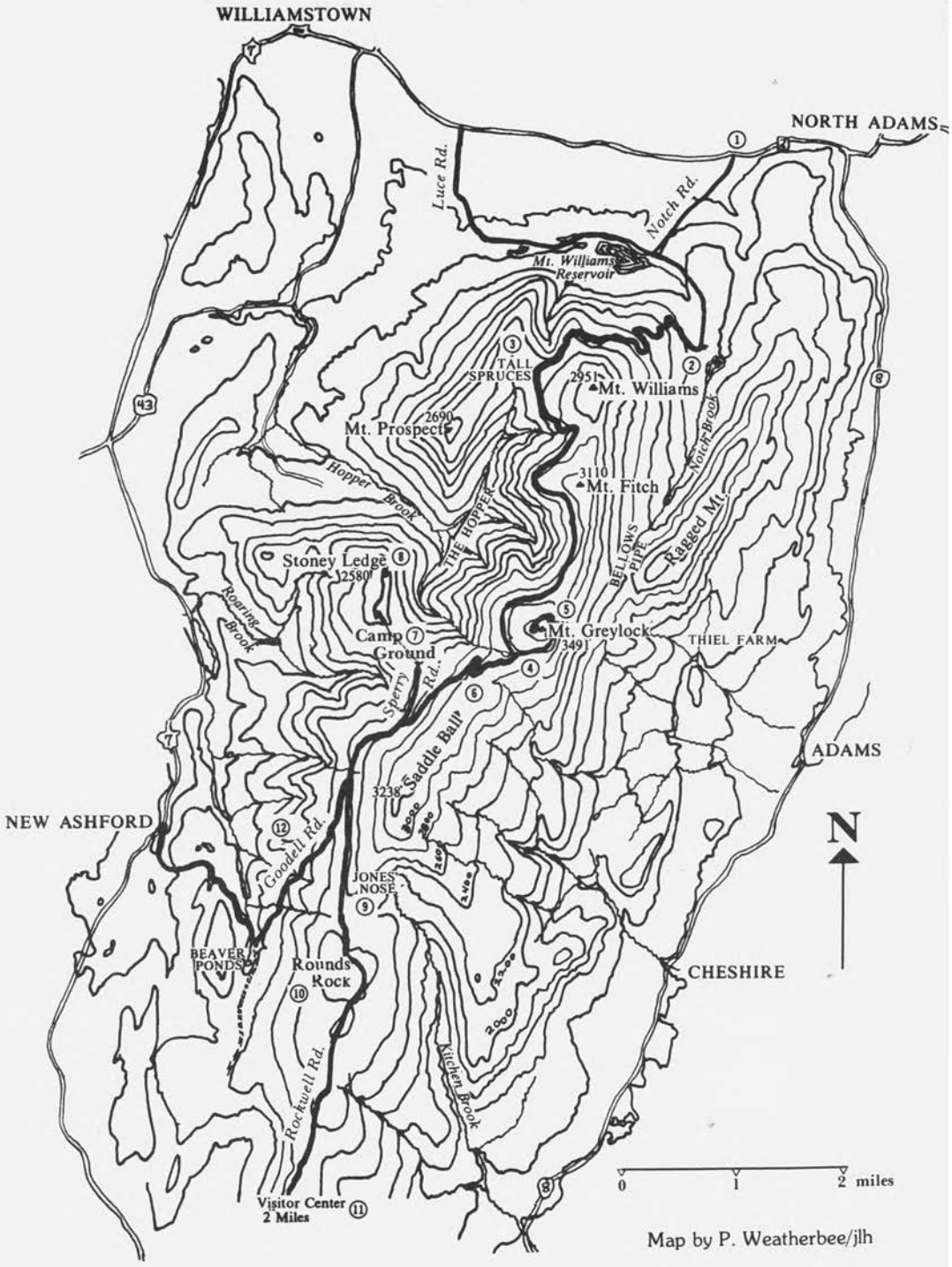

WILLIAMSTOWN
NORTH ADAMS
Luce Rd.
Notch Rd.
Mt. Williams Reservoir
3 TALL SPRUCES
2951 Mt. Williams
2690 Mt. Prospect
3110 Mt. Fitch
Hopper Brook
THE HOPPER
North Brook
Ragged Mt.
BELLOWS PIPE
Stoney Ledge 2580'
Roaring Brook
Camp Ground
Mt. Greylock 3491'
THIEL FARM
Sperry Rd.
Saddle Ball
3238
ADAMS
NEW ASHFORD
Goodell Rd.
JONES NOSE
N
BEAVER PONDS
Rounds Rock
CHESHIRE
Rockwell Rd.
Kitchen Brook
Visitor Center 2 Miles
0 1 2 miles
Map by P. Weatherbee/jlh

MOUNT GREYLOCK

by Pam Weatherbee, Williamstown

The pervasive mood of Mt. Greylock is that of a world apart, removed from the everyday concerns of the valley. Whether you wish to sit on the rocks and dreamily take in the view that stretches across farmlands, orchards, mill towns and mountain ridges to Mt. Monadnock or to haunt some tangled ravine where the song of the Winter Wren mingles with the sound of a waterfall, what you will remember will be the feeling of remoteness. Physically isolated from the north-south trending ridges of the Green Mountains and the Taconics, Greylock is an "island," geologically and climatically different from its surroundings. William Brewster, eminent ornithologist of the nineteenth century, put it aptly when he termed the mountain "a Canadian island rising from an Alleghenian sea." The summit is a haven for boreal species of plants and birds usually found hundreds of miles to the north, and this is what intrigues me - Mt. Greylock's northern character and its many varied habitats, each adding to the many diverse ecosystems of Massachusetts. It is quite a jump from Nantucket's Prickly Pear Cactus to Greylock's wind-racked spruces and firs.

From its height of 3491 feet, the highest point in Massachusetts, the whole massif of Mt. Greylock dominates the skyline of northern Berkshire County and presents a striking sculptural shape from any approach, rising fortress-like from its central position between two mountain ranges. Seen from the west, the full length of the range stretches out from Mt. Williams and Mt. Fitch on the north to Saddle Ball on the south at an average of 3000 feet, and Mt. Greylock lords it over them from the center, framed by the symmetrical sides of the Hopper Valley that lies within two lesser spurs, Mt. Prospect and Stony Ledge. These spurs join the main ridge in flat saddle-like areas known as Tall Spruces (Wilbur's Clearing) and The Campground. Ragged Mountain, well named, joins the east side of the massif at the Notch. "Twin thrones, giants of the North," is how Oliver Wendell Holmes described the way Greylock and Saddle Ball seem to oppose each other as seen from the south creating a concave shape between them, thus explaining Greylock's original name of Saddle or Saddleback Mountain. Looking out at this view from his study window in Pittsfield, Herman Melville was inspired to dedicate his novel, Pierre, to Greylock's "Most Excellent Purple Majesty."

Geological History. The forces that created this sculptured range, now host to a rich variety of life, were common to the rest of New England and eastern North America. Six hundred million years ago, this particular area was at the edge of a proto-Atlantic sea: a Precambrian and Cambrian ocean lapped at sandy beaches during a long quiet time in geologic history, building layers of sand that would become quartzite under heat and pressure. In the deeper parts of the sea to the east,

muds accumulated and gradually became shales and then, finally, schists under miles of sediment. Life was burgeoning in the sea, but a walk along the beach would not have been accompanied by the cries of birds or relieved by a mantle of green. Later, about 500 million years ago (Ordovician Period), shelled animals began building coral reefs in the warm shallow seas, creating what was to become limestone. These three rock formations - Cheshire Quartzite, Schist, and Stockbridge Limestone were the main building blocks of the region. On the east side of the mountain, quarrying operations are exposing a huge vein of Stockbridge limestone that dips under the mountain.

This stable time was gradually shattered by the terrible pressures produced by the oncoming continent (now Europe). Once-level layers were buckled like a pushed-up rug. Some rocks were even uprooted from their places of origin and shoved twenty or thirty miles to the west. This is thought to be what happened to the rocks that now form Greylock. These schists plowed into and over the native quartzite and limestone, and, together, they were further twisted and folded. Pressures also raised the level of the land above the ocean so that no new rocks were laid down beyond the Ordovician. Time and erosion then became the great landscape makers, carving away the softer rocks like limestone, leaving the ridges capped with resistant schist. Now, the valleys are underlain by limestone, also found scattered in pockets in the foothills of Greylock, creating habitats for plants dear to the hearts of botanists. The finishing touches were added by the glacial ice sheet that ground down from the north, smoothing mountain tops, gouging out the U-shaped valleys, and leaving till and outwash along the valley sides. Before finally melting away, glacial ice blocked the drainage and formed a huge lake, Lake Bascom, that almost surrounded the massif at the 1100-foot

Common Wood Sorrel (Oxalis montana) *Illustration by Julie Roberts*

contour level. As the glacier retreated 14,000 years ago, the climate warmed, and plants and animals migrated back from their southern refuge. Plants adapted to the cold and exposure remained only on the mountain tops.

The Human Intrusion. The region was too wild and rugged even for the Mahican Indians who never established villages here but who used the valleys for an east-west travel route and for hunting-grounds. After the Europeans began their incursions, there was a long confrontation with the Indians that lasted until the end of the French and Indian Wars in 1763. The Berkshire Barrier (a high plateau on the eastern border of the county) also served to discourage settlers who referred to the elevations as "hideous high mountains." One hundred and forty years after the Pilgrims landed, permanent villages began to spring up. Then the clearing of land for farms and lumbering proceeded rapidly, starting from the river bottoms and sweeping up to the mountain heights. One enterprising farmer, Jeremiah Wilbur, established a "fine farm" on the saddle between Mt. Prospect and Mt. Williams. He built the first road to the summit of Greylock in order to carry salt to his cattle which often strayed there. At an altitude of 2300 feet, these high open pastures must have been beautifully alpine in aspect. Although Wilbur's farm now has grown up to spruces, some of this same feeling can be experienced at Jones' Nose or Rounds Rock (9 and 10 on map) where now blueberry bushes and small trees are struggling to complete the inexorable push to reforest.

Almost as soon as settlement peaked, richer lands to the west lured away marginal farmers. However, lumbering on the mountain continued to feed the fires of charcoal makers, lime burners, iron horses, iron furnaces and stoves, and to provide lumber for houses and barns. Most of Greylock at one time or another was cut, with only trees in the most inaccessible ravines escaping the saw. Logging slash led to disastrous fires that ravaged the east side of the mountain, burning the soil and creating conditions ideal for erosion and landslides. In 1885, a commercial venture bought land at the summit and tried to attract tourists. Local citizens, appalled at the destruction of the forests, bought out this failed business and presented the land to the state in 1898 with the proviso that the state continue to buy up land on the whole range. Gradually, the Mount Greylock Reservation grew to more than ten thousand acres, thus protecting most of the mountainous area (Greylock and adjacent peaks). The area was the focus of a fierce and bitter conservation battle in the 1960s when plans to build the world's largest tramway and ski resort on the world's smallest mountain were foiled at the last minute by the Mount Greylock Protective Association, a citizen group aided by bird clubs, by the Massachusetts Audubon Society, the Appalachian Mountain Club, and the Massachusetts Forest and Park Association. Formerly managed by Berkshire County, Mt. Greylock became a part of the state park system in 1968.

Present Status. Mt. Greylock now provides these resources: (1) a watershed - its slopes supply water to four towns and two great river systems, the Hudson and Housatonic; (2) a recreation area for hikers, campers, and skiers - the visitor center on Rockwell Road furnishes information, Bascom Lodge at the summit provides food and lodging in the summer, and a good trail guide, available at local bookstores, is put out by Williams College Outing Club; (3) a scenic attraction; and (4) a mecca for naturalists.

Early Naturalists. It is necessary to return to the nineteenth century to describe the development of knowledge of the natural history of the mountain. At the same time that the early use and misuse of Greylock's resources were going on, a different group was exploring the mountain, cataloging its plants and assembling lists of birds. Williams College was a botanical center in the early 1800s. Chester Dewey discovered two new sedges (Carex novae-angliae and C. hitchcockiana) on the mountain, and Amos Eaton lectured on botany to enthusiastic students who printed in 1817 one of the first manuals of botany in America. Ebenezer Emmons, a geologist, made a list of birds in 1835 and was the first to indicate that Golden-crowned Kinglets, Red-breasted Nuthatches, Brown Creepers, Magnolia Warblers, White-throated Sparrows, and Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers bred in this region. His observations were confirmed in 1883 when William Brewster published his list of birds breeding on Greylock. Henry David Thoreau, after having walked from Concord in 1843, hiked up the Bellowspipe, spent a cold night under some boards in the wooden tower at the summit, and awoke to find a landscape of clouds lapping at his feet. Thoreau may have heard of Greylock through his friend Nathaniel Hawthorne, one of the first to use the name "Graylock" in print, the usual name at the time being Saddleback. He called it a "respectable" mountain and explained that "it often has a gray cloud or lock of gray mist upon its head." The name might also have something to do with an Indian chief, Greylock, who fought the English, burned Connecticut Valley settlements, and died in 1725. No one really knows.

The Vegetation and Birdlife of Greylock.

In late May, when the valleys are in full leaf, the flush of green is just creeping up the slopes of the mountains. Wildflowers that you may have missed down below can be seen as you ascend. Drifts of white Canada Violets standing tall line the roadsides, along with both the purple and yellow species. Red Trillium and Painted Trillium decorate the woods. The delicate white flowers of Dutchman's Breeches and Squirrel Corn glow against their silvery foliage. Spring Beauty whitens the roadsides, and in hidden corners, Large-flowered Bellwort hangs its bells. In the woods, the Hobblebush splashes its white, flat flower-clusters.

The lower slopes of the mountain are covered with tall straight trees typical of the northern hardwood community. Sugar maple is the dominant tree among the Beech, Yellow and Black birches, and the White or Paper Birch. There are lesser numbers of Black Cherry, Basswood, White Ash and poplars. Hemlocks are most common along the north-facing slopes. A handsome tree in every respect is the small Striped Maple (Acer pensylvanicum) with its large, three-lobed leaves and bright striped bark which, along with Hobblebush, forms a large part of the understory. Dry slopes with a southern exposure host Northern Red Oak and Mountain Azalea. Notch Road (2 on map) quickly takes you into this forest on the north side of Mt. Greylock, but Rockwell Road winds through an area more recently returning to forest where Fire Cherry, Blueberry, Blackberry, and Fireweed abound.

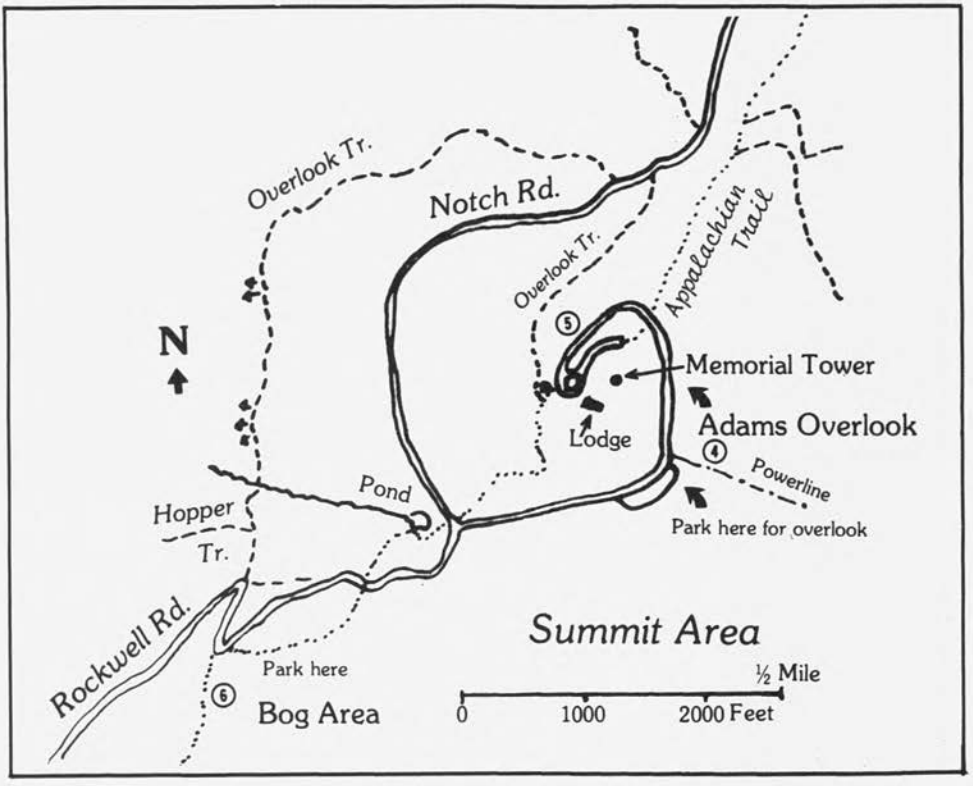
The birds on the lower slopes are those common to many other wooded areas in the state, but where else could you find such a beautiful backdrop? Driving up Notch Road (2) or hiking any of the trails, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Wood Thrush, American Robin, Red-eyed Vireo, Black-throated Blue, Black-throated Green, and Black-and-white warblers, American Redstart, Ovenbird, Scarlet Tanager, and Rose-breasted Grosbeak are species easily seen. Louisiana Waterthrushes nest along the lower rushing streams. Wild Turkey have taken hold well and are most likely to be seen in the Bellowspipe or along Notch Road. Pileated Woodpeckers range widely in the mature forest. In the late summer, many grouse families are seen, led by their squealing mothers, who will try to decoy an intruder away from the chicks. In the dusk of a late afternoon, a Barred Owl may be seen peering down from an overhanging branch.

Tall Spruces (3 on map). The first dense stand of Red Spruce appears at 2300 feet where the Appalachian Trail crosses Notch Road. Called Tall Spruces or Wilbur's Clearing, this is the former site of the "fine farm" of Jeremiah Wilbur. It is a good place to see the resident warblers such as evergreen-loving Blackburnian, Magnolia, and Yellow-rumped as well as the migrating Bay-breasted, Cape May, and others. The "pip-pip-pip" call of the Olive-sided Flycatcher is often heard, and the birdwatcher has a good chance of seeing it. A walk along any of the trails or the road is very productive, and careful listening may turn up a Winter Wren.

After Tall Spruces, the vegetation becomes noticeably shorter, with spruces, Yellow Birch, and Mountain Ash (Pyrus americana) beginning to predominate. The 2600-foot elevation, according to experts, is a definite boundary between deciduous hardwoods and the boreal forest. Here, clouds hang longer, thus cutting out the sun and providing more moisture, and hoar frost is more common, making the growing season shorter. Only plants adapted to cold and exposure survive. Above this line, the wind becomes a factor as well, because there are no barriers to mitigate the flow which is speeded up as it passes over the mountain. Severe winds drive ice crystals into the tree bark, killing

one side and producing dwarfed, twisted trees that grow away from the predominant wind direction. These are known as "flag trees." Balsam fir becomes more common closer to the summit and is the dominant tree there. It is highly resistant to cold, and its pliable limbs are able to rebound from the weight of ice and snow.

Summit Areas (4 and 5 on maps). Greylock's summit is far from its original state due to man's continued disturbance of the area. Eyesores such as memorial towers, radio towers, TV towers, microwave towers, parking lots, and buildings all mar the area. However, the views are still lovely, ranging from Mt. Monadnock and the Holyoke Range to the Catskills, Adirondacks, and the Green Mountains. The east face drops directly down to Adams, giving a hawk's-eye view of orchards, fields and old mills. The Hoosac Range bounds the east side of the valley. If the memorial tower looks more like a lighthouse to you, you are not far wrong; it was originally designed to be placed on a Boston Harbor island. Bascom Lodge, built of native stone by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930s, seems to fit more comfortably into the landscape.



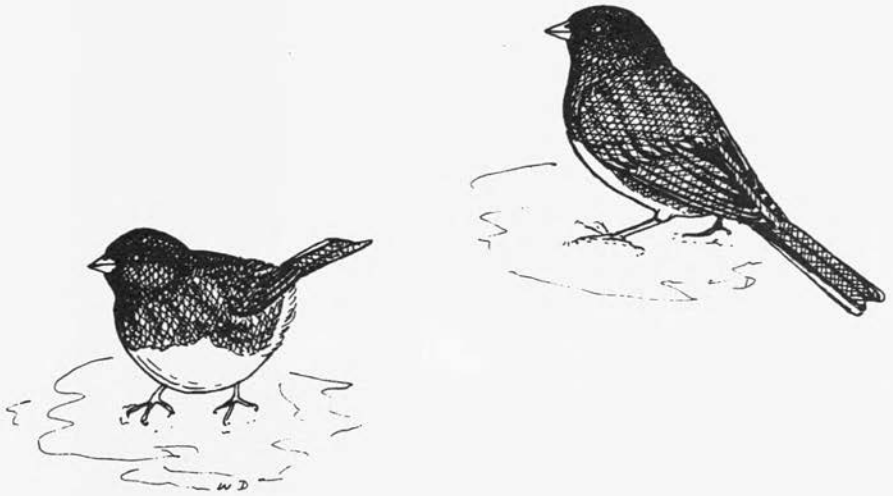
Mourning Warbler *Illustration by William E. Davis*

The summit area was originally covered with stunted, laterally growing firs, as Timothy Dwight found in 1799. Such trees may still be found in clumps around the summit. Their leaders are dying but the lower, ground-hugging branches extend out in a lush circle. Yellow birch appears here as straggly bushes, but Mountain Ash flourishes covering the mountain top with white flower clusters in June. Growing along with the latter is Northern Mountain Ash, found here and on another nearby ridge, the southern limit of the species' range. Similarly distributed is Bartram's Shadbush which puts out its starlike blossoms in time for the first birdwatchers in early June. Other berry-producing bushes such as raspberry, blueberry, and chokeberry complete the bird menu, their fruits being enjoyed by towhees, Cedar Waxwings, robins, etc. Late summer finds the Large-leaved Goldenrod, another northerly plant at its most southerly station, blooming along the road and edges of clearings. The song of the White-throated Sparrow is background music to this northern scene. Blackpolls call an insistent "seet-seet-seet" from the tips of firs. Yellow-rumped Warblers nest here and in a broad zone above 3000 feet. Juncos are omnipresent. The much sought Mourning Warbler appears each summer in the low growth just below the Adams overlook between the Appalachian Trail and the powerline and is most easily seen here (4 on map) in the very early morning. This

bird seems to like the tangled mess of branches and raspberry bushes often resulting from logging slash. Several pairs are now nesting in just such a habitat on the Hopper's lower slopes along the Hopper Trail (see summit map). Bicknell's Thrush, a race of the Gray-cheeked, traditionally nests here, at its southern range limit, but has not been found in recent years.

It is worthwhile to compare what William Brewster saw a century ago with what exists today. In a delightfully written article published in 1884, he describes his visit of June 21-29, 1883. After exploring the valley areas for several days, he ascended Greylock from Adams on horseback one June morning. Reaching a level plateau that had been logged just below the summit and was now covered with vigorous second growth about fifteen feet high, he realized the goal of his hopes, the attainment of the Canadian Zone. The air "rang with bird music." He quickly identified Olive-backed (Swainson's) Thrush, Winter Wren, Mourning Warbler, Black-throated Blue Warbler, White-throated Sparrow, Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, and Olive-sided Flycatcher, "at least three additions to the summer fauna of Massachusetts within less than as many minutes!" Mourning Warblers were described as abundant. After passing into a dark spruce and fir wood, he saw only Red-breasted Nuthatches, Blackburnian Warblers and Swainson's Thrushes. He noted juncos at the top.

Rose Twisted Stalk (Streptopus roseus) *Illustration by Julie Roberts*



Dark-eyed Junco

Illustration by William E. Davis

Hawks use the steep slopes for uplift and can be seen zooming by the Adams overlook. Greylock is not a good place for migrating hawks as it is not part of a long north-south ridge, but it may occasionally serve as a grandstand seat to observe kettles of broadwings following the Hoosac Valley south. More often now, the hoarse croaks and cries of the Common Raven are heard on the mountain, and groups of four or five may be seen. Perhaps someday, ravens will again nest in Berkshire County, and Raven Rocks on Ragged Mountain will live up to its name. In some summers, Evening Grosbeaks have been seen in many places on the upper slopes and ridges, and it is always a pleasant sight to see Indigo Bunting family groups near the summit.

Saddle Ball Ridge. Boreal forest in unspoiled condition extends along the ridge of Saddle Ball and is accessible by walking the Appalachian Trail south from a hairpin turn on Rockwell Road (6 on map). While ascending the trail over a small ridge, notice the rich assortment of spring wildflowers including Rosy Twisted-stalk and the yellow bells of Clintonia borealis. Canada Warblers inhabit the dense growth here. The trail descends to a small stream that leads to a sphagnum bog. Here you are likely to hear the bubbling song of Swainson's Thrush. This, and the other resident thrush, the Hermit Thrush seem much scarcer now than ten years ago. The Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, a late migrant but only a suspected breeder here,is usually seen in these boggy areas. All along the ridge, the boreal forest is typified by small firs and Yellow Birches not over twenty feet tall, and the boggy soil

Clintonia (Clintonia borealis) *Illustration by Julie Roberts*

is richly green with geometrical forms of Wood Sorrel, Yellow Clintonia, Shining Club Moss (Lycopodium lucidulum), and Mountain Woodfern (Dryopteris spinulosa austriaca) arranged more artfully than in any Japanese garden. Compare this sparse number of species to the lush disorder of more southern climates.

The Campground, Stony Ledge, and the Hopper Valley. The campground (7 on map) and Stoney Ledge (8 on map; both spellings are acceptable) are reached by Sperry Road off Rockwell Road. The first is situated in a transition zone between spruce-fir forest and northern hardwoods. Once a farm, and in the 30s a home for a Civilian Conservation Corps camp (foundations and fireplaces can still be seen), the primitive campground is a pleasant place to stay to enjoy some of the resident birds and to hear Barred Owls calling at night.

Solitary Vireos nest near the road, and Red-breasted Nuthatches, Golden-crowned Kinglets, Brown Creepers, and juncos populate the woods, the latter often choosing nest sites right by the road. Trails lead down to waterfalls where the Winter Wren holds forth, where huge hemlocks cling to steep slopes, and where Mountain Maples move gently in the spray.

A contrast is the road to Stony Ledge (8) which winds through sunny blueberry fields and opens out to a stunning view of the Hopper valley and the blue peaks of Vermont in the distance. Sitting on the rocks, one can hear the collective sounds of the valley floating up. The monotonous Red-eyed Vireo and the distant chimes of the Hermit Thrush mix with sounds of rushing brooks. The valley is an unusual shape, closed in on three sides by steep slopes through which tumble many small streams that connect to form Hopper Brook and then rush west out the narrow gateway. March Cataract forms a delicate white strand down the mountain during spring runoff, easily seen from the valley. Sometimes thought to be a glacial cirque, the Hopper definitely is carved by erosion as indicated by the sharp V-shaped valley bottom. In contrast to the upper slopes which tend to have acidic soils, a narrow band of limestone circles the lower slopes producing the rich soil needed by rarer species such as Large-Flowered Bellwort, Ginseng, and Massachusetts' only Holly Fern, Polystichum braunii, rediscovered by the author and Bruce Sorrie of the state's Natural Heritage Program. The trees in this sheltered valley are particularly tall and straight. Fortunately, sixteen hundred acres of the Hopper have been placed in the National Register of Natural Areas by the Society of American Foresters, and this precludes any cutting or vehicle use. In years to come, this area should be a shining example of undisturbed old-growth forest, a rarity preserved for future generations.

Mount Greylock should be regarded as a treasure by the state. Its northern vegetation and associated birdlife are rare in this small, heavily populated, northeastern state. Like the rest of the Berkshires, it is intimate, accessible, and not overwhelming in altitude, but still offers wild rugged country that is a challenge to anyone interested in getting off the beaten path. There are remote areas that reward the person willing to explore these scenes of wild beauty. After a day on Greylock, my feelings concur exactly with those of William Brewster: "Looking back at the rosy haze fast deepening into purple shadows under the brow of the mountain, it was hard to realize that the day's experience had not been a delightful dream." Greylock needs more people to share that experience and, once aware, will come to be its guardians. With care, the Blackpolls, Mourning Warblers, Whitethroats, and perhaps again, the Bicknell's Thrush, not to forget us humans, will always find our island of the north.

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Personal Communications in 1983 from
Fox, William T., Professor of Geology, Williams College.
Sorrie, Bruce, Program Botanist for Natural Heritage Program.
Wobus, Reinhard A., Professor of Geology, Williams College.

ITINERARY AND JUNE BIRDING GUIDE FOR MOUNT GREYLOCK

Access by car is from Route 2 on Notch Road from North Adams, Luce Road in Williamstown, and from Route 7 north of Lanesborough center where there are signs directing one to the Park and Visitor Center.

The numbers of the places listed below refer to the circled numbers on the maps (pages 64 and 70).

1. Notch Road begins 1.2 miles west of North Adams Center on Route 2.

2. Notch Road enters Mt. Greylock Reservation 2.4 miles from Route 2. Birds seen along the road are
Yellow bellied Sapsucker, Wood Thrush,
American Robin, Red-eyed and Solitary vireos,
Black-throated Blue, Black-throated Green, and
Black-and-white warblers, American Redstart,
Ovenbird, Scarlet Tanager, Rose-breasted Grosbeak.

3. Tall Spruces (4.7 miles from Route 2). The Appalachian Trail crosses here. Park and take the trail north (right) to the clearing and the trails beyond. The trail south (left) and along the road are productive also. The birds are
Olive-sided Flycatcher, Winter Wren,
Magnolia, Yellow-rumped, and Blackburnian warblers,
Cape May and Bay-breasted warblers in migration.

4. Adams Overlook. Go left at the junction of Notch and Rockwell roads (8.5 miles) and park at first pull-off. Walk up the road to where the Appalachian Trail crosses.
Hawks, Blackpoll, Mourning, and Chestnut-sided warblers,
juncos, White-throated Sparrows.

5. Summit area (9.5 miles from Route 2) and Bascom Lodge. Park and walk east to Overlook and around edges of clearing.
Yellow-rumped and Blackpoll warblers,
White-throated Sparrows.

6. Saddle Ball along Appalachian Trail and bog area. Return to road junction and take Rockwell Road (left). Drive about 2000 feet down and park on left at sharp hairpin turn. Walk in here on the trail and explore boggy areas and boreal forest.
Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, Winter Wren,
Swainson's Thrush, Canada Warbler.

7. Campground. Turn right off Rockwell Road onto Sperry Road (2.2 miles from summit). Walk along road and explore trails. Red-breasted Nuthatch, Brown Creeper,
Golden-crowned Kinglet, Solitary Vireo,
Mourning Warbler nesting along Hopper Trail.
Expect Barred Owls calling if you stay overnight.

8. Stony Ledge. Continue on Sperry Road for view of Hopper Valley. Birds here are
Dark-eyed Juncos, Hermit Thrush, towhees.

9. Jones' Nose. Return to Rockwell Road and continue down (4 miles from summit) to high open fields, blueberries, shadbush.

10. Rounds Rock. (5 miles) Park on left ("4 miles" painted on road) and take trail west (right) not over a mile to a beautiful place with views to the south, blueberries, Mountain Holly (Nemopanthus), soaring hawks, and Hermit Thrushes.

11. Visitor Center: (8.5 miles to summit) exhibits and information. Continue down from here to Route 7.

12. Alternate route to Route 7. Take right 3 miles from summit at Ash Fort onto good gravel road. This is a less-traveled, quiet road with woodland birds, Barred Owl seen along the road, and a chance for Wild Turkey.

PAM WEATHERBEE spent most of her childhood in Williamstown, Massachusetts, roaming the woods and fields. This early interest led to a degree in biology and then to a wider interest in natural history with emphasis on birds and botany. She worked for three summers as a volunteer naturalist on Mt. Greylock and is now on the Mt. Greylock Advisory Committee.