



Hampshire Bird Club, Inc.
Amherst, Massachusetts
www.hampshirebirdclub.org
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{In an effort to reduce personnel costs, the editor has engaged ChatGPT, the artificial intelligence composition bot, to write this month's editorial commentary. If you like this editorial, kindly keep it to yourself. That's particularly necessary for preservation of the editor's ego should you prefer the bot's humor. The prompting text given to the bot was "Write 200 words about bird watching that starts with 'Dear reader,' and includes humor and a Black-capped Chickadee." The bot produced the following text.}

Dear reader,

If you're anything like me, you love spending time outdoors, and bird watching is one of my favorite activities. I'm sure you've heard of it, but for those of you who haven't, it's basically just like it sounds – you watch birds!

I'm an amateur bird watcher, and I've been able to identify a few of the more common birds in my area, such as the Black-capped Chickadee. I love watching this little bird flit about, hopping from branch to branch and singing its cheerful song. It's so much fun to observe its behavior and learn more about it.

But bird watching isn't all fun and games. It can be quite challenging, especially when you're trying to locate and identify a bird in a large area. I've had my fair share of misadventures, such as the time I accidentally stepped in a mud puddle while trying to get a better look at a Black-capped Chickadee. I'm sure the bird got a good laugh out of it, although I didn't at the time.

NEXT PROGRAM

Tuesday, February 14 at 7:15 PM

John Kricher presents

Galapagos, Darwin, and Biology's Biggest Discovery
Via Zoom

The Galapagos archipelago holds a special fascination for birders, naturalists and biologists worldwide, in large part due to the endemic Darwin's finches and how they shaped Charles Darwin's perception of evolution. The mockingbirds of the same islands are less famous but similarly influenced Darwin's thinking. Over forty bird species, as well as the famous tortoises, Marine Iguanas and many more species are found nowhere else on Earth. Professor John Kricher will fill us in on the finches, mockingbirds and other endemic species of the Galapagos.

Dr. John Kricher is professor emeritus of biology at Wheaton College, where he taught ecology, ornithology and vertebrate evolution for forty-eight years. He is a fellow of the American Ornithologists Union, a former board member of the American Birding Association and past president of the Association of Field Ornithologists, the Wilson Ornithological Society and the Nuttall Ornithological Club.

UPCOMING PROGRAMS

March 14: Nathan Senner, *TBA* (Wesley Church, also 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)

HBC NOMINATING COMMITTEE

As required in the HBC bylaws, President Allard has formed the 2023 Nominating Committee to produce a slate of candidates for the HBC Board election in May. The committee members are Carol Fournier, Dave Gross and Kalpesh Krishna. Contact one of the committee members if you would like to learn more about the Board and have an interest in joining. The committee will announce a slate of candidates at the April club meeting at which further nominations can be made.

A COUPLE OF REQUESTS

HBC Boutique

Greetings all! I have enjoyed running the boutique for some years, but for a number of reasons, not the least of which is that I already have two back-to-back, conflicting Tuesday night obligations, I'm looking for someone to take over my post. Running the boutique involves designing or having someone else design club t-shirts, ordering the shirts and all of the 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 communicating with the board about money and/or any changes of which they would need to be aware.

If anyone would like to chat about it with me feel free to email or call. My contact information is higgins.elizabetha@gmail.com and 413-320-2026.

Many thanks, Betsy Higgins

Chimney Swift Habitat

Are you interested in Chimney Swifts, habitat loss, and a project to create nesting and roosting sites for these aerial insectivores? Last season, a local chimney habitat was destroyed while swifts were roosting inside. I'm hoping to build, and seek help building, one or more chimney swift towers before the swifts return this year. Please contact me if you would like to help: bjhart1949@gmail.com.

Bruce Hart

HBC TREASURER'S REPORT

Through December, club revenue totaled \$7,050 and expenses were \$2,316. This resulted in a year-to-date surplus of \$4,734. However, keep in mind that most of our revenue, which is primarily from dues and donations, comes in during the fall, while many of our expenses are in the spring. Expenses for the club include speaker honoraria, rent at the live meeting venue and newsletter production and mailing. We also periodically make donations to support local education and conservation activities (e.g., at the Hitchcock Center or Arcadia Wildlife Sanctuary). There are also expenses associated with running the club, such as various web services and license fees, as well as insurance, PO Box rental and other administrative costs. The Board reviews club financial data monthly, and at this point is very comfortable in the balance between revenue and expenses. Questions or comments can be sent to treasurer@hampshirebirdclub.org.

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. On the third Saturday of each month at 10:00 AM a one hour online educational session is held (half presentation, half discussion) and on the fourth Saturday of the month there is a two hour, in-person, beginner 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

- February 18, 2023 10-11 AM: Learning Bird Song (Presentation)
- February 25, 2023 7:45-10:00 AM: Power Canal, Turners Falls (Walk)
- March 18, 2023 10-11 AM: Ducks (Presentation)
- March 25, 2023 7:45-10:00 AM: Lake Wallace, Belchertown (Walk)

WINTER & 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, February 12. Old Trolley Line Conservation Area, Easthampton. 9 – 11 AM. Join Laura Beltran to search for those northern finches, Pine Siskins, Common & Hoary Redpolls, Evening Grosbeaks, Purple Finches, and Pine Grosbeaks all of which were found in this area during the last northern finch irruption. Dress warmly for this walk on flat, but possibly icy terrain. For more information and to register contact Laura Beltran at lauraandnature@gmail.com. (E/M)

Sunday, March 12. Waterfowl of the Connecticut River, Holyoke Dam – Turners Falls. 8 AM – noon. Mike Locher will lead this trip along the Connecticut River starting at the Holyoke Dam and visiting areas along the river up to Turners Falls in search of overwintering and migrating waterfowl. This will be car birding primarily. A scope is helpful. To register contact Mike Locher at (413) 585-5864. (E)

Tuesday, March 21. Quabbin Park HQ, Belchertown. 7 – 10 AM. Join Dave Gross on a leisurely walk around the south end of the Quabbin reservoir on a search for very early migrants and over-wintering species. We'll look and listen for birds on land and on the water. Meet at the Quabbin Visitor Center for a walk along the dam and beyond. Depending on our luck we may drive to other spots in the park. Contact Dave at djgross@gmail.com or 413-687-8161 to sign up. (E)

Friday, March 24. American Woodcock Display – Easthampton Community Garden. 6:30 – 8:00 PM. Jim Lafley will meet participants at the garden site 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. To register contact Jim Lafley at jimlafley@gmail.com. (E)

Friday, March 31. Waterfowl & Early Migrants – Arcadia & West Meadows. 6:30 - 10:30 AM. Ted Gilliland will meet participants at the Mass Audubon Arcadia Sanctuary parking lot. This is a walk from the parking lot through the sanctuary and out to West Meadows over moderate terrain. Boots and clothing appropriate for the weather outside for four hours are recommended. Binoculars are necessary. To sign-up contact Ted Gilliland at tgillila@mtholyoke.edu or 480-381-5617. (E)

Friday, April 14. Westover Air Force Base, Ludlow. 8 – 11 AM. To reach the fence at Westover AFB, Jim Lafley will lead participants along Tilley Road in Ludlow where many species can be heard and seen before reaching the fence. This will be a flat one mile walk along an abandoned road. Scopes are recommended, but the leader will have one available. Upland Sandpipers, Grasshopper Sparrows, Eastern Meadowlarks, American Kestrels as well as other birds are possible. To register contact Jim Lafley at jimlafley@gmail.com. (E)

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. (M with one optional S section to listen for the waterthrushes). Note – The Elks has a "donate to park" policy, so it would be good to throw a dollar in their box.

Sunday, April 23. Fannie Stebbins Wildlife Refuge, Longmeadow. 7:00 – 10:00 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)

- Wednesday, April 26. Park Hill Orchard, Easthampton. 6:30 – 9:30 AM.** The Park Hill Orchard with surrounding fields and woodlands can be an excellent place to see a wide variety of spring migrants. Join Jim Lafley as he leads the group around this area with stunning views of the Mt. Tom range. To register contact Jim Lafley at jimlafley@gmail.com. (E/M)
- Sunday, May 7. Mineral Hills Conservation Area, Florence. 7:00 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)
- Sunday, May 14. Gate 5 at Quabbin Reservoir, Belchertown. 6:30 – 9:30 AM.** Greg Brown knows this area well as he lives nearby and birds it frequently. It's a good time and a good location for finding both migrating and resident nesting birds. The variety of habitat along this easily accessed road makes it a great spot. To register contact Greg at gwb@gregorywbrown.com. (E)
- Saturday, May 20. Westover Air Force Base. 10 AM – noon.** We will join the Allen and Brookline Bird Clubs for a bus birding tour of the base hosted by the base naturalist. Each club will have 13 seats, and there is no cost to participants. Interested participants will need to provide information (social security number, address, etc.) to be submitted to Base Security to be vetted prior to the trip. This trip will be limited to HBC members, and seats will be filled on a first come basis. Email stevewinn@comcast.net if interested or with any questions. (E)
- Saturday, May 20. All Day, Hilltown Rambles. 6:30 AM.** 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. 6:00 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)
- Thursday, May 25 through Sunday May 28, Trip to Monhegan Island with Scott Surner.** The classic HBC field trip. Last fall the trip to Monhegan cost \$475 for double occupancy and \$580 for a single. These figures may be different for this trip because the Trailing Yew hasn't posted any pricing yet for the 2023 year, though these numbers should be a good guess of the cost. Trip limit is 12 people. Contact Scott Surner at ssurner@aol.com to register.
- Sunday, June 4. Knightville Dam. 7:00 AM. Long half day, often past noon.** Betsy Higgins and Marcia Merithew will co-lead a walk at the Knightville Dam area. 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 at 7:00 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. To sign up email mmerithew@comcast.net. (M)

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

The Old Trolley Line Conservation Area trip planned for January 19 was rescheduled to January 18 due to a 100% rain prediction on the original date. Six out of eight registered participants were still able to make it. On a calm, comfortable day we didn't see any of the northern finches as advertised in the walk description, but enjoyed 18 other species. We had beautiful views of Eastern Bluebirds and the only White-throated Sparrow on the walk. This conservation area is a good location for woodpeckers, and they didn't disappoint. Two Carolina Wrens were singing like it was spring already and the only surprise of the day was a Raven at the end of the walk.

Jim Lafley

MEMBERSHIP NEWS

Welcome to the 18 newest members joining in January! We hear that many of our new members this year learned about the club through the popular Birding For Everyone series led by Derek Allard and other club volunteers. We hope to meet you on other walks or one of our many Zoom educational gatherings! Our newest members are Kathleen & Jeffrey Auer (Holyoke), Jane Dalton (Northampton), Lorraine & Joseph Golio (Westfield), Joseph & Martha Lellman (Florence), Jonathan & Stephanie O'Keefe (Amherst), Mary Santiago (Amherst), Robin White (Northampton), Jane & James Wing (Gilsum, NH), Ryan S. Willey (Amherst), Aaron Hulsey (Easthampton), Arielle Lifton-Johnowitz (Austin, TX), Joyce Samet (Northampton) and Francis Pike (Granby).

We appreciate our long-time members, too! Thank you to all who responded to the postcard reminder and renewed your membership. Many of you let me know that you had missed renewing since it had been included in the September newsletter without a separate reminder. We are reconsidering our approach for next year. Also, we're working on an update to simplify the online joining and renewal process so that it is (hopefully) easier and less confusing to keep your club membership going from year to year. More to come.

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

Donna Lee Ubertalli, Membership Secretary

EDUCATION COMMITTEE REPORT AND WORKSHOPS

Our New Registration Forms: We have a new registration form for our workshops. Here's how it works: go to the Education webpage and find the workshop you wish to attend. Below the workshop description, you will find a link to the registration form. You can register for more than one workshop on this form, too. Enter your email address and name. Check the box next to the workshop(s) and be sure to scroll down to the Submit button. You will receive an automated email response saying we have received your registration. The day before the workshop, you will receive an email with the Zoom link. *PLEASE* register before the day of the workshop. We can't continuously monitor our email to send out Zoom links at the last minute. Thank you! Questions? Email us at education@hampshirebirdclub.org.

Mike Locher's terrific workshop on Coastal Birding in Winter— and fun quiz — offered us some handy ID information on the waterfowl we might find on the coast and occasionally around here. If you missed it, see the recording. **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.

<https://hampshirebirdclub.org/program-videos/>.

Upcoming new member bird walks—open to all:

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

- April 23, 2023 – 7-9 AM at Lake Wallace, behind the Belchertown Police Station
- The fourth one will be our usual new member bird walk before the June HBC picnic at Arcadia

Our next **Do-It-Yourself Field Trip** with Laura and Les will be on Monday, February 6, 7 PM on Zoom. Each month an area is chosen and a leader describes the location and five target species for that area. Anyone interested has a month to visit the area on their own, record the species they see, and report back at the Zoom meeting the following month. Our January field trip location was the Honey Pot, Hadley, and the target birds

were Horned Lark, Snow Bunting, Northern Flicker, Northern Harrier and American Tree Sparrow. If you'd like to join the February Zoom to share your January sightings and learn of the upcoming field trip, e-mail education@hampshirebirdclub.org.

February workshop:

DIY – Monday, February 6, 7-8 PM

March workshops:

DIY – Monday, March 6, 7–8 PM

Owling 102 – Wednesday, March 15, 7-8 PM

Learning about Merlin ID – Tuesday, March 21, 7–8 PM

To register: There are links to the new registration form on the Education Workshop page.

THE CBC CORNER

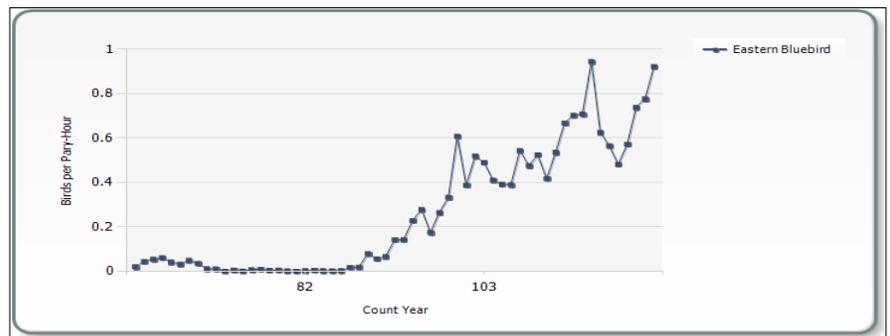
This new feature will highlight in reports and essays the Audubon Christmas Count including its history and impact. The first installment comes from the HBC Newsletter's Belchertown bureau.

Bluebirds, Nothing But Bluebirds, All Winter Long?

by David Spector

Many birdwatchers in Western Massachusetts have noticed an increase in the numbers of Eastern Bluebirds wintering here over the past several decades. A survey of books describing the birds of this area suggests that is the case. In 1890, based on her experiences in Northampton and in northern New York, Florence Merriam wrote that bluebirds are “among the last to leave in the fall,” and in 1906 Hubert Lyman Clark in his *The Birds of Amherst and Vicinity* wrote, “Earliest arrival, Feb. 20; departs in October.” In contrast, the 2003 *Bird Finding Guide to Western Massachusetts* by Jan Ortiz, et al., says that “Flocks are increasingly common in winter.” Those are the impressions of the authors; what about numbers?

The Christmas Bird Counts (CBCs) provide a fairly consistently collected set of data for the early winter as shown in the graph below for the Eastern Bluebird. The CBC data for Massachusetts for the past half-century agree with subjective impressions and show a substantial increase in bluebirds. “Count year” is measured from the first CBC in 1900 (thus, e.g., “count year 103” is the December 2002-January 2003 count).



Why do more bluebirds winter here? One reason might be that there are more bluebirds available to stay the winter. The federal Breeding Bird Survey data show increases in breeding Eastern Bluebirds across most of the northeastern states and in Canada. In Massachusetts the area in which bluebirds were found breeding more than doubled in the three decades between breeding bird atlases. Global warming, habitat changes, nest-box availability, changes in pesticide use, ornamental and invasive plant fruit availability, etc., might all contribute both to increased Eastern Bluebird populations and to more individuals wintering in the North. Teasing apart the role, if any, of each factor in the observed changes would be difficult, but that difficulty need not deter us from enjoying these animated bundles of skylight, working to protect them, and participating in CBCs and other monitoring programs.

The title of this essay paraphrases ornithologist Irving Berlin, and I'll close with a quote from birdwatcher Cole Porter: “Be like the bluebird and sing, ‘Tweet, tweet, tra-la, tra-la, tra-la.’”

2022 QUABBIN CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

The 35th Quabbin Christmas Bird Count tally included 67 species with one new bird for the count and two new high counts. This year's weather was cloudy but fairly warm with a high temperature of 55 °F. Rain held

off until around 2:30-3:00 PM which was quite helpful. Several participants reported that the number of birds was low, especially sparrows and especially for locations inside the gates. Every Christmas Count has included birds we expected to see and didn't, and this count had its share, but it wasn't from a lack of effort. The participants did not find a Belted Kingfisher for only the second time, and there were no sightings of Great Blue Heron or winter finches. The numbers of Red Crossbills were also lower than expected.

Ending on a sad note, Chris Page, Leader of Area 8 since the first Quabbin Christmas Bird Count on December 31, 1988, is moving on. It's not that he's gotten better offers from other Christmas Bird Counts (although maybe he has), but rather that he is moving to the Fall River area this year. Chris has been a member of the Hampshire Bird Club since its beginning in 1984 and was the designer of the Hampshire Bird Club logo featuring the Pileated Woodpecker.

Scott Surner

UPCOMING EVENTS OF INTEREST

Arcadia Wildlife Sanctuary

The following programs are offered at Arcadia Wildlife Sanctuary. More programs can be found at <https://www.massaudubon.org/get-outdoors/wildlife-sanctuaries/arcadia>

Bald Eagles – February 4, 9 AM - noon

Join us for an indoor presentation to learn about eagles and their success stories and history in Massachusetts, followed by a 2 mile hike to the Arcadia Meadows to search for eagles and other birds. Register: <https://www.massaudubon.org/program-catalog/arcadia/85039-bald-eagles>. Members: \$20; Nonmembers: \$25

Woodpeckers, Wood Ducks, and Woodcocks – Mar 11, 18 & 25, 8 AM – 10 AM

Discover the natural history of these special birds found at Arcadia. We'll begin each program indoors, discussing identification tips, courtship and breeding behavior, and conservation. Then we'll go outdoors to listen for and look for the birds. Bring binoculars if you have them. Register: <https://www.massaudubon.org/program-catalog/arcadia/85764-woodpeckers-wood-ducks-and-woodcocks>. Members: \$55.00; Nonmembers: \$70.00

Birding by Ear – April 8, 9 AM – noon and April 15 & 22, 8 AM – noon

Spring is a time filled with the beautiful sounds of birds, many returning to their breeding grounds. Learn the difference between bird songs and call notes, and how to identify birds by their songs. The first class will be an instructional session; the next two will be morning walks to practice what we've learned. Register: <https://www.massaudubon.org/program-catalog/arcadia/85811-birding-by-ear>, Members: \$55.00; Nonmembers: \$65.00

Conte National Wildlife Refuge

“Slow” Birding Series – Feb. 3, 17 & 24 – 9:00-11:30 AM

Explore the concepts of “slow” birding, the art and science of bird observation while enjoying the diverse habitats at the refuge with Bill Randolph. We'll watch for our resident winter birds along the forest-wetland boardwalk, ponds and adjacent grasslands. Learn how bird behavior is an important tool for identifying different species. Expect 1-2 miles of easy, flat walking and dress in layers for winter weather. Appropriate for beginning and intermediate birdwatchers. For more information and to register email Tasha.Daniels@FWS.gov or call (413)858-5403.

THE HBC QUIZ

The answers for the quiz questions in the January 2023 newsletter are as follows:

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| 16) Allen's rule is that the appendages (e.g., legs, external ears, etc.) of birds and mammals are proportionately shorter in colder climates. | 18) Chester A. Reed. |
| 17) Samuel Atkins Eliot, Jr., taught, among many | 19) Ralph Ellison, in his novel <i>Invisible Man</i> . |
| | 20) Florence Merriam, later Florence Merriam Bailey. |

Spoil a good walk: go birding!

newsletter@hampshirebirdclub.org

Dave Gross, Editor