

Mid-June 2023



## \* \* \* ANNOUNCEMENTS \* \* \*

### SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

by Daniel Gordon *The Climate Question* podcast, BBC Sounds

While they are being promoted around the world as a crucial weapon in reducing carbon emissions, solar panels have an average lifespan of 25-30 years. Experts say billions of panels will eventually all need to be disposed of and replaced.

"The world has installed more than one terawatt of solar capacity. Ordinary solar panels have a capacity of about 400W, so if you count both rooftops and solar farms, there could be as many as 2.5 billion solar panels," says Dr Rong Deng, an expert in solar panel recycling at the University of New South Wales in Australia.

According to the British government, there are tens of millions of solar panels in the UK. But the specialist infrastructure to scrap and recycle them is lacking. Energy experts are calling for urgent government action to prevent a looming global environmental disaster.

"It's going to be a waste mountain by 2050, unless we get recycling chains going now," says Ute Collier, deputy director of the International Renewable Energy Agency. "We're producing more and more solar panels - which is great - but how are we going to deal with the waste?" she asks.

It is hoped a major step will be taken at the end of June, when the world's first factory dedicated to fully recycling solar panels officially opens in France. ROSI, the specialist solar recycling company which owns the facility in Grenoble, hopes eventually to be able to extract and re-use 99% of a unit's components. As well as recycling the glass fronts and aluminum frames, the new factory can recover nearly all of the precious materials contained within the panels, such as silver and copper, which are typically some of the hardest materials to extract. These rare materials can subsequently be recycled and reused to make new, more powerful, solar units.

Read more: <https://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-65602519>

## **THANK YOU TO OUR BIRD MONITORING PROJECT VOLUNTEERS!**

This nesting season we welcome Amanda Bailey as a regular observer and record-keeper of the Bobolinks at High Ridge WMA in Westminster/Gardner. Amanda has completed coursework with Mass Audubon's Birder's Certificate Program and wanted to take on an independent project to help her community with bird conservation. Besides keeping track of the numbers and behaviors of Bobolinks and assessing nesting success, Amanda is keeping an eye on different aspects of field management, including recreational uses, and trying to learn about the composition of the vegetation. She reports that 3-5 pairs of Bobolinks are using each of three different fields. (Actual pairs are difficult to assess because male Bobolinks may mate with more than one female.) We're grateful to finally have a monitor for these declining grassland birds at the WMA.

Doug Wipf and Ted Purcell are continuing their watch of the DCR Watershed Prison Camp area fields in Rutland. The nestboxes are being used by at least two pairs of bluebirds and several pairs of swallows. We're encouraged that up to three male Bobolinks were on-site by the end of May, since late mowing of these fields renders them less desirable for nesting (denser, weedier vegetation) but at least allows them to complete their nesting cycle and successfully raise their young.



*Eastern Bluebird fledgling, Rutland  
Photos by Doug Wipf*



*Eastern Bluebird at Prison Camp area June 15, 2023*

Mike Perkins and Wendy Howes made monitoring visits to Riis Hill in Barre and discovered bluebirds and Tree Swallows using the nestboxes there. In past years American Kestrels have used the kestrel box at Riis Hill, but a new box was installed on the opposite side of Route 62 at the Barre Heath restoration site, and a pair of kestrels was seen in the vicinity of that nestbox in May.

Jon Skinner is monitoring the extensive nestbox network at High Ridge WMA, and he has his work cut out for him. He's been keeping a watchful eye on more than 40 boxes. Originally a "trail" of 49 boxes, the number has declined due to a problem with bear predation. After a bear knocked down and destroyed several boxes in 2021 and 2022, resulting in the losses of several nests/nestlings and some adult birds, Jon decided he wouldn't replace them for the 2023 season. Nevertheless, two more boxes were recently taken down by a bear, and swallow nestlings and an adult—probably the female—were lost. It may be that the bear, or bears, are attracted to either the odors of the nests/ birds or the scent of the humans who use the areas near the boxes, including Jon. And the bear(s) quickly learn(s) to associate the nestboxes with a good meal. We will be searching for ways to remedy the bear problem at this site.

East Quabbin Land Trust volunteers checked for grassland birds on two of their properties—Mandell Hill, Hardwick and Wendemuth Meadow, North Brookfield—on June 10<sup>th</sup>.



Bobolinks nest at both sites but were difficult to detect at that late date, the peak of nesting season. A few silent males were observed. The bonus grassland species of the morning was Eastern Meadowlark at Mandell Hill. A pair was present and most likely young have hatched; one adult was seen carrying food to a spot low in the vegetation. Eastern Meadowlarks are known to be nesting at only two locations in Worcester County. The other is alongside Wachusett Reservoir in Clinton, Gate 37.



*Eastern Meadowlarks*

*Photos by Alan Rawle*

## **BINOCULARS REVIEWED**

A page from Cornell Lab of Ornithology's *LIVING BIRD* magazine is included with this newsletter. When birders, butterfly-watchers, and hikers meet up, those with binoculars often enter into a discussion about options. This article rates a couple of models relative to "getting the most bang for your buck."

We'd like to add some notes of caution. First, nothing can replace actually holding binoculars in your hands and trying them out. Watch for occasional optics fairs featuring several vendors at a Mass Audubon store or a business specializing in birdwatching products, or visit those locations or other retail businesses that have binoculars on display. This is especially important if you have, for example, an inter-pupillary distance that's outside the norm, or astigmatism or other special visual condition.

Given that in-person shopping may be difficult in this age of online merchandising, think about how much weight you're willing to carry, how close you hope to be able to focus, the amount of light you think you'll need, etc. Take careful measurements of your inter-pupillary distance. Read the detailed product specifications and/or contact the manufacturer's support department for help and advice.

Finally, learn about the return policy in case you find the binoculars unsatisfactory, and check on the procedure for obtaining repairs.

We hope you find this information helpful!

## The Best Affordable, Full-Size 8x42 Binoculars

BY MARC DEVOKAITIS AND HUGH POWELL

**I**t's one of the most common questions birdwatchers hear: What kind of binoculars should I buy? And it's hard to give a blanket answer: With hundreds of models at price ranges from under \$100 to more than \$3,000, the market can be bewildering. But the good news is that today's binocular market is full of great-performing options, and even fairly low-priced bins can deliver bright and crisp images, a comfortable feel, and a generous field of view.

We enlisted 75 people of varying birding skill levels to con-

duct nearly 300 head-to-head tests, and spent an additional 50 hours doing extended field sessions, with 24 full-size, 8x42 binoculars priced from around \$130 to \$650. Ultimately, the best pair of binoculars for you depends on your personal preferences. With so many binocs today delivering great image quality at mid-range prices, you can make your choice based on ergonomics (such as weight, focus wheel, barrel size, eye-cups) and how you plan to use them (such as watching feeder birds vs. birding in dim light or at greater distances).

### OVERALL TOP PICK



Of all the binocs reviewed during testing, the **Celestron TrailSeeker ED (\$380)** came out on top. The bins rendered crisp, sharp, and brilliantly colorful images. A titmouse's bluish-gray back and buffy flanks could be easily discerned against a canopy of colorful autumn leaves. A brilliant Golden-crowned Kinglet flashing its orange crown and hopping among yellow cottonwood leaves reminded us of the sheer joy of a leisurely bird walk during migration. The TrailSeeker ED has a generous field of view, good close focus, a comfortable, not-too-heavy feel in the hands, and a responsive, easy-to-control focus wheel. "I was quickly able to get a crystal-clear image with these, at multiple ranges," said one of the Cornell Lab testers.

### BUDGET BINS THAT DAZZLE



The **Opticron Oregon 4 PC Oasis (\$219)** was notable for being the only binocular under \$250 to make it into the top picks. We found them crisp virtually from edge to edge, with a focus wheel that turned easily and stopped precisely. They handled glare well, picking out a male Downy Woodpecker despite harsh backlighting. Overall, these budget-priced binoculars can stand proudly alongside (or even in front of) models twice as expensive. Tester comments included "very light and great picture clarity" and "crisp and bright across field of view."

### OTHER NOTABLE BINS IN THE AFFORDABLE, FULL-SIZE CATEGORY

All of these models provided crisp, clear images, good focus-wheel movement, and comfortable ergonomics.

**Nikon Monarch M7**  
(\$489)

**Kowa BDII XD**  
(\$449)

**Nikon Monarch M5**  
(\$290)

**Celestron TrailSeeker**  
(\$300)

**Hawke Frontier ED X**  
(\$549)

Prices listed are MSRP as of press time; prices fluctuate by date and by seller.

To see the full results for all 24 binocular models tested, along with testing methods and tips for choosing binoculars, visit [bit.ly/8x42BinsReview](https://bit.ly/8x42BinsReview).



## **SANDHILL CRANES NEST IN HARDWICK FOR FOURTH YEAR**

It may actually be the fifth year that a pair of Sandhill Cranes has produced two young in Hardwick. A member who learned of the recent successful nestings 2021-2022 (in 2020 the two young were lost at an early age) recently alerted us to her observation of two adults with young at a different, but close-by, Hardwick site in 2019. Despite their large size and dramatic appearance, these birds seem to be able to make themselves less-conspicuous while they're restricted from flying and continually move about on foot with their offspring.

The crane family is doing well, and the colts appear to be thriving. All four seem to have settled into a routine of resting and foraging on a few private properties in Hardwick. While one of the landowners has been less-than-enthusiastic about people viewing cranes while they're on his property, the others have been gracious and enthusiastic. They understand that local birders are just as excited about these birds as they are.

If the cranes follow their usual habits, they should be easy to see at various times of day for the next 6 weeks or so. Out of respect for our neighbors and with the best interests of the birds in mind, please contact [warerivernatureclub@yahoo.com](mailto:warerivernatureclub@yahoo.com) if you're interested in guidance on viewing and photographing these beautiful and special birds.

*Sandhill Crane family June 7, 2023*

*Photo by Alan Rawle*



## NEW NEIGHBORS

In late May Bill Platenik of Brimfield discovered that a new family of gray foxes had moved in about 70 feet from his house. He didn't realize it until his trailcam gave them away. Great camera captures! Thanks to Bill for sharing this experience.



## **MORE CAMERA TRAP FOOTAGE**

Jim “Hikingcamera” Morelly reports that he has installed trailcams at two new Quabbin region locations this spring. To view some of the amazing animal action that takes place in our wild central Massachusetts backyard, go to these short videos:

<https://youtu.be/1Gm9Kx7foAs>

<https://youtu.be/foMdQWN72io>

Wonderful results!

Thank you to Jim for sending along the links to his excellent, well-edited videos.



*From Jim Morelly's web-site:*

<https://hikingcamerawildlife.smugmug.com/>





# SAVE BIRDS from Flying Into Windows!

Up to 1 billion birds die from glass collisions each year, mistaking reflections for reality. Almost half of these strikes occur at home windows.

Collisions with glass kill as many as a billion birds each year in the United States alone. Although many people assume that collisions only happen at tall buildings, almost half occur at homes.

Glass causes bird mortality because birds interpret reflections literally, as habitat and sky. They don't perceive glass as a barrier between them and a destination.

This is one conservation challenge that gives everyone an opportunity to make a difference, thanks to a range of effective solutions — many inexpensive and easy to apply.\*

- Apply **tempera paint** (available at most art supply and craft stores) with a brush or sponge, either freehand or using a stencil. Tempera is nontoxic and long-lasting, even enduring rain, yet it comes right off with a damp rag or sponge.
- Use tape to create **patterns** such as stripes or dots. Any opaque or translucent tape can work if the spacing is correct. Most birds will avoid glass if horizontal or vertical patterns are spaced two inches apart on the outside of the pane. This creates the impression to birds that they would not fit through the gaps between the patterns.

- Install **patterned window film**, including do-it-yourself products made specifically to stop collisions. Find out more at [birdsmartglass.org](http://birdsmartglass.org).
  - If you don't want to alter the glass itself, consider **Acopian BirdSavers** or Bird Crash Preventers. These methods are unobtrusive, inexpensive, and highly effective.
  - Install **lightweight netting or removable screens** over the window. (Netting or screens must be several inches in front of the window so that a bird won't hit the glass if it hits the net or screen.) Or use a motorized solar shade to make glass safe when you're not there.
  - What about **hawk decals**? Birds don't interpret hawk decals as predators but rather as obstacles. To be effective, multiple decals must be used together and spaced as described above. (Note that this is closer together than outlined in most manufacturers' recommendations.)
- \* *For best results, solutions applied directly to the glass should go on the outside.*



Ready to take action? Visit [birdsmartglass.org](http://birdsmartglass.org) to learn more.

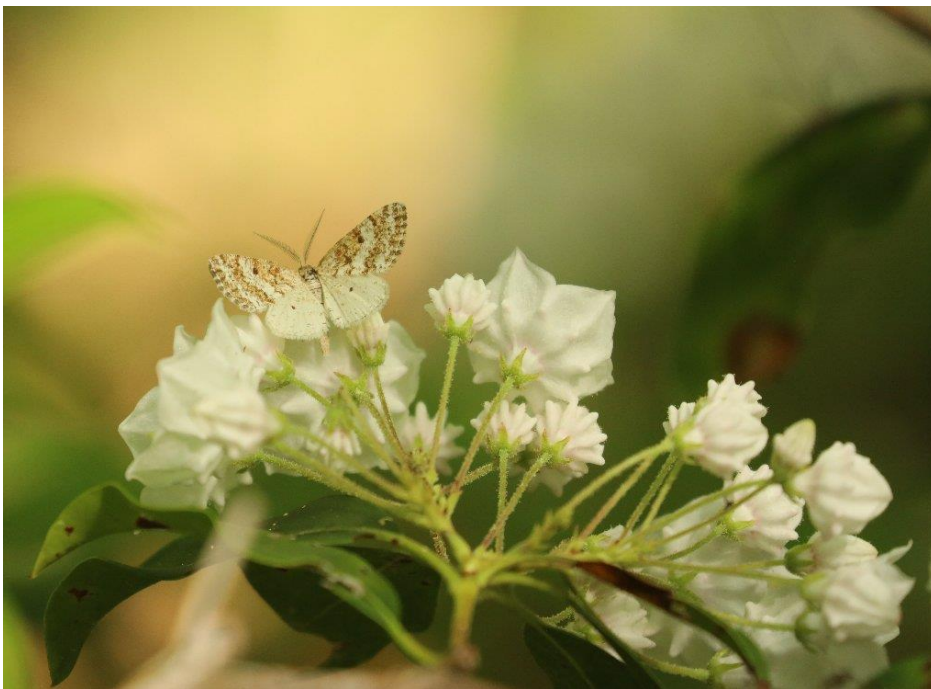
**\* \* \* UPCOMING EVENTS \* \* \***

PRINCETON OPEN SPACE COMMITTEE - PRINCETON HIKES!

**RED FOX FARM TRAILS EXPLORATION**

Wednesday June 21<sup>st</sup> 10 a.m.

This easy-to-moderate hike of 3.5 miles will provide the opportunity to check out some new Princeton trails.



**HIKING  
CENTRAL  
PRINCETON**

**TRAILS**

Saturday

June 24<sup>th</sup>

9 a.m.

This 5-mile hike will take us from Princeton Center down to Krashes field and over to the Beaver Dam in the Russell Corner trails.

Moderate effort level.

For more information or to register:

[TrilaroundprincetonMA@gmail.com](mailto:TrilaroundprincetonMA@gmail.com)

WARE RIVER NATURE CLUB

# GETTING TO KNOW BIRDS AND BIRDING

Location TBD

Saturday June 24<sup>th</sup> 8 a.m.

Rain date: June 25<sup>th</sup>

Leader: Wendy Howes



This will be a slow-paced walk during which we'll focus on birding basics. We'll share identification tips, point out behaviors of interest, and share some life history information. This is a good time to find family groups and fledglings. Suitable for beginners or anyone trying to hone their birding skills/knowledge or approach birding in a non-hurried way.

A location will be chosen based on preferences of registrants.

To register: [warerivernatureclub@yahoo.com](mailto:warerivernatureclub@yahoo.com)

PRINCETON OPEN SPACE COMMITTEE - PRINCETON HIKES!

## BICKFORD POND LOOP HIKE

Saturday July 8<sup>th</sup> 9 a.m.

This is a 4-mile moderate hike in northwestern Princeton.  
For more information or to register: [TrailaroundprincetonMA@gmail.com](mailto:TrailaroundprincetonMA@gmail.com)



*Baby porcupine at Wachusett Meadow Wildlife Sanctuary, Princeton*

*June 11, 2023*

*Photo by Alan Rawle*

MASSACHUSETTS BUTTERFLY CLUB & FORBUSH BIRD CLUB

# BIRDS & BUTTERFLIES WALK LEICESTER

Sunday July 17<sup>th</sup> 9 a.m.

Leader: Dolores Price

pricedolores884@gmail.com or (508) 887-3928



Join us to search for butterflies and birds of early summer  
. Meet-up and first portion of walk will be at the Route 56 overlook to Worcester Airport in Leicester. Immediately following will be a drive to nearby Mulberry Street to walk the wooded trail to Kettle Brook/Manville Street. Prior years' butterfly highlights have included fritillaries, Monarchs, swallowtails, Black Dash skipper, and Appalachian Brown.

Contact the leader for more information.