



Cape Cod Bird Club

VOLUME 26

NOVEMBER ~ DECEMBER 1997

ISSUE 2

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Don Scott

The CCBC mailbox regularly yields a variety of interesting items. Many are pitches for exotic and expensive trips, but others are both enlightening and worthy of passing along. Such was a recent letter from an organization called the *Rainforest Alliance*. In brief, their



non-soliciting letter focused on the relationship between the loss of rainforest acreage (a million acres in Central America and another million in Mexico each year) and the rapidly growing new trend of planting coffee bushes in open fields, as opposed to the traditional method of planting in the twilight under the forest canopy.

Jim Talin wrote an editorial on this subject in our March/April 1997 newsletter, but the seriousness of this matter makes it worthy of mention again. These "full sun" farms produce more coffee beans, but at a terrible cost to the environment. Conservationists are greatly concerned, since coffee is the dominant crop throughout the highlands of Central America.

Shade grown coffee promotes biodiversity. Coffee farms are home to dozens of tree species which provide refuge for abundant wildlife, ranging from frogs in the leaf litter to ocelots in the underbrush to a huge variety of both tropical and migratory birds in the canopy. Many of these birds - including warblers, orioles, thrushes, hummingbirds, and tanagers, as well as toucans, parrots, and trogons - take refuge in traditional coffee plantations.

The American Birding Association (ABA), in an effort to change this trend, has joined forces with a cutting edge coffee company to protect bird habitat in the tropics by promoting eco-friendly coffee. *Songbird Coffee*, a line of gourmet coffees from Thanksgiving Coffee Company, returns 15 cents from each pound sold to support ABA conservation programs. These beans are available at *Wild Birds Unlimited* and *Wild Oat* stores across the country.

For those interested in more information regarding ECO-O.K. certified coffee sources, a handout will be available at our November meeting. Those unable to attend may write to me c/o the CCBC address at the Cape Cod Museum of Natural History.

OSPREY LESSONS

Marge Marion

After watching the disappearance of the osprey from this area because of DDT, it is great to see this magnificent bird having a resurgence as it nests all over the Cape. The Osprey is such an exquisite bird to watch in flight that I always keep it in my sights as long as possible.

During a migration a few years ago, I stopped to watch a young osprey fishing at the Harwich Reservoir. As the bird hit the water, I waited to see it rise with the catch of the day. Anyone who has watched an Osprey knows that they sometimes take a long time to pull up from the water, but this one caused me to panic from holding my breath for so long. About the moment I despaired, the bird lifted its dripping feathered frame out of the water, and with much fluttering and struggling, managed to get to a branch looking dejected. While I stood feeling sorry for the bird and its sloppy fishing performance, an adult Osprey flew by, fluttered in the air, dropped to the water, and with a good splash lifted out of the water with a fish in its talons. All this while, the youngster watched! I could almost hear the adult speaking in Osprey language: "That's the way to do it - try again when you dry off!" The adult bird flew off to a far tree. Obviously, the young bird was going to have to try again to catch its own.

*"That's the way to do it -
try again when you dry off!"*

Another Osprey caught my attention when we were on Sanibel Island, Florida. There WAS AN Osprey nest on huge power line poles, and I couldn't understand why one bird was bringing sticks to a nest where another bird was already setting. This bird flew around with sticks and twigs, and couldn't seem to get them to stay any place. It really seemed demented. A naturalist at Ding Darling reassured me that the bird was not an aberration. It was immature and simply practicing. I hoped it improved for the sake of the future of the species.

ENDURANCE RECORD

Ellie Winslow

Last July in late afternoon, raucous sounds coming from the front yard beckoned me to go out and investigate. Forty feet up in a locust tree perched a Red-tailed Hawk, placidly surveying "his" farm fields, looking for a snack. Two Mockingbirds were diving and screaming at the hawk like a pendulum - at the bottom of each swing, they would physically hit the hawk at the base of its tail, causing the hawk to flinch. At the end of each foray, the hawk would shake its tail and put the feathers back in place. When the mockingbirds took a breather, a couple of robins would make attempted passes at the hawk's shoulders while being cheered on by a nearby crow, which was adding his two cents to the racket.

A few times the mockers would go for the hawk's head, but never touched it. When the mockers rested on a nearby limb six feet away, the hawk would slowly turn his head toward them as if to say: "You're still here?" The white wing flashing and tail splaying of the mockers was an indicator of how mad they were and how hard and how fast was their attack. Their harsh raspy voices completed their obvious displeasure of the offending hawk in their "territory."

The setting sun, which changed the mockers flashing white wing patches to a pale pinkish-orange, was the end of this drama. The hawk finally flew away to his tall spruce tree perch on the other side of the farm. Length of confrontation - 3.5 hours! How long would this battle have lasted if dusk had not broken up the melee? Why did the hawk endure this barrage for so long? Only once did the hawk move a foot to stretch a leg and spread a wing. How much territory do mockingbirds feel the necessity to defend?



Cape Cod Bird Club Inc.

The Cape Cod Museum Of Natural History
PO BOX 1710, Brewster, MA 02631

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NOVEMBER PREVIEW

Stauffer Miller

November is a sobering month for the Cape Cod birder. Warblers are long gone, shorebirds have moved out, even sparrows have gotten tough to find. And by month's end the sun will be setting at 4:19 PM! In such a depleted setting, of what avian bounty can the November birder partake, aside from the obvious roast holiday bird on the 27th?

Thankfully, there are some places worth monitoring in November, and the outer Cape has several of them. First Encounter Beach in Eastham could be checked for Jaegers and Alcids, especially if the wind has been strong out of the northwest and the tide high. Continue southward while there, watching for a Merlin in the little tree on the right. At the turnaround parking lot at the end, look for Lapland Longspurs in the high tide debris, leftover shorebirds on the far side of the Herring River, and Snowy Owl in the same spot.

Another spot worth some time in November is the harbor in Wellfleet Center. A Dovekie was there last November 21-23, as was a Thick-billed Murre on the 24th. A Little Gull was there November 23-24, 1995, and over the years a variety of ducks, including Harlequin, have been present.

A final spot worthy of some November time is Nauset Beach in Orleans. This is one of my favorite places for a beach walk. Park at the big parking lot, and walk north a few hundred yards. Early morning is not so good on a sunny day as the light will be in your eyes. Large rafts of sea ducks often frequent this area, and you'll need your scope. What could be more to a birder's liking than this spot - the pounding Atlantic surf, a bracing wind, and the ducks bobbing in and out of view just off shore? Rarities here have included Eared Grebe and Harlequin Duck. So, don't knock November.

Good birding.

The Cape Cod Bird Club

is an organization whose members are interested in the protection and conservation of the bird life and natural resources of Cape Cod.

If you are interested in joining, please send a check for \$10 single membership, \$15 family membership to...

CCBC, Cape Cod Museum of Natural History
PO BOX 1710, Brewster, MA 02631

PEREGRINE

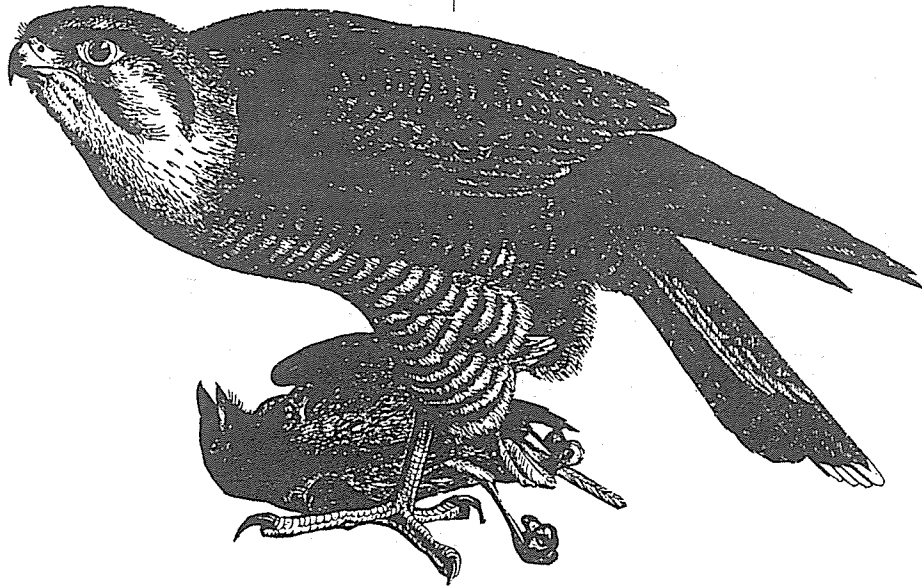
Phil Kyle

I was leading a trip out in Nauset Marsh, aboard the Nauset Explorer (a 20' pontoon boat) for the CCMNH, with a group of fifteen seventh graders from St. David's School in New York. We had just seen a young Great White Heron feeding at Hopkins Island in Town Cove. I was surprised because most of the school kids were actually pretty impressed by the big bird. Then I gave the perfunctory story about why the Double-crested Cormorant was facing into the wind and drying its wings. Most of the students showed some interest.

Then we cruised through the Great Marsh at high tide. As we passed Fort Hill, I noticed a pair of Mockingbirds "protecting" a *rosa multiflora*, a big rose bush covered with small rose hips. As we cruised further I could see a bunch of six Great Blue Herons, which everybody aboard could see with their naked eyes, let alone their binoculars. Then I saw something dark, a shape flying, pointed wings, it was a hawk of some kind, possibly a falcon. I drew everybody's attention to it even before I had identified what kind of hawk it might be. As we got closer, I started to entertain the idea it might be a Peregrine Falcon (Duck Hawk), but I thought: "No I couldn't have that kind of good luck."

Then it landed on a sand dune about 50 feet from the marsh's edge. I made as big a deal as possible about not getting too close and possibly scaring it away. The emphasis was mostly so the Captain would hear me and not scare the hawk away. Looking through my binoculars again, I realized it was a Peregrine. When I announced it to the group, most didn't know one raptor from another. Plus the Captain was definitely skeptical. I delivered a short talk about Peregrines migrating southward using the energy from ducks, etc., that they ate. Everyone got more

interested! We got closer. The whole time the Peregrine Falcon, probably a large female, was busy preening itself. The boat stopped a mere 50 yards away, which I thought was too close for a hawk, let alone a Peregrine. But the bird just went about its business as though we weren't even there. We must have spent a good 10 minutes looking at it. Actually, we looked until the group of 7th graders got bored!



Then, much to my disappointment, we left and went past Little Island, as a small group of Black-bellied Plovers and Sanderlings flew past. It was then that I saw what I thought was another hawk. It turned out to be the same Peregrine

Falcon, but this time it was chasing a Black-bellied Plover. In fact it was hoping it was going to have plover for lunch! However this plover had different plans. Some serious aerial acrobatics ensued. The Peregrine kept up the chase, but the plover would do an avoidance maneuver as the falcon closed in. First, the falcon would start its dive, getting closer and closer to the plover, and just when you thought there was no hope for the plover, it would zig when the falcon zagged. This cat and mouse game went on for at least five minutes, and each time the plover avoided being caught at the last possible second. All the students on board were rooting for the "underdog" plover.

Eventually, the Peregrine gave up, after fifteen or so unsuccessful attempts to make the plover into a meal. Most of the kids cheered when the falcon flew off. But they were quickly distracted by a couple of Gray Seals that appeared close to the boat. So much for another adventure aboard the Nauset Explorer.

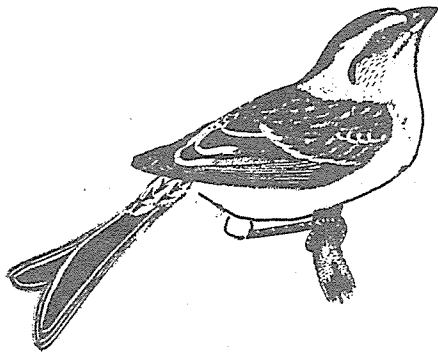
DAVID & GOLIATH

Ron Hindman

One Saturday this past July, I went to sea for the day on the *USS John C. Stennis* (CVN-74), the US Navy's newest nuclear aircraft carrier, on which my son Mark is stationed. This was my second annual Family Day Cruise experience of spending a day at sea, 100 miles east of Norfolk, Virginia, on this magnificent ship. Being an ol' Navy man, I thoroughly enjoyed it.

To stand on the 1,092 foot, 4.5 acre flight deck of this 97,000 ton vessel and observe F-18 fighter jets, not more than 50 feet away being launched and recovered, is an awesome experience. The power, speed, and maneuverability of these aircraft is impressive to say the least.

But two other observations that day were just as memorable. For a short period, there was a lull in the flight operations. As I stood on the sun-drenched deck



waiting for the action to continue, I happened to notice a sparrow taking a break on the flight deck. Not able to get close enough to identify the species, especially without binoculars, I

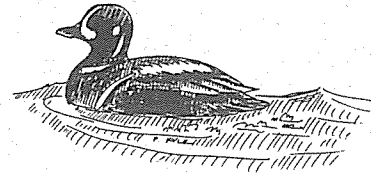
could only marvel at what she (I think) was doing so far from the streets of downtown Norfolk, 100 miles at sea. Then, as some Navy flying resumed, she took flight herself and disappeared into the horizon.

The second memorable thing I saw occurred just after an F-18 had buzzed the ship at 800+ miles per hour, so that the crowd of one-day sailors could experience a sonic boom. I looked to port side and saw a butterfly fluttering alongside the carrier, easily keeping pace with our 20+ knot speed. I must have watched a good ten minutes as this small delicate butterfly maintained an erratic, parallel course with the huge ship.

Later, I reflected on the events of the day, still very impressed with our technology, yet, as always, awed by the wonders of nature with its own special technology. It was the small vs. the mighty, like David and Goliath, and I don't have to tell you who won that one.

NEW MEMBERS

New Members Since January 1, 1997



Richard Adami & Marilyn McClune	Dennis
Beverly Boynton	East Orleans
Glenn & Jane Berchtold	Eastham
Robert Bradley	Dennis
Lynn Campbell	East Orleans
Susan Daly & Stephen Wasby	Albany, NY
Paul Dorr	Sandwich
Jeffrey Friedman	Needham
Donald Fairbanks	Plymouth
Barbara Garulay	West Yarmouth
Joyce Guide	Provincetown
Anthony Grimm	Wyomissing, PA
Martha C. Gruson	Concord
Sharon Harbison	West Falmouth
William Howe	North Falmouth
Thomas & Kathleen Howes	Yarmouthport
Arnold & Cynthia Henson	East Orleans
Norma Ingalls	Eastham
Richard & Sylvia Jurkowski	Centerville
Richard & Christine King	East Orleans
Sally Leighton	Brewster & Tolland, CT
Ginny McGagh	East Falmouth
Jane MacDonald & Tom Sanker	Sandwich
Susan Makowski	Dennis
William & Dorothea O'Brien	Mashpee
John Pery	North Truro
Loren Scherbak & Carol Hannaford	Rockville, MD
Jamie Taft	Greenville, NH
Michael & Linda Visconti	Milford
Patricia Wood	East Sandwich
Lenny Warren	Hyannis
Russell & Susan Watson	Irvington, NY
George & Nancy Whalen	Brewster
Nancy B. Wood	West Barnstable

ARE BIRDS REALLY FLYING DINOSAURS?

Jim Talin

In the news recently, I have heard birds described as flying dinosaurs. I'll admit that I have a problem seeing the Chickadee at my feeder as cousin to a dinosaur such as Tyrannosaurus rex. So I decided to do some research to find out just what similarities there are. At first, I wasn't sure what I found. When you consult the experts, who have a way of writing that mystifies as much as it clarifies, you run into statements assuring us that there is "a maniraptoran origin for birds; certainly a coelurosaurian origin at the very least." Or "The theropod (meaning "beast-footed") dinosaurs are a diverse group of bipedal saurischian dinosaurs." Mononykus olecranus...Giganotosaurus carolinii...I think you can begin to see what I mean.

When you persevere however, it is possible to understand some basics. First, there is a fossil record that links birds to reptiles and to a family of dinosaurs called theropods, a record that establishes that birds are actually the descendants of small "nonflying theropods". The latest fossil finds that connect birds and dinosaurs are the most exciting and are the finds that are in the news. A recently uncovered fossil shows a dinosaur with a wish-bone. But the record is spotty, because theropod fossils are scarce and hard to find. The reptile link is older and more complete. As early as 1860, a fossil called the 'London Specimen' established this link. Furthermore, birds, like reptiles, have scales (feathers are considered modified scales), and birds also have scales on their legs. Birds also lay eggs, and have other skeletal resemblances to reptiles. But cousins to dinosaurs? Just what are the characteristics that link birds to "nonflying theropods"? Here are some links: the general tubular structure of the bones, some modifications of the hands and feet; 3 main fingers on the hand; the fourth and fifth digits are reduced; and 3 main (weight-bearing) toes on the foot; the first and fifth digits are reduced. Here's a more technical list of the shared characteristics taken from a WEB site called Dinobuzz.

1. Pubis (one of the three bones making up the vertebrate pelvis) shifted from an anterior to a more posterior orientation, and bearing a small distal "boot".
2. Elongated arms and forelimbs and clawed manus (hands).
3. Large orbits (eye openings in the skull).
4. Flexible wrist with a semi-lunate carpal (wrist bone).
5. Hollow, thin-walled (pneumatized) bones.
6. 3-fingered opposable grasping manus (hand), 4-toed pes (foot); but supported by 3 main toes.

7. 1st toe (hallux) reversed; faces posteriorly.
8. Elongated metatarsals (bones of the feet between the ankle and toes).
9. S-shaped curved neck.
10. Erect, digitgrade stance with feet positioned directly below body.
11. Shortened, distally stiffened tail.
12. Teeth with a constriction between the root and the crown.
13. Functional basis for wing power stroke present in arms and pectoral girdle (during motion, the arms were swung down and forward, then up and backwards, describing a "figure-eight" when viewed laterally).

Where do these similarities lead us? Well, the scientific WEB site Dinobuzz has this summary: "So when you see a hawk diving to snatch a dove, or an egret darting for fish, or an ostrich dashing across the African savanna, know that you are gaining insight into what dinosaurs were like. Modern birds have been separated evolutionarily from the other coelurosaurian dinosaurs for some 150 million years, so they do look quite different, but science has shown us that they are closely linked by evolutionary history."

For more information, go to Altavista on your web browser and look up Dinobuzz. My thanks and apologies to Dinobuzz for my use of its information.

CLOSED MINDS

Robert Pease

Speak not to me of those whose narrowness
of mind would not allow a rail to pass.

A rail? A nail could not find entry there
where cortex, petrified, has closed all paths
to reason, sense and thought.

To shut themselves
away in such a cell, convinced that Right
is theirs alone, is worse than taking flight,
or being turned to stone.

Jackie Sones

August - September

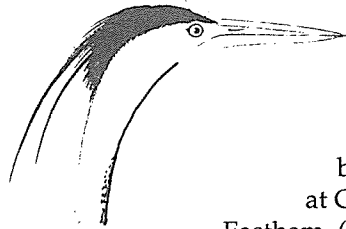
If you'd like to report a sighting, you may do so in any of the ways listed at the end of this column. It's very helpful to include your name and phone number, the birds name, the number of individuals, the date and location of your sighting, and any other information you've gathered!

Raptors

The Swainson's Hawk first seen on June 25 continues to be reported! Observers have been treated to great views of this bird from various locations within the Provincelands. On September 10, George Martin happened upon a Rough-legged Hawk (light phase) working the marshy edges of Oyster Pond in Chatham. This is a very early date for this species in Massachusetts. Keep your eyes open for more! Erik Nielsen discovered a Black Vulture near Race Point in Provincetown on September 21.

Shorebirds

Reports of the Bar-tailed Godwit on South Beach and North Monomoy Island in Chatham filtered in through the third week in September. An American Avocet, first spotted at First Encounter Beach in Eastham on August 22, has been observed most regularly at Coast Guard Beach in Eastham. (It put in one appearance at the Wellfleet Bay Wildlife Sanctuary on September 14.) A Long-billed Curlew was seen on September 8 at Coast Guard Beach in Eastham.



Gulls

Mid-September provided a few sightings of Lesser Black-backed Gulls: On September 10 one was reported from South Beach in Chatham; and on September 14 Dick Comeau, Sally Clifton, and Seward Highley caught up with one at Red River Beach in South Harwich; and two individuals were spotted on South Monomoy Island in Chatham. A Common Black-headed Gull spent some time at Coast Guard Beach in Eastham during late August and early September.

Jaegers

Jaegers put on spectacular aerial shows at the end of the summer. Numerous observers described exciting tern chases at Nauset Marsh in Eastham and South Beach in Chatham. The jaegers began to appear around August 21 and continued through September. Numbers ranged from one to twelve individuals in view at one time.

Terns

This seemed like a great year for Black Terns and a very

poor year for Forster's Terns. Nauset Marsh in Eastham, South Monomoy Island in Chatham, and Horizon's Beach in Sandwich produced the largest numbers of Black Terns (maximum of 25). Forster's Terns have been hard to find. I have heard about small numbers (1-3 individuals) from Coast Guard Beach in Eastham and South Monomoy Island in Chatham.

Ash-throated Flycatcher

Blair Nikula and Jeremiah Trimble spotted this individual in a bayberry thicket on South Monomoy Island in Chatham on September 14. There are fewer than 10 records for this western species in Massachusetts, with most occurring in November. The coloration of this bird was very unusual in that at least the outer two primary feathers were pure white!

Western Kingbird

Kyle Jones found this handsome species in Truro on September 22. Let's hope for more sightings this fall!



Dickcissels

Individual Dickcissels were reported from three different locations in September: the Wellfleet Bay Wildlife Sanctuary feeders, Bill Swift's feeders, and North Monomoy Island in Chatham.

Many thanks to everyone who contributed reports! To submit bird sightings in the future, call Jackie or Blair at 508-432-6348, send regular mail to 2 Gilbert Lane, Harwich Port, MA, 02646; send e-mail to odenews@capecod.net; or come to a bird club meeting, and tell us about your observations!

PROGRAMS & MEETINGS

Phil Kyle

On Monday evening **November 10** at 7:30 pm at the Cape Cod Museum of Natural History on Route 6A in Brewster, Dr. John Kricher will present a program on the topic *Nothing Endures But Change: A Brief History of the Birds and Mammals of Eastern Forests*. Dr. Kricher is the Jennings Professor of Biology at Wheaton College. He graduated from Temple University and received his Ph. D from Rutgers. He is author of *A Neotropical Companion* and the *Ecology of Eastern Forests*.

On Monday evening **December 8** at 7:30 pm at the Cape Cod Museum of Natural History on Route 6A in Brewster, Shawn Carey and Don Crockett will present a mixed media program on birds. First a slide show entitled *The Water's Edge* will be shown. Then Shawn Carey will discuss the best places to photograph birds. Slides of his work will follow. Don Crockett will then talk about the *Virtual Birder and Birding the WEB*. Finally a slide presentation called *Birders* will be shown. Shawn Carey has made presentations at several Mass. Audubon Birder's Meetings and has put on many sanctuary workshops on bird photography.

Far Up The River

Tu Fu

translated by Kenneth Rexroth

A pair of golden orioles

Sings in the bright green willows.

A line of white egrets crosses

The clear blue sky. The window

Frames the western mountains, white

With the snows of a thousand years.

Anchored to the pilings are

Boats from eastern Wu,

Three thousand miles from home.

Note: Tu Fu (712-790 A.D.) is considered by most Chinese to be their greatest poet. Most of his poems contain images of birds, as in these two examples. Translations are by David Hinton in New Directions Paperbook NDP675, and Kenneth Rexroth NDP192.

WALKS & FIELD TRIPS

Kathy McGinley arives@capecod.net

November

Wednesday, Nov. 5th: Harwich. Meet at 9 AM at Saquatucket Harbor's parking lot across from Thompson's Market on Rt. 28. "Bessie's Choice." Leader: Bessie Tirrell, 432-9248.

Sunday, Nov. 16th: Falmouth. Meet at 9:00 AM at Locust St. parking lot at head of Bike Path. Leader: Bob Vander Pyl, 457-0864

Monday Nov. 17th: Harwich Conservation Area. Meet at Bell's Neck parking lot at 9 AM. Leader: Ruth Connaughton, 432-1580 & Marge Marion, 432-0988.

Saturday Nov. 22nd: Eastham. Meet at 8:30 AM in the lower parking area of Fort Hill. Leader: Dick Koeppen, 430-1822.

Sunday Nov 30th: Provincetown. We'll walk out to Race Point to look for seabirds. About 20 minute walk one way. Meet at Beech Forrest parking lot at 9 AM. Leader: Stauffer Miller, 362-3384.

December

Saturday & Sunday Dec 6th & 7th: 1997 Annual Waterfowl Count. Sign up with Blair Nikula at the November meeting, or call 432-6348.

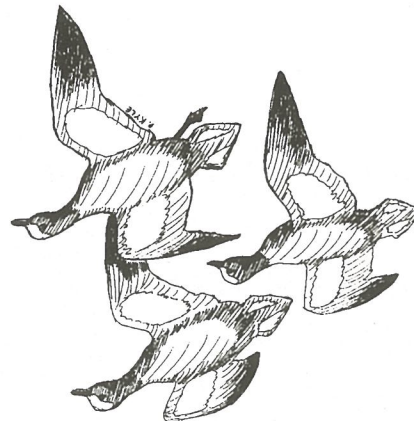
Sunday Dec 14th: Falmouth. Meet at 9:00 AM at the Locust St. Parking lot at head of Bike path. Leader: Bob Vander Pyl 457-0864.

Sunday December 21st: Annual Cape Cod Christmas Bird Count. Sign up at the December meeting with Blair Nikula, or call 432-6348.

Date to be Announced: Mid-Cape Christmas Bird Count to be announced at the December Meeting, or call Peter Trimble at 477-3847.

January

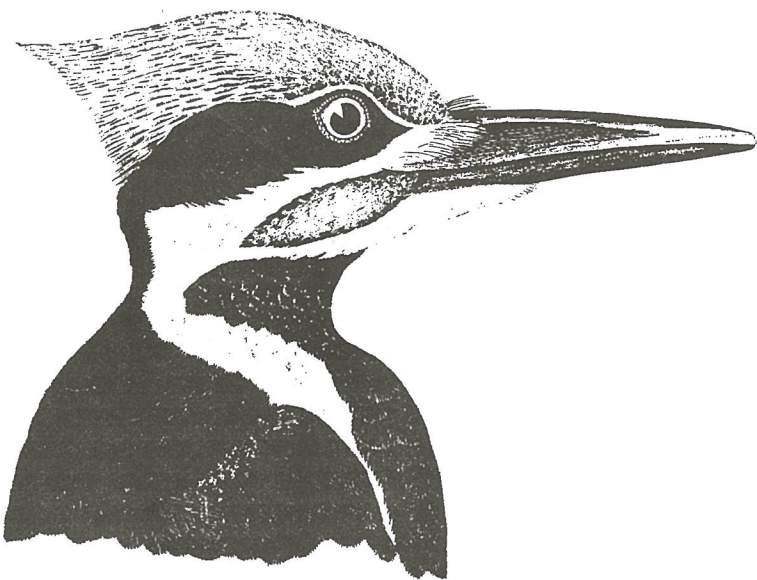
Friday Jan 16th, 1998: Harwich. Meet at 9:00 AM at Saquatucket Harbor's parking lot across from Thompson's Market on Rt. 28. "Bessie's Choice" Leader: Bessie Tirrell 432-9248.



Frank Caruso
Barbara Steller
17 Freedom Rd
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Cape Cod Bird Club
The Cape Cod Museum Of Natural History
PO BOX 1710, Brewster, MA 02631



DUES ARE DUE

The mailing list will be revised very shortly. If you have not paid 1997-1998 dues by the end of the year, this may be the last newsletter you receive. We do not like to lose members, but at the same time, we do not want to have a mailing list inflated with names of those no longer interested in CCBC. So please play promptly.

According to our records your dues for 1997-1998...

- have been paid
- have not been paid

Dues are single \$10.00, family \$15.00.

Checks may be mailed to ...

Cape Cod Bird Club
Ellie Winslow-Treasurer
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Sandwich, MA 02563