



Cape Cod Bird Club

VOLUME 26

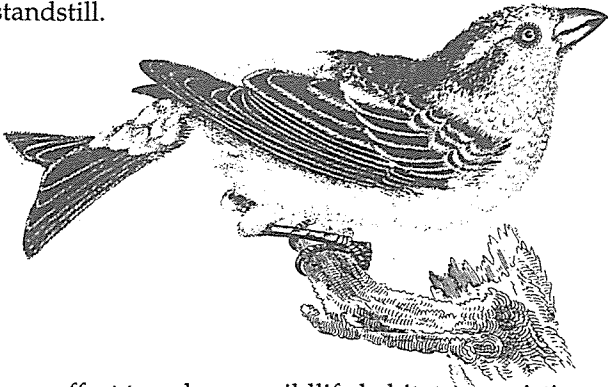
JANUARY ~ FEBRUARY 1998

ISSUE 3

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Don Scott

Many people view golf courses as highly manicured, over fertilized pieces of land that would have served better as wildlife refuges. Though there is some merit to this point of view, golf courses do exist, will continue to be developed and actually are great areas for birding during the late fall and winter when play is generally at a standstill.



In an effort to enhance wildlife habitats on existing and future golf courses, the United States Golf Association (USGA) and the Audubon Society of New York State have created the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program (ACSP). Under this program, ACSP certification may be achieved by a golf course through implementing and documenting projects in six environmental quality areas. These areas are

- Environmental Planning
- Wildlife and Habitat Management
- Integrated Pest Management
- Water Conservation
- Water Quality Management
- Outreach and Education

Criteria for certification in these areas include such items as testing of water tables for traces of commonly used chemicals and also for nitrates; indication that course plantings provide food supply for birds; development of nesting box programs; management of non-play areas to provide habitat for wildlife and maintaining a program of education for both members and the general public.

Through 1996 more than 2000 golf courses were participating in the ACSP program, and close to 100 had achieved certification. The Cape has one certified course-The Hyannisport Club-with at least one more, Eastward Ho! in Chatham, well along in the process.

Preserving the delicate environmental balance in this world is a painfully slow process, but it is reassuring to know that progress is, indeed, being made!

REPORTING A BANDED BIRD

Jim Talin

During the warm, bright months, after work, I would take my dog for a walk on the beach. I should say that I walked, but the dog ran, splashed in water and investigated every item on the beach, necessitating that I be alert for trouble she could get into. There were plastic bottles to be tossed, shells to be chewed, and dead things to be sniffed. So, on October 10, I warned the dog away from a dead bird that we passed, despite the fact that I always stop to look at dead birds, whether they be gulls or loons. On this day, I picked up a dead Common Tern and noticed that it had been banded. On the rear of the head and between the wings on its back, two circular wounds, as round as a half dollar, had been inflicted on the tern. Perhaps some other bird had been eating it. Or perhaps a fisherman had killed it. Either way, there wasn't much dignity in death for this bird.

I removed the band from the bird's leg and thought, So, how do you report a banded bird? For those of you who might confront a similar situation, I will tell you how I went about it. Bird bands have a three line message on them. Line one says "Advise F & W Service"; line two is a number that identifies the bird; and line three says "Washington, DC, USA." Not much to go on really. The next day, I made a few telephone calls and found an easy way to report the finding of the banded bird. The person to get in touch with is named Wendy Manear. The easiest to reach her is by email, and her address is Wendy_Manear@nbs.gov. The street address is USGS, Bird Banding Lab, 12100 Beech Forest Road STE-4037, Laurel, MD 20708-4037. I reported to her, and a few weeks later received a Certificate of Appreciation, which told me something about bird banding and the bird I had found.

By 1994, 55 million birds had been banded in North America, but only 3 million had been recovered. On June 29, 1987, a Common Tern that was too young to fly was banded by Miss H. Hays at a location near Great Gull Island in New York. I was born in New York, so I could understand this tern's impulse to relocate to Cape Cod, and I couldn't help wondering what its life had been like over the decade of its existence, a period during which we humans had worried about war, elections, and famines. I found it pleasant to imagine a day in the life of this tern as having been much the same as the description by Forbush of terns he encountered one June day in 1908. It was nicer to picture it shaking water from its wings as it flew in a changeless routine, rather than to remember its crumpled remains.

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BIRD SIGHTINGS

October ~ November 1997

Jackie Sones

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 bird's name, the number of individuals, the date and location of your sighting, and any other information you've gathered!

Seabirds. From mid-October through November strong winds produced great seabird shows at Corporation Beach in Dennis, First Encounter Beach in Eastham, and Skaket Beach in Orleans. Days that produced that most sightings included October 26, November 8, 9, 15, and 27. Blair Nikula, the most faithful stormchaser on Cape Cod, tallied the following: October 26 = 1 Sooty Shearwater, 5+ Greater Shearwaters, 60+ unidentified shearwaters, and 300+ terns. November 8 = 1900 Red-throated Loons (may represent a high count for Massachusetts), 3 Red-necked Grebes, 3 Horned Grebes, 2000 Northern Gannets, 55 Northern Fulmars, 2 Cory's Shearwaters, 550 Black-legged Kittiwakes, 1 Red Phalarope, 1 Red-necked Phalarope, and 2 Razorbills. November 9 = 60 Northern Fulmars, 2 storm-petrels, 325 phalaropes, 5 Dovekies, and 98 large alcids. November 27 = 150+ jaegers (mostly Pomarine), with as many as 90 in view at one time!

Wading Birds. High tides in mid-October and early November made for easy wader viewing at Fort Hill. On October 15 there were 4 American Bitterns; on November 12 there were at least 6 American Bitterns, 4 Black-crowned Night-Herons, and 25+ Great Blue Herons.

Ducks. Sally Clifton reported three Northern Shovelers on the Mill Pond in Marstons Mills on November 24. Dick Comeau and crew found a Eurasian Wigeon in Chatham on November 23. One Redhead was seen on Shiverick's Pond in Falmouth on November 28 by Jeff Eddy.

Raptors. The Swainson's Hawk was last reported in Provincetown on October 4. Dick Koeppen saw a Merlin during the Cape Cod Bird Club walk at Fort Hill in Eastham on October 4.

Rails. A Yellow Rail was discovered by the South Shore Bird Club at Fort Hill on October 20. Since 1955, there have been about 10 sightings of Yellow Rail on Cape Cod; two of them were at Fort Hill (October 26, 1980, and October 13, 1985). This sighting was also unusual in that the bird was found on a second day (October 21), and Yellow Rails don't usually stick around! Stauffer Miller reported a Virginia Rail and a Sora in Mashpee on October 5. Jeremiah Trimble flushed a Virginia Rail and a Sora at Fort Hill on November 15.

Shorebirds. Dick Comeau reported three Marbled Godwits off Chatham on November 23. (There are about 10 winter records for this species in Massachusetts.) Jeremiah Trimble spotted a late Whimbrel at First Encounter Beach on November 9.

Gulls. Jim Talin discovered a Lesser Black-backed Gull on Breakwater Beach in Brewster on October 16. One immature Little Gull was spotted at First Encounter Beach on November 9.

Western Kingbird. In early November Mike O'Connor passed along news of two Western Kingbirds seen along Bridge Road in Eastham. The last report we received was on November 10.

Townsend's Solitaire. This bird was somewhat mysterious. It was seen only on November 3 along the railroad bed near Corn Hill in Truro.

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Cape Cod Bird Club Inc.

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

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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

Jim Talin

Overall, more birds were seen per observer in this years feeder census than in last year's census. 318 birds were seen per feeder this year, while just last year 312 were seen last year. Indeed, most of the species surveyed this year showed small increases in numbers, with Starlings increasing the most. The most common birds remain largely the same each year, with slight shuffling of position. Here is a comparison of 1995-96 and 1996-97.

1995-1996		1996-1997	
1. Mourning Dove	4.72	1. Goldfinch	4.92
2. B C Chickadee	4.44	2. B C Chickadee	4.91
3. Goldfinch	4.23	3. Starling	4.31
4. Blue Jay	3.61	4. House Sparrow	4.03
5. House Finch	3.50	5. Mourning Dove	3.56
6. Junco	3.09	6. House Finch	3.38
7. House Sparrow	2.99	7. Blue Jay	3.21
8. Starling	2.67	8. Cardinal	2.69
9. Tufted Titmouse	2.57	9. Crow	2.64
10. W T Sparrow	2.42	10. Tufted Titmouse	2.38
11. Cardinal	2.34	11. W T Sparrow	2.01

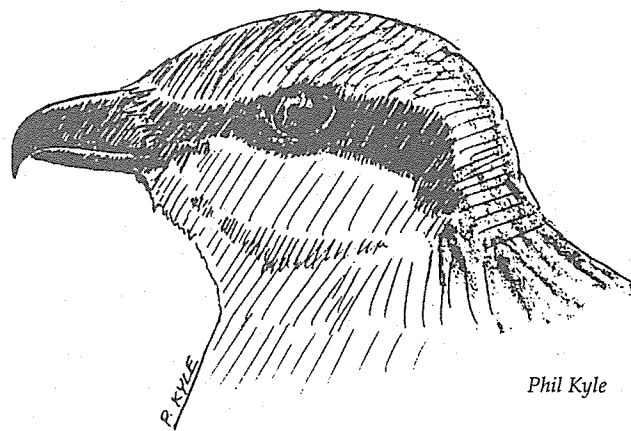
Notable for their decreases were Juncos, Cowbirds, Red-breasted Nuthatches, Brown Creepers, and Cedar Waxwings. Northern birds were lacking from the survey, with no Pine Siskins and no Evening Grosbeaks being seen. Rare birds seen at feeders included a Black-throated Blue Warbler, an Eastern Phoebe, a Screech Owl, and a Pheasant. Red-bellied Woodpeckers had been showing up with greater frequency in the past few years, but this year their numbers remained static.

Looking at the results, I had to wonder if Starlings were really as common as the monthly average shows. Even if the average number of Chickadees and Starlings seen per month are close, Chickadees were seen twice as frequently as Starlings were. The reason is to be found in size of flocks, with peripatetic chickadees traveling in small groups to every feeder, while gangs of up 150+ Starlings clogged feeders here and there. To show the effect of flock size on average numbers, I have added a column to the large list that follows. This column shows the average size of each group of birds when they were seen. A flock of Chickadees equalled 5.02 birds, while a Starling flock was 15.88 birds. In a sense, then, 5 Chickadees now equal 15 Starlings. This new column also helps understand the plight of the Bobwhite, an average of .93 being seen at each feeder each month. Yet Bobwhites, whose call was once synonymous with Cape Cod, were only seen just 9 times during the

census period, with an average flock size of 7.45 birds, which makes them seem more common than they were.

Overall, however, fewer species of birds were seen this year. 59 species were seen in 1995-96, while only 44 species were seen this year. In addition to the northern species, missing were the Purple Finch, Northern Oriole, Bluebirds, Meadowlarks, Mallards, Swamp and Fox Sparrow, House Wren, Broad-winged Hawk, Harrier, Ovenbird and Hermit Thrush.

And finally a note of thanks to all who participated.



BIRDS IN FLIGHT

from Horticulture Magazine

Scores of bird species are in trouble according to *WatchList*, a report from the National Audubon Society and Birds in Flight that documents the decline of American bird populations. Compiled from the work of scientists and volunteers, this study found that 90 bird species, or fully 14 percent of all US breeding bird species, were in decline or danger. By publishing this report annually, both organizations hope to call attention to the plight of species that are not yet listed as endangered but have experienced significant drops in their numbers and face habitat loss. Species on the latest *WatchList* list include Field Sparrow, Gray Catbird, Loggerhead Shrike, Long-billed Curlew, Orchard Oriole, Red-headed Woodpecker, Short-eared Owl, Western Wood Pewee, Wood Thrush, and Yellow-billed Cuckoo.

To find out more about *WatchList*, call National Audubon toll free at 888-AUDUBON, or write them at 700 Broadway, NY, NY 10003, or visit them on the World Wide Web at <http://www.audubon.org/audubon/>

FEEDER CENSUS 1996-1997

Species	Birds per feeder per month	Percent of feeders visited	Group size when seen
Goldfinch	4.92	100%	6.01
BC Chickadee	4.91	100%	5.02
Starling	4.31	55%	15.88
House Sparrow	4.03	61%	7.76
Mourning Dove	3.56	97%	4.64
House Finch	3.38	94%	4.75
Blue Jay	3.21	100%	4.09
Cardinal	2.69	97%	3.02
Crow	2.64	77%	4.49
Tufted Titmouse	2.38	100%	2.68
White-throat Sparrow	2.01	58%	4.40
Robin	1.66	77%	5.07
Downy Woodpecker	1.63	94%	1.99
Grackle	1.62	61%	8.44
Song Sparrow	1.47	71%	2.36
Red-winged Blackbird	1.39	61%	7.94
Junco	1.23	61%	3.14
White-breast Nuthatch	1.12	84%	1.72
Bobwhite	0.93	29%	7.45
Yellow-Rmpd Warbler	0.76	52%	2.63
Hairy Woodpecker	0.66	61%	1.40
Flicker	0.56	61%	1.93
Carolina Wren	0.53	58%	1.62
Cowbird	0.34	39%	4.29
Mockingbird	0.24	35%	1.35
Red-breast Nuthatch	0.19	26%	1.48
Tree Sparrow	0.19	10%	3.09
Red-bellied Woodpecker	0.15	32%	1.08
Pine Warbler	0.05	16%	1.13
Sharp-shinned Hawk	0.05	23%	1.00
Cooper's Hawk	0.04	16%	1.00
Rufous-sided Towhee	0.04	6%	1.00
Herring Gull	0.04	3%	7.00
Ruby-crown Kinglet	0.03	6%	1.20
Golden-crown Kinglet	0.03	3%	2.00
Pheasant	0.02	3%	1.00
Brown Creeper	0.01	6%	1.00
Am. Kestrel	0.01	3%	1.00
Cedar Waxwing	0.01	3%	1.00
Chipping Sparrow	0.01	3%	1.00
Red-tail Hawk	0.01	3%	1.00
Eastern Phoebe	0.01	3%	1.00
Screech Owl	0.01	3%	1.00
B-T Blue Warbler	0.01	3%	1.00

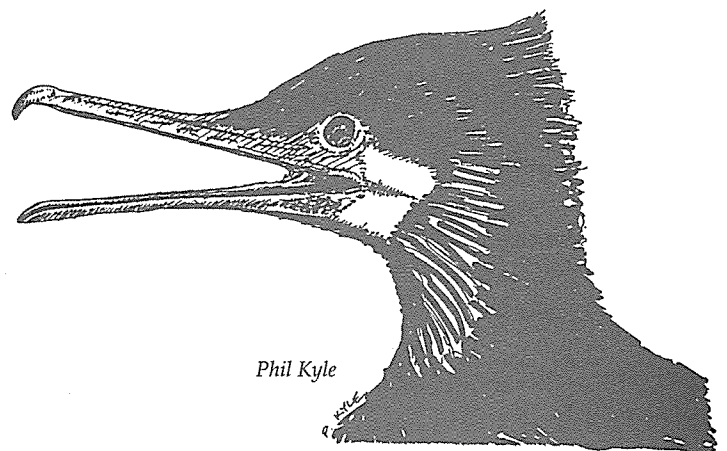
BIRD SIGHTINGS

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Sparrows and Buntings. Stauffer Miller observed an immature Dickcissel at the Harwich Community Gardens on October 6. White-crowned Sparrows were abundant near Corn Hill during early October, with a high count of 80+ on October 11. Also near Corn Hill, two Clay-colored Sparrows were seen on October 19. Sharp-tailed Sparrows (maximum of 4) and Seaside Sparrows (maximum of 4) were reported from Fort Hill from mid-October through November. Jeff Eddy watched two Lapland Longspurs at First Encounter Beach on November 1.

Northern Finches. White-winged Crossbills first appeared on Cape Cod on October 13 when a flock of five were seen feeding in spruce trees near the Cove Motel in Orleans. By the end of November there were more than 10 reports, with the majority coming from the Outer Cape. Many sightings involved one or two birds at backyard feeders. Laurinda and Paul Morway sent word about six White-winged Crossbills at their feeders on November 8. Jeff Eddy was the first to report Common Redpolls on Cape Cod; he found a flock of 15-20 along Race Point Road in Provincetown on November 2. Other redpoll sightings included four at the Wellfleet Bay Wildlife Sanctuary on November 7 (Jackie Sones); twenty-three along Race Point Road in Provincetown on November 15 (Blair Nikula); and eighteen at Fort Hill on November 28 (Peter Trimble). There were two Pine Siskin reports: two at the Wellfleet Bay Wildlife Sanctuary on November 19 and one in North Falmouth on November 23. Evening Grosbeaks were also seen at a few locations, most recently at the feeders of Kathy and Rives McGinley in South Orleans.

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!

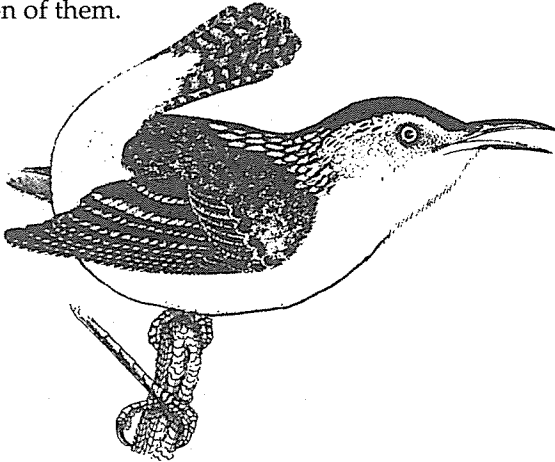


PROGRAMS & MEETINGS

Phil Kyle

On Monday evening, **January 12, 1998**, at 7:30 pm at the Cape Cod Museum of Natural History on Route 6A in Brewster, Dr. Katherine Parson will present a program on *Hérons of the Northeast: The Current Status*. Dr. Parsons has spoken to the Cape Cod Bird Club several times, as well as to Mass Audubon's Birder's Meeting. Since 1985, she has been on the scientific staff of Manomet Bird Observatory and has worked cooperatively with Mass Audubon's Coastal Waterbird Program. She has also worked to develop wading bird management strategies on Sampson's Island in Barnstable and at other Cape Cod sites.

On Monday evening, **February 9, 1997**, at 7:30 pm at the Cape Cod Museum of Natural History on Route 6A in Brewster, Erik R. Zettler will present a program entitled *Bird Parasites: The Inside Story*. Science Coordinator of the Sea Education Association, Erik Zettler was a research associate from 1985-1994 for the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute where he coordinated research and oceanography on two tall ships that sailed from the Gulf of Maine to the Dry Tortugas. Eric has been studying microorganisms since 1982 and acts as host to several billion of them.



LAND BANK REFERENDUM

The Barnstable County Commissioners have set the date of Tuesday, January 27, 1998 for the Land Bank Referendum. If passed, the Cape Cod Land Bank would become effective immediately.

One need only drive a few miles in any direction on any road on the Cape to realize what new development is doing to our remaining wooded and meadow areas. The Cape Cod Bird Club Board of Directors strongly supports the concept of a Land Bank and urges all members to vote in favor of the referendum. If you do not plan on being in town on that date, absentee ballots may be obtained from your Town Clerk's office. This is a critical issue — **PLEASE VOTE !!!**

WALKS & FIELD TRIPS

Kathy McGinley arives@capecod.net

January

Sunday January 11th. Falmouth: Meet at 9:00 AM at Locust St. parking lot at the head of Bike Path. Leader: Bob Vander Pyl, 457-0864.

Friday January 16th. 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.

Saturday January 17th. Eastham: Meet at 8:30 AM in the lower parking lot at Fort Hill. Leader: Dick Koeppen, 430-1822.

Saturday January 17th. Meet at the Dennis-Yarmouth High School front parking lot at 8:00 AM. We will drive to Smuggler's Cove and Parker's River Beach. Leader: Phil Kyle, 564-6771.

February

Sunday February 1st. Cotuit: Meet at 9:00 AM at the new CVS Pharmacy along RT. 28 in Cotuit. We'll check a few bird habitats in Cotuit, W. Barnstable, and Marston's Mills. Leader: Stauffer Miller, 362-3384.

Sunday February 8th. Falmouth: Meet at 9:00 AM at the Locust St parking lot at the head of the bike path. Leader: Bob Vander Pyl, 457-0864.

Saturday February 14th. Brewster: Meet at Cape Cod Museum of Natural History at 8:00 AM. We'll look in areas of Upper Mill Pond, Point of Rocks, and Nickerson State Park. Leader: Phil Kyle, 564-6771.

Friday February 20th. 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.

Saturday February 21st. Eastham: Meet at the lower parking area of Fort Hill at 8:30 AM. Leader: Dick Koeppen, 430-1822.

March

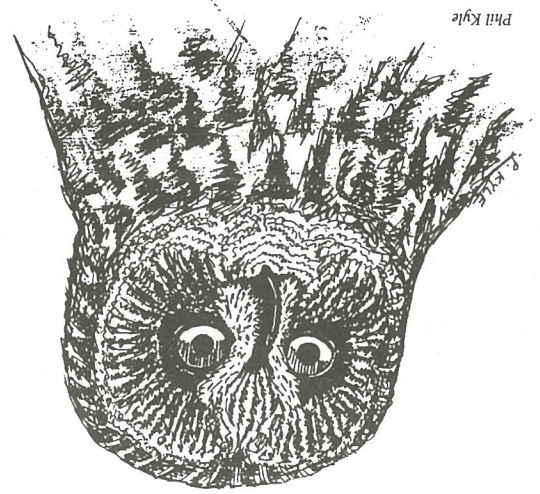
Friday March 20th. Sandwich: Meet at Sandy Neck Parking Lot near Ocean at 9:00 AM Leader: Bessie Tirrell, 432-9248.



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

Cape Cod Bird Club



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REPORTING A BANDED BIRD

Jim Talin

"To see the terns thus fishing is a sight to stir the blood. High in the sunlight they hover above the surging sea. Below the blue waves roar on, to break in foam on the yellow sand. The whirling, screaming, light-winged birds, strongly contrasted against the smoky murk to seaward, alternately climb the air and plunge like plummet straight down into the waves — rising again and again, fluttering, poising, screaming, striking. So now like birds gone mad, the terns flashed from sky to sea. It fairly rained birds; hundreds of them were shooting down into the angry waves. They played with gale and sea. Rising, they shook the brine from their feathers and, towering high, hovered a moment, breasting the gale; then setting their wings like long, barbed spearheads, plunged again and yet again." (Forbush, p. 107-08, Vol. 1, Birds of Massachusetts.)

To Inge

Bob Pease

*For you are made
of oak and thunder,
hemp and Rocky
Mountain raptor's
soaring flight.
You'll still be
gazing down from
cloud tops on
the rest of us
a score of years
from now, and smiling
laughing, singing
in the sun.*