



Cape Cod Bird Club

VOLUME 28

JANUARY - FEBRUARY 2000

ISSUE 3

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE


Phil Kyle

With the new millennium here, it's already given rise to thoughts of a new birding plan for me or at least a New Year's resolution. Turning over a new leaf obviously means some kind of change. I try not to pick anything too drastic or difficult to change because I know it wouldn't last!

Changing from a "twitcher" or lister to a "REAL" birder is my goal, and this is the perfect opportunity! I didn't fear losing the pleasure of seeing an unusual bird, like observing a flock of Pine Siskins or seeing a small group of Redpolls in a tree or maybe seeing a few White Winged Crossbills at my feeder. But I wanted to change from being a "serious" lister, who not only has a Life List, a Yard List, a Summer College Course List, a Monday Morning Birding with CCMNH List, and even a Movie List to a person who enjoyed the everyday sightings. I knew this listing behavior had gotten out of hand. Yes, it was definitely an obsession.

I knew I wanted to be open to new birding experiences. Miracles do happen, don't they? I'd seen over 30 Great Blue Herons pushed up by the moon high tide in Nauset Marsh; crawling under a bunch of young pitch pines, I'd stuck my head out to see a Pileated Woodpecker chipping away at a huge pine tree only twenty feet away; and I'd seen seven species of warbler in one maple tree, so I knew IBM's did occur. (IBM = itty bitty miracles)

My resolution, I realized, is to be grateful also for the common bird sightings that I make everyday. I hope to find out more about the birds that I see more often. The old attitude of finding happiness only if I spotted a Bald Eagle on the lower Cape will hopefully become passé.

Having more appreciation for the birds I see around me all the time, I now know is very important to me. Having a natural curiosity about wild things and a lot of enthusiasm for birds is a great way to start. So I'm realizing that keeping on track with my resolution isn't that hard — as long as you make the change simple, and I definitely did that! 

Please read the editor's note on back page!

A NIGHT TO REMEMBER

Steve Mirick




On October 15, Judi Matthews and I had the privilege of visiting the Northern Saw-whet Owl banding station run by Judy and Steve Walker in Freeport, Maine. A few interesting tidbits of information from our visit:

1) This is the peak of Saw-whet Owl migration. Last night they had banded 20 owls, and we left before they closed the nets for the night! 2) They have banded 202 owls so far this fall, which is nearly 3 times last year's total at this time and the best season they have had so far.

3) On Tuesday, 10/12/99, they banded a site record of 38 owls in one night!!!! They had 15 birds in the net at one time! 4) They appear to get more owls at their location a few miles away from the coast than June Ficker gets at her owl banding station along the immediate coast.

5) A very high percentage of the birds they capture are females. 6) In a previous year, they had one of their owls recaptured in Maryland 8 days after it was banded in Maine!

7) They lure the birds into the nets with a very loud tape of Saw-whet Owls, and cold, dark nights with relatively little wind appear to be best for migration. 

(How about going with me next year for an overnight to Freeport for a bit of shopping and to witness this phenomenon? Stauffer Miller)

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FIELD TRIPS

JANUARY - FEBRUARY 2000

Stauffer Miller

January


Saturday, January 8: 9 a.m. Fort Hill, Eastham. Meet at the lower parking lot. Leader, Dick Koeppen, 430-1822.

Sunday, January 9: 9 a.m. Falmouth, 9:00 a.m. Meet at the Locust Street parking area of the bike path. Leaders: Bob Vander Pyl and Alison Robb, 540-2408.

February

Thursday, February 10: 10:00 a.m. Meet at Friendly's near rotary in Orleans. Seabirds in Eastham and Wellfleet. Leader, Stauffer Miller, 362-3384.

Sunday, February 13: Falmouth, 9:00 a.m. Meet at the Locust Street parking area of the bike path. Leaders: Bob Vander Pyl and Alison Robb, 540-2408.

OFF-CAPE TRIP Thursday, January 27: Mass. Audubon's Daniel Webster Sanctuary in Marshfield for Long- and Short-eared Owls and other birds. Meet at West Parish Church parking area near where the Rte. 6 exit 5 exit ramp intersects with Route 149 at 1:00 pm. Please call or email (emiller@seepub.com) to make a reservation. Leader: Stauffer Miller, 362-3384. 

BIRD CLUB MEETINGS

All meetings, unless otherwise indicated, are held the second Monday of each month, September through May, at 7:30 p.m. at the Cape Cod Museum of Natural History on Route 6A in Brewster.

On **January 10th** Vernon Laux will present his program called Why Watch Birds: A Close Look at Birds Around the World with an emphasis on the Cape and Islands. Vernon resides on Martha's Vineyard but has worked in the past for Wellfleet Bay Audubon Sanctuary. He has traveled extensively around the world with birding trips and tours. He has visited Antarctica more than 35 times and has traveled to Australia, New Zealand and South America several times. Many readers may already be familiar with his columns in *The Vineyard Gazette*, *Bird News* and *All Outdoors*. He recently published his first book, *Bird News - Vagrants and Visitors on a Peculiar Island*.

On **February 14** Paul Rezendes will speak to the club about animal tracking. Join naturalist and internationally renowned photographer/author for an evening of discovering what the art of seeing and the art of observation are all about. Through his slide presentation, *Tracking and the Art of Seeing*, you'll begin to recognize the clues left behind by animals. Paul's focus will not only be the practical skills of tracking but his approach acknowledges the fundamental connection of all life. His almost thirty years of experience make him one of the leading tracking teachers in the country. Paul and his wife, Paulette Roy, live in Athol.

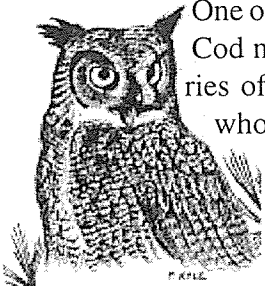
AMENDMENT TO THE BY-LAWS

Ron Ayotte, Secretary

Publication of the CCBC Newsletter has become an important task of your Club's leadership. The newsletter has become better and better as talented editors have made constant improvements. Your Board of Directors concluded last summer that it would be helpful if the Editor of the CCBC Newsletter were to meet with the Board. This has proved so successful that the Board has decided to regularize it by an amendment to the Club by-laws. Under Art VII, this can be done at any regular meeting at which a quorum (25 members) is present, provided notice of the meeting (i.e., the newsletter) has contained the text of the proposed amendment. Accordingly, the Board hereby gives notice that the amendment below will be discussed and voted on at the regular meeting on January 10, 2000.

To amend Article IV (Officers and Directors), Section 2, by adding a second sentence: "The Editor of the


WHO-O-O-S CALLING OUT THERE?



One of the best known sounds of the Cape Cod night is the Great Horned Owl's series of six or seven low, resonant hoots: whoo, who-who-who, whoo whoo. The hooting of the male owl is deep while the sound of the female is at a higher pitch.

The large Great Horned Owl gets its name primarily for the tufts of feathers on its head which give it a fierce "horned" appearance and are its best identifying feature. Its plumage is a fine example of effective camouflage, with its back a mottled arrangement of sooty browns with white and black. Upon its brown chest is a conspicuous white "bib" also called a "gular" or throat patch, but this patch is typically hard to see because it is often hidden by the Great Horned Owl's lower "chin."

Because they are large and powerful, Great Horned Owls are capable of handling a wide variety of prey, ranging in size from shrews and songbirds to skunks and geese. As a general rule, however, Great Horneds depend mainly upon medium-size mammals and birds. Rabbits are a staple part of the diet in many regions, and grouse and ducks are also important prey. It is common to find these owls riddled with porcupine quills or reeking of skunk scent. There are accounts of Great Horned Owls attacking snakes and coming off second best.

Great Horneds lay from 2 to 3 white eggs, often in an abandoned nest of either a hawk or another large bird. Occasionally, they will nest in the hollows of broken tree branches. Their courtship begins in January with breeding occurring soon thereafter, which is why we hear them calling so frequently at this time of year. 

amendment, continued from page 2


Club newsletter shall be, ex officio, a non-voting member of the Board of Directors".

If approved, Art IV, Sect 2, will read: "The Board of Directors shall be composed of the President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer and six directors. The Editor of the Club newsletter shall be, ex officio, a non-voting member of the Board of Directors."


The Board of Directors believes non-voting status is appropriate, since the Editor is not elected to her/his position by the membership but is rather a volunteer. This allows the Editor input to discussions without altering the basic tenor of the by-laws as they exist.

MAN THE DESTROYER

Thanks to Ellie Winslow for passing along this article from the first issue, Feb 1887, of the "Audubon Magazine." A prophecy fulfilled?

It is stated that the quagga, the beautiful wild striped ass of South Africa, has suddenly ceased to exist. The bootmakers of London and New York wanted his skin for a particular kind of sportsman's boot, and he consequently passed away out of zoology. There may be a few left on the highest and wildest plateaus, but the Boers, tempted by the high prices, have extirpated the herds which only ten years ago existed in South Africa. That will be the fate of the elephant, too. There will soon not be a bird of paradise on earth, and the ostrich has only been saved by breeders. Man will not wait for the cooling of the world to consume everything in it, from teak trees to humming-birds, and a century or two hence will find himself perplexed by a planet in which there is nothing except what he makes. He is a poor sort of creator. 

DID YOU KNOW ...

that in ancient Rome, "the owl has flown" was a slang expression for bribery? The phrase came from the Greeks, who used to stamp a picture of an owl on their coins. When those coins changed hands, the owl "flew." From *Everything You Never Learned About Birds* 

bird club gift ideas




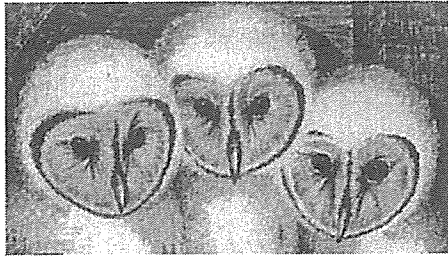
CCBC Decals	\$1.00
CCBC Checklist	.50
Birding Cape Cod	\$10.00
CCBC Hats	\$15.00
Organizer Packs	\$17.00

The above items are for sale at each meeting.

A BARN OWL STORY


Betty Mitman

Years ago I was working on the third floor of an old building at Mount Holyoke College. The windows had balustrades on them. One day a woman was working near one of these windows and said that there was a bad smell coming from the window. It was probably the pigeons again, and she called the maintenance office. The next day the maintenance man came. To get to see what the problem was, he had to climb on her desk and look out the high window. He turned back to the people, his face had paled, and it was clear he didn't know what he was seeing. One of us got up and looked down, and there were three baby barn owls, still in their white downy plumage and looking up at us with very angry expressions and hissing as well. The decision was made to leave them alone and let them mature. Word got out and birders came from all over western Massachusetts, climbed up the three floors and onto the desk to have a very intimate look at these birds. We think they were displaced birds from an old school that had been torn down across the street. However, they didn't return the next year!!! 




MARCH MEETING: MEMBERS' NIGHT!

Barbara Stanton


Last year's Members' Night was such a success that on Monday, March 13th, we will again host this event. All who would like to participate by presenting a slide show, displaying artwork or trying your hand at besting Phil for bird calls (!), please call either Barbara Stanton, 432-6027 or Susan Weliky, 548-8747. There will also be a Silent Auction again, so now's the time to clean out your closets of bird books and any other bird or nature related items. Let Barbara or Susan know if you will be donating items for the auction. Let's make this year's better than last! 

DID YOU KNOW ...


that the Great Horned Owl is found in virtually all of the forested and semi-forested regions of North, Central, and South America, except on the islands of the Caribbean? 

A TRIP TO NEBRASKA'S SANDHILLS


Stauffer Miller

I am looking for 3 people to join me for a "Heart of the Sandhills" trip to Nebraska, May 22 - 26, or thereabouts. We will fly in and out of Scotts Bluff via Denver and spend one night each in small towns of Alliance, Valentine, Mullen and Oshkosh as we make a big loop. Marsh and prairie birds, such as Wilson's Phalaropes, Black Terns, Yellow-headed Blackbirds and Chestnut Collared Longspurs, should be in abundance. The trip has nothing to do with Sandhill Cranes, which move through a different part of Nebraska earlier in the year. The Nebraska Sandhills, which we'd be in, are a large area of grass-covered dunes in the west central part of the state. If you are interested or want more information, please call me at 362-3384. 

DID YOU KNOW ...

that with no need to make the seasonal migrations that carry other birds from the Arctic Ocean to the Straits of Magellan and back again, Great Horned Owls are likely to be year-round residents of limited hunting ranges? Such adaptation by a species is truly remarkable and has few parallels in ornithology. 

sightings, continued from page 6


(D.Koeppen et al.) and a flock of 15 made a brief appearance in Yarmouth on 3 November (K.Hamilton). Common Redpolls were also widely reported from the outer Cape during November, with peaks of 85 in Provincetown on 14 November and 55+ in Truro on 21 November (B.Nikula). A few Pine Siskins moved through in late October, with a peak of 20-30 at a feeder in Falmouth on 16 October (B.Goode); however they had largely disappeared by late November. In striking contrast to the rest of the clan, only one or two Evening Grosbeaks were reported. 

DID YOU KNOW ...

Owls swallow small prey whole, but larger prey are first dismembered? Fur, feathers, teeth, and bones that are indigestible are compacted in the owl's stomach and later regurgitated as "pellets." One or more of these may be disgorged daily, depending upon the volume and type of food eaten. Scientists obtain information on the food habits of owls by identifying the remains of prey animals in such pellets.

BALD EAGLE STAMP PROGRAM




Bring your commemorative postage stamps to pass on to Bessie Tirrel at each meeting. She sends them down to Florida, where they are resold and the proceeds go toward the Bald Eagle restoration project. 

MAS SUMMER INTERN PROGRAM


Matt Bailey

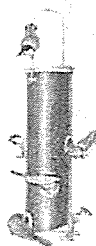
The Massachusetts Audubon Society's Coastal Waterbird Program needs your help! Every summer, budding ornithologists come to the Cape to help us protect the shorebirds that breed on our beaches. These interns are usually college students or recent graduates who are hoping to launch a career in wildlife protection. While they are volunteering their time, they need places to live (i.e. room and kitchen privileges). If you have a room to spare, this would be a wonderful chance to host a like-minded bird enthusiast and to help our feathered friends all in one fell swoop (pun intended). Different work sites require different time commitments, so, we are seeking housing for a variety of time spans. The vast majority of work is done between mid-April and mid-August.

The Coastal Waterbird Program has been placing interns for over ten years and several Cape Cod Bird Club members have generously hosted interns in past (and upcoming) years. However, as the program grows and shorebird numbers increase, even more volunteers are needed! If you are interested in exploring the possibilities of housing an intern for some or all of the 2000 season, please call me at (508) 362-7475 or Scott Hecker at (781) 834-9661. 

(Editor's note: If you need a reference, please call me. Stauffer and I had a most enjoyable intern two summers ago.)

ANNUAL FEEDER COUNT

Enclosed with the last issue of the newsletter was the bird club's annual feeder census form. In case you haven't participated before, please look at the form and its instructions and try to be a participant this winter 



ANOTHER OWL STORY THAT'S A HOOT

Nancy Wood, Yarmouthport


For two years, '77 & '78, we were fortunate to find long-eared owls nesting in a pine grove behind our house. I had a great time observing them and keeping notes, and my husband took some pictures of the young as they began exploring.




The nest was rather sloppily constructed and tipped to one side and after a freak May snowstorm, I went out to check on things and found two babies on the ground. Mother was sitting dutifully on the remaining nestlings. As it was dusk, I brought the babies in the house and put them in a box with a light for warmth, and fed them hamburger which they eagerly swallowed.

We had no idea how to return these nestlings to a nest that was 50' up in a tree! Feeling desperate, I called Steve Hayes early the next morning before he headed to work at Bartlett Tree Co. Being a fellow bird lover, he was most anxious to help and sent a crew here by 8 o'clock to see what they could do. Out we all went, to find the nest in an even more precarious position than the night before. Tree climber, John Comolli, armed with a roll of twine and a ditty bag climbed to the nest. Mother had left, and the male was putting on quite a broken wing display nearby complete with squeals and squawls. John managed to secure the nest with the twine so it would not fall in the next windstorm, and the nestlings were hoisted up in the ditty bag to join their two siblings. Mission accomplished!

We cleared out and hoped that mother would approve of her remodeled nest. In half an hour, I went out to see what was happening and saw her rearranging sticks and twigs to her satisfaction. The male was quite agitated and barked at me all the way back to the house.

You can imagine how grateful we were to have such a happy conclusion to our owl predicament! All four baby owls left the nest by June that year, and three of them made it to young adulthood. The fourth met with some disaster, and all that we found remaining of him was a pile of feathers. 

Can you guess? Which bird species was the most frequently reported in the February 1999 National Audubon-Cornell Laboratory's Great Backyard Bird Count? 

The period featured a continued abundance of seabirds and the best flight of northern finches in recent memory. The late fall is typically a great time for rare vagrants from the west, but no such avian treats appeared this year.

Tube-noses: Large numbers of Greater Shearwaters lingered on Stellwagen Bank into October: 500 were estimated there on 3 October (Cape Cod Bird Club trip) and 1200 on 30 October (Brookline Bird Club). At least a few were still present off of Provincetown in late November. Small numbers of Sooty, Cory's, and Manx Shearwaters were also seen on Stellwagen into October, as were a few Northern Fulmars.

Hérons and waterfowl: Very high tides pushed 7 American Bitterns out of the marsh at Fort Hill on 24 October (M.Sylvia). Fifty Snow Geese were seen migrating over Sandwich on 9 October (R.Ayotte). Mill Pond in Marstons Mills continues to host an impressive variety and number of ducks; at least 36 Wood Ducks and 101 American Wigeon were counted on 11 October (J.Liller et al.). Two Eurasian Wigeon were there on 7 November (J.Liller), while others were seen on Great Pond in Eastham on 24 October (A.Thomas) and at Mill Pond in West Barnstable on 29 October (N.Soulette). A female King Eider was in Provincetown on 1 October (S.Highley et al.), and as many as 11 Harlequin Ducks were reported from Nauset Beach.

Rails and shorebirds: A Clapper Rail was found at Fort Hill on 30 October (D.Peacock), and another was seen at Seagull Beach in Yarmouth on 24 November (J.& P.Trimble). A flock of 122 American Oystercatchers was on Monomoy on 3 October (B.Nikula). Six American Golden-Plovers lingered on South Monomoy through 13 November, and 4 Marbled Godwits were still present on North Monomoy on 6 November (B.Nikula).

Jaegers, gulls, and terns: A few jaegers were seen on Stellwagen Bank and in Provincetown throughout the period, and a northerly gale blew at least 50 Pomarine Jaegers past First Encounter Beach on 30 November (P.Pratt). An adult Little Gull flew past Nauset Beach on 20 November (B.Nikula), and an immature Black-headed Gull was in Truro on 27 November (J.Young). Lesser Black-backed Gulls were reported from North Monomoy, Red River Beach in South Harwich, Skaket Beach in Orleans, Race Point in Provincetown, and

Stellwagen Bank. An adult Sabine's Gull was seen by a few on the bird club's trip to Stellwagen Bank on 3 October (R.Stymeist et al.). Two Caspian Terns were seen at Great Island in Wellfleet on 2 October, and 3 flew past North Falmouth on 7 October (M. Kasprzyck). Forty Forster's Terns at Outermost Harbor in Chatham on 10 October (B.Nikula) was an unusual concentration.

Alcids: Two Dovekies in Cape Cod Bay off of Eastham on 28 October (J.Sones) were, surprisingly, the only ones reported. Two Thick-billed Murres were in Provincetown Harbor from 27 November on (J.Young et al.), and an Atlantic Puffin delighted a hundred or so observers on the Brookline Bird Club trip to Stellwagen Bank on 30 October. Razorbills were widely reported in November, with a peak of 960 moving past Provincetown on 28 November (B.Nikula).

Cuckoos and owls: Five Yellow-billed Cuckoos on Morris Island on 1 October (R.Comeau et al.) was a notable total. Two Short-eared Owls were found on North Monomoy on 17 October (J.Ehrat et al.), and another was at South Cape Beach in Mashpee on 9 November (S.Miller).

Songbirds: A Bohemian Waxwing in the Beech Forest in Provincetown on 18 October (P.Schaub), was followed by flocks of 10 in South Wellfleet on 12 November (D.Murley et al.) and 16 in Wellfleet a few days later (G.Ellison), and a single in Truro on 14 & 21 November (G.Martin). A modest flight of Northern Shrikes resulted in three or four reports from the Cape. As many as 4 Blue Grosbeaks were found at the chicken farm in Truro in early October. One or two Clay-colored Sparrows were also seen there during October, and another was on Great Island on 25 October (J.Sones et al.). A Yellow-headed Blackbird visited Hatches Harbor in Provincetown on 7 October (P. Trull).

Northern Finches: It has been decades since this group was so well represented on Cape Cod. Red Crossbills were widely reported from the outer Cape during November with peaks of 24 birds in Harwich on 29 November (T.Noonan) and 15 in Chatham on 30 November (R.Clem). A single White-winged Crossbill was found on a bird club walk at Fort Hill on 30 October

**1999-2000
Cape Cod Bird Club Rare Bird Hot Line**

Area One

Co-leaders: Mark Tuttle	362-3015	Peter Trimble	477-3847
Elinor/Stauffer Miller	362-3384	Frank Caruso	477-9807
Jinks Keil	771-8421	Phil Kyle	495-0196
Sally Clifton	775-4693	Ron Ayotte	888-2164
Carl Bergfors	362-2321	Sue Weliky	548-8747
Carol/Cliff Friedman	428-0526	Dennis Weihe	833-0467
Sue Phelan	362-5172	Priscilla Moon	548-4236
Muriel Thomas	428-3593	Mark Kasprzyk	540-4706
Maureen Johnson	428-4958		

Area Two

Co-leaders: Blair Nikula	432-6348 (h) 432-0970 (w)	Bessie Tirrell	432-9248
Dot Kierstead	385-5973	Sue/Jim Talin	896-7169
Ruth Connaughton	432-1580	Roger Everett	896-5948
Seward Highly	896-2256	Margo Fitsch	896-5292
after 6/1:	896-3628		
Ron Hindman	432-2693	Janet Silverio	430-1712

Area Three

Co-leaders: Art King	255-8919	Aurele Thomas	255-1409
Sue Thompson	255-1451 (h) 255-0099 (w)	Bill Swift	255-3493
Chris/Dave King	240-0228	M'Lou Brier	255-1103
Kathy/Rives McGinley	255-4740	Paul/Betty Mitman	255-1726
		Mont/Guitta Blau	349-6374

If you see a rare bird, but can't decide if you should pass it on, please contact your area leader and let him/her make the decision about passing it on.

When calling down the list, leave a message where necessary and tell the machine that you are proceeding down the list after giving as accurate a location as possible.

Thanks for helping to make this a successful "hot line" year.



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Blackbird Haiku
by Matt Bailey
blackbirds funnelling
darkness into feathergrass
before the night comes

Frank Caruso
Barbara Steller
17 Freedom Rd
FORESTDALE, MA 02644-1725



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



Greetings from your editor: I want to thank Ned Handy, Jim Talin and Susan Weliky for their special contributions to the November-December newsletter and to Steve Mirick, Ellie Winslow, Nancy Wood and Betty Mitman for their interesting additions to this issue, as well as Phil Kyle for his Great Horned Owl drawing. Contributors like these help make my job much easier and also make the newsletter enjoyable reading. I hope every member will write an account of a bird observation, a bird trip, a good bird book or anything else that would interest the club's readers. However, I ask that all submissions be sent to me electronically — no need to format your article, as email serves the purpose just fine. If you don't have a computer or email of your own, your public library can help you with this task. All submissions must be in my hands by the 15th of the month prior to the next issue. Don't hesitate to get in touch with me if you have any questions. *Elinor Miller, emiller@seepub.com; 362-3384*



The Cape Cod Bird Club Inc.

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

Officers

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Barbara Stanton *Vice President*
Ron Ayotte *Secretary*
Ellie Winslow *Treasurer*

Newsletter

Editor ~ Elinor Miller, email: emiller@seepub.com
Circulation ~ Ron Ayotte

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