Dear reader, oh dear reader, here we are, months and months into the Coronavirus pandemic and still we are meeting remotely. Our in-person meetings are via Zoom. We have remote field trips. Our in-person field trips take into account vaccination status. Remember when we didn’t have any idea what KN95 meant? Remember when we used to be able to read people’s expression when we were out and about? Remember the days when we could meet at Immanuel Lutheran for our second-Monday-in-the-month programs? Ah, the good old days.

The HBC Board has thought long and hard about restarting our in-person meetings, and it came close to doing that for this month. That was before the Omicron SARS-CoV-2 variant came to town. But before Omicron the board had already decided to stay with Zoom for the next few meetings. Our previous meeting space at Immanuel Lutheran is now occupied by Craig’s Doors, leaving us without a venue until we can identify an appropriately large space to keep attendees separated, well ventilated, and with adequate night time parking. Once the board finds a place that fits the bill and the pandemic feels less threatening, we should be back in business.

NEXT PROGRAM
Monday, January 10 at 7:15 pm via Zoom
Presenter and topic to be announced

UPCOMING PROGRAMS
February 14, 2022. TBA.
March 14, 2022. TBA.
April 11, 2022. TBA.
May 9, 2022. TBA.
June 13, 2022. TBA.

BIRDING FOR EVERYONE
Starting in January, the club will begin a new Birding For Everyone (BFE) program. This group is geared towards beginner birders and those who, historically, have not been included in the birding community: young people, members of underrepresented groups, and the disabled. Each month there will be a one hour online educational session (a-15 minute presentation followed by 45 minutes for questions, bird ID help, etc.) and a two-hour, in-person, beginner bird walk at an accessible location. The online sessions will take place on the third Saturday of the month at 10:00 am while the in-person walks will occur on the fourth Saturday of the month at 8:00 am. Please spread the word. Anyone interested should email dal-lard@hampshirebirdclub.org to express interest or to sign up for the January offerings:

January 15, 10:00-11:00 am: What gear do I need for birding? (online presentation)
January 22, 8:00-10:00 am: Arcadia Visitor's Center (in-person walk/sit)
MEMBERSHIP NEWS
Greetings! Please join me in welcoming these new members who joined the HBC in December: Sara Israelson, Easthampton; Daniel O’Donoghue, Easthampton; and Richard & Kirsten Taranto, Northampton. Unrenewed members should note that even though they may still get announcements via Mailchimp, they are not eligible for members-only club events, which include in-person field trips. Confused about your membership status? We’re an email away, and can let you know in a flash!
Lissa Ganter, membership@hampshirebirdclub.org

UPCOMING FIELD TRIPS
Field Trip Guidelines
All HBC field trips will be limited to 10 participants and up to 2 leaders.
The following additional rules apply this winter due to the continuing COVID-19 situation:
1. All field trip leaders and participants must be fully vaccinated with booster, are required to wear a mask when asked (possibly in carpool situations) and should maintain a safe social distance during the event.
2. Field trips are for Hampshire Bird Club Members only.
3. Members should use the contact information in the description if they have any questions or would like to register for the trip.
4. Participants will receive specific information about their trip directly from the leader once they register.

Winter Field Trips
Sunday, January 16. Springfield Crows – specific location to be determined. 4:00 pm – 6:00 pm.
Jim Lafley and Patti Steinman will bring participants to the annual Springfield winter crow roost for this spectacular avian event. Each year Common Crows and some Fish Crows find a suitable site in Springfield to roost for the night. With thousands of birds gathering at various staging sites and at the final roost, a variety of behaviors and vocalizations can be witnessed. There is no walking involved. Dress for cold weather as we will be standing around outside. Binoculars are helpful. Please contact Jim Lafley at jimlafley@gmail.com or 413-221-1941 with questions or to sign-up.

Friday, March 18. American Woodcock Display – Easthampton Community Garden. 6:30 pm – 8:00 pm.
Jim Lafley will meet participants at the garden and bring them to a site that has been reliable over the years for observing the mating sounds and displays of the American Woodcock. It will be a very short walk from the car but be dressed in subdued colors for camouflage and warmth and in tick-discouraging clothing. Binoculars are helpful. Please contact Jim Lafley at jimlafley@gmail.com or 413-221-1941 with questions or to sign-up.

Thursday, March 31. Waterfowl & Early Migrants – Arcadia & West Meadows. 6:30 am - 10:30 am.
Ted Gilliland will meet participants at the Arcadia Sanctuary parking lot. This is a walk from the parking lot through the sanctuary and out to West Meadows over moderate terrain, approximately three miles in length. Boots and clothing appropriate for the weather outside for 4 hours are recommended. Binoculars needed. To sign-up contact Ted Gilliland at tgillila@mtholyoke.edu or 480-381-5617.

EDUCATION COMMITTEE REPORT AND WORKSHOPS
On December 15th Jim Lafley offered his popular “Birds on Your Feeder” workshop with 30 attendees. In addition to offering identification information on the various feeder visitors in our area, Jim helped participants get a jump start on preparing for the Christmas Bird Count feeder watch. Additional Education Committee workshops, organized by Janice Jorgensen, focused on specific aspects of the Christmas Bird Count participation.
Reminder: our programs are now recorded and available at the Hampshire Bird Club website. Look under PROGRAMS for the link: https://hampshirebirdclub.org/program-videos/.

Upcoming workshops

On February 23rd, 7-8 pm, Sara Griesemer will do an interactive workshop on eBird. Send your questions directly to education@hampshirebirdclub.org. How do you change locations? How do you find a new location? Can you link several lists together on a single birding trip? Whatever questions you have, let us know! Please register by emailing education@hampshirebirdclub.org with the name of the workshop in the subject line.

We are hoping to have a workshop on the great birding locations for winter waterfowl in coastal Rhode Island. Stay tuned for more information on that.

Do-It-Yourself Field Trip

Our next Do-It-Yourself field trip December report and January orientation will be on Monday, January 3 at 7 pm on Zoom. Each month an area is chosen, a leader describes the location and five target species are identified. Anyone interested in participating has a month to visit the area on their own, record the species they see, and report back at the Zoom event the following month. Our December field trip location was the Honeypot in Hadley, and the target birds were Red-tailed Hawk, Rough-legged Hawk, Horned Lark, American Tree Sparrow and Snow Bunting. If you'd like to join the January Zoom session and learn more about the upcoming field trip e-mail education@hampshirebirdclub.org.

A CHAT WITH GEOFF LEBARON

This is the second half of my chat with Geoff LeBaron in November 2021. The first half of the chat, found in last month’s newsletter, was about his role as the Director of the Audubon Christmas Bird Count. In the second half of the chat Geoff talks about his introduction to the natural world, his time as Program Chair for the HBC, and his leading of international nature trips.

Newsletter: What got you interested in nature, birds and bird watching?

Geoff LeBaron: My parents were birders. And my grandparents at least appreciated birds. My grandmother was a real birder.

N: “Real” meaning birding with binoculars?

GL: Yes, and going out on bird walks and stuff like that. My family history has always been quite nature-oriented. I’ve never not watched birds. I grew up in Eastern Massachusetts and then we moved to New Mexico when my father was headhunted to start the Department of Biochemistry for the University of New Mexico Medical School when it opened. My mother was a microbiologist.

We would drive across the country every summer to come back to visit family in New England since we were on an academic schedule. Our family has a place on Squam Lake so I grew up spending a lot of time in the summers in the Lakes Region of New Hampshire.

Often people want to know what's your favorite bird. I usually say it's whatever bird I'm looking at at the time. I have a number of early vivid memories of birds. I remember American Goldfinches landing all over my mother every time she went out to fill the feeders in the winter. And the Common Loon: When I was little my uncle took me to a loon’s nest. The bird looked like it was dead since it was quiet on the nest, and we could motor up to it. That was memorable. There are a dozen pairs of loons on Squam Lake and they are part of the summer up there, so I’ve always loved them.

In our backyard in Needham there were a few apple trees from an old orchard on a hillside. One day when I was about seven I saw a chipmunk go up one of the apple trees and it fell out. That repeated a few times. I went inside and told my mom that a chipmunk keeps falling out of a tree. She thought I was nuts. We went back to look at the apple tree, and the chipmunk would go up the main trunk and out the first main branch where there was male Rose-breasted Grosbeak. Every time the chipmunk went down the branch, the grosbeak would whack the chipmunk and knock it
out of the tree. There was a female on the nest at the end of the branch.  

**N:** I can see where that would be memorable.  

**GL:** I also had an early up-close and very in-your-face experience. I was even younger than for the chipmunk incident. Maybe I was five. I was little and we were walking in the shrubby areas near the Norwood airport. It must have been in mid-June. A male Chestnut-sided Warbler flew out right up to my face and started scolding me, probably because there was a nest there. And again, for a little kid to have this little bird trying to chase you off was pretty memorable.  

Another was with Bobolinks. I was walking our dog in a field one spring when we were driving up to New Hampshire before the interstates were built there. We'd stopped for lunch, I think. I was walking the dog in a small field and this Bobolink popped up right in front of us. It was pretty cool.  

**N:** You were HBC Program Chair for a long time. What can you say about that?  

**GL:** I think I did that for 19 years. Jan Ortiz recruited me. I know it was after I started working full time at home because before that I always had to be away on Monday night, so I could never come to bird club meetings before then. She recruited me to the Board and then said “Oh, by the way, will you be Program Chair?”  

**N:** During your tenure there were a lot of speakers who you brought in. Do any of them especially stand out in your memory?  

**GL:** The program that absolutely blew me away was Rick Prum’s. It's Richard, actually. I think he must be the most brilliant person I have ever met. He's just a fun guy to talk to, and he gives a fantastic program. His program for us was on the evolution of color in social attraction in birds. He had a better title than that. He had done a lot of really deep research on pigmentation and the way the way color is presented in bird plumage.  

He talked about “super black” where the feathers actually absorb light and they don't reflect anything back. There are videos of a Superb Bird-of-Paradise (now called Greater Lophorina) displaying its black hood thing that is super black. It's especially startling because the bird also has a yellow gape and white eyes. The bird in the video dances around and he's got the little things over his head, and it's just dramatic. [Ed. note: Here's such a video: https://youtu.be/1ere9BjJuVg ] Rick is relatively local, so we could get him back.  

I always enjoyed Don Kroodsma’s talks. He does such a good job of bringing sonograms to the real world. It's always fun to highlight up and coming ornithologists, both local and less than local. And it's always fun to bring in speakers like David Sibley and Kenn Kaufman who attract a lot of people. I think that the most people we ever had in the church was for Kenn's second talk. I think we had almost 200 people for that one.  

**N:** I am actually surprised that, after 19 years, you can pare it down to such a small number of talks.  

**GL:** There were many other good ones. Margaret Rubega’s talk about the feeding adaptations in hummingbirds is one. [Ed. note: The April 2005 newsletter describes this talk in some detail. Apparently David Peake-Jones liked this talk, too.] Her grad student came up later and showed super slow motion of hummingbirds fly-catching and drinking. It was really fun stuff, and he was a really good presenter. For a club, that aspect is pretty important. I always tried to have a whole range of presenters to keep up the interest. I think of David Spector and his talks that have birds, music, and literature crossovers as an example.  

**N:** You have led a number of bird adventures worldwide. Is there one that sticks in your mind?  

**GL:** Two stick in my mind: the first one I did and the last one I did. The first one was a Panama and Costa Rica trip that happened to coincide with Operation Just Cause. I did an HBC program about this several years ago. When we were in the Panama Canal the US Air Force was bombing Panama City. On that trip we didn’t get to go ashore because of the military action.  

The last trip was in 2009 that went from Argentina to the Falklands to South Georgia and then across the South Atlantic up to Tristan da Cunha and on to Cape Town, South Africa. We sailed 4600 nautical miles across the widest part of the South Atlantic with a pretty amazing variety of seabirds.  

I’ve done trips to Panama, Costa Rica, the Galapagos, Antarctica, Australia, Alaska, Puerto Rico, and Baja California, many of these multiple times. I’ve been able to go to all seven continents if you include Kamchatka as part of Asia. And
thinking about it, I've sailed on a vessel across the international dateline, across the equator, across the Tropic of Capricorn and across the prime meridian. To be able to say that I experienced going across all those geographic benchmarks on a ship is interesting. This was possible because most of the trips I did for Audubon were ship-based expedition cruising.

N: I know you have an interest in flying things besides birds. Care to share that with the newsletter readers?

GL: Sure. For one thing I've always loved butterflies and moths. I never got as much into dragonflies as my parents did. I'm not as interested as some birders are, though. It seems that as they have fewer and fewer new birds to find, they evolve into looking for butterflies.

But I assume that you're referring to aviation and aircraft.

N: Yes, you got me there.

GL: I've always loved aviation. If my vision without glasses had been better I probably would have gone into a career involving flying. So I got my airplane fix via photography, especially of military aircraft. I'm a known quantity with the Department of Defense as an aviation hobbyist. A friend of mine used to have high level clearance and he told me one time that I was on the “good list.” That enabled me to get permission to photograph things that some other people wouldn't be able to. It's one thing to go to air shows and such, when the whole world is there, but going to a base and photographing their aircraft, that requires permission.

So I would write a letter and then make some phone calls if they gave me permission. I would be very gracious if they told me that I couldn't photograph certain things. I wouldn't do it even though I knew perfectly well there was no good reason because, if it's outside in the daytime, it's being imaged much more intensively from overhead than anything I could ever get with a camera. For any place that I got permission to photograph I always made up large color prints of the slides I took and sent them off with a thank you letter.

During and after graduate school I did overwater aerial survey work. I was flying as an aerial observer somewhere around 3000 hours over water looking at marine mammals, turtles and birds. I've been able to see the entire East Coast from 500 feet or below from Key West up to the tip of Nova Scotia and also out to about 250 or 300 miles offshore.

My passion for aviation now is trying to find slides that I know I have because long ago I ran out of room for filing and storing my slides. I was a diehard Kodachrome user. The last Kodachrome slide I ever took was of a polar bear in Churchill, Manitoba. It's actually a really crappy picture, but I've kept it because it's the last one.

NORTHAMPTON CHRISTMAS COUNT 2021

The year's last full moon lit up the early morning sky on December 19th; fast-moving clouds cast a spooky haze. The owlers had been out in the rain, and we were off to the races. The day remained overcast and windy for the most part, with spots of sun here and there; temps hovered in the mid-30s. Luckily it hadn't dropped below freezing the night before... we all had open water.

MANO's 255 participants counted 44,259 birds (a few reports are still coming in, but we had at least 7,500 individual birds more than last year). Feeder watchers counted in excess of 1,200 birds. The final total of 88 species was two shy of our record. No new species were found on count day, but a lingering Western Meadowlark was a count week bird. And we had new record-high numbers for Northern Harriers, Bald Eagles, Ravens, Catbirds, Cackling Geese, Black Vultures, Ring-billed Ducks, and Grackles.

Despite another challenging pandemic year, it was a very successful day for the MANO (Northampton) CBC's 88th year. The final tallies for the count are on the next page. Many thanks to everyone who pitched in! Next year's CBC will fall on Sunday, December 18th. Please save the date!

Amanda Kallenbach and Janice Jorgensen
**Northampton Christmas Bird Count Results**

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<th>Highest</th>
<th>Year</th>
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**Most species ever**

- 91 species in 2019
- 88 species in 1999

**2021 species**

- 88 species
- 44722 individuals
- 250+ field participants
- 31 feeder watchers
- 1256 miles walked

Thank you for supporting MANO CBC – next one is 12/18/22

Compiled by Janice Jorgensen and Amanda Kallenbach and all the leaders, participants, and feeder watchers.
EXOTIC ECO-TOURISM

Our sharp-eyed friend-of-the-newsletter David Spector found an exotic destination wildlife tour for those who can afford the travel: “Our base for this new tour – in the wildlife-rich US state of Connecticut – lies only two hours from New York City, yet could be a world away from this crowded east coast metropolis. Within Connecticut’s vast woodlands (over 60% of the state is forested) lives a wonderful variety of mammals and birds, including two of the region’s most iconic species, the Bobcat and Black Bear. During this unique, single-centre, holiday we will join expert local guides and aim to offer intimate encounters with these two elusive predators. The photographic opportunities should be outstanding, as will the birding with a host of exciting species to look out for, from majestic Bald Eagles to colourful Baltimore Orioles.” The cost is only £3,495 (excluding airfare). Other highlights of this spectacular nine-day trip include “such striking birds as Scarlet Tanager, Black-and-White Warbler, Indigo Bunting and the exquisite Ruby-throated Hummingbird. We also stand a very high chance of finding North American Beaver during the tour.”

As you may well surmise, this is a trip offered to Brits, who, from the sound of it, may be a rather gullible bunch. So that sets me to thinking that the HBC may well be missing a lucrative fund-raising scheme. I have a lovely barn that could be used to house at least two dozen eco-tourists, sleeping on the floor and in the two lofts, who would be willing to inhabit a space with no central heat and zero insulation. That seems no barrier for a British tourist. And for the trip there is the option of motor boating on the expansive Quabbin Reservoir. (Quabbin really sounds exotic, now doesn’t it? The ad copy practically writes itself!) And for a small upcharge (£495?), there could be a short side trip to the spectacular, wind-swept Mount Sugarloaf in remote Sunderland, MA (both of which sound like something out of the Sound of Music) where sightings of the occasional Peregrine Falcon accompany magnificent views of the mighty Connecticut River. We’ll make a bundle.

And should you think that we are hosing you along the lines of the April 2021 newsletter, think again. Here’s the proof: https://www.naturetrek.co.uk/tours/usa-bobcats-and-bears.

UPCOMING EVENTS OF INTEREST

Hitchcock Center for the Environment

Winter Tracking with Kathy Dean
Saturday, February 19, 9 am – noon in Buckland
Please register online or call 413-256-6006

Join us for a winter morning exploring the tracks and sign that animals have left behind in the woodlands and wetlands surrounding Kathy's home in western Massachusetts. All levels welcome. Cost is $30.

Kathy Dean has worked in the field of outdoor education since 1983 as a wilderness guide, rock climbing instructor and teacher of animal tracking, bird language and nature awareness. In addition to working with several nature education centers, she offers wildlife tracking, bird language and custom-tailored nature programs through Trotting Fox Programs. Kathy is the author of Abbreviated Field Guide to Mammal Behavior: New England Region. She lives in a small hill town in western Massachusetts and is blissfully surrounded by woodlands, wetlands, and wildlife.

Spoil a good walk: go birding! newsletter@hampshirebirdclub.org Dave Gross, Editor