



Hampshire Bird Club, Inc.

Amherst, Massachusetts

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Dear reader, December is a month filled with holidays and celebrations. Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, Festivus and New Year's Eve are the big ones. And for bird watchers there are the two weeks of Christmas Bird Counts. There are many, many more lesser-known official holidays, observations and celebrations in December. (These are all legitimate. If you don't believe me, look them up.) For example, December 1 is Bifocals at the Monitor Liberation Day, something near and dear to my heart (and my eyes). Also, December 4 is both National Cookie Day as well as Wear Brown Shoes Day. Happily, December 4 is also National Sock Day, so we're good to go as far as feet go. And in a clever joint effort by the cookie and kitchen tools lobbies, December 4-10 is National Cookie Cutter Week.

Did you know that December is Bingo's Birthday Month? I sure didn't. (It's the game, not somebody's name.) It turns out that December is National Tie Month as well as Buckwheat Month. (I personally prefer the latter over the former.) December has its share of sweet days: the aforementioned National Cookie Day, National Pie Day (Dec. 1), National Sacher Torte Day (Dec. 5), National Cotton Candy Day (Dec. 7, a day that will live in infamy, clearly for more than one reason), National Brownie Day (Dec. 8, a very good day), National Pastry Day (Dec. 9), Gingerbread House Day (Dec. 12), National Ambrosia Day (also on Dec. 12), National Cocoa Day (Dec. 13), National Cupcake Day (Dec. 15), National Chocolate Covered Anything Day (Dec. 16, another day that might well live in infamy), National Maple Syrup Day (Dec. 17), National Hard Candy Day (Dec. 19), National Oatmeal Muffin Day (also on Dec. 19), National Cookie Exchange Day (Dec. 22 – my address is available on request), National Date Nut Bread Day (also on Dec. 22), National Pfeffernusse Day (Dec. 23), National Eggnog Day (Dec. 24), National Pumpkin Pie Day (Dec. 25), National Candy Cane Day (Dec. 26), and National Chocolate Candy Day (Dec. 28, another very good day). It's no coincidence that National Bicarbonate of Soda Day falls on December 30.

And should you be wondering, National Dentist's Day is March 6, 2023. Happy Holidays!

NEXT PROGRAM

Tuesday, December 13 at 7:15 PM

The Annual Members' Meeting on Zoom

It's that time of year again! Do you have some old photos that you've wanted to share but never gotten around to doing it? How about some new ones taken on a trip last winter, or over the summer? Have you always wanted to show some of your photos to the club but didn't feel like you had enough to fill an entire 45-minute program? Then the Members' Meeting is just for you!

On December 13, club members can present a mini-program, as short as 5 or 10 minutes, no more than 10 slides long. Because we are doing this via Zoom, it is the perfect opportunity for club members who have moved away, and those who have a hard time travelling to in-person meetings, to show the rest of us what you've been up to. If you would like to be one of our presenters, please send your slides in an email attachment to Laura Beltran at lauraandnature@gmail.com by December 7 (one week before the meeting).

UPCOMING PROGRAMS

January 10: TBA (via Zoom)

February 14: John Kircher, *Galapagos, Darwin, and Biology's Biggest Discovery* (via Zoom)

March 14: Nathan Senner, TBA (via Zoom)

April 11: Joan Walsh, *Full Life Cycle Conservation of Roseate Terns* (Wesley Church, also via Zoom)

May 9: Matt Kelly, *TnT: Where Birding is Dy-No-Mite!* (Wesley Church, also via Zoom)

June 13: BYO Picnic (Arcadia Wildlife Sanctuary)

EDUCATION COMMITTEE REPORT AND WORKSHOPS

Jim Lafley's popular "Birds at Your Feeder" workshop was very informative. In addition to providing clear ID information for the birds we typically see at our feeders, Jim offered guidance on how to identify the several varieties of finches that we have in this area, especially those we hope to see during this irruptive year. And, for those of you who might not know, we typically invite the Allen and Hoffman Bird Clubs to attend our Education workshops, and quite a few of their members attend.

In the works: We are developing a more straightforward one-step registration form for Education Committee workshops through Google Forms. These will be very similar to the forms used for Birding for Everyone. We will be rolling out the new forms after the first of the year.

Upcoming new member bird walks—open to all:

Directions to each meeting place will be posted on the Education page of the website

- Jan. 8, 2023 – 9-11 AM at the Silvio Conte National Wildlife Conservation Area parking lot
- April 23, 2023 – 7-9 AM at Lake Wallace, behind the Belchertown Police Station
- The fourth will be our usual new member bird walk before the June HBC picnic at Arcadia.

Upcoming workshops:

Tuesday, Dec. 6, 7-8 PM – *Feeder Watching for the Christmas Bird Count* with Janice Jorgensen

Wednesday, Dec. 14, 7-8 PM – *Everything You Ever Wanted to Know About the Christmas Bird Count* with Lesley Farlow

Monday, Jan. 2, 7-8 PM Our next *Do-It-Yourself Field Trip* meeting will be on Zoom as usual, but NOT in December. We are in the middle of a two-month DIY. For DIY an area is chosen and a leader describes the location and five target species for that area. Anyone interested has time to visit the area on their own, record the species they see, and report back at the next DIY Zoom meeting. Our November and December field trip location is Ashley Reservoir in Holyoke, and the target birds are Ring-necked Duck, Bufflehead, Osprey, Ring-billed Gull, and Herring Gull. Join the January Zoom to share your November and December sightings and learn of the upcoming field trip.

To register for workshops, please email education@hampshirebirdclub.org with the name of the workshop in the subject line. Our programs are now recorded and available at the Hampshire Bird Club website. You can find the links under PROGRAMS or on the EDUCATION page at <https://hampshirebirdclub.org/program-videos/>

BIRDING FOR EVERYONE

Birding for Everyone will be on hiatus this month as we work on the Christmas Bird Count. A huge thank you to everyone who attended online discussions and/or in person walks. This was the first year for BFE and the response has been far greater than expected. We will be back in action in January, so stay tuned!

[Ed. note: The following unsolicited comment on the Nov. 26 BFE trip tells you all you need to know.]

“Our owl prowl last night at Quabbin Reservoir was such a very special event – the beauty of the evening, the location and the learning shared, it was truly a wonderful gift to be able to be there. Thank you for making the arrangements at Quabbin in the evening (so special), teaching us about ‘red lights’ – who knew (I didn't) – showing us how to do an owl prowl and sound the calls so they can be heard, giving us the opportunity to stand in the darkness and silence together and patiently wait, learning about owl habitat, behavior and significant species in our area.... all so special. Not to mention the kindness and presence of all who attended, the encouragement and sense of humor of those wearing their ‘owl gear’, as well as Maria's gift of time from DCR and presence in caring for the group. Plus of course introducing us to the owls of the night! THANK YOU! – Carol”

MEMBERSHIP NEWS

Many thanks to all of you who renewed your membership this month and welcome to our newest members who joined in November! Please give a warm welcome to Juliana Vanderwielen of Belchertown; Carol Smith of Southwick; Stephanie Railsback, Shutesbury; Susan Macrae, Florence; Ron Geisinger, Chicopee; and Dana Buxton of Pittsfield. See you on the birding trail!

Any questions? You can reach me at membership@hampshirebirdclub.org.

Donna Lee Ubertalli, Membership Secretary

UPCOMING FIELD TRIPS

The winter and spring field trips will be listed in the January newsletter as they are still being organized and arranged. Please note that most trips will be open to non-members while others will be restricted to HBC members such as the Westover base trip for Upland Sandpipers, Grasshopper Sparrows and other species due to the requirement of vetting through the Federal Government, the Quabbin Reservoir trips, and any overnight trips.

FIELD TRIP REPORTS

Satan's Kingdom, Hell's Kitchen, and more (October 30)

Josh Rose resurrected HBC's annual Halloween birding adventure returned after its eight-consecutive-year run was interrupted by a two year Covid hiatus. Six of us gathered at the power canal in Turners Falls, where we found two Bufflehead and four Hooded Mergansers on the water and an immature Bald Eagle winging overhead. Then it was on to Northfield, where our first Wood Ducks of the day were skulking in back corners of East Sawyer Pond. Hell's Kitchen was sadly lacking in shorebirds but we saw some Green-winged Teal and heard a Winter Wren calling. At Satan's Kingdom we enjoyed a very active and vocal Belted Kingfisher, a nice adult Red-shouldered Hawk, two lollygagging beavers, and a number of dragonflies. Just outside the Kingdom, another immature eagle flew over Caldwell Road, and a few Savannah Sparrows popped up at the edge of River Road. The Wagon Wheel in Gill provided not only a delicious lunch but also a pair of Purple Finches eating the seeds of a tree over one of the picnic tables. After lunch, a late Osprey splashed down in Barton Cove. We ended the trip back where we started at the power canal, where that morning's birds had been joined by a trio of Ring-necked Ducks and our only butterfly of the day, a Clouded Sulphur. A beautiful day with 42 bird species.

Josh Rose

Pine Grove Conservation Area (November 13)

A gaggle of HBCers joined Laura Beltran and walked about 1.5 miles past the former golf course's old greens and along the edge of the woods searching for November birds. Although it drizzled and only 18 species were found, the group had wonderful views of Red-breasted Nuthatches, which have been plentiful throughout our area since July.

Laura Beltran

Dead Creek WMA and Lake Champlain Valley (November 13)

I know, you're probably thinking, "Gee. It seems like an interesting trip, but the drive is so long and I'd be away from my beloved Hampshire County for a whole day!" And you're probably thinking, "And it will be cold and wet and I've already seen Snow Geese." Both of these are undoubtedly true. At 3+ hours from Northampton to the Snow Goose fields (and 3+ more back), and cold drizzle from late morning through mid-afternoon (just another day on Lake Champlain in November), you're probably feeling pretty smug right now.

But here's what you missed: scintillating conversation, astute political analysis, poignant conservation op-eds, and a non-stop Abbott and Costello routine courtesy of me (Mike Locher) and my trusty sidekick (Andrew Magee). And you missed 850+ Snow Geese taking off and circling in front of the dark hillsides east of the fields, which Andrew aptly described as "dreamlike" and another birder said was "like a mystical dance." And you missed a flotilla of 30+ Common Loons (with a lone Red-throated Loon

in their midst) cruising past the Champlain Bridge. And you missed a tight flock of 20+ Snow Buntings that we flushed from the road to the Button Bay State Park overlook. And you missed the close looks at 45+ White-winged Scoters (with a few Black Scoters mixed in for variety) at the Tri-Town Water District HQ. And you missed the A+ scenery of the Lake Champlain Valley, which never disappoints, no matter the weather.

All told we saw 38 species, didn't get either wet or cold enough that it bothered us, and, speaking for myself, my butt doesn't hurt that much. (Full disclosure: I slightly edited the comment by "another birder" above. I added the adjective, but she wasn't a poet, and she might have said this had she known that her words were to be quoted.)

Mike Locher

NORTHAMPTON CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

The Northampton (MANO) Christmas Bird Count will be held on **Sunday, December 18**. Despite the pandemic challenges of the last two years, our MANO group had some of its best counts ever. This year looks equally promising, even with continued Covid hurdles. Once again we need your help! Even if you haven't previously participated, please consider participating in this huge citizen science project. It's fun! Let us know if you'd like to participate by sending us an email at CBC@hampshirebirdclub.org.

Even if you don't join one of the count groups, you can still count birds in your yard or take a walk around your neighborhood! We're delighted to welcome feeder-watchers and new count participants, to explain how the CBC works, and to answer all your questions. As noted in the Education Committee report above, we'll have Zoom orientation meetings for leaders, participants, and feeder-watchers. As in last year's pre-count sessions, we'll cover how the CBC works and provide instructions on filling out the forms. Plans for the count compilation have not been finalized. More on this to come soon.

Please feel free to contact the team with questions at CBC@hampshirebirdclub.org. You can view our count circle at <https://hampshirebirdclub.org/wp-content/uploads/Northampton-MANO-Christmas-Bird-Count-Areas.pdf>.

Did we mention it's fun???

Check the HBC website (hampshirebirdclub.org/cbc) and HBC's Facebook page (www.facebook.com/groups/HampshireBirdClub) for updates.

CHECKLIST TO SEE IF YOU ARE READY TO GO FOR THE CBC

Performance Factor	Far Exceeds Norm	Exceeds Norm	Meets Norm	Needs Improvement	Does Not Meet Minimal Standard
Pursuit Ability	Leaps trees with a single bound	Needs a running start to leap trees	Can leap large bushes	Crashes into bush when attempting to leap over it	Catches poison ivy
Locating Birds with Binoculars	Faster than a Peregrine Falcon	Fast as a Chimney Swift	Not quite as fast as a Chimney Swift	Would you believe a slow Chimney Swift?	Has trouble locating chimneys
Field Work	Walks on water consistently	Walks on water in emergencies	Needs log to get over water	Drinks water	Spills water
Credibility	Talks with God	Talks with Roger Torey Peterson	Talks with self	Argues with self	Loses argument
Sight Identification	Eyes of an eagle	Eyes of a Blue Jay	Needs binoculars	Needs binoculars and good light	Can't find binoculars
Sound Identification	Can recognize birds from a single chip	Can recognize birds by song	Can identify birds by song using Merlin	Can hear songs	Eh?

[Ed. note: This chart, with only a slight modification, first appeared in the HBC newsletter in April 1994. The editor at the time was Sally Venman.]

UPCOMING EVENTS OF INTEREST

Arcadia Wildlife Sanctuary

All programs require registration.

Birdwatching Around the World: Mongolia – Online – December 6, 9 – 10 AM

Chris Leahy first visited Mongolia in 1982 and has been making almost annual visits since 1994. Take a virtual trip with Chris to the other side of the world as we explore the nature of Mongolia.

For more information and to register: <https://www.massaudubon.org/program-catalog/mass-audubon-education/84994-birdwatching-around-the-world-mongolia-online>

Birdwatching Around the World: Trinidad & Tobago – Online – Dec. 13, 9 – 10 AM

If you're interested in learning more about birds found throughout the neotropics, there's no better place to start than Trinidad and Tobago. Explore this area virtually with Scott Santino, Mass Audubon's Statewide Trips, Travel and Certificate Programs Manager.

For more information and to register: <https://www.massaudubon.org/program-catalog/mass-audubon-education/84993-birdwatching-around-the-world-trinidad-tobago-online>

Winter Crows – Arcadia Wildlife Sanctuary – Jan. 8, 2:00 – 5:30 PM

Join Patti Steinman to learn about the habits of the American Crow, a common bird with uncommon intelligence. We'll start with a presentation about crows, then head to Springfield in search of a nighttime roost. If we're lucky, we'll observe crows congregating by the thousands - a spectacular winter natural event. We'll watch the skies "as the crows fly," and follow them as they change location.

For more information and to register: <https://www.massaudubon.org/program-catalog/arcadia/84944-winter-crows>

Winter Birding Class at Arcadia – Sundays, January 22 – February 19, 9 AM - noon

What is an irruptive bird species and is this an irruptive year? What birds are at the feeders and how can we learn to identify them? Join naturalist John Green for this three-session indoor/outdoor class. Each class will include an indoor learning session, followed by outdoor time looking for birds.

For more information and to register: <https://www.massaudubon.org/program-catalog/arcadia/85038-winter-birding-class>

THE HBC QUIZ RETURNS

As promised in the December 2021 newsletter, there are more HBC quiz questions courtesy of our quizmaster David Spector. There are no prizes, no fanfare, just the glowing self-recognition of a job well done. Now on with the quiz... The topic for this set of questions is "Local Connections." If you attended the November HBC meeting, you will know the answer to some of these questions.

- 11) What Northampton native has the Latin name of a North American owl named for him?
 - 12) According to Amherst's Emily Dickinson, what bird is the "Rowdy of the Meadow"?
 - 13) What bird is the subject of Cummington native William Cullen Bryant's poem "Robert of Lincoln"?
 - 14) According to poet Dora Read Goodale of Mount Washington, Massachusetts, what bird is a "merry white-capped darling, With his mate so quaint and brown"?
 - 15) Amherst native and pioneer of the study of bird behavior Margaret Morse Nice published research on many species, but she is best known for her ground-breaking long-term study of what species?
- extra credit: Who was the most famous of her father's Amherst College students?

Quiz answers will be in the January newsletter.

Spoil a good walk: go birding! newsletter@hampshirebirdclub.org

Dave Gross, Editor