



# Hampshire Bird Club, Inc.

## Amherst, Massachusetts

www.hampshirebirdclub.org

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### April, 2007

Late winter and the first stirrings of spring brought some notable visitors to our valley this past month. Many of us were fortunate enough to see at least one of the Rough-legged Hawks which mysteriously congregated in the shadow of Mt Warner in Hadley. At least seven birds spent several days in this wonderful landscape, to the delight of local birders. As one who had never before seen a dark morph of the species, I confess to being struck by the superficial similarity in flight to Turkey Vultures, though the grace with which these birds perched atop the spindliest foliage they could find hardly evoked images of their storky brethren.

Amongst other tantalizing reminders of the miracle of migration was the fallout of Fox Sparrows which occurred this month, an event so singular and uncommon as to make the local radio news! What happened of course, is that the birds were put down by bad weather just as the peak of their numbers were negotiating our latitudes. What is really rather more remarkable than their presence at our feeders this season, is their ability to sneak by us most years leaving nary a streak of red across the inscrutable sky.

In this edition are:

- an introduction to the program next Monday, field trip reports and upcoming trips, a brief glimpse into the sordid inner workings of the mysterious Nominating Committee,
- an exhortation to sign up for two wonderful overnight trips,
- more on the Massachusetts Breeding Bird Atlas (2) from the peripatetic Mary Alice Wilson,
- some offerings from other local environmental organizations, and
- a tribute to John Lynes, who died recently.

## PROGRAMS

**Monday, April 9 at 7:30 PM**

**Sam Fried** speaks about **The Yukon, North West Territories, & the Dempster Highway**  
Immanuel Lutheran Church; 867 North Pleasant Street, Amherst.

Winding like a gravel ribbon for 450 miles through the boreal forest and across the arctic tundra, the Dempster Highway offers unparalleled scenery and opportunities for birding and wildlife viewing. Golden Eagle, Long-tailed Jaeger, and Willow and Rock Ptarmigan are common birds seen from the road. Gyrfalcons and Peregrines build their aeries on roadside cliffs, and 25 species of ducks and swans are easily observed. Northern Hawk Owls sit atop spruce trees as we pass by. In tundra areas, Smith's and Lapland Longspurs breed, while Northern Wheatear can be found in the talus slopes. Mammals will not be overshadowed, as we encounter moose, gray wolf, caribou, snowshoe hare, grizzly and black bears and lynx. Truly one of the continent's most exciting drives, the Dempster Highway is the road to adventure!



Sam Fried is a past president of Hartford Audubon Society. Hundreds of his photographs and over 35 feature articles have been published in field guides, books and magazines worldwide, including *National Audubon*, *Birder's World*, *Bird Watcher's Digest*, *Birding* and *Living Bird Quarterly* magazines and most recently, the *United States Golf Association Environmental Section Magazine*! Sam co-founded Flights of Fancy Adventures, Inc., a birding, photography, natural history and golf travel company offering small group, low cost, high quality trips to North, Central and South American destinations. For the listers amongst us, Sam has seen 731 species of birds in North America, and photographed 709 of them!

May 14, 2007.  
June 11, 2007.

Paul Sievert.  
Joan Walsh.

## Coming Up

*The Short-tailed Albatross.*

*The Massachusetts Breeding Bird Atlas (Two)*

## FIELD TRIPS

### Reports

#### Connecticut Valley Waterfowl. Saturday, March 24.

**Al Richards**, Chuck Horn, Andrew Magee, and David Peake-Jones toured temporary and permanent wetlands of the Connecticut River valley between Hadley and Turners Falls in search of migrating waterfowl. Since we overlooked the extended daylight savings time, we assembled in the dark at the Hadley Stop and Shop. Not to be deterred, we used the On-Star Doppler radar in Al's vehicle to identify skeins of geese overhead by flight pattern, and ground-truthed the resultant identifications based on flight call notes. As dawn broke, we headed to Hadley Cove. The assembled birds were mainly Canada Geese, and it seemed we would find little else with them. However, as the light brightened, birds found their way by random motion from invisible corners into the tiny viewing windows provided by the streamside silver maples. In this way, we found Green-winged Teal, Northern Pintail, Wood Duck and American Wigeon. Eventually, a **Greater White-fronted Goose** appeared close to our vantage point.

The Honeypot was bird-less, except for a possible Peregrine close to Route 9, but in flooded fields along Rt 47, approaching Sunderland, we found masses of Green-winged Teal, Northern Pintail, and a solitary Snow Goose, mingling with the ubiquitous Canada Geese. Both Peregrines appeared after a short time near the Sugarloaf nest site, and we observed one harassing a stoical Common Raven for several minutes. In the flooded fields at the southern end of Great Pond in Hatfield (off Cow Path Road) we found yet more Green-winged Teal, along with several Wood Ducks and several Killdeer. From the bluffs on the other side of the marsh, we could see several Hooded Mergansers and a pair of Northern Shovellers, who provided rather graphic evidence of an intent to procreate.

At the Rod and Gun Club, we found Tree Swallows cruising the retreating ice edge, another nice pod of Wigeon, a couple of distant **Pied-billed Grebes** (alertly spotted by Andrew), some Ring-necked Ducks, and a lone **Ruddy Duck**. We searched in vain for the origin of a suspiciously Red-headed-sounding woodpecker call note, but after a couple of reps, the singer went silent. All-in-all, we were blessed with a satisfying diversity of ducks and a very nice day.

David Peake-Jones



#### Cape Ann and Plum Island. March 3.

Sue Emerson, Geoff LeBaron, Chris Ellison, and Andrew Magee (in order of decreasing cranial hairiness) went looking for the esoteric winter specialties of coastal Massachusetts. They struck out at Jodrey Fish Pier, found the Eared Grebe still chained to its buoy off Niles Beach, and located a motley crew led by Scott Sumner following a parallel course for the day. Courting Red-breasted Mergansers enlivened the tony vistas of Eastern Point, as did a drake **Redhead**. Diverse gulls populated Niles Pond, including two **Black-headed Gulls**, **Glaucous** and **Iceland Gulls**, and the potential highlight of the trip, for those who can stomach this sort of thing, a (still being reviewed), possible, just-could-have-been first-year **California Gull**! Razorbills followed their usual mysteriously urgent trajectories just off shore. A herd of Harlequin Ducks sported in the foam off Emerson Rocks, and Northern Gannets plied the breezes further out. The day ended at Plum Island where there was a bonanza of no less than six or seven hunting **Short-eared Owls**, and a "monster" Peregrine Falcon.

(David Peake-Jones, from Geoff's trip notes)

## Coming Trips

*(See also the REVISED Winter-Spring-Summer Trip Schedule. Yellow = GOOD, Green =BAAd!)*

**\*Saturday, April 14. Norwottuck Rail Trail/Station Road, Amherst.** 10 AM to Noon. Jan Ortiz investigates bird life at this wheelchair accessible and lively location. Binoculars and scopes are available for use as well as other assistive technology such as portable folding chairs, large print field guides, monopods, and listening devices. Meet at the Station Road rail trail parking lot. Please contact Jan Ortiz (549 1768) or the DCR (545 5758) for further information. (E/A).

**\*Saturday, April 14. Ashley Reservoir: Early Warblers.** Half day. Mike Locher tries to fill Bob Bieda's shoes in searching out early migrants. We're hoping to find Pine and Palm Warblers, Ruby-crowned Kinglets, and migrating Broad-winged Hawks and Ospreys. Meet at the Holiday Inn parking lot, Exit 15 ("Holyoke Mall") off Rt. 91 at 7:00 a.m. (If anybody is interested, we may listen for American Woodcock nearby in the predawn hours. Call Mike (413-585-5864) to express interest and get meeting details.) (E)

**Wednesday, April 18. Midweek half day in the Connecticut River Valley.** Morning. Harvey Allen (413-253-7963) looks for the early migrants Bob missed. Meet at 7:30 a.m. across from Atkin's Farm (on the corner of Rt. 116 and Bay Road, Amherst). (E)

**\*Saturday, April 21. More Migrants.** Half day. Betsy Higgins (413-586-7585) looks for migrants, starting around Look Park in Northampton. Meet at 6:30 a.m. in the parking lot of the JFK Middle School on Bridge Street in Northampton. (E)

On the first three **Tuesdays** in May, we will offer guided walks at Wildwood Cemetery (E) in Amherst from 6:30 - 8:30 a.m. Meet in the small parking area just outside the entrance on Strong Street. On the first three **Thursdays** in May, we will offer guided walks along the rail trail (E/A) from 6:30-8:30 a.m. Look to the May newsletter for leaders and more details.

## OVERNIGHT TRIPS

*Both these trips have plenty of space. Sign up early to avoid disappointment.*

### **MONHEGAN ISLAND: A Birding Pilgrimage**

#### **Memorial Day Weekend (May 26-29), 2006**

Ask any of the best birders in the northeast where to go for the ultimate spring birding experience, and most will mention one place: Monhegan Island. Ask most Hampshire Bird Club veterans to name the five most memorable moments of their lives with the club, and most will mention the Monhegan Island trip. Here's why!

During the Spring, migrant songbirds moving northward up the Atlantic seaboard are sometimes pushed out over the ocean by storms, and have to fight their way back toward the safety of land. Monhegan Island lies about twelve miles off the coast of Maine and is often a haven for exhausted birds to recuperate before resuming the perilous journey northward. We will arrive on the island on the Friday of Memorial Day weekend, without vehicles, and immerse ourselves in the gentle rhythms of island life. We'll find migrant songbirds throughout the tiny village of Monhegan, sheltering in the numerous apple trees, sometimes picking through the sea-wrack on the town beach for sand-fleas, or even hiding in the lobster pots piled almost everywhere. Each day will bring fresh migrants to the island, and a storm could even produce one of the fallouts of birding legend. Rarities can and do crop up at any time.

When the birding slows down, we can venture off on any of the island's numerous walking trails to Lobster Cove, the stupendous seaward cliffs, the Seal Rocks (aptly named), or the Enchanted Forest.

Most of us will leave the valley early on Friday, May 26, and arrive on the island late that afternoon. We will stay at the rustic Trailing Yew, which will lay on breakfast and dinner each day, including a local lobster dinner. This is the perfect opportunity to slow down, REALLY learn the birds, and remember what life *should* be about. We depart the island at mid-day on Memorial Day, and most will be home by early evening, traffic permitting. This trip is open only to members of the Hampshire Bird Club. Registration is by deposit.

***For further details, including an estimation of costs, call Betsy Higgins (586 7585) or Andrew Magee (586 1509).***

## **CONNECTICUT LAKES, New Hampshire.**

**Friday, June 22 – Sunday June 24, 2007.**

Mike Locher and David Peake-Jones will be doing their best to deputize for Tom Gagnon this year on our trip to the "Great North Woods."

Less than a mile south of the Canadian border in extreme northern New Hampshire, our beloved Connecticut River begins as a stream one can almost literally step over at Fourth Connecticut Lake. From here, the river flows through the progressively larger Third, Second, and First Connecticut Lakes, and Lake Francis, before hurrying through Pittsburg, New Hampshire, and on to points south. The streams, lakes, swamps and spruce woods of the Connecticut Lakes are superbly scenic, and provide the closest large tract of boreal forest for us in New England. We will stay in comfortable cabins at Powderhorn Lodge, and make our way daily along Rt 3 (part of which is aptly nicknamed Moose Alley) and adjacent logging roads to visit the various habitats which make up the lakes experience.

There should be great opportunities to observe nesting warblers, including Bay-breasted and Blackpoll, perhaps even the rare Cape May Warbler. Winter finches like Evening Grosbeak and Pine Siskin should be around, along with boreal specialties such as Gray Jay, Boreal Chickadee, Olive-sided Flycatcher and White-winged Crossbill. If we are really lucky, we might come across jewels like the Spruce Grouse or Black-backed Woodpecker.

Please contact David Peake-Jones (413 529 9541; [davidpj@the-spa.com](mailto:davidpj@the-spa.com)), or Mike Locher (413 585 5864, [mlocher@yahoo.com](mailto:mlocher@yahoo.com)) for further information or to sign up.

## **SECOND MASSACHUSETTS BREEDING BIRD ATLAS**

**What Breeding Bird Atlas?** If you are not already involved, go the [www.hampshirebirdclub.org](http://www.hampshirebirdclub.org), click on Breeding Bird Atlas to find background information and instructions on how to participate.

### **Downloading the handbook, field card, breeding bird protocol, and safe-date list**

**1. If you are computer savvy and have a fast internet connection:** Wait to download everything until the final versions are online. You will get an email when all the pieces are ready to go (estimated date April 6).

**2. If you are not-computer-savvy and/or have a slow internet connection:** You may find that the downloading process will drive you CRAZY. No problem. Mary Alice will download all this stuff as soon as the final version is ready and put it on a CD for you. Just let her know before the

April 9th HBC meeting and she will bring it to the meeting. Cost = \$0.75 After that you will also have to pay for postage or drive to Leverett. (mwilson@k12s.phast.umass.edu)

### Downloading maps

If you are having problems, let Mary Alice know. She can print them out for you (and bring them to the April 9th meeting.) Email is still mwilson@k12s.phast.umass.edu.

### March 26th workshop

1. If you were at the workshop with Joan Walsh, you know what a well-thought-out project this is. (And how interesting it is going to be to talk with her at our June 11th HBC meeting when we are deeply into the atlas work.) Please check out the workshop notes ([www.hampshirebirdclub.org](http://www.hampshirebirdclub.org)) because I have added some additional information on some points.

2 If you were not able to attend, there are notes on [www.hampshirebirdclub.org](http://www.hampshirebirdclub.org) (click on breeding bird atlas).

Special thanks to David Gross and Sue Emerson for helping with the arrangements, to the Hitchcock Center for hosting the meeting, to all the participants for such a great turn out (ran out of chairs) and such good questions and, of course, to Joan Walsh and Simon Perkins.

### Atlas Guidelines

See the Handbook for all observation/data entry protocols.

And, as always, Use Common Sense and Courtesy to:

the **birds** (never disturb or endanger, no tapes)

the **birders** (share information, expertise)

the **landowners** (ask permission, provide information, thank)

**yourself** (be safe, have fun)

### Other questions?

Go to [www.hampshirebirdclub.org](http://www.hampshirebirdclub.org) or contact mwilson@k12s.phast.umass.edu.

## HITCHCOCK PROGRAMS

**Beyond “An Inconvenient Truth”: Taking Action.** *Nick d’Arbeloff and Frank Kleimig*

Wednesday, April 25, 7 p.m. Held at the USFWS in Hadley

### Amherst Butterfly Institute

*Classes:* Tuesdays, May 1, 15, 29, June 12, and 26, 7:00 to 9:00 p.m.

*Field Trips:* May 5, 20, June 2, 17, and 30 (or July 1), 10:00 a.m. (time varies)

**Bluebird Program and Nest Box Workshop:** *John Rogers*

Saturday, April 7, 10 a.m. to noon

**Paddle the Watershed. Connecticut Watershed Adventures, 2007.**

Saturday, April 14, 10 a.m.: River Rat Race and Parade, Millers River, Athol to Orange, 978-248-9491.

Thursday, May 3, 7:30 p.m.: Full Flower Moon Canoe, Mill River and Arcadia Oxbow, Easthampton, 413-584-3009.

**Birding By Ear:** *John Green*

Sunday, April 29, Saturday May 26 and Saturday June 2, 6:30 - 9:30 a.m.

**Citizen Science: Salamander Egg Mass Survey:** *Micky McKinley*

Variable date. Call to sign up for April/May dates.

**Low Maintenance Design with Native Plants:** *Owen Wormse*

Saturday, May 5, 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Nasami Farm Native Plant Nursery in Whately, MA

**Fantastic Landscape Connections:** *Richard Little*

Tuesday, April 10, 7 p.m. Held at Holyoke Heritage State Park, Holyoke

**Montague Plains Field Walk:** *Tim Simmons*

Tuesday, April 24, 6:30 p.m. Meet at the Montague Plains, Montague

*For details and registration for all Hitchcock programs, please contact the Hitchcock Center for the Environment, 525 South Pleasant St., Amherst MA 01002. Telephone (413) 256 6006, or on the web at [www.hitchcockcenter.org](http://www.hitchcockcenter.org).*

## **GREAT FALLS DISCOVERY CENTER PROGRAMS**

**Signs of Spring:** *Refuge staff*

Saturday, April 7, 11am

**Something's Fishy!** *Refuge staff*

Saturday, April 7, 1 pm

**Fantastic Landscapes: Connections:** *Richard Little*

Tuesday, April 10, 7 pm. Held at Holyoke Heritage State Park, Holyoke.

**A Place Called Pondicherry:** *David Govatski*

Wednesday, April 11, 7 pm

**Sustainable Forestry Practices in the Valley:** *Jay Healy, Hall Tavern Farm, Charlemont MA.*

Thursday, April 12, 7 pm.

**Harvesting and Stewardship for Multiple Values:** *Lincoln Fish, Greenfield Conservation Commission*

Saturday, April 14, 11 9:30 am – 12:00 pm. Held in the field. Please register with the center.

**Montague Plains Field Walk:** *Tim Simmons, Mass. Nat. Heritage and Endangered Species Program*

Tuesday, April 24, 6:30 pm. For ages 10 and older. Pre-registration required at 800-859-2960.

**Friends Coffeehouse Series**

Wednesday, April 25, 7 pm

*Great Falls Discovery Center is located at 2 Avenue A, Turners Falls, MA*

*Open Fridays and Saturdays from 10 AM to 4 PM*

Phone (413) 683 3221

## Nominating Committee

The committee this year consists of Elissa Rubenstein, Jim Marcum, and Bruce Callaghan. They are charged with recruiting people to serve on the board of the club, thus ensuring its survival and vibrancy. If you are interested in serving, please contact one of these folks.

*OK, it was just a hook to get you to read this far. There are really no details of the lurid machinations of the Nominating Committee. Some things, as Don Rumsfeld might have said, can never be known, and, even if they were known, can never, never be told!!!*

## Welcome, New Members!!

**Robert Jones** -----Monson, Ma.

**James Mallet** -----Hadley, Ma.

We will close this month with a wonderful tribute to John Lynes, written by Bob Bieda.. Until May, talk softly and carry a big scope!

David Peake-Jones, Editor

(413) 529 9541

newsletter@hampshirebirdclub.org

## In Memory of John Lynes

It is with deep sadness that I announce the passing of John Lynes on Sunday, March 18. John was a long time Western Massachusetts birder, classical music expert, and dear friend. He was genteel, optimistic, and lived life with great enjoyment. John was 97.

When John moved to the area in the 1940s, he and his wife Marion bought a farm in Westhampton. When Marion died in the early 1990s he donated this land to the Massachusetts Audubon Society and it is now the Marion Sherman Lynes Sanctuary. John kept almost daily list of birds seen in Westhampton and nearby areas for more than 50 years. He also did his version of breeding bird surveys for Westhampton. He reported, to his surprise, little change in the breeding bird status of Westhampton during that time.

Many Massachusetts birders may remember visiting his home in 1970 to view a Varied Thrush that spent the winter at his feeder. He also observed three White Ibis flying over Westhampton in 1974. He was very familiar with these birds, having lived in southern Georgia for several years before coming to this area. In Georgia, his and Marion's favorite bird was the Painted Bunting, a regular visitor to his yard.

John spent a good deal of time during the 1960s, 70s and 80s birding with Rudd Stone and Sam Eliot. He and Sam were on the faculty of Smith College together. It was wonderful to listen to the stories he would tell about these two rather eccentric gentlemen.

John will be deeply missed by his many friends here in Western Massachusetts.

Bob Bieda