

# *The Woodcock*

## ANTIOCH BIRD CLUB

Founded 2016

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### **Season's Greetings!**

Welcome to the third issue of *The Woodcock*! In this latest edition, the Antioch Bird Club reviews our November and early December news and events, introduces our upcoming events for December, provides recent bird highlights to the AUNE campus, and concludes with a warm thank you to our primary supporters.

### **ABC Monthly Update**

#### **BREAKING NEWS!!!- Antioch Bird Club Work Study Position (Now Available!!!)**

ABC is VERY proud to announce a new opportunity for the spring semester of 2018 for those wishing to work more closely within the club! If you are work study eligible, have a love for birds, and want to help further the club towards its goals, including keeping it viable for the foreseeable future, please consider applying to be the Antioch Bird Club Assistant! This is hot off the press and we are stoked to see the club's legitimacy be taken up to the next level within the institution of AUNE! Please click [here](#) for more information!

#### **New Bird Feeding Station on Campus**



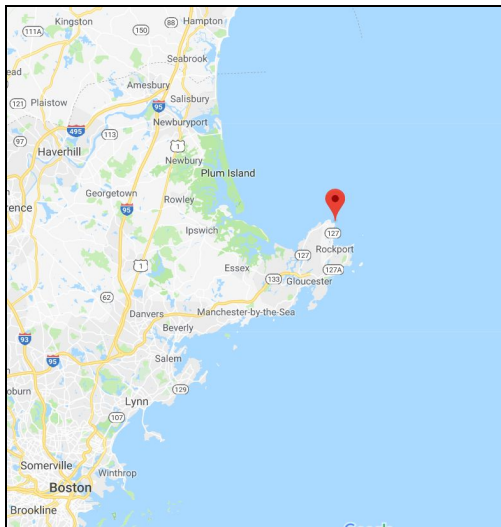
The next time you are entering the main building from the main parking lot, be sure to check out our new bird feeding system. Adjacent to the rain garden outside the community room, we hope this location offers students prime viewing opportunities of our feathered friends when relaxing outside during the warm-weather months, or inside the community room, dance studio, and upstairs kitchen during the winter.

## Connecticut River Waterfowl at the Hinsdale Setbacks

The first Saturday of November, five bird club members ventured to the Hinsdale Setbacks, a unique feature along the eastern bank of the Connecticut River, in hopes of finding thousands of migrating waterfowl. Although numbers were lacking, we enjoyed watching a small flock of Pied-billed Grebe, several mergansers, and a surprise sighting of 2 Brant (spotted by Rachel Yurchisin). A complete list of species can be found [here](#).

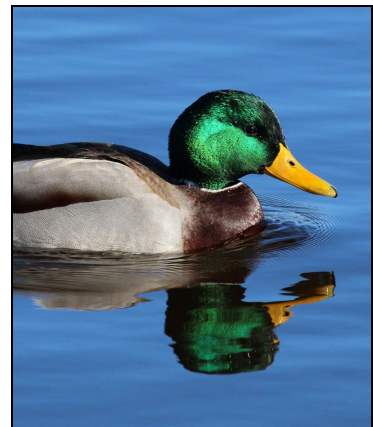
## Fall Seabirds of the North Atlantic Coast

On Saturday, November 11th, nine intrepid AUNE students braved sub-freezing temperatures and gusty northwest winds to explore Cape Ann, Massachusetts in search of seabirds. Located on the north shore of Massachusetts, Cape Ann is one of the premier places in New England to search for sea ducks, loons, grebes, gulls, and other rocky shoreline specialties, particularly Harlequin Duck and Purple Sandpiper. This is an annual trip for the club, and helps climatize participants for similar trips to the area that often occur in the winter months of the spring semester.



Starting just after 8 AM, the morning group of eight made their way out to Andrew's Point, one of the best [hotspots](#) on Cape Ann for the target species listed above. Situated on the north shore of Cape Ann (see map thumbnail to left), it is easy to see why so many seabirds are easily viewed from this locale which juts out into the North Atlantic. As expected, this location didn't disappoint! Highlights included Harlequin Duck, all three species of scoter (Surf, White-winged, and Black), Long-tailed Duck, Red-throated Loon, Northern Gannet, Great Cormorant, and Purple Sandpiper.

From Andrew's Point, we made our way south, exploring several other hotspots in and around Rockport and Gloucester. These included Granite Pier, Niles Beach, Niles Pond, Eastern Point Lighthouse, and Jodrey State Fish Pier. These spots targeted a variety of habitats including rocky points and jetties, secluded beaches and coves, a freshwater pond, and an inner harbor. Because of this variety of habitats we were able to add additional species on the day including a variety of dabbling and diving ducks, Horned Grebe, and American Coot.



After parting ways with two of our morning participants at Jodrey's Pier in Gloucester, we headed north to Essex, MA for a quick lunch at '[Woodman's of Essex](#)', originator of the fried clam and to meet a new participant for the afternoon. After a warming lunch of fried fish, clams, chowders, and chicken, our intention was to head north to Newburyport and Plum Island in search of owls, raptors, and any other surprises that we could find in the remaining hours of daylight. Once again, things were working in our favor, and when we arrived to our first stop, Cushing Park in Newburyport, our target bird was resting peacefully in the late day sun. "Acorn", as the locales refer to it, is an adult red morph Eastern Screech-Owl, which has been using a dead tree in this small city park for the last several years and was named after the acorn-shaped hole that it often roosts in which faces the late afternoon sun. Arguably the highlight of the day, Acorn showed beautifully for all of our afternoon participants (below).



Our final stop on the day was Plum Island, specifically Parker River National Wildlife Refuge (see our [previous newsletter](#) for a map and description of Plum Island). Because our trip fell on a federal holiday (Veterans Day), we gained free access to this wonderful refuge for the last few hours of sunlight. Our target at this location was a previously reported Snowy Owl. While we did not see this individual, Plum Island never disappoints and we enjoyed wonderful looks at American Wigeon, Red-throated Loons, Greater Yellowlegs (right), a flyby Merlin (15 feet away!), and several Northern Harriers.







However, the clear highlight at this location, and our final stop of the day, was a pair of Short-eared Owls hunting in the fading light that were first discovered by Steven Lamonde (left). These Short-eared Owls marked the second species of owl observed during the last three hours of this day alone, capping what was truly an amazing trip from start to finish. To help celebrate our successful day, we did what any self-respecting group of graduate

students would do after being out in the cold all day- we visited the [Flatbread Company in Amesbury, MA](#) for a wonderful dinner of all-natural, organic pizza in front of a large wood-fired pizza oven! For more photos from this trip, please see our Facebook album titled '[Fall Seabirds of the North Atlantic Coast- 2017](#)'



Two emblematic images of the Short-eared Owls from the trip including one hunting in fading light by Steven Lamonde (left) and one perched in the twilight by Chad Witko (right).

## Intro to Common Winter Birds

Our final birding event on campus for the semester, this workshop took place on December 2nd and was devoted solely to learning about the common species of birds that one is likely to observe over the winter months. By learning many of these common winter species, most of which are year-round residents (e.g., Blue Jay and Black-capped Chickadee), a beginning birder can build a solid foundation of 20-30 species from which to reference during the rest of the year when encountering new birds. This is particularly helpful when trying to learn the other species that breed here during the summer or winter here from places further north.

On the morning, we had a total of eight participants, including two journalism students from Boston University who made the trip out to interview Chad about birds and climate change for one of their class projects (right). The students from Boston University reached out to ABC after we ran into some of them on our Plum Island trip on November 11th (see above). This highlights the reach that ABC is starting to have as a resource, not only across the Keene area but across the region.



While the people showed up for this event, the birds were a little lacking on the day. Starting in the library, the feeders were mostly empty thanks to a Cooper's Hawk that was visibly perched above them upon our arrival. While not allowing for a lot of songbird diversity, its presence was a learning experience of its own. Moving from the library to the bike



path, we headed west over the footbridge to the Ash Brook Wetland area where we found a nice patch of birds from which to continue our learning. Highlights from this spot included several Blue Jays, Black-capped Chickadees, a Northern Mockingbird, Dark-eyed Juncos, a male Northern Cardinal, and several House Finches. In the end, it was a great morning to be out that offered a lot of opportunities to discuss the basics of birding during this time of year, including how to share binoculars (left).

## **December Schedule of Events**

### **End of Season Meeting, Pizza Night, and Bird Trivia!**

**December 6<sup>th</sup> (Wed)- 5 PM**

Please join ABC for our end of fall semester meeting, trivia and pizza night! We will have a short meeting summarizing the fall semester and look towards the spring semester in terms of the club's growth. After taking care of business, we are lined up to play Team Bird Trivia, testing our knowledge of North America's birds while eating pizza from one of Keene's own pizza pie purveyors!

### **118th Christmas Bird Count**

**December 17<sup>th</sup> (Sun)- All Day**

Hallmarked as the nation's longest-running citizen-science bird project, the Christmas Bird Count (CBC) offers wonderful opportunities to meet fellow bird-enthusiasts and enjoy a home-cooked potluck dinner afterwards. Join Antioch Bird Club members for Keene's CBC on 12/17/17, or sign up for a local count closer to home! Leader(s): Chad Witko and Steven Lamonde. RSVP by December 10th.

## **Birds of AUNE**

### **Bird of the Month**



The ABC 'Bird of the Month' for December 2017 is the White-breasted Nuthatch (*Sitta carolinensis*). This small songbird with a large head can be found hanging upside down and moving around odd angles in mature woodlands and forest edges of the Monadnock region. It also commonly frequents bird feeders, including ABC's very own on campus. To learn more about this quirky species, please read [here](#).

### **AUNE eBird Hotspot Update**

Not surprisingly, over the last month zero new species of birds have officially been added to the AUNE campus [list](#), keeping the total to 107 species. However, the first Golden-crowned Kinglet of the year was observed on November 11th by first-year ES student Dylan Cipkowski. American Tree Sparrows, first seen on November 9th are becoming more visible on campus, as their local overwintering population settles in for the season.



## A Snowy Day in Stoddard



On Thursday, November 16th, a report went out on the New Hampshire Birds Google Group, detailing a report of a Snowy Owl (left) atop the roof of Carlisle Wide Plank Floors in Stoddard, NH. Located only 20 minutes northeast of Keene, this is about as close as a Snowy Owl is likely to get this season to campus. As such, ABC made a post to our Facebook page, alerting club members of this arctic visitor which had made its way practically into our “backyard”. Fortunately, at least four ABC members were able to make the trip to Stoddard that afternoon to view the owl in the fading light, fog, and light mist. One birder even viewed the owl after dark on his way home catching a quick glimpse of the bird atop a telephone pole in his headlights. Unfortunately, the Stoddard Snowy Owl, likely a young female based on the amount of plumage barring, was only around for a single day. While not observed on campus, it was a highlight for those ABC members who got to view the owl before it moved on. Photo courtesy of Chad Witko.

## ABC Next Steps (A Review of 2017 and a Look Towards What's Next)

Wrapping up this final edition of *The Woodcock* for 2017, we want to end by first thanking each and every one of you for your support and inspiration over the last few months. Without you, none of this would have been possible. Seriously! A special thanks, as always, to Abby Jones (Library) and Susan Weller (Environmental Studies Department) for their continued support above and beyond what is expected and for listening to our crazy ideas. Also, many thanks to Amy Janvier for handling the mailing of our newsletter and for serving as our fund-collecting point person during the 1st Annual Fall Birdathon back in September.

Arguably our best semester to date, ABC reached new heights during the fall of 2017 from which we will only continue to grow. Since September, ABC has organized 12+ trips and events, ranging from coastal forays in search of seabirds to scavenger hunts around the library. We are already in the planning phase for the spring semester of 2018 and suspect it will take our club to new levels. We hope that you will join us in this effort as we strive to become a more integral organization on campus and a valued resource to the local community. As always, thank you for your time.

**Our Next Meeting is Wednesday, January 17th, at 3:00 PM.**

<https://www.facebook.com/AUNEBirdClub/>