



Science at Work  
for a  
Sustainable World

## **18<sup>th</sup> Annual Massachusetts Birders Meeting Program Abstracts and Speaker Biographies**

### **Petersen Lecture Presentation (Keynote speaker):**

**Greg Butcher, Ph.D.**  
Director of Bird Conservation  
National Audubon Society

### **The (Citizen) Science Behind State of the Birds USA 2009**

***“Birds need clean air, clean water, and healthy landscapes to raise their families. So do humans. When we organize our birding, we collect information on the health of the environment for birds and people, and we can use that information to improve the quality of life for all of us.”***

**-Dr. Greg Butcher**

---

Dr. Greg Butcher is Director of Bird Conservation for the National Audubon Society, working with the *State of the Birds* reports, the Watch List of birds of conservation need, effects of global warming on North American bird populations, analysis of Christmas Bird Count data, BirdLife International, the North American Bird Conservation Initiative, Partners in Flight, and policy issues related to migratory birds. He has a Ph.D. in Zoology from the University of Washington. He has previously served as Director of Bird Population Studies at Cornell University's Laboratory of Ornithology, Executive Director of the American Birding Association, and Midwest Coordinator for Partners in Flight, and Editor of *Birder's World* magazine. Greg is a Fellow of the American Ornithologists' Union (AOU), past president of the Association of Field Ornithologists, and past chair of the nongovernmental organizations and monitoring committees of Partners in Flight.

Dr. Butcher was a member of the science team that developed the *U.S. State of the Birds* report released by the Department of Interior in 2009.

---

### **Massachusetts Breeding Bird Atlas 2 (BBA 2)**

## **Preliminary Results: Winners and Losers**

**Joan Walsh**

**Breeding Bird Atlas Coordinator  
Mass Audubon**

This presentation will examine the interim results of the BBA2, paying attention to the species that are in decline and not under any extra state or federal protection, while also looking at the most rapidly expanding breeding species in Massachusetts. There will also be a discussion of features in common with each suite of species, along with ideas that could lead to the recovery of those species that are declining.

Joan Walsh is the Director of Bird Monitoring at Mass Audubon. Prior to returning to her home state, she worked for seven years at New Jersey Audubon as director of research, completing the first New Jersey Breeding Bird Atlas while managing hawk watchers and sea watchers, and raising kids at the same time. Previously, she was a biologist on the Farallon Islands, studied Wood Storks in Georgia (Go “Dawgs”) and terns on Great Gull Island, and was an intern at Manomet in 1983—the El Nino Year of the Chickadee. She really likes Corgi dogs, old churches, and new birds in warm places.

---

## **Understanding Bird Populations by Listening in on Nocturnal Migration**

**Ted Floyd**

**Editor of *Birding*  
American Birding Association**

This talk will look at how studies of nocturnal migration in Colorado are generating new insights about bird populations in that state. For example, quantitative documentation of heavy early-season fall nighttime flights (starting in late July) has led to new understanding about the extent and magnitude of molt-migration by land birds in the Interior West. This discovery, which has potentially important conservation implications for many regions in North America, is increasingly being assessed by bird conservation researchers across the country.

Dr. Ted Floyd is the Editor of *Birding* magazine, the flagship publication of the American Birding Association. He has authored more than 100 articles and several books about birds and other ecological topics. Most recently, he co-authored the *Atlas of the Breeding Birds of Nevada*. Ted is on the board of directors of Colorado Field Ornithologists, and he is actively involved in research on nocturnal migration in Colorado.

---

## **Extreme Shorebird Conservation: Science at the End of the World**

**Stephen Brown, Ph.D.**  
**Director of Shorebird Research**  
**Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences**

Arctic shorebirds complete epic migrations between the ends of the earth, highlighting the interconnectedness of the hemisphere, and illustrating the importance of halting global climate change before vital ecosystems—essential to both shorebirds and people—are destroyed. Manomet is working throughout the Hemisphere to learn what limits their populations, and to put in place conservation measures that will ensure their survival. We will share striking photographs of elusive Arctic shorebirds on their breeding grounds and new discoveries about their habitats and the conservation challenges facing them. This presentation will also share stories from Manomet’s work in the Arctic, and what it is like to travel and carry out field research in these remote wilderness areas like the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

Dr. Stephen Brown is Director of Shorebird Science, Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences. Dr. Brown works on a wide variety of science and policy issues related to protecting imperiled shorebirds, which literally cover the globe during their annual migrations, as part of the Shorebird Recovery Project at Manomet. Stephen was the lead author of the U.S. Shorebird Conservation Plan which brought together wildlife managers and policy makers from all 50 states to develop a coordinated strategy for restoring the declining populations of shorebirds throughout their ranges. Stephen has an active research program in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, where his work helps to determine what limits populations of shorebirds, and the impacts that oil development would have on nesting shorebirds. He is currently organizing a new collaborative network of study sites which will examine shorebird limiting factors throughout the entire North American arctic. Stephen has been with Manomet since 1997.

---

## **Long-legged Wading Birds: Time-tested Survivors of Environmental Challenge**

**Katharine C. Parsons, Ph.D.**  
**Director of Wildlife & Energy Solutions**  
**Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences**

Long-legged wading birds, among the most distinctive denizens of freshwater and coastal wetlands, have shown resilience to past challenges of plume-hunting and pollution. Although populations of some species have declined in recent decades, others appear to be thriving in the Northeast. How will outcomes of climate change, including sea level rise and altered freshwater systems, impact wading birds in the coming years? The great variety of strategies with which long-legged wading birds exploit wetland resources may point to adaptation approaches that can be promoted for wetland species generally.

Dr. Katharine C. Parsons is Senior Scientist at Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences. Dr. Parsons has directed Manomet's Wetlands and Wildlife Program since 1985 and currently heads up the Wildlife and Energy Solutions Initiative. Her research interests include the reproductive and foraging ecology of aquatic birds, and the eco-toxicology of birds and reptiles using estuarine, freshwater and agricultural wetlands. Currently she and partners in the conservation community and energy sector are developing strategies for promoting green energy infrastructure—including wildlife-friendly utility corridors and energy plant siting that benefits the coastal environment. Since 1998, she has served in leadership roles in the Waterbird Conservation for the Americas Initiative; in 2003, she was elected inaugural Chair of the Waterbird Conservation Council. In addition, Parsons is President-Elect of the Waterbird Society, an international scientific organization that publishes the journal *Waterbirds*.

---

## **Marsh Birds and Whip-poor-wills: Assessing their Status in Massachusetts**

**Chris Buelow**  
**Restoration Ecology Assistant**  
**Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program**

This presentation will focus on two of the most enigmatic and potentially troubled groups of birds in Massachusetts. A portion of this discussion will focus upon a comprehensive two-year study of marsh bird abundance and distribution in southern Berkshire County, the results of which are being used to help extrapolate the statewide status of these secretive birds, as well as give an indication toward future trends of marsh birds in Massachusetts. The discussion will also focus on historic trends in Whip-poor-will distribution in the Commonwealth in relation to current knowledge about these birds. Preliminary research results suggest significant implications between land use and management strategies in regard to conserving the Massachusetts population of these beloved, but little understood birds.

Chris Buelow has been employed as the Assistant Restoration Ecologist with the Massachusetts Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program for nearly a decade, focusing primarily on the assessment and restoration of natural communities that support rare and endangered species. Prior to this work, Chris was involved with a variety of conservation organizations across North America studying and management bird populations, especially rare and endangered species. Closer to home, Chris is on the board of the East Quabbin Land Trust and was a founder of the recently initiated East Quabbin Bird Club.

---

## **Bicknell's Thrush: Conserving a Vulnerable Migrant across the Hemisphere**

**Chris Rimmer**

**Director**  
**Vermont Center for Ecostudies**

Bicknell's Thrush is one of North America's rarest and vulnerable songbirds. Nesting only in mountaintop forests of the Northeast and adjacent Canada, and wintering primarily on the island of Hispaniola (Dominican Republic and Haiti), the species faces numerous threats to its long-term survival. This presentation will feature the fascinating ecology and natural history of this rare songbird, the Vermont Center for Ecostudies' efforts to study it in New England and the Caribbean, and how Bicknell's Thrush represents a vital conservation link across the hemisphere.

Chris is Director of the Vermont Center for Ecostudies, a nonprofit wildlife conservation group based in Norwich, Vermont. He did undergraduate studies in Wildlife Biology at the University of Vermont and graduate work in Ecology and Behavioral Biology at the University of Minnesota, where he studied Yellow Warblers on the James Bay coast of Ontario. Prior to his graduate studies, Chris was an itinerant field biologist, with stints in Peru, Ellesmere Island, James Bay, coastal Massachusetts (Manomet), and Antarctica. His recent work has focused on conservation research of Bicknell's Thrush at both ends of its migratory range.

---

## **Kestrels and Cranberries**

**Joanne (Joey) Mason**  
**Raptor Researcher and Bander**  
**Independent**

Joey Mason will share her extensive research and experiences with American Kestrels in southeastern Massachusetts during the past 20 years. She will describe how she monitors her nest boxes and what she has found in them through the years, including things which were *not* kestrels. She will present evidence about what these raptors eat and why they often prefer to nest in cranberry bog habitats. These small falcons are in a rapid population decline, and Joey will provide insight and speculation on why this may be happening. Her presentation will include a live male and female kestrel for attendees to see up close.

In the early 1980s Joey got hooked on watching birds of prey during fall migration after numerous visits to Hawk Mountain Sanctuary in Pennsylvania. In 1985 she learned how to band hawks in Cape May, NJ, where she continues to band raptors for the Cape May Raptor Banding Project every fall. Joey learned much about falcon behavior while working on the peregrine recovery team for the Colorado Division of Wildlife during the summers of 1987 and 1988. With the help of Mike Maurer in 1989 she initiated a nest box project for American Kestrels in southeastern Massachusetts on cranberry grower-owned properties. In 2000, she spearheaded the Raptor Retrofit Project to prevent osprey electrocutions on cranberry grower properties, along with being widely consulted about suitable placement of osprey nesting platforms. Every year Joey monitors and maintains dozens of American Kestrel, Tree Swallow, and Eastern Bluebird nest boxes.

---

## **Massachusetts Avian Records Committee (MARC): Facts, Fiction, and Function**

**Wayne Petersen**

**Director**

**Massachusetts Important Birds Areas (IBA) Program**

**Mass Audubon**

Many birders are unclear about the precise function that bird record committees serve, or their role in establishing an accurate baseline of avian information for a particular region, no matter how large or how small the region may be. In addition to evaluating current bird observations, record committees periodically examine historic records when new information suggests that a re-evaluation of an older bird report or specimen is deemed appropriate. Eventually this process results in a state bird list which has undergone a systematic and rigorous evaluation procedure. In this summary presentation attendees will learn something about the history, evolution, and mechanics of the Massachusetts Avian Records Committee (MARC), along with a current summary of the Massachusetts state bird list and a sampling of a few of the outstanding bird records that have (or have not) been established in the Commonwealth through the years.

Wayne Petersen is the director of the Massachusetts Important Bird Area (IBA) Program at Mass Audubon. Among his other responsibilities he organizes the annual Massachusetts Birders Meeting, helps coordinate Mass Audubon's spring Bird-a-thon, and leads international birding tours for Mass Audubon and Field Guides, Inc. Among his various writing projects Wayne co-authored *Birds of Massachusetts* (1993) and co-edited the *Massachusetts Breeding Bird Atlas* (2003) and *Birds of New England* (2004). He is a Regional Editor for the New England Christmas Bird Count and *North American Birds* magazine, co-ordinates the USFWS Breeding Bird Survey for Massachusetts, serves on the boards of *Bird Observer* magazine and the Wildlands Trust of Southeastern Massachusetts, and is an associate member of the Massachusetts Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program Advisory Committee. Prior to becoming IBA Program Director, Wayne was Senior Field Ornithologist at Mass Audubon for 15 years. In 2005, he was the recipient of the American Birding Association's *Ludlow Griscom Award* for outstanding contributions in regional ornithology.

---

## **Are you a Bird Brain?**

**Jim Hully**

**Director of Research**

**IntelligentMDx**

Join Jim for a fun and dynamic photo quiz that will visually and mentally challenge your knowledge of New England birds! Do you know your *Ammodramus* from your *Spizella* sparrows? How good are you at counting birds? Are female ducks as identifiable as their male

counterparts? You will be educated as well as entertained in this fifty minute interactive presentation.

Although formerly trained in the biological sciences, Jim's real passion has always been birds. His earliest recollections are from birding with his father in the United Kingdom during the 1960s. After studying marine biology and then focusing on human pathology, Jim's scientific career brought him to the United States: Wisconsin, California, Arizona, and Massachusetts. It was no coincidence that these places also offer great birding! Jim is currently the Director of Research at a small biotech company located in Cambridge, Massachusetts. He lives in Salisbury, Massachusetts, with his artist wife, Gina Lee Kim, and their two pet rats. Jim is a volunteer trip leader for Mass Audubon's Joppa Flats Education Center.