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J. Heywood, 1994

## FIVE SEASONS IN WESTERN HAMPDEN COUNTY: BIRDING A BIG BACKYARD

by Seth Kellogg

I have found that birding decisions are made first on the basis of the season and second on the basis of location. Therefore, this article is organized according to the five seasons of the year: winter, spring, breeding, summer, and fall. The spring season is March through May, although it can extend into June, and a few early birds push it back to mid-February in some years. The breeding season overlaps the late spring and early summer seasons, but is primarily June 1 to July 15. The summer season is a migration and dispersal time, mostly for waders and shorebirds, and extends from about July 15 to September 15. For most species fall migration does not start until September, although some songbirds and raptors and few ducks start on their way in August. Lingerling waterfowl extend the fall season into early December, with the calendar cutoff December 1.

I have always thought it unfortunate that the listing season is primarily the calendar year. Four or even five seasonal lists per year based on the delineations above seem much more appropriate to me and a lot more interesting. The birder's field effort is also based more on the natural life of the birds. I have kept five seasonal lists for ten years now, and my field work is much more continuous, intense, and productive as a result. It also tends to place more emphasis on localized study of the more common species, rather than going far afield to chase rarities that someone else has found. I feel it is more important and satisfying that the unusual presence of a more common bird be noted, rather than a rare bird already found to be "seen."

Therefore, if you want to know where to look for birds, the best advice I can give is to look in your own backyard. That is the way I started and the way I continue for the most part. So why am I writing this article about finding birds in western Hampden County? Well, I have been asked, and this is my backyard, which I know, and when and what I look for might serve as a useful model for your own backyard explorations. It is also good to know about some other New England habitats, whether you ever go there or not.

Detailed directions to the places mentioned in the seasonal accounts are given at the end of this article. Because the article is organized according to season, not location, each seasonal account mentions a number of places, often not geographically connected, that are most productive for that season or for particular sought-after species. The paragraphs describing the detailed directions, therefore, are listed in alphabetical order. When the seasonal accounts mention a location, the location will either be in bold face or will be followed by a bold-face name in parentheses; the bold-face name is where the

reader can find directions to the location in the alphabetized list.

[**Editor's Note.** This article covers a lot of territory. We recommend that you have detailed maps of this region when you follow the directions provided below. One possible map source is the *Universal Atlas of Western Massachusetts* (1992), available at most bookstores. Other map sources include USGS topographical maps. Some directions in the article are for footpaths that are not well marked or for which no trail maps exist. These directions are provided for interested readers who wish to explore the areas at their own risk.]

### Winter Season

I start with winter, not the best birding season of the year—the birds do not like it much either—but it is the time of the traditional frenzy called the Christmas Bird Count (CBC). The long established Springfield area CBC includes the **Connecticut River**, where there are good access points and a number of interesting winter species. **River Road and Route 159** in Agawam and the **Bondi's Island** boat ramp in Agawam provide places to see Common Goldeneye, Common Merganser, other rarer waterfowl, and gulls, including Iceland, Glaucous, and Lesser Black-backed gulls. Most of the river could be frozen if the weather is severe, but there are always some open spots, especially around the boat ramp, where heated water is released.

Farther north there is river access at various points on the **Connecticut River** in Holyoke and South Hadley. In addition to the gulls and waterfowl, look for Bald Eagle and Barrow's Goldeneye, which has wintered in the Holyoke area for several years. A side jaunt for a winter river trip might be up the **Chicopee River**.

For forest landbirds in winter the Stebbins Refuge in **Longmeadow**, **Robinson State Park** in Agawam, **Ashley Ponds** in Holyoke, and **Forest Park** in Springfield have Pileated and Red-bellied woodpeckers and Carolina Wren as well as lingering species normally found farther south. Forest Park has a concentration of hand-fed Mallards that bring in the less common species, including Northern Shoveler. Northern finches are specialties of the last three locations, with Boreal Chickadee occasionally present just inside the Ashley Ponds gate. Opposite the Law Enforcement Academy on South Westfield Street in Agawam (see **County Property**) is a large tract owned by the county that is covered with multiflora rose bushes and regularly harbors wintering robins and Cedar Waxwings, with hopes for Bohemian Waxwing, Gray Catbird, Eastern Bluebird, and assorted raptors.

Farther west I have been so provincial as to start a Westfield-area CBC. Water bodies here that stay unfrozen longer are **Congamond Lakes** and **Cobble Mountain Reservoir** (see **Granville, Cobble Mountain, and Borden Brook Reservoirs**). American Coot stay as long as they can at Congamond, which also attracts common dabblers and an occasional diver. Gulls, often including the

white-winged types, habitually roost on either the water or the ice. Cobble Mountain Reservoir is visited by some ducks or a Bald Eagle, but more often is a winter avian wasteland. The various evergreen plantations around the reservoirs can have winter finches, and ravens and Wild Turkeys are regular.

### Spring Season

Late February and March keep the spotlight on the Connecticut River. The birds push up the river, stopping at the places already mentioned as the ice thaws. First to arrive are Ring-necked Ducks and Hooded Mergansers, with an occasional scaup or Bufflehead. Pondsides in **Longmeadow**, the lower Westfield River seen from Pynchon Point (see **River Road**) and **Agawam Meadows**, the **Chicopee River** marshes north of Route 141, **Ashley Ponds**, and the cove area in Holyoke (see **Connecticut River Above Holyoke Dam**) often have divers and dabblers. **Congamond Lakes** also open fairly early and attract a wide variety of early divers. Agriculture is much reduced in this area; thus, the early seasonal movement of raptors and other open-country landbirds is not a special feature, although many blackbirds and Tree Swallows are found at Pondsides, the Agawam Meadows, **Leonard and Hart ponds** in western Agawam, and Congamond Lakes.

April brings more waterfowl, but marsh species and some hardy woodland birds are also to be looked for then. Pondsides, Congamond Lakes, the cove area in Holyoke, and Ashley Ponds are good for Great Blue Heron, Osprey, swallows, Palm and Pine warblers, Virginia Rail, and Sora. The Tilley Street marshes in Ludlow northwest of Westover Air Reserve Base (see **New Ludlow Road and Tilley Street**) are also excellent. The best location at Congamond Lakes is the marshes west of South Pond, which extend to the state line. American Bittern has been resident here for many years except for 1993. Virginia Rail and Sora are most easily heard or seen here, at the Tilley Street marshes, and at Pondsides in Longmeadow.

Raptors are a love of mine, and we have both the oldest and newest hawkwatch sites in New England. Bray Tower on Holyoke's **Mount Tom** is the traditional site for spring migrants. **Mount Tekoa** on the Westfield-Russell line is the rocky ledge very visible from the Massachusetts Turnpike after you pass the Westfield exit. It is a hard climb but worth the visit. An early May visit should get you Worm-eating Warbler at both locations. Other sites for migrating hawks in spring are Blueberry Hill in West Granville (see **Granville**) and **Drake Mountain** in Southwick.

When the rush of late April and May comes, the verity that anywhere is good for birds comes to full fruition. One can debate about whether a migrant trap like **Forest Park** or a known breeding location like the hills of **Granville** is better to get the first Canada Warbler, but the question need not be answered. Do both! I still do a spring migration watch route at Congamond Lakes that was

promoted by *Bird Observer* many years ago, and I hit the appropriate breeding habitat for species like Least Flycatcher, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, and Yellow-throated Vireo. After a night rain or storm is the best time for late waterfowl at **Ashley Pond** or **Congamond Lakes**, especially loons, grebes, White-winged Scoter, Oldsquaw, Red-breasted Merganser, or terns. Spring shorebirds are not easy to find in this region, with flood pools on West Road in **Longmeadow** and the **Agawam Meadows** being the most we can offer. A few dabbling ducks may be found there as well. The best time is late May and early June, when the Connecticut River level drops enough to expose the **Longmeadow Sandbar**. Then a Black Tern or a flight of shorebirds may stop on their way up the river.

The hardest species to find are the open-country specialties, but a couple of airports do help the cause. Unfortunately, the biggest and best, **Westover Air Reserve Base**, is mostly inaccessible, and **Barnes Airport** in Westfield is only slightly better. Once an airport, the **Bowles Industrial Park** in Agawam still has remnant Grasshopper and Vesper sparrows, but they may be doomed. At Westover Grasshopper Sparrows and Upland Sandpipers are easy if you can get on the base, and a large field on the northern edge along **New Ludlow Road** often produces Upland Sandpipers when the grass is still short.

A specialty of the region is Fish Crow, which has nested in Springfield and is present in Longmeadow, Agawam, and Holyoke. Our Peregrine Falcon pair can be seen cutting the skies near the Monarch Building in downtown Springfield. Rare southern overshoots and late uncommon migrants heading north to nest are hard to predict, but they seem most often found in **Forest Park**, **Robinson Park**, **Ashley Ponds**, **Stanley Park**, and **Mount Tom**. These are among the few places where you have a chance to hear Olive-sided Flycatchers and Kentucky Warblers singing together. In addition to Pondsides in **Longmeadow** and **Tilley Street** (see **New Ludlow Road and Tilley Street**), the best place to find Willow and Alder flycatchers and hope for White-eyed Vireo and Yellow-breasted Chat is the **County Property** in Agawam. This brings us into another season.

### Breeding Season

The western hills of the state seem to be a mecca for birding in the breeding season, and western Hampden County has its share of attractions. In the valley itself the grass, marsh, and thicket birds noted above are a draw, and Worm-eating Warbler is present up and down the central ridge from Mount Tom to the quarry area north of Route 57 on the Southwick-Agawam line, as well as along the first eastern rim of the Berkshires (for Worm-eating Warbler locations, see **Mount Tom**, **Mount Tekoa**, and **Provin Mountain** under **Leonard and Hart ponds**). A few Red-bellied Woodpeckers are now spread throughout the lowlands. The best locations to find them are **Longmeadow**, **Robinson State Park**, and the **Congamond Lakes** area.

Back into the hills we find the Acadian Flycatcher, present in at least ten different locations in **Granville** over the last several years and undoubtedly in other towns in the region. Beaver swamps, which are scattered throughout the area, host Great Blue Herons, American Bitterns, Virginia Rails, Alder Flycatchers, Northern Waterthrushes, Barred Owls, and Red-shouldered Hawks. You might happen upon a nesting Hooded Merganser or Sedge Wren, and Common Mergansers are found on the Westfield River, some smaller rivers, and the ponds and reservoirs. There are Wild Turkeys, Pileated Woodpeckers, Ruby-throated Hummingbirds, Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers, Common Ravens, and Hermit Thrushes. In the evening, where forest and field intermix, Whip-poor-wills call in May and June, and American Woodcocks perform in April and May. Winter Wrens sing in the ravines and logged hillsides; Golden-crowned Kinglets in the spruce plantations; Nashville and Prairie warblers in the secondary growth; Black-throated Blue, Canada, and occasional Hooded warblers in the heavy laurel woods; Magnolia, Yellow-rumped, Black-throated Green, and Blackburnian warblers and sometimes a Swainson's Thrush in the evergreen areas; Louisiana Waterthrushes on the rushing streams; and White-throated Sparrows, Dark-eyed Juncos, and Purple Finches almost anywhere. Wandering the back roads enough will bring you to all of these species. See the directions covering **Granville** and **Tolland** and **West Blandford** for suggested areas to explore.

### Summer Migration Season

As the hot season progresses the focus turns to summer migrants and back to the river. The **Longmeadow Sandbar** area and the lower Westfield River (see **Bondi's Island**, **Exposition Grounds**, and **Agawam Meadows**) are hot spots for waders and shorebirds. Great and Snowy egrets and sometimes an immature Little Blue Heron, feed in the shallows of the rivers and nearby marshes. Tricolored Heron and White Ibis have been found once each in this general area. Black-crowned and rarely a Yellow-crowned Night-Heron are present, especially in the **Exposition Grounds** slough. Bonaparte's Gull is fairly regular, and Laughing Gull and Black Tern are possible. Double-crested Cormorant is common, Osprey and Peregrine Falcon present, and gathering Bank and Tree swallows abundant.

No fewer than twenty-seven species of shorebirds have occurred on the Longmeadow Sandbar, including such rarities as American Avocet; Willet; Whimbrel; Hudsonian Godwit; Western, Baird's, Stilt, and Buff-breasted sandpipers; Long-billed Dowitcher; and Red-necked Phalarope. Birds come and go within minutes or hours, or stay a day or two. **Bondi's Island** boat ramp (on the Agawam/West Springfield border) and the power line behind the **Exposition Grounds** have smaller but also productive sandbars.

## Fall Season

In August waterfowl begin to show up on the Pondsides marshes in **Longmeadow** and sometimes on the Connecticut River. These are usually Pied-billed Grebe, both teals, and in September Pintail, Gadwall, Northern Shoveler, American and once a Eurasian Wigeon, American Coot, and, rarely, Common Moorhen. Wood Ducks are abundant. Other spots for these are **Leonard and Hart ponds** in western Agawam and Tilley Street marsh in Agawam (see **New Ludlow Road and Tilley Street**).

Flycatchers, swallows, and warblers take the stage in late August and early September. For swallows the **Longmeadow Sandbar** cannot be beat, but later in September and early October **Congamond Lakes** usually has some, either feeding or roosting on the wires, especially in the morning. An overgrown field with plenty of small birches is the ideal place for fall warblers and flycatchers. The birds seem drawn to such areas and are at eye level instead of straight up against a gray or bright sky. By their nature such spots are transient and have to be searched out almost yearly. Old gravel pits are likely places. Of course it is time to visit those hawkwatches again for the big fall flights, which include loons, cormorants, and geese.

When October arrives, it is time to look for diving ducks. **Congamond Lakes**, **Ashley Ponds**, and sometimes **Hampton Ponds** are visited again for Ring-necked Duck, scaup, Oldsquaw, scoters, Bufflehead, and Ruddy Duck. Sometimes the three reservoirs in Granville and Blandford or the Connecticut River may have birds, but not as often. Snow Goose and Brant are possible flyovers. If the Connecticut and Westfield rivers stay low, the summer sandbars could still produce late shorebirds such as Dunlin and White-rumped Sandpiper. It is also the month for sparrows, when any weed patch may host White-crowned and Lincoln's or a more rare westerner. Stebbins Refuge in **Longmeadow**, **Agawam Meadows**, and any untidy gardens or field edges are likely places to find sparrows.

November brings a chance for finches, mostly in the hill country. Horned Larks, American Pipits, Snow Buntings, and maybe a Lapland Longspur are possible on West Road in **Longmeadow**, the airports, and other farm fields, but again there are not many of these habitats in the region. Blackbirds return to the marshes for a while, and gulls can be studied again for rarities. Another season ends in another backyard.

### Detailed Directions

**Agawam Meadows.** From the Route 5 and Route 57 rotary in Agawam, leave the rotary heading west on Route 57, but take your first right after leaving the rotary (only a short distance). Then take your first left, again only a short distance, onto Meadow Street. Go 0.5 mile to a dirt road on the right; the dirt road has a gate that is usually open but is posted against vehicles. Park here and

walk in on the unpaved farm road into Agawam Meadows. The northeast corner of the meadow has lookouts onto the Westfield River.

**Ashley Ponds, Holyoke.** From Interstate 91 in Holyoke, take Exit 15-Ingleside, and turn west away from Ingleside mall onto Lower Westfield Street (unmarked). Go about 0.6 mile on Lower Westfield Street, going straight through one set of lights and up over a hill until you come to the main gate, where you can park. Walk in, and check the spruce woods and ponds to the left and right. The road to the right just before reaching the main gate is also a good place to walk in, and anywhere around the ponds can be productive.

**Barnes Airport, Westfield.** From the Massachusetts Turnpike, which is Interstate 90, Exit 3 in Westfield, go north on Routes 10 and 202 about 0.2 mile to your first right (at a fire station) almost immediately after going over the turnpike onto Owen District Road. Drive through the open gates, which are beyond the entrance to the State Police barracks, onto a dirt road that skirts the fence on the south end of Barnes Airport. Alternatively, you can walk into the closed lumber mill next to the gates, and walk north along the fence listening for Grasshopper and Vesper sparrows. Return to Routes 10 and 202, and continue north for another two miles, where you take a right onto Buck Pond Road toward the Air National Guard entrance. Stop at the end of the road, and view the north end of the runway.

**Bondi's Island, Agawam.** A section of Route 5 in Agawam runs between Memorial Avenue to the north and Route 57 to the south. On this section of Route 5, there is only one exit, which is unmarked. Take this exit, which will lead to a parking lot next to an incinerator and sewage treatment plant visible from Route 5, known as "Bondi's Island." Walk down the ramp to the Connecticut River, then north along the bank to view a sandbar.

**Bowles Industrial Park, Agawam.** From Route 57 in Agawam, take Route 75 south 0.8 miles to the second set of lights. Turn right onto Silver Street, and proceed about 0.5 mile to Franklin Street Ext. Turn right onto Franklin Street Ext., and park at the end of the street. Walk down the hill, and explore the overgrown gravel pit and woods. Return to Silver Street, and take your next right (0.1 mile) onto Garden Street. In about 0.1 mile, turn left into Bowles Industrial Park. Look in the fields on the left and right a short way in for sparrows.

**Chicopee River.** Take Exit 5 (Chicopee) off the Massachusetts Turnpike. Take a right after the toll booth, and then a right onto Route 33 (south). Go 0.6 mile south on Route 33 to a bridge that crosses the Chicopee River, cross the bridge, and turn left onto Route 141. In about 0.5 mile look for a marsh area next to and below a road on the left (Wildemere). Park on Wildemere Road, and scan the marsh. Continue on Route 141 for 1.5 miles, and turn left onto Grochmal Road, which goes to the sewage plant, which is within the Springfield city limits. Stop and view the river and, if the gate is open, from the back of a

fire training area a short way farther down. Continue on Route 141 another 1.5 miles, and keep left down a hill, and take a sharp left off Route 141 onto West Street. Park before the bridge, and walk down to view the river.

**Congamond Lakes and Marshes, Southwick.** From the center of Southwick (intersection of Routes 10 and 202 with Route 57 west), go south on Routes 10 and 202 for 2.1 miles to a stoplight. Take a left onto Route 168. Go 0.8 mile, and turn left onto Berkshire Avenue, and go one mile to Echo Road on the right. Echo Road leads to a small private beach on the southwest side of Middle Pond. If you turn right opposite Berkshire Avenue, drive to the end, where you can park. Walk the railroad bed to the marshes, which are on both sides of the bed. Back on Route 168, go another 0.2 mile beyond Berkshire Avenue to reach a causeway between the Congamond Ponds. Park on the right in a public unpaved area, and view the South Pond. Go another 0.5 mile farther (crossing into Connecticut), and turn left onto Old Mountain Road and left again onto Chestnut Circle, stopping at a beach on the southeast side of Middle Pond. The beach is closed to the public only in the summer, and the site is good for birding because of its favorable light on a sunny morning.

**Connecticut River Below Holyoke Dam.** Take Exit 5 (Chicopee) of the Massachusetts Turnpike. Take a left after the toll booth and then a right onto Montgomery Street. After 1.5 miles, turn left at the lights through an underpass and right onto Route 141. Go 0.1 mile to a bridge; park in store lots before the bridge, and scan the river. After crossing the bridge into Holyoke, take the first right onto Canal Street (0.1 mile), and follow Canal Street 0.5 mile. Turn right into a mill area, and park in the back along the railroad tracks to view rapids. Continue on Canal Street 0.4 mile, and turn right to go over the Route 116 bridge into South Hadley, then right at the first set of lights onto Main Street. Go 0.2 mile to a small pumping station for a view of the north end of the rapids.

**Connecticut River Above Holyoke Dam.** Heading north on the Route 116 bridge that enters into South Hadley, take a left onto Main Street at the first set of lights on the north side of the bridge. Follow Main Street, which turns into Canal Street running along the river, to Heritage Park (one mile) on the left for a view of the river above the Holyoke dam. Continue on Canal Street as it curves to the right, and in 0.3 mile take the first right (River Road) that goes onto the Route 202 rotary. Stay on Route 202 west, and go over the Connecticut River bridge (0.3 mile) back into Holyoke, turn left at the lights on the west side of the bridge, go around another rotary, and bear right off the rotary onto Prospect Street. Go 0.2 mile on Prospect Street, then left onto a road behind an apartment complex to Pulaski Park, and view the dam. You could also go right at the lights on the west side of the Route 202 bridge, and find parking on the left (D. O'Connell's parking lot) across from a cable across a dirt road going down to right into a cove area. Walk the trail along the railroad tracks beside the marsh.

Back at the west side of the 202 bridge, bear right onto Route 141. Go about

0.3 mile, and turn right onto Pleasant Street. Go about 0.5 mile, and take a right onto Harvard Street, which leads downhill to Jones Point Park. Park here, and cross the ballfields to the north and onto a trail between some railroad tracks and the Connecticut River. Go back on Harvard Street to Pleasant Street, and turn right. Go about one mile to Route 5. Turn right onto Route 5, and go one mile to a small turnoff on the right marked with a sign for the dinosaur tracks owned by the Trustees of Reservations. Follow the trail down to the river ledges.

**County Property, Agawam.** From the intersection of Routes 57 and 187 in Agawam, turn south onto Route 187 (South Westfield Street). Go about 0.5 mile to where the road branches; take a left, continuing on South Westfield Street. At about 0.5 mile, you can park at a metal gate opposite a large brick building, which is the Law Enforcement Academy. Walk in and follow trails, which are overgrown in some places.

**Drake Mountain, Southwick.** Go west from Southwick Center on Route 57 for 3.2 miles, and take a right onto Loomis Street. Go 0.6 mile, and turn left into a concrete products plant. Park in the back, and walk the road on an unmarked private refuge [owned by the author] that is open to birders. After crossing a covered bridge passing a private house (about 0.2 mile), take the next trail to the left to a large field. Continue on a water pipeline at the edge of the field to the top of the first steep hill. Turn right on the bike trail, follow it almost to the top, and then go left at a campfire site to a lookout on some ledges. The total distance is about 1.2 miles.

**Exposition Grounds, West Springfield.** From the intersection of Routes 5 and 147 (the latter is Memorial Avenue), take Route 147 west 0.8 mile to Circuit Avenue (opposite Ponderosa). Go left onto Circuit Avenue, and then turn left again and stop opposite a metal building on the left just before the end of cinder blocks piled up on the right. Walk to the back of the cinder blocks, and look into a slough. Continue to the end of Circuit Avenue, and park at the pump building. Climb over the dike, and view the Westfield River. Walk up the dike to a power line, and walk along the power line to a sandbar in the Westfield River.

**Forest Park, Springfield.** Forest Park is a large urban park on the south side of Springfield. Within the park boundaries lies Porter Lake, a long oblong-shaped lake running east-west. A fee is now charged to drive through the park from Sumner Avenue on the north side of the park to Route 5 on the south side of the park. To avoid the fee, you can park at the tennis courts at the Sumner Avenue entrance or at a small parking lot before the gate next to the ball field near the Route 5 entrance. Many trails wander throughout the park. A pond good for wintering ducks is at the bottom of a hill west of Porter Lake.

**Granville, including Granville State Forest and Blueberry Hill Hawkwatch.** From the intersection of Routes 57 and 189 in Granville, go south on Route 189. Go about two hundred yards to your second right; take this right onto Water Street. Water Street goes along a brook, where Acadian Flycatcher

and Louisiana Waterthrush are present. At the end of Water Street (about 2.5 miles), turn right onto South Lane. South Lane goes through orchards where Eastern Bluebird boxes are well used. In about 1.6 miles from the Water Street intersection, the road forks; take the left fork onto Barnard Road, and return in about a mile to Route 57. Turn left onto Route 57, and go two hundred yards to a turnoff on the right at the edge of a beaver pond, known as Shaughnessy Swamp. Great Blue Heron nests are visible in the rear of the swamp.

Another 1.8 miles west of Shaughnessy Swamp on Route 57, turn right onto North Lane to get to the Blueberry Hill Hawkwatch site. Go about 1.2 miles, and park near a chain that is across an obvious trail. It is a short walk to platforms at the top of the hill, which is mostly cleared for wild blueberry harvesting. Also check the farm pasture 0.2 mile from Route 57 for Wild Turkeys early in the morning. The small trees around the edge of the blueberry field often hold something interesting.

Return to Route 57, and continue west for another 1.8 miles to West Hartland Road. Turn left onto West Hartland Road, following signs for the Granville State Forest. At about one mile, you will see a parking area on the left just past a bridge at the bottom of a hill near the paved road into the picnic area. Park here, and walk the road into the picnic area, which is open to vehicles only when there is a guard to collect a fee. Acadian Flycatchers have nested here, although sporadically in the last four years. A walk along the brook in this picnic area is usually productive. Driving another 1.5 miles beyond the parking area will bring you to another camping area. You can park here on the right, and take a trail opposite the gate to the camping area into a large spruce grove. Smaller spruce groves are along the main road.

**Granville, Cobble Mountain, and Borden Brook Reservoirs, Granville/Blandford.** Just east of the intersection of Routes 57 and 189 in Granville center, go north on Old Westfield Road. In about one mile, stop at a spruce grove on the right, and then at a gate on the right across a dirt road into the watershed. Walking the dirt road will take you down to a brook. Return to Old Westfield Road, and continue for 1.5 miles to a four-way intersection, where you can stop and walk down a dirt road to the right past a gate to view the north end of the Granville Reservoir. This is the best access to miles of watershed trails on the back side of Drake Mountain. Opposite this latter gate, drive the paved road (it has several names, e.g., Wildcat, North Lane Number 1) up the hill, listening for Acadian Flycatcher, especially on the left at the top of the hill.

Keep left at the standpipe, and follow the road to Cobble Mountain Reservoir and the intersection with Cobble Mountain Road (about two miles from the four-way intersection). Go right onto Cobble Mountain Road, and follow the road around a short distance to the spillway. On the far side of the spillway you can park and climb to the top of the cobble, which has a

spectacular view. Ravens nest at the north end of the dam, which is a little farther down the road. Continuing about 2.5 miles on this road will bring you to large beaver ponds on the left. Alternatively, turning left when you reach Cobble Mountain Road, you can proceed along Cobble Mountain Road, which turns into Phelon Road after it intersects with Blandford Road entering from the left in about one mile. Continue on Phelon Road for two miles from the Blandford Road intersection until you reach Borden Brook Reservoir, with many productive stops along the way.

Phelon Road ends at Borden Brook Road and the Borden Brook Reservoir, which is sometimes drained. Walking into the reservoir property here is prohibited. Take a left onto Borden Brook Road, and go about 0.7 mile to where Beech Hill Road enters from the left. Park just past this intersection, which is at the bottom of a hill just after a sharp right over a small bridge. Walk up the hill on the paved road about one hundred yards to a dirt road on the left with a chain and sign. The dirt road leads into a private ski touring area, but the area is open to birders. Walk the dirt road for about two hundred yards into Borden Meadow. American Bittern nests here, and a Sedge Wren was present one July. After visiting Borden Meadow, drive back to Route 57 on the dirt road portion of Beech Hill Road. The drive is about three miles, goes through dense forest, and can be a treat.

From the intersection of Blandford Road and Cobble Mountain Road, you can also go south along Blandford Road, which can be productive. About two miles south of this intersection is another four-way intersection and a spruce grove. Park here, and walk on the now-closed road to the left to find more spruce groves and excellent habitat. You can also turn right at the intersection and drive down the dirt road about one mile to Route 57. Acadian Flycatcher has nested near the cottage where the dirt road crosses a small stream. Back at the intersection, going straight will also get you back to Route 57 (about 1.2 miles).

**Hampton Ponds, Westfield.** From the Massachusetts Turnpike Exit 3 in Westfield, go north on Routes 10 and 202 about 2.6 miles to where Route 202 goes off right and Route 10 continues straight ahead. Take a right onto Route 202 (North Road), and follow the road 1.7 miles to Hampton Ponds. Pull over the side of the road to view Horse Pond on the right. Take the next left (0.1 mile) into the Hampton Ponds State Park, and view the south end of Pequot Pond. A short way farther on Route 202, take a right onto East Mountain Road, and then take your first right onto Buck Pond Road (0.5 mile). Go about 0.7 mile until you see Buck Pond on your left. Continue about 0.5 mile, and take your first right onto Industrial Park Road that will take you back to Route 202.

**Leonard Pond, Hart Pond, and Provin Mountain, Agawam.** From the intersection of Routes 187 and 57 in Agawam, take Route 57 west for 0.7 mile, and turn left at a light onto South West Street. In about one mile, Leonard Pond will be on the right. You can park here. You can also walk along a dirt road at

the north end of the pond through a swamp and fields to the Metacomet-Monadnock Trail, which follows the crest of Provin Mountain. The trail can also be picked up from Route 57 at the Southwick-Agawam town line. Walking to the north from there, the trail passes a quarry where ravens nest. Worm-eating Warblers also nest on this section of the ridge. From Leonard Pond, continue down South West Street for 0.8 mile, and take a right onto Barry Street. Go about 0.5 mile, and park at a dirt road skirting Hart Pond and leading to some fields. Do not cross the culvert into the back area.

**Longmeadow—Sandbar, Stebbins Refuge, and Pondsides.** Take Exit 2 from Interstate 91, and go south on Route 5. At the fourth light (one mile), turn right onto Emerson Road. Go down a hill, under Interstate 91, over some railroad tracks, and past several houses to an open dirt parking area on the right (one mile). Park here to view the Longmeadow sandbar in the Connecticut River. To scan the marshes, before crossing the railroad tracks mentioned above, take a left onto Pondsides Road. Stop on the road and view the marshes; the road will take you to the Stebbins Refuge sign (1.5 miles) and trail map at the corner of Bark Haul Road. To walk the Stebbins Refuge trails, park at the sign, and study the map.

**Mount Tekoa, Russell.** Follow Route 20 west from the center of Westfield for 2.5 miles. Turn right after going under the Massachusetts Turnpike bridge onto a road to the Woronoco Mills (actually located in the town of Russell). Turn right again over a one-lane steel bridge, and follow the road (Bridge Street, unmarked) past houses and straight into the mill loading area. Go across the railroad tracks, and turn left onto a dirt road. Parking is available before this road goes up the hill and becomes passable only for four-wheel-drive vehicles. This road has recently been found to harbor nesting Cerulean and Worm-eating warblers. To reach the hawkwatch site, do not go through the loading area, but follow the paved road around the mill, and park before the road ends. Walk to the left over the railroad tracks, and follow the dirt road to the right toward the turnpike bridge for about 0.5 mile. Look for an unmarked trail to the left before reaching the bridge. After climbing 100 feet, the trail takes a turn to the right and up a power line. At the top of the steep incline, the trail leaves the power line and goes left; it then becomes marked with white blazes and goes up the spine of the mountain.

**Mount Tom Reservation, Holyoke.** From either Interstate 91 or Route 5, take the Route 141 (west) exit, and follow Route 141 to the top of Mount Tom (2.2. miles). Take a right through the gate opposite the restaurant at the top of the mountain onto Christopher Clark Road. Stop along the road and at turnoffs; this road is good for Worm-eating Warblers. Take your first left at the headquarters building to reach the Bray tower. Continue north a short way farther past the headquarters building to a parking lot on the right for the Goat's Peak lookout and tower, which is a short and steep climb. The main road to the

right returns you to Route 5 and another entrance to the reservation. This entrance is about 4.2 miles north of the Route 141 exit from Interstate 91 or Route 5.

**New Ludlow Road and Tilley Marshes, Granby/Ludlow.** The marshes and fields north and east of the perimeter fence around the Westover Air Reserve Base can be good for Upland Sandpipers and other species. From Exit 5 (Chicopee) of the Massachusetts Turnpike, bear right after the toll booth, and turn left at the lights onto Route 33 north. Go about three miles, and turn right onto New Ludlow Road. After 1.5 miles (you will be in Granby), stop at a large field on the right and check for Upland Sandpipers. Continue another mile, and turn right onto East Street. Another mile down and just after entering Ludlow, turn right onto Tilley Street. Go to the end of Tilley Street, and park at the gate. Walk in on an old road for about 0.3 mile, take an unmarked trail to the left, and follow the trail around a marsh area.

**River Road and Route 159, Agawam.** From the rotary at the intersection of Routes 5 and 57, turn onto River Road, which heads east from the rotary, and park at the concrete dividers at a curve about 0.1 mile after getting onto River Road. Walk down to Pyncheon Point, which overlooks the confluence of the Westfield and Connecticut rivers. Continue south on River Road two miles to a large parking area on the left, from where you can look out across the Connecticut River at Longmeadow Sandbar. Scan the river from here or anywhere before and after this spot that looks open and where you can find a parking spot. Continue on River Road another 0.6 mile, and take a left into the Riviera Apartments complex. Turn right into the apartment lot closest to the river, and park next to the tennis courts. View the river, and then walk south into the woods along the riverbank to a picnic grove of Riverside Park and the outflow of a brook. Return to River Road, and continue for two hundred yards to Route 159. Turn left onto Route 159, and go past the Riverside Amusement Park (0.4 mile). At 0.2 mile after the amusement park, take a left onto Woodcliff. Take an immediate right onto Ruskin, and then onto Sunnyslope, which ends at Riverview. Turn left onto Riverview, and go one hundred yards to a pumping station, where you can park and walk down to the edge of the Connecticut River.

**Robinson State Park, Agawam.** From the intersection of Routes 147 and 75, go west on Route 147 for 0.5 mile. Take the right fork at a stoplight onto North Street. At 0.4 mile, turn right onto Maynard, and follow Maynard to the end, where you can park and go into the woods and walk well-worn trails. Return to North Street, turn left, and drive until you reach the main park entrance on the right (0.5 mile). If the gate is open (opens at 8:00 AM), follow the paved park road and stop to walk the trails. Otherwise, walk the road and trails.

**Stanley Park and Crane Avenue, Westfield.** From near the junction of

Routes 20 and 10 in Westfield, go west on Court Street for about 0.5 mile to the second light, and take a left onto Mill Street. In about 0.5 mile, Mill Street goes left, but go right onto Crane Avenue, and park before the gate at the end of Crane Avenue. This farm and mixed-woods area has been the nesting site of a Golden-winged Warbler recently. Turning left into the mill parking lot will provide a view of Crane Pond. Back on Court Street, continue beyond Mill Street on Court Street, which becomes Western Avenue, for two miles to Stanley Park. Turn into the second entrance into Stanley Park (after a big field). Park near the picnic grove. Following the trails from behind the tables will take you to the Beveridge Sanctuary along the Little River.

**Tolland and West Blandford.** There are many active and abandoned beaver swamps here that you can explore on your own. One good beaver pond is Babcock Pond in Tolland. Going west on Route 57 and just after crossing the Granville/Tolland line, a logging trail starts at a metal gate just past the bottom of a hill. At the second wooden-plank bridge on the logging trail (about 0.8 mile), follow the stream to the left until you reach Babcock Pond (0.2 mile). If you have any doubts about retracing your steps back to Route 57, do not do this walk. Another good pond is Hall Pond in Tolland. Continue on Route 57 west from the Tolland/Granville town line for about 1.7 miles, and turn right onto Schoolhouse Road. Go 2.2 mile, until you see a dirt road (Blandford Road) on the right. The road may be marked, "road closed," but you can drive this road in summer at least part of the way depending on your vehicle. If you walk, it is about 1.5 miles to Hall Pond on your right.

In the summer a drive into the western part of Blandford is a must for me. Alder Flycatcher, American Bittern, American Kestrel, Bobolink, and perhaps Cliff Swallow are highlights. A good loop drive will provide many opportunities to stop and explore. From Blandford center (intersection of Route 23, North Blandford Road, and North Street), take Route 23 west about 2.1 mile to Blair Road. Turn right on Blair Road, which ends at about 2.5 miles at North Blandford Road. Turn left onto North Blandford Road, and go 1.2 miles west to Gibbs Road (at the Blandford/Otis town line). Turn left onto Gibbs Road, which will take you back to Route 23 in about three miles. Turning left (east) onto Route 23 will take you back to Blandford center (about five miles).

Another worthwhile spot to explore are beaver ponds to the west of Old Chester Road. To reach Old Chester Road, turn right instead of left at the intersection of Blair and North Blandford roads. Go about two hundred yards, and turn left onto Old Chester Road. Park at the power lines at the top of a hill (0.2 mile), and walk in on an old road on the left to explore a very large and old drained pond, where beavers are active. The pond bed is one mile long, but you can reach the lower end in 0.2 mile. Sedge Wrens nested here in the mid-1970s.

**Westover Air Reserve Base.** The runways and grasslands are enclosed with high fences, and entrance for casual birding is generally not permitted. To

inquire about a special permit, call the airbase naturalist, Gina Rossi, at 413-557-2484. The best areas to bird are just north of the ellipse along the road adjacent to the railroad tracks and in the large open fields on the other side of these tracks. From Exit 5 (Chicopee) of the Massachusetts Turnpike, bear right after the toll booth, and turn left at the lights onto Route 33 north. Go 0.5 mile, and turn right at the entrance to the base. After passing through the guarded gate, stay straight on the road past an industrial park area, hangars, and ellipse (an elongated rotary) into an open area.

**SETH KELLOGG** is the editor of *Bird News of Western Massachusetts*, a quarterly publication of the Allen Bird Club of Springfield. He is an active field trip leader for the club and a past president. He is an especially avid hawkwatcher and has served as chairman of the Hawk Migration Association of North America. He is currently working on a book on the birds and bird habitats of western Massachusetts, examining the changing status of bird species there since 1935, which will also provide a through-the-year manual for beginning birders who want to explore their own backyard anywhere in the northeast. Seth owns the private refuge at the foot of Drake Mountain in Southwick.



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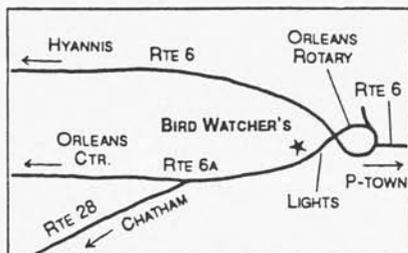
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