

The Woodcock

ANTIOCH BIRD CLUB

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Happy New Year (and Happy Birthday)!

Welcome to the fourth issue of *The Woodcock* and a brand new year! In the world of birding, a new year represents many of the things we already associate with the changing of a calendar- new opportunities, new resolutions, and new hopes for the months to come. Did you know that many birders keep year lists, keeping track of how many species they have identified by sight or sound within a calendar year?

Furthermore, some birders participate in a Big Year, which is a personal challenge or an informal competition among birders to see as many species as possible within a set geographic area. Also, did you know that for ornithologists, all birds celebrate their birthday on the 1st of January, regardless of when they were born? With the start of 2018 fresh in the rearview, there is no better time than now to make this year your best year for birding yet! We certainly plan on it! So what does 2018 have in store for ABC? A lot! Please read on for more details about some of our plans for 2018 and the semester ahead.

ABC News

Please Welcome Our New Antioch Bird Club Assistant



The Antioch Bird Club warmly introduces Kelsey Higney (ES-Conservation Biology) as our first-ever Antioch Bird Club Assistant! Kelsey brings great enthusiasm and warmth to the club's first formal position. We know that she's going to be a great addition to the club helping us to diversify our reach and we are confident that her presence will move us closer to our highest potential. Please welcome her in the weeks and months to come if you see her at our meetings or on our trips.

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Antioch Bird Club Global Big Year 2018



From January 1st to December 31st, the Antioch Bird Club is seeking to find just how far-reaching our impact is by cooperatively looking for as many species of birds as possible on planet Earth in a calendar year. This is our Global Big Year! It is, in essence, a celebration of birds, as well as a celebration of diversity in all forms. The truly global presence of birds brings people together across international borders, languages, and cultural barriers like no other group of vertebrates on Earth.

Any support for the Global Big Year is most welcome. The Antioch Bird Club is grateful to exist in a body of students, staff, and alumni from all different backgrounds and places. We would love to see the true expanse of our birding influence in 2018. To participate, all you need to do is have or create an eBird account from eBird.org and share your bird sightings with us at 'ABC Big Year.' If you have any questions, don't hesitate in emailing us at antiochbirdclub@gmail.com or by messaging us on Facebook. If you are interested in viewing our progress, including an interactive map, please visit the Antioch Bird Club Global Big Year eBird profile [page](#), or follow us on [Facebook](#) where we will post monthly albums showcasing photo highlights from our effort! For more details, please visit our event [page](#) on Facebook.

ABC Seeks Graphic Designer

The Antioch Bird Club is looking to develop a series of graphic logos to be used for advertising purposes (social media, banners, and t-shirts). If anyone has experience with graphic design in developing logos and is willing to help us out gratis, please let us know!

ABC Monthly Update

Bird Trivia Night

A HUGE thanks to everyone who came out to the final ABC monthly meeting of the fall semester to partake in bird trivia! Three teams competed but the Gyrfalcons (Chad, Jen, and Jess) came out on top with 14 points. For those keeping tally, this is the second year in a row Team Chad has won! The Thrashers (Sam and Jake) came in second place with 13 points, but get the bonus prize for naming more woodpecker species in North



America than any other team, and the Timberdoodlers (Steven, Arianna, and Rachel) came in third with 10 points. A special thanks to Lauryn Witko for being our emcee! Finally, all gaming resources used for this event will be kept in the library (in the bird club corner) to use whenever someone needs a little bird-game therapy.

Impromptu Trip to the Coast

In the ephemeral world of birding, you sometimes have to drop all other plans to see the birds when the birds are present, or you might not get another chance. On Saturday, December 16th, several ABC members took a last-minute impromptu trip to the coast in search of seabirds and winter raptors, many of which were being reported in the days leading up to the trip. As has been the case all season, the coast lived up to its hype and then some.



Arriving to Rockport, MA shortly after sunrise, the seabirds put on quite a show, despite the cold. From Andrew's Point, all the expected bay and sea ducks were visible, including the incomparable Harlequin Duck (above- Photo by Chad Witko). We were even treated to several flocks of offshore alcids flying in the distance over the horizon. While these relatives to puffins could not be positively identified at this great distance, they were a welcome addition to the morning. With our early success of seabirds at Andrew's Point, we decided depart the Cape early, heading north. By mid-morning, we were able to make our way to Joppa Flats, home of the Joppa Flats Audubon Center. Highlights from this location were the throngs of Canada Geese and puddle ducks lining the ice-rimmed Merrimack River. The notable birds from this locale included several Snow Geese, two Gadwall, and a resting female Northern Pintail among the Mallards.



Mixed waterfowl flock (left) by Chad Witko and Snow Geese (right) by Steven Lamonde.



Female Northern Pintail sleeping among Mallards (note grayish body and gray legs) (photo by Chad Witko).

After our brief stop at Joppa Flats, we quickly made our way to Plum Island and Parker River National Wildlife Refuge just up the road. Hitting the refuge mid-day, we were excited to still find some great birds from Parking Lot 1, including nearby Razorbills and

Red-throated Loons just off the beach. We also ran into a group of young birders who told us about a Snowy Owl they had just observed from the Wardens moments prior. Shooting down the refuge road exactly at the posted speed limit, we found ourselves at the Wardens parking lot alone and free from other birders. As we walked out towards the edge of the marsh, a flock of birds was observed feeding on the dirt road in front of us. Snow Buntings (right; photo by Chad Witko)! These would prove to be a life bird for some people in our group and the view was outstanding. Even when the buntings were flushed they would simply wheel around us, calling in flight, only to land back to the very spot they were just at.



It was also at this very spot that Steven Lamonde found a white mound in the middle of the marsh. Looking through his scope, the mound was perfectly owl-shaped, but anyone who has chased Snowy Owls before knows how easily deceptive a white piece of trash in the middle of a marsh can be. Nevertheless, it was very convincing, and as a group we felt confident that we had observed *the* Snowy Owl that the young birders told us about just moments prior. However, as any good group of birders does, we were discussing the observation when Rachel shouted “What about the Snowy Owl right there?”. A large white bird flew directly adjacent to us, making its way out towards the edge of the marsh before settling into an Eastern Red Cedar. SNOWY OWL!



Snowy Owl in flight (left) and a light-morph Rough-legged Hawk (right) kiting in the afternoon wind at Plum Island (Photos by Chad Witko).

After a snow-filled stop (two Snowy Owls and ten Snow Buntings), we gave a round of high fives and decided there was no better time to leave the refuge than on this high note. Despite these intentions, the raptor show at Plum Island was far from over and we found it difficult to leave as quickly as we had hoped. On the way out of the refuge along the main road we were treated to fantastic looks at several Northern Harriers and Rough-legged Hawks hunting over the pans and marshes. Plum Island delivered!

After leaving Plum Island, the group headed north over the MA/NH border to Hampton Beach State Park. Here, we were lucky to view a small flock of Snow Buntings before even parking! Then, as if the birds were in a competition of their own, we received word from a passing birder that there was a Snowy Owl perched on a sand dune just around the corner. Our third Snowy Owl on the day! After many photographs, we walked a short ways on the beach and between the dunes to round up various sea ducks, Northern Gannet, and a Savannah Sparrow.

Having been following reports of a Glaucous Gull for the past few days, the group decided to head across the road to Yankee Fisherman's Co-Op, near where the gull had been regularly spotted. After looking around, and braving the cooling temperatures, no gull with white wingtips had been spotted. But, just as they were pulling out of the parking lot, Steven asked "Wait, what about that one on the lightpost?" Indeed, there sat the Glaucous Gull! After quickly re-parking, everyone whipped out their cameras and binoculars to get a better look. Many photos were taken as the bird alternatively perched and soared in the wind, sliding in and out of golden rays from the setting sun.

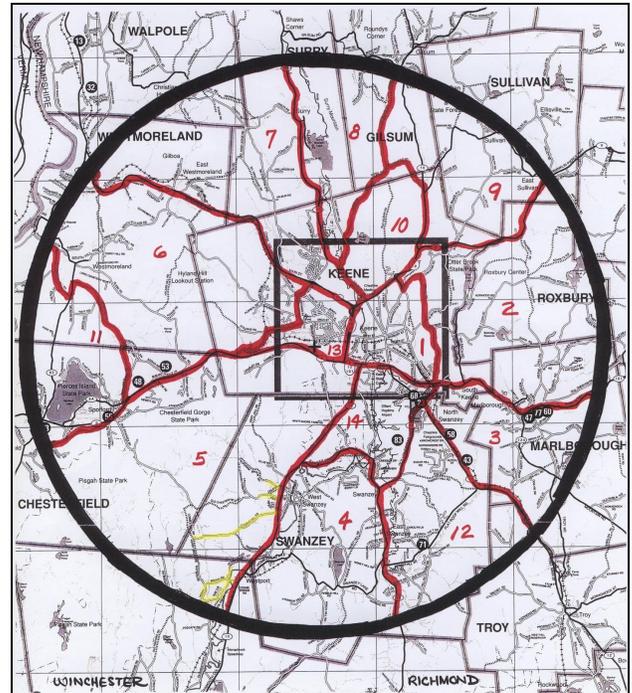


Snowy Owl (left; photo by Chad Witko) hanging out in the beach dunes at Hampton Beach State Park, and a Glaucous Gull (right; photo by Steven Lamonde) showcasing its beautiful white wingtips.

118th Annual Christmas Bird Count

On Sunday, December 17th, ABC participated in the 118th Annual Keene [Christmas Bird Count](#). The Keene Christmas Bird Count, or CBC as it is often referred, is one of the original CBCs in the United States, dating back to 1900.

Setting out to count every bird encountered within the sector, eight ABC members joined Chad Witko (sector leader) in birding the back roads and neighborhood streets of Marlborough. It was a beautiful, yet frigid winter day with clear skies and temperatures ranging from -2°F to 24°F with light winds. In total, ABC tallied 334 individual birds of 26 species, and covered over 50 miles within a 7.5-hour period.



ABC's endeavor was part of a larger group effort for the entire 177-mi² count circle. 36 participants observed 61 species of birds and 7,638 individuals were counted. This year's 61 species tied 2012's and 2014's high count for number of species on count day, while the individual count was good for 4th all-time and well above the long-term average.

This all-time ranking was primarily thanks to a remarkable total of 2,524 Dark-eyed Juncos, the most common species on the day. The ten most common species were Dark-eyed Junco (2,524), European Starling (821), Black-capped Chickadee (553), American Goldfinch (367), Blue Jay (363), House Sparrow (321), American Crow (290), Rock Pigeon (253), Cedar Waxwing (251), and Mourning Dove (218). Six species set new high counts: Lesser Scaup (4), Cooper's Hawk (8), Brown Creeper (32), Hermit Thrush (4), Song Sparrow (22), and Red-winged Blackbird (107) with two large flocks for this late date. On the other hand, low numbers

of Black-capped Chickadees were recorded (553), and Wild Turkeys were also relatively scarce (70). A few misses include Ruffed Grouse, Evening Grosbeak, and Winter Wren.

Six count week species (observed 3 days before to 3 days after the count) include a first-ever for the count period Black Vulture in Westmoreland (Adam Burnett), a second-ever American Pipit in Swanzey (Sam Jaffe), a second-ever Peregrine Falcon in Westmoreland (Don Clark), Brown-headed Cowbird and Ring-billed Gull in Swanzey, and another bird that will get special treatment in this article a little later on. The 67 species recorded during count week breaks the old record of 66! With the two first-ever count period birds plus the first record of Towhee on count day, the cumulative total of birds recorded on the Keene CBC is now 109.



Schedule of Events

Superbowl of Birding (Superbowl XV)

January 27th (Saturday)- 5 AM (All Day)

ABC will be competing in this year's Superbowl of Birding, an event aimed at counting the greatest number of birds and earning points for rarity. The event is hosted by Mass Audubon's Joppa Flats Education Center. Our first team is comprised of two current students (Chad and Steven) as well as two alumni (Phil Brown (New Hampshire Audubon) and Ken Klapper). The primary objective of this team is to compete in the Zeiss Joppa Cup and for the Rockingham County Award (competing only in NH). With this effort we are hoping to bring more attention to ABC as an entity within the realm of NH birding. The club would like to fill a second team. Please respond ASAP on the Antioch Bird Club event page or email antiochbirdclub@gmail.com if you are interested. For more information, please visit the Mass Audubon [webpage](#) for the Superbowl. Leader(s): Steven Lamonde and Chad Witko.

Library Scavenger Hunt

February 16th (Friday)- 8 AM through March 2nd (Friday)- 12 PM

Like to win prizes?!? Need a break from the start of the semester? Hidden among the books, journals, shelves, and plants of the library will be an array of bird photographs that you need to find and identify! Be the person to correctly identify the most species from these photos and you will win a select prize! Because of the success of past scavenger hunts we're going to raise the stakes this time around! Think you know our scavenger hunt? Think again!

Great Backyard Bird Count

February 16th (Friday) through February 19th (Monday)

The 21st Annual Great Backyard Bird Count is a great way for birders of all levels to count some birds! The Antioch Bird Club will be making eBird checklists in solidarity with birders around the area and around the world to collect data for researchers at Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society. The more eyes and ears the better! For more information see 'Events' on the Antioch Bird Club Facebook page.

Bagels and Birds

February 17th (Saturday)- 8 AM (Rain Date is February 18th)

Join the Antioch Bird Club for a morning of coffee, bagels, and birds! We look forward to a relaxing morning observing the birds of the Antioch Bird Club feeders from the comfort of the library. Bagels and coffee will be provided from a local Keene establishment. For more information see 'Events' on the Antioch Bird Club Facebook page. Leader: Chad Witko. RSVP by February 15th.

Winter Seabirds and Raptors

February 24th (Saturday)- All Day

The club journeys to Plum Island and Cape Ann for a day of seabird and raptor viewing at these coastal birding hot spots. This trip will be an opportunity to see a variety of seabirds including loons, grebes, mergansers, scoters, and with any luck the incomparable Harlequin Duck. Likely raptors include Northern Harrier, Bald Eagle, and Red-tailed Hawk, with Rough-legged Hawk, Short-eared Owl, and Snowy Owl a distinct possibility. A carpool will be organized by ABC. Leader: Chad Witko. RSVP by February 22nd.

Birds of AUNE

Bird of the Month



The ABC 'Bird of the Month' for January 2018 is the Black-capped Chickadee (*Poecile atricapillus*). This small songbird is known for its distinctive chickadee-dee-dee call and for being a common visitor to backyard feeders, especially in the winter. Leaving suet, peanuts, or black-oil sunflower seeds in a feeder will likely attract this bird. The Black-capped Chickadee is listed under 'Least Concern' on the IUCN Red List, though they are having a low year in New Hampshire according to Christmas Bird Count data. To learn more about this quirky species, please read [here](#).

AUNE eBird Hotspot Update

Over the last month two new snow-themed species of birds have officially been added to the AUNE campus [list](#), raising the total to 109 species. These included a flyover Snow Bunting on December 15th and the bird featured below! New high counts of two species were also recorded since the publishing of our last newsletter. A large flock of Dark-eyed Juncos (48) continues to visit the ABC feeders in front of the library, and an estimated 300 European Starlings were observed flying over campus on December 20th. In related news, two new eBird hotspots have been created for Antioch's [Glover's Ledge](#) and [Branch River](#) properties.

Snowy Owl on Campus

On December 19th, Chad Witko arrived to campus at 7:30 AM, just in time for his shift in the library. Getting out of the car, he noted to himself how quiet it was, save for a few House Finches calling from the feeders. It was a quintessential, cold, and still winter morning. As he walked across the parking lot to the main building's front door, he studied the bird feeders, noting which ones had to be filled later in the day after his shift ended and before he left for Christmas break. Turning his attention back towards the front door, he had a feeling that began to stir inside him, a notion to "look up". Turning his gaze back towards the library bird feeders he did just that, and mid-step, looked up to find a solitary white figure atop the bike shed watching his every move. It was a Snowy Owl, and it stopped Chad dead in his tracks.

It was just three days prior that Chad and other members of ABC saw three snowies in one day, but this was much different. Watching the bird for approximately 1-2 minutes, heart pounding, it was just enough time for Chad to take a documentation photo (right) from his iPhone before the bird flew over the building and out of sight. Getting the word out through the normal “bird channels” over the next few hours, several students, along with faculty members and staff, were able to see this owl as it perched on various buildings along the bike path. After leaving campus, the Snowy Owl was observed right next door and could even be observed from the Avon Street parking lot (below; photo by Jess Meck).



This bird was also observed just a few days after the 118th Annual Keene Christmas Bird Count on the 16th (see above), and was subsequently counted as a “count week bird”. Much to the surprise of many, this marked the first time ever that a Snowy Owl was detected within the Keene Christmas Bird Count Circle in all the years it has been running! Perhaps more ironic is the fact that in our last newsletter, when remarking upon the Snowy Owl in Stoddard, we stated the following: “Located only 20 minutes

northeast of Keene, this is about as close as a Snowy Owl is likely to get this season to campus.” How wrong we were! Additionally, this is more than likely the same individual Snowy Owl that has famously been hanging around the entrance to Monadnock Marketplace just a few minutes from campus. How lucky we were to add it to our campus list! Talk about being in the right place at the right time.

Our Next Meeting is Wednesday, February 7th in Room 231 at 3:00 PM.

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