



Hampshire Bird Club, Inc.
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www.hampshirebirdclub.org
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Dear reader, a big-time Boston lawyer went duck hunting in rural Berkshire County. He shot and dropped a bird, but it fell into a farmer's field on the other side of a fence. As the lawyer climbed over the fence, an elderly farmer drove up on his ancient tractor and asked him what he was doing. The litigator responded, "I shot a duck and it fell in this field, and now I'm going to retrieve it." The old farmer replied, "This is my property, and you are not coming over here." The indignant lawyer said, "I am one of the best trial lawyers in Boston and, if you don't let me get that duck, I'll sue you and take everything you own." The old farmer smiled and said, "Apparently, you don't know how we settle disputes in Berkshire County with the 'Three Kick Rule'." The lawyer asked "What is the 'Three Kick Rule'?"

The farmer replied, "Well, because the dispute occurs on my land, I get to go first. I kick you three times and then you kick me three times and so on back and forth until someone gives up." The lawyer quickly thought about the proposed contest and decided that he could easily take the old codger. He agreed to abide by the local custom. The old farmer slowly climbed down from the tractor and walked up to the attorney. His first kick planted the toe of his heavy steel-toed work boot into the lawyer's groin and dropped him to his knees! His second kick to the midriff sent the lawyer's last meal gushing from his mouth. The lawyer was on all fours when the farmer's third kick to his rear end sent him face-first into a fresh cow pie. Summoning every bit of his will and remaining strength the lawyer very slowly managed to get to his feet. Wiping his face with the arm of his jacket, he said, "Okay, you old fart. Now it's my turn." The old farmer smiled and said, "Nah, I give up. You can have the duck."

NEXT PROGRAM

Tuesday, April 11 at 7:15 PM

Ben Nickley presents

Berkshire Bird Observatory: Origins, Current Projects and Tales from the Field

Wesley United Methodist Church, 98 North Maple Street, Hadley; also via Zoom

The [Berkshire Bird Observatory](#) started operations in 2022. Ben Nickley, BBO's founder and director, will discuss its origins, aims, current research projects and future endeavors. He will show plenty of pretty pictures of birds in hands and relate stories from its pilot Spring, Summer and Fall seasons at [Jug End State Reservation](#).

Ben Nickley is a researcher with a passion for birds and the natural landscapes they inhabit. Over the past several years, Ben has traveled across North America to do field studies in many exceptional places, mixing in college and grad school along the way. Of all the places he and his team have been – from the Cypress swamps of the Southeast to the high meadows of the Sierra Nevada – they love nothing more than the Northeastern Deciduous Forest. Ben feels truly privileged to have landed in the Berkshires and to have support from Green Berkshires, BBO's parent organization. BBO contributes data to Green Berkshires' four-year South Taconic biodiversity mapping project. Ben hopes to garner continued support from the Berkshire community to ensure the longevity of BBO as a social, scientific, and conservation institution in this wonderful region.

UPCOMING PROGRAMS

Tuesday, May 9: Joan Walsh, *Full Life Cycle Conservation of Roseate Terns* (Wesley Church, also via Zoom)

Tuesday, June 13: BYO Picnic (Arcadia Wildlife Sanctuary)

MEMBERSHIP NEWS

Welcome to our new members who joined in March – Bill Platenik (Brimfield), Lesley Bourque (Stafford Springs), Claudia Kadra (Ware), Leyla Keough-Hameed (Amherst), Henry Klatz (Easthampton), Andrea LeClair (Southampton), and Abbigail Kelly West (Granby). We look forward to seeing you on the trail or at a meeting!

Donna Lee Ubertalli, Membership Secretary

BIRDING FOR EVERYONE

The Birding For Everyone (BFE) program is geared toward beginner birders and those who, historically, have not been included in the birding community: people young in age, from underrepresented minority groups and who have disabilities that make birding difficult. A one hour online educational session (half presentation, half discussion) is held prior to a two hour, in-person bird walk at an accessible location. All events are free and open to the public. Please help spread the word! The online presentation requires no registration (check the HBC website for the Zoom link). Those interested in attending the walk can register at bit.ly/2023bfe. Upcoming sessions are:

Saturday, April 15, 2023 10-11 AM: Warbler ID (Presentation)

Saturday, April 22, 2023 7:45-10:00 AM: Fort River National Wildlife Refuge, Hadley (Walk)

VOLUNTEER FOR HBC POSITIONS

Our boutique maven, Betsy Higgins, wants to step down, and thus the club is asking members to pick up the reins for her. Running the boutique involves designing or having someone else design club T-shirts, ordering them and other various items that we carry in the boutique, coming to in-person meetings to sell things, keeping track of sales, getting money to and communicating with the treasurer, and interacting with the board. If you are interested, you can contact a board member (board@hampshirebirdclub.org) or Betsy (higgins.elizabetha@gmail.com and 413-320-2026).

The board is also seeking a person or people to organize field trips for the club. Field trips are an essential part of the HBC and we want to continue offering trips to familiar locations and new trips to new locations. Know that you will not be alone in your duties as our outgoing Field Trip leader, Jim Lafley, has agreed to stay on to make this transition as seamless as possible. If you are detail-oriented and would like to help shape the future of our trips and walks, please contact president@hampshirebirdclub.org.

PROPOSED HBC BYLAWS CHANGE

The Nominating Committee has identified three important issues relating to the upcoming HBC board elections that arise from our bylaws. To summarize the bottom line, the committee proposes three changes in the bylaws that will promote a more inclusive club while also fixing problematic language in the bylaws. The HBC board supports the proposal. Here are the issues:

- 1) Section 10.2 of the bylaws says that board members must be HBC members for at least a year. That prohibits nomination of highly qualified new members.
- 2) Section 10.3 of the bylaws says that the election must happen by written ballot at the May meeting. The only exception to this is if the meeting cannot be held in person. This greatly limits participation in the election. Another technical issue in this section is that it says that 5 or 6 members will be elected (which presumes that there will be no odd things like what happened last year when we had a lot of turnover and there were seven board members on the ballot).
- 3) Section 9.1 of the bylaws says that to conduct any business at a members meeting a quorum must be present. A quorum is defined as 15% of the current membership. Today that number is about 50 people. We rarely get 50 people together at one time unless we get someone like David Sibley to speak.

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 X - ELECTION OF DIRECTORS AND OFFICERS

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.

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10.3 Election. 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. *The Board election shall be conducted online with voting commencing the day after the end of the annual program/members meeting in May and ending one week after that meeting. HBC members may vote via paper ballots mailed or delivered to the Membership Secretary no later than one week after the close of online voting.* Following the vote, *the number of candidates with the highest vote totals sufficient to fill all Board vacancies will join the Board.* In the case of a tie for the final spot, one of the tied candidates will be selected by coin toss. *A quorum of HBC members as defined in Section 9.1 must vote in the election for it to be valid.* Newly elected Board members shall assume their duties on June 1.

EDUCATION COMMITTEE REPORT AND WORKSHOPS

We were delighted to have Dan Ziomek and Heidi Stemple offer their wonderful Owling 101 workshop on March 15. As of this writing, we are looking forward to HBC Board member Kalpesh Krishna's workshop on Birding in India on Wednesday, March 29. We hope to see you there.

Once again, THANK YOU for using our new registration form. To use it go to the Education webpage and find the workshop you wish to attend. Below the workshop description is a link to the registration form. You can register for more than one workshop on this form, too. Enter your email address and name on the form, check the box next to the workshop(s), and submit – be sure to scroll down to the Submit button. You will receive an automated email informing you that we have received your registration. The Zoom link for the workshop will arrive via email the day before the workshop. **PLEASE register before the day of the workshop.** We can't constantly monitor our email to send out Zoom links at the last minute. Thank you! Questions? Email us at education@hampshirebirdclub.org.

Upcoming Workshops

- Wednesday, April 19, 7–8 PM: Birding in New Hampshire with avian conservation biologist Pam Hunt
- Monday, April 24, 7–8 PM: Birding with Bioacoustics in Conway, MA with Alex Milne and Erika Nesse
- Tuesday, May 2, 7–8 PM: Female Bird Song: She sings, too! with Katie Schroeder and Monique Dumais

Upcoming new member bird walks—open to all:

- Sunday, 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.

Directions will be posted at hampshirebirdclub.org/education-committee/ on the HBC website.

Join the **Do-It-Yourself** field trip! The March DIY trip was to the UMass Campus Pond, Amherst. The target birds were Red-tailed Hawk, Peregrine Falcon, House Finch, Song Sparrow and Double-crested Cormorant. Make sure to register for the Zoom discussion on Monday, April 3, 7 PM, to discuss our success at finding our target birds and to learn the DIY location and target birds for April. Please remember to register by using the online form as noted above.

Reminder: our programs are now recorded and available on the Hampshire Bird Club website. You can find the links under PROGRAMS or on the EDUCATION page: hampshirebirdclub.org/program-videos/.

SPRING FIELD TRIPS

Field Trip Guidelines

1. Field trip participant numbers are determined by the field trip leader.
2. All field trip leaders and participants must be fully vaccinated, are required to wear a mask when asked, and must be aware of maintaining a safe social distance during the event.
3. Participants should use the contact information in the trip 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 after they register. Please do not show up for a trip unless you have registered for it.

Sunday, April 16. Ashley Reservoir. 7 AM. Half day. Mike Locher looks for early migrants like Pine and Palm Warblers, Ruby-crowned Kinglets, Louisiana Waterthrushes, and possibly holdover ducks. Meet in the Holyoke Elks parking lot (250 Whitney Ave.) near Exit 15 (“Holyoke Mall”) off Route 91 at 7 AM. Contact Mike (413-585-5864) for more information or to register. *Note - The Elks lodge has a "donate to park" policy, so it would be good to throw a dollar in their box.* (M with one optional S section to listen for the waterthrushes)

Sunday, April 23. Fannie Stebbins Wildlife Refuge, Longmeadow. 7–10 AM. Laura Beltran will lead a trip that will include some stationary observations and a walk along a flat, woodland road and trail. The group will be searching for spring migrants through a variety of habitats. To register contact Laura Beltran at lauraandnature@gmail.com. (E/M)

Sunday, May 7. Mineral Hills Conservation Area, Florence. 7 AM. Half day. Betsy Higgins and Marcia Merithew will co-lead this walk that can feature Prairie Warblers, Eastern Towhees, Ravens, and Red-shouldered Hawks, as well as a variety of warblers and vireos. Meet in the parking area at the end of Turkey Hill Road. This will be a moderate walk on uneven ground with some slight inclines/declines. We'll walk around and into the quarry and along the dirt road if time allows. To sign up email mmerithew@comcast.net. (M)

Monday, May 15. Fannie Stebbins Wildlife Refuge. 6–11 AM. Aaron Hulsey and Joe Oliverio will co-lead a walk at Fannie Stebbins to look for a variety of spring migrants and nesting birds. Joe will be able to answer any photography questions participants may have. The walk will be around 3 miles on flat trails through forest and wetland habitats. Trails can be muddy so wear appropriate footwear. We will be meeting at the paved parking area on West Road. For information or to register email Aaron at thomas.hulsey487@gmail.com. (E)

Saturday, May 20. Hilltown Rambles. 6:30 AM, all day. Join Bob Zimmermann and Dave Gross as they ramble around the Berkshire Hilltowns to look for those migrants that prefer higher elevations than the valley provides. We'll be on the lookout for American Bittern, Sandhill Cranes, Blackburnian Warblers and Spotted Sandpipers along with anything else we can turn up. There will be a bit of hiking at the hilly Moran Wildlife Area. Meet at the Northampton Stop & Shop parking lot at 6:30 AM. Pack a lunch or pick one up at our stop at the Cummington Creamery. For information and to sign up contact Dave (djgross@gmail.com or 413-687-8161) or Bob (raz@umass.edu or 413-585-0405). (E/M/S)

Sunday, May 21. Mt Holyoke. 6 AM. Half day. Mike Locher hikes up the park road to the top of this local peak hoping for some later migrants and deep-woods breeding specialties including Worm-eating and Cerulean Warblers and Yellow-throated Vireos. Meet at the (gated) entrance to Skinner State Park (at the end of Old Mountain Road in Hadley) at 6 AM. This is an occasionally steep hike on a paved road. For more information or to register contact Mike (413-585-5864). (M/S)

Sunday, June 4. Knightville Dam. 7 AM. Long half day, often past noon. Betsy Higgins and Marcia Merithew will co-lead a walk at the Knightville Dam area in Huntington. The trip starts with an exploration at the top of the dam, then a drive down to the road along the East Branch of the Westfield River. Highlights include flycatchers, Bank Swallows, Spotted Sandpipers, several species of warblers, and cuckoos. Meet in the JFK Middle School parking lot on Bridge Road in Florence at 7 AM. It's about a 20-minute drive to the Knightville area. There will be a combination of walking and driving on dirt roads over moderately uneven terrain. For more details and to sign up, email mmerithew@comcast.net. (M)

Sunday, June 4. Exploratory Field Trip to Fog Hollow, Southampton. 7–9 AM. Bird club members are invited to this exploratory field trip at Fog Hollow in Southampton. An exploratory field trip directs members to a location to both explore the location and discover what bird species are there without a designated leader. Fog Hollow, in the Southampton Wildlife Management Area, is located off Cook Road, Southampton. If you are traveling south on Cook Road, a parking area is on the left near the power lines. See you at 7 AM.

Field Trip designations:

(E) – Easy walking conditions, fairly accessible for most, usually flat terrain on improved trails or roads.

(M) – Moderately difficult, more challenging trail conditions, short steep sections, longer hikes involved.

(S) – Strenuous conditions, muddy or rocky trails, steep sections, difficult footing in part.

FIELD TRIP REPORT

Connecticut River Waterfowl Trip, March 12: We started at the Holyoke Dam and the South Hadley Canal Park and saw little at either location. There was a Bald Eagle on a nest at the latter location, but there were very few ducks. The Oxbow had plenty of Common Mergansers and a few Hooded Mergs, but little else. The marsh at Arcadia, though, yielded over 40 Northern Pintails (the most I've ever seen together in the Valley) and well over a dozen Green-winged Teal. From there we went to Fitzgerald Lake to see the American Coot, and as a bonus we saw a pair of Red-shouldered Hawks in the woods across from the dock.

Then we headed to Great Pond where Canada Geese, Mallards, and American Black Ducks, usually so common, were few and far between. We did get a single American Wigeon, some Wood Ducks, a few more Green-winged Teal, Northern Pintails, several Hooded Mergansers, and a large group of Ring-necked Ducks in perfect light. At this point most of the group left, but three of us continued to Turners Falls. At Barton's Cove David Peake-Jones picked out one Iceland Gull and I found another (slightly larger and browner) white-winged gull that I'm still researching. We ended at the Power Canal, where we searched in vain for the red phase Eastern Screech Owl that has been spotted there recently, and tallied many Canada Geese, a half dozen Mallards, several Mute Swans, and a pair of Buffleheads. The Buffleheads were diving beside one of the swans, so we had our largest and smallest waterfowl of the day side by side.

Mike Locher

A bunch of birds are chilling in a large group when another bird flies in out of nowhere. "Sorry to intrude lads. I've just arrived from Europe!" says the bird. "Ukraine?" asks one of the group. "Nah mate, I'm a pelican" says the new arrival.

THE CBC CORNER

Some Thoughts About Christmas Bird Count Data

by David Spector

The Christmas Bird Count (CBC) is a wonderful source of data for tracking early winter abundance of birds, but, as with every measurement tool, it has limitations. Some limits are obvious. Coverage is greater where there are more people; across the expanses of boreal forest and tundra in northern North America there are relatively few counts. A species that has not changed its abundance but is wintering further north in response to global warming or habitat change might seem to be in decline because its new range has less overlap with observers. A full picture of a species' population also includes breeding season data.

Even within a single count circle coverage is uneven; for example, here in the Northampton count, areas crisscrossed by roads have much better coverage than do the slopes of the Holyoke Range, and species that frequent suburban habitats are better sampled than are more strictly forest birds. One advantage of the CBC is its multiple decade data base. The counts measure change across large areas as abandoned fields grow into woodlands, woodlands are cut into developments, agricultural and bird-feeding practices change, climate changes, and so forth. Counts also reflect changes in access and visibility. Posting of "no trespassing" signs, opening of new trails, creation or elimination of roadside pull-overs, or construction of houses along the edge of a field, all change access and thus counts of birds, although they may have minimal effects on actual bird populations. Ideally such effects are local, and, like weather events on count days, they "average out." If, though, they represent wider trends then they could bias population estimates.

My first CBC was in an area in which both Black-capped and Carolina Chickadees were common. I asked how I should record chickadees, most of which I could not confidently identify to species. I was told to apply the ratio of those I could identify to all chickadees encountered; thus, if I saw 30 chickadees and identified 6 as Carolina and 3 as Black-capped, I would report 20 Carolinas and 10 Black-cappeds. On another CBC with a large roost of three gull species, many gulls arrived after dark or settled on the water too far for identification; I was told that the ratio method was to be applied – proportions of gull species for those individuals arriving in adequate light and close to observers were applied to the total group.

Unfortunately, the ratio method is based on assumptions that might be false. What if the two species of chickadee differ in how frequently they sing or in how often they learn the other species' song? What if the three gull species differ in time of arrival at roost or where in the roost they settle? It can be frustrating to report birds as "chickadee sp." or "gull sp.", but that is often the best way to record these birds. I have had no connection with these two CBCs in several decades, and I hope that they have changed the way they record those unidentified birds.

A similar problem arises when one member of a pair of difficult-to-distinguish species is locally rare but increasing as is the situation here with crows. When I see a hundred crows overhead or in a corn field in Western Massachusetts I assume that they are all American Crows, unless I hear otherwise, although I know that there might be one or a few Fish Crows in the mix. As Fish Crow becomes more common here, should I start reporting these flocks as "crow sp."? What should one do in an area north of here where Fish Crows have not yet arrived but are expected as their range expands northward? There is no clear answer, but using American Crow as default means that the record of Fish Crow range expansion might lag behind reality.

Some reports on CBCs and similar counts get close scrutiny. Consider my hypothetical report from a Western Massachusetts CBC that includes the following: 1 Roseate Spoonbill, 1 Northern Lapwing, 50 Herring Gulls, 50 Ring-billed Gulls, 2 Sharp-shinned Hawks, 2 Cooper's Hawks, 5 Downy Woodpeckers, and 5 Hairy Woodpeckers. I would be asked for feather-by-feather descriptions of the two records that are easy to identify and that provide minimal information of biological interest. Data on the other species, for which my report will be trusted, can provide information about how similar species respond to environmental changes, but those species are the ones that I am more likely to misidentify. Let's hope that I didn't count the same 50 gulls as Herring when they were 100 feet overhead, but as Ring-bills when they flew back at 1000 feet! Let's also hope that my identifications were not affected by my experience of relative abundance when I learned to identify these species several decades ago. Expectations based on past

experience can bias identification and result in lags in the record of population changes.

Despite these challenges, data from CBCs and similar efforts are very useful and become more so as observers and users of the data become more aware of possible biases and limitations.

UPCOMING EVENTS OF INTEREST

Arcadia Wildlife Sanctuary

The following programs are offered by Arcadia Wildlife Sanctuary in Easthampton. More programs can be found at www.massaudubon.org/get-outdoors/wildlife-sanctuaries/arcadia.

Quiet Birding—April 15 and 28; times vary

Arcadia Wildlife Sanctuary, Easthampton

Parking Lot Birding—April 16; 8-9 AM

Arcadia Wildlife Sanctuary, Easthampton

Saturday Morning Bird Walks—May 6; 7:00-8:30 AM

Arcadia Wildlife Sanctuary, Easthampton

Spring Migration Bird Walks—May 8, 9 10, 11 and 12; 6:30-8:00 AM

Arcadia Wildlife Sanctuary, Easthampton

Mass Audubon Bird-a-thon—May 12-13

Registration for Mass Audubon's fortieth anniversary Bird-a-thon opens on March 30 to sign up for fundraising and birding. Bird-a-thon is Arcadia Wildlife Sanctuary's largest community fundraiser that makes possible the protection of resilient, bird-friendly landscapes, increasing access to nature and environmental education, and mobilizing to fight climate change in the Valley and throughout Western Massachusetts. This year's 24 hours of birding is from 6 PM on Friday, May 12, to 6 PM on Saturday, May 13. Birding activities include birding in pairs and small groups, an accessible bird walk with naturalist John Green and Birding in Place with Laura Beltran (we'll be working to re-capture the Sitting Duck award!). Rules for this year's Bird-a-thon are on the Mass Audubon website. Contact Carolyn Cushing ccushing@massaudubon.org with any questions.

THE HBC QUIZ

Answers for last month's puzzles:

Quiz:

- 21) Black-capped Chickadee. Susan Smith.
- 22) Frances Hamerstrom.
- 23) Marsh Wren. Don Kroodsma.
- 24) Pleasant Valley Sanctuary in Lenox, Massachusetts.
- 25) Geoff LeBaron, Director of the Christmas Bird Count.
- 26) Thornton Burgess.

Flocks:

- 1 H: Ostentation of Peacocks
- 2 G: Gaggle of Geese
- 3 D: Parliament of Owls
- 4 A: Brood of Chickens
- 5 J: Murder of Crows
- 6 C: Charm of Goldfinches
- 7 F: Exaltation of Larks
- 8 I: Conspiracy of Ravens
- 9 B: Watch of Nightingales
- 10 E: Murmuration of Starlings

While out on an HBC field trip we saw the sheriff arrest two local crows who were sitting together on a fence. They were charged with attempted murder.

And what do you call those two birds when they stick together? Vel-crow.

A woman applied for a job at the circus. The ringmaster asked her what her specialty was. She said that she did really good bird impressions. The ringmaster said, "Sorry, we already have someone who does impressions." "Oh well" said the woman as she flew out of the tent.

Spoil a good walk: go birding!

newsletter@hampshirebirdclub.org

Dave Gross, Editor