



Hampshire Bird Club, Inc.

Amherst, Massachusetts

www.hampshirebirdclub.org

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February 2021

Dear reader, this time last year we were planning lots of in-person events. Among them were club meetings at the Immanuel Lutheran Church and six field trips in March and April. The February 2020 newsletter asked for volunteer drivers to share rides to our meetings and also asked members if they would like to join the meeting speaker and the set-up crew for dinner. The Education Committee had several projects and reported on the outcome of a survey of what new things they could try.

There were also somewhat ominous reports of a nasty virus in Wuhan that had popped up in the Seattle area.

We're close to a year into the nearly complete shutdown of in-person events. At present we have no field trips scheduled, though there is light at the end of the tunnel. There has been very tentative discussion of the possibility that downsized HBC field trips might be able to resume once vaccinations become more widespread. It may be possible to have in-person programs again in the fall. One of these days we'll be able to see each other again in the flesh. Keep the faith. We'll get there.

NEXT PROGRAM

Monday, February 8 at 7:15 pm via Zoom

Don Brightsmith presents

Urban and Endangered: a Parrot Paradox in South Texas

In the mid 1980's, Red-crowned Parrots established a population in the Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas (LRGV). The species is endemic to northeastern Mexico (naturally occurring within only a few hundred miles of the US border) and is listed as globally endangered by the IUCN. Wild individuals apparently wandered from Mexico to the LRGV on rare occasions, but, bolstered by numerous escaped pets, the population became established and grew steadily from 1995 well into the 2000's. Currently the USFWS and State of Texas consider the Texas population native. Since 2016, we have studied roosts and nests in the LRGV. Over 70% of nest trees are standing, dead, non-native *Washingtonia* palms. All Red-crowns observed roosted and nested in trees planted in suburban areas, most within 5 meters of residential streets, often in the front yards of private homes. We found no roosts or nests in natural vegetation. The Red-crowned Parrot presents a unique set of challenges as an endangered species whose US population depends on anthropogenic habitats.

[Donald J. Brightsmith](#) is an Associate Professor of Ecosystem Health in the Department of Veterinary Pathobiology and the Schubot Avian Health Center at Texas A&M University. He holds a Ph.D. in Zoology from Duke University, an M.S. in Wildlife Ecology from the University of Arizona, and a B.S. in Natural Resources from Cornell University and is author of over 75 scholarly works. His interest in wild birds started at a young age with binoculars in the backyard and has led him to projects, presentations, and teaching in Peru, Costa Rica, Brazil, Nicaragua, Indonesia, England, Australia and throughout the US. His specialties are tropical ecology, ornithology and wildlife conservation, especially topics related to wild and captive parrots. He has worked on parrots in Peru since 1993 and has run the [The Macaw Society/Sociedad pro Guacamayo](#) (formerly the Tambopata Macaw Project) since 1999. His research has focused on a wide variety of topics including parrot conservation, clay lick use, nesting, movements, habitat use, etc. He also conducts research on diets of captive and wild parrots, parrot enrichment and wild Red-crowned Parrots in Texas. As an advisor to government and private parrot conservation projects he is helping put his knowledge to work for the benefit of wild parrots.

FIELD TRIP NEWS

Please check the HBC website or Facebook page for updates.

Given the ongoing pandemic, there are no in-person field trips scheduled. The Board will reevaluate this decision on an ongoing basis and will schedule some get togethers as soon as possible. The [Resources](#) page of the HBC website includes links to some activities and descriptions of birding locations. A few field trips throughout New England may be accessed by going to www.birdingcalendar.com.

Carol Mardeusz, Field Trip Chair

THE HAMPSHIRE BIRD CLUB MIRACLE LENS CLOTH

This past August, I took a United flight to Salt Lake City. It was a work trip, but I brought along my new pair of 10x42 Nikon Monarch 7's, hoping to see some interesting bird life. The morning after my arrival I discovered to my horror that I had left my binocs under the seat on the plane. Scolding myself for not attaching a name tag to them, I returned to the airport. The baggage rep made an unsuccessful call, but told me that the last flights of the day go for servicing at the SkyWest hangar at SLC, and lost & found items from several airlines are pooled. All I could do was file a loss report with United and continue with my trip, disappointed there would be no proper birding in Utah and Wyoming. (Were those Swainson's Hawks I passed on the road?)

Weeks went by and I received a couple of 'Sorry!' messages from United. I consoled myself imagining that maybe a low-paid airline worker was enjoying unexpected, amazing optics, and had taken up birding. Meanwhile, actual miracles were happening...

It came to pass that the binoculars were discovered by diligent service folks, and sent to Lost and Found Central, a third party company in Atlanta. Their Delta department handled them (which is surprising since I lost them on United). An employee discovered the Hampshire Bird Club label on the lens cloth, attached to the binoculars. He looked up our club online, and contacted our president, Bob Zimmermann. Henry Lappen happened to hear Bob's announcement, during the HBC October Zoom meeting, that a pair of binoculars found on a plane had been traced to the club. Henry told me about it, and Bob put me in touch with Atlanta. The binocs arrived home safely a week later. Many thanks to Bob, Henry and all the hands, human and unseen, that played their part in returning my Monarchs.

Moral:

Always label every item while traveling.

Do an idiot check with hands as well as eyes under plane seats before exiting.

Don't give up hope when something is lost.

AND...

Never carry birding optics without attaching a Hampshire Bird Club Lens Cloth in its neat little bag!

Chris Yerlig, falcon@mailworks.org

PS: The first 5 people to email me will receive their very own HBC miracle lens cloth!

MEMBERSHIP NEWS

Save the date! **Welcome Meeting for New Members: Wednesday, February 17, 7-8 pm.** This informal gathering is sponsored by the HBC Membership and the Education Committees for us to meet and learn more about each other and the club. HBC is for birders of all levels, and whether you are brand new to birding or highly experienced, new to the area or a longtime resident, or some combination thereof, we hope this gathering will be an opportunity to share knowledge, meet some new comrades, and connect with a few people in preparation for the time that we can all finally get to meet and bird in person! All members who have joined HBC since last January will receive a Zoom invitation for this event. We hope you will attend. Questions? Contact Lissa, membership@hampshirebirdclub.org.

We welcome these new members who have joined in the past month: Sally Crawford, Pelham; Ellen Gallagher, Hadley; Jim Knittle, Belchertown; Deborah Levine, Holyoke; Mary Ann Lowe, South Hadley; Lauren Paret, Leeds; Halie Parker, Montague; Debbie Rittall, Montague; and Bill Donnelly, Florence

PROPOSED HBC BYLAWS CHANGE

Article X of the current HBC bylaws specifies that the membership shall vote on a slate of candidates for the Board of Directors as proposed by the Nominating Committee at the annual meeting in May of each year; the slate includes the names of the proposed officers (president, vice-president/program director, treasurer, communications secretary and membership secretary). At the same time, this section of the bylaws specifies that members may nominate candidates for positions on the Board from the floor at the annual meeting. It's not at all clear, however, how voting for the new nominee fits with a vote on the slate presented by the Nominating Committee. If elected, do they become the 12th Board member? Is that person excluded from consideration as an officer?

The Board proposes that the bylaws be changed so that the membership shall vote on individual candidates rather than a slate of candidates at the annual meeting; the requisite number of candidates with the most votes will be elected to the Board for two-year terms. The Board members will then elect the officers at the first meeting of the newly elected Board in the ensuing fiscal year, which begins on June 1.

Additionally, the current bylaws specify one-year terms for Board members. In practice this has led to the view that initial election to the Board implies long-term service on the Board. With an eye to encouraging more HBC members to become involved in HBC governance, the Board also proposes that Board members serve two-year terms, but without term limits. The aim of this change is to bring new ideas and more diversity to the Board, and ultimately to the HBC.

In accordance with Section XII of the current bylaws, we will present these changes for your consideration at the February members/program meeting and discuss them at the March members/program meeting. Assuming that we will not be able to meet in person in March, we will arrange for the entire HBC membership to participate electronically in a vote on whether or not to accept the changes between March 8, the date of the March members/program meeting, and March 22.

The current wording of the HBC bylaws (left column with changed portions in strike-through) and the proposed changes (italicized, right column) are as follows.

Article V - BOARD OF DIRECTORS

5.1 The HBC shall be directed by a Board of Directors (hereafter called "the Board") composed of the following: President, Vice President/Program Director, Treasurer, Communications Secretary, Membership Secretary, and six members at large, ~~including the immediate past president (if possible).~~

5.2 ~~Officers and Board members shall be elected for one-year terms and shall be eligible for reelection.~~

Article X - ELECTION OF DIRECTORS AND OFFICERS

10.1 In consultation with the Board, the President shall appoint a nominating committee ~~at the March program meeting~~ each year. The nominating committee shall be composed of three members of the HBC. At least one member of this committee shall be a member of the Board and at least one shall be a person who is not on the Board, but from the membership at large. ~~The nominating~~

Article V - BOARD OF DIRECTORS

5.1 The HBC shall be directed by a Board of Directors (hereafter called "the Board") composed of the following: President, Vice President/Program Director, Treasurer, Communications Secretary, Membership Secretary, and six members at large.

5.2 Board members shall be elected for two-year terms and Officers for one-year terms; Board members and Officers shall be eligible for reelection.

Article X - ELECTION OF DIRECTORS AND OFFICERS

10.1 *Directors.* In consultation with the Board, the President shall appoint a Nominating Committee to be *announced at the February program/members meeting* each year. The Nominating Committee shall be composed of three members of the HBC. At least one member of this committee shall be a member of the Board and at least one shall be a person who is not on the Board, but from the

~~committee shall present a slate of officers and other board members to be voted on at the annual meeting in May. To the extent possible, this slate shall fully represent the diversity of the HBC membership, e.g. in gender, age, etc. and shall reflect any specific directions from the board with respect to diversity. Nominations will also be accepted from the floor, if seconded.~~

~~10.2 Newly elected officers and board members shall assume their duties immediately after the June program.~~

~~10.3 To be eligible for election to the Board, nominees must have been members of the HBC for at least one calendar year prior to the election.~~

~~10.4 To be eligible for the presidency of the HBC, the nominee must have served on the Board for at least one calendar year prior to the election.~~

HBC members shall be invited to suggest individuals for Board membership to the Nominating Committee by the March program/members meeting.

10.2 Nominations. At the program/members meeting in April, the Nominating Committee shall propose a list of at least five or six nominees (in alternate years) to replace those Board members whose terms are expiring. Board incumbents are eligible for re-election and all nominees must have been members of the HBC for at least one calendar year prior to the election. The Nominating Committee shall strive to select nominees that represent the diversity of the HBC membership with respect to gender, color, race, age, and physical ability and, further, reflect any specific directions from the Board regarding diversity.

10.3 Election. The nominees shall be voted on individually by written ballot at the annual program/members meeting in May. Nominations may be made from the floor at the May meeting and, if seconded, added to the list of nominees. Only HBC members may make nominations and vote in the election. Following the vote, the five or six candidates (depending on the year) with the highest vote totals will join the Board. In the event that the members meeting cannot be held in person, the Board can hold the election in an alternate format that will allow all members to participate. In the case of a tie for the final (fifth or sixth) spot, one of the tied candidates will be selected by coin toss. Newly elected Board members shall assume their duties on June 1.

10.4. Officers. Officers shall be elected annually by the Board of Directors at the first Board meeting after June 1. This meeting will be convened and presided over by the President of the preceding club year. Each officer shall hold office for one year.

10.5. Vacancies. A vacancy on the board may be filled for the unexpired portion of the term by a two-thirds vote of the Directors.

10.6. In the first year in which this policy is enacted, the six Board members who have been serving the fewest number of years will be considered to be in the first year of their terms; other Board members, if nominated, may be considered for re-election.

2020 QUABBIN CBC RESULTS

The Quabbin count occurred on January 2, 2021. We tallied 62 species with two count week (CW) birds, and added a new species to the count, Iceland Gull, bringing our all-time total to 119 species. We had 4 new high counts, Red-tailed Hawk, Merlin, Tufted Titmouse and Carolina Wren and a third highest count of Red-breasted Nuthatch. Considering the weather we faced in the morning – slush and rain until around 10 am – I think we did pretty well! I was hoping winter finches would have made a bigger splash on this count, but it looks like they’ve moved on. I want to thank everyone for helping out especially under less than desirable conditions and let’s not forget about the pandemic!

American Black Duck - 47	Mourning Dove – 208	Carolina Wren - 30
Mallard - 103	Eastern Screech-Owl - 1	Golden-crowned Kinglet - 7
Ring-necked Duck - 2	Great Horned Owl - 5	Eastern Bluebird - 73
Bufflehead - CW	Barred Owl - 3	Hermit Thrush - 1
Common Goldeneye - 9	Northern Saw-whet Owl - 2	American Robin - 158
Hooded Merganser - 51	Belted Kingfisher - 5	Northern Mockingbird - 7
Common Merganser - 149	Red-bellied Woodpecker - 46	European Starling - 585
Red-breasted Merganser – CW	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker - 1	Cedar Waxwing - 2
Ruffed Grouse - 6	Downy Woodpecker - 86	American Tree Sparrow - 60
Wild Turkey - 139	Hairy Woodpecker - 33	Dark-eyed Junco - 416
Common Loon – 5	Northern Flicker - 7	White-throated Sparrow - 59
Horned Grebe - 4	Pileated Woodpecker - 18	Song Sparrow - 30
Sharp-shinned Hawk - 1	Merlin - 3	Northern Cardinal - 127
Cooper’s Hawk - 1	Blue Jay - 532	Red-winged Blackbird - 6
Bald Eagle - 16	American Crow - 123	House Finch - 56
Red-shouldered Hawk - 2	Common Raven - 28	Purple Finch - 2
Red-tailed Hawk - 43	Black-capped Chickadee - 920	Red Crossbill - 15
Ring-billed Gull – 113	Tufted Titmouse - 348	Common Redpoll - 55
Herring Gull - 2	Red-breasted Nuthatch - 240	Pine Siskin - 1
Iceland Gull - 1	White-breasted Nuthatch - 202	American Goldfinch - 30
Gull Species - 200	Brown Creeper - 26	House Sparrow - 533
Rock Pigeon – 91	Winter Wren - 2	

40 observers making up 18 parties with one feeder watcher.

Weather overnight included light snow and rain that created a slushy inch or so by daybreak and light to at times heavy rain that continued to about 10 am. After that it became partly cloudy with an occasional gusty wind out of the west-northwest. Temperatures ranged from 30 to 41 degrees F. Overall, there was a substantial amount of open water this year, with the main body of Quabbin wide open.

Scott Sumner

THE BOBOLINK PROJECT

Bobolinks are a grassland bird species that's disappearing in the northeastern US, and the decline is largely due to the early summer mowing of the hayfields in which Boblinks are actively nesting. [The Bobolink Project](#) by Mass Audubon connects people who are able to donate funds with farmers who are willing to help Bobolinks—but who also face stark economic realities and financial pressures. Financial contributions to the Bobolink Project allow Mass Audubon to “buy time” for nesting Bobolinks on working farms. The link to donate is

https://secure2.convio.net/mas/site/Donation2?idb=1477565999&df_id=5140&mfc_pref=T&5140.donation=form1&5140.donation=root&df_id=5140&idb=168012366&mfc_pref=T

UPCOMING EVENTS OF INTEREST

Hitchcock Center for the Environment

Nature Trivia Night

Wednesdays 7 pm-8:30 pm: February 10, March 10, April, 10

\$50 per team of 1-4 people; please [register online](http://www.hitchcockcenter.org) at www.hitchcockcenter.org

Join us for a monthly online trivia contest fundraiser for environmental education. The quiz will test you on a wide breadth of science, nature and environmental knowledge. **The winning team will split the award with the Hitchcock Center for the Environment that will help provide 25%-50% discounts on program fees for economically challenged and low-income household.**

Arcadia Wildlife Sanctuary

Massachusetts Wildlife Success Stories: Peregrine Falcon & American Kestrel - Online

Thursday, February 18, 7:00-8:00 pm with Dave Paulson, MassWildlife

[Register](#) online at the Mass Audubon website.

Fast-flying, powerful, and efficient hunters, peregrine falcons are now more commonly seen than in previous years. With the help of a collaborative restoration effort, these birds are now nesting in cities as well as more rural places throughout the Commonwealth. In contrast, the American Kestrel, our smallest falcon, is still experiencing a decline in population throughout most of North America.

Current research on kestrels involves documenting nest boxes, which can lead to a better understanding of this species and how to help restore them. Learn about research efforts for both the kestrel and peregrine and how you can help to ensure the well-being of these amazing birds of prey.

Birding for Everyone

Saturday, February 20, 10 am

Join us online for our monthly lesson and birding discussion. This month Laura Beltran will talk about Project Feederwatch followed by questions and open discussion of birding in the Valley. We meet online the third Saturday of every month and lead small group walks on the fourth Saturday. Focus is on novice, beginner and intermediate birders with advanced birders sharing their experience and knowledge. All are welcome. For more info or to join, contact Jonah at jkeane@massaudubon.org.

Beginner Birdwatching 1 – Online

Wednesdays, March 3-31, 6:30-8:30 pm (8 sessions, some back-to-back on the same evening)

[Register online](#) at the Mass Audubon website.

Learn birding basics from the experts--from different bird families to various tools and resources used by birders. Find out what makes birds unique in the animal kingdom; where and how to locate birds in urban, suburban, and rural areas; and get introduced to basic bird biology and behavior. This online class will help you get started and build your skills at locating, observing, and identifying local birds so you can join one of the fastest growing hobbies in North America, with opportunities to practice every week.

Each weekly class will include optional, self-directed outdoor observation exercises and a 30-minute follow-up discussion session a week later, providing an opportunity for you to observe birds and share your discoveries and questions with classmates and instructors.

dropping from the sky
starlings mark naked branch
like musical notes
Haiku by Marcia Merithew

Sunlight reflecting
Scattered light on gray feathers
A corvid turns blue
Haiku by Laura Beltran

Dave Gross, Editor
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