletter@hampshirebirdclub.org

PS – Remember the rebus contest by the Education Committee in the April newsletter? Here's my entry (with images from stockphotos.com, cityfolkclub.blogspot.com, classroomclipart.com, allthingsclipart.com, and vecteezy.com):

