



Cape Cod Bird Club

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MARCH - APRIL 2000

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Phil Kyle

Whenever a man hears it, he is young
and nature is in her spring,
Whenever he hears it, it is a new world

Henry David Thoreau

I'm not really fond of being lectured to. I'm not sure if it's the fact that it makes me feel inferior or if I feel I'm being told something that I'm not really sure I'm interested in hearing. At any rate I will pass this on this information and I hope that in the process I won't offend anyone.

I know you share my fondness for birds. They have a freedom about them. For me birds represent wildlife with a very different agenda from ours. They are not concerned with the mundane human world. Birds travel to places we can only dream about visiting. Their appearance, their song, even their mysterious behavior represents a challenge for us. To be more philosophical, bird diversity mainly gives us major clues about the health of OUR surroundings. So if the population of a variety of bird species is declining then there is a good chance the HUMAN life-support system is also having problems .

It all seems to be falling apart.... For example during the last decade the forest dwelling bird populations have shown a serious decline. Radar detection also shows that the number of migrating birds in the '80's, flying over the Gulf of Mexico, is half the number it was in the '60's. Whether the decline of birds is due to our use of pesticides — that kills much of the nestling's food supply and possibly the adult birds'; loss of habitat in bird breeding grounds — for example coastal refuges are rapidly being replaced by beach front developments; or maybe it's because we contribute acid rain that kills the trees that many birds nest in; no matter what the source of the problem, bird populations are decreasing rapidly.

So what do we do that doesn't involve a dramatic dedication of our lives to the solving the bird population problem? Being concerned for our wild


Please read the editor's note on back page!

birds and the well being of our ecosystem just isn't enough. Fortunately there are many things we can do to help birds out!

Volunteer to join HawkWatch; naturescape our back yard; house an intern for the Coastal Waterbird Program; help out with the Christmas Bird Count, the Water Fowl Survey and/or the Breeding Bird Census; join the Birds in a Forested Landscape Project; train our cat to be an indoor cat; participate in Project FeederWatch; provide food, water and cover for migrating and breeding birds; take an Ornithology class or workshop; donate binoculars or field guides to the Birder's Exchange; subscribe to at least one of the many Birding Magazines; be a citizen watchdog and know the conservation laws. *

So please remember there are simple ways we can get involved and become part of a possible regional solution and save the birds. For a more complete list of suggestions or more information on how we can help, please send a self-addressed stamped envelope to:

Cape Cod Bird Club, c/o SAVE THE BIRDS
Box 1710, Brewster, MA 02631

*A lot of information for this article comes from the book Bring Back the Birds by Greenberg and Reaser. 1995. 

WHAT'S INSIDE:

A Few Birds to Watch For Now	pg. 3
Amendment change	pg. 3
Bald Eagle Stamp Program.....	pg. 5
Bird Club Gifts	pg. 5
Bird Sightings	pg. 6
Cape Cod Christmas Bird Count Summary..	pg. 3
Field Trips	pg. 2
Hand-feeding Back Yard Birds	pg. 5
Meetings and Programs	pg. 2
Mid-Cape Christmas Bird Count	insert
Seeing is Believing	pg. 4
Sightings	pg. 6
Waterfowl Count.....	pg. 7
Wild Kitchen Recipe.....	pg. 5

FIELD TRIPS

MARCH - APRIL 2000

Stauffer Miller

March

Saturday, March 4: 9 a.m. Fort Hill, Eastham. Meet at the lower parking lot. Leader, Dick Koeppen, 430-1822.

Sunday, March 12: 8 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.

Thursday, March 16: 8:30 a.m. Meet at the Corner Cafe in Pocasset, at intersection of Shore and Barlow's Landing Roads. Pocasset and Wings Neck for cranberry bog walking, a walk to a salt marsh and a sea level lookout. Leader, Stauffer Miller, 362-3384.

Saturday, March 18: 9 a.m. Meet at Corporation Beach to look for waterfowl in spring plumage at Corporation Beach in Dennis and other nearby ponds and inlets. Leader, Mark Tuttle, 362-3015.

April

Saturday, April 1: 9 a.m. Fort Hill, Eastham. Meet at the lower parking lot. Leader, Dick Koeppen, 430-1822.

Thursday, April 27: 7 a.m. Meet at Dunkin Donuts, Rt 151 and Ninigret Avenue in Mashpee (1.6 miles west of Mashpee rotary). We'll explore Mashpee and Sandwich with a walk around a marsh; then visit several other areas, probably ending in Village of Sandwich. Leader, Stauffer Miller, 362-3384.

Sunday, April 30: Falmouth, 7:00 a.m. Meet at the Locust Street parking area of the bike path. Leaders: Bob Vander Pyl and Alison Robb, 540-2408.

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.



Monday March 13th is Members' Night. It was a big success last year, and we are hoping this year's event will be even better. Please donate items to the silent auction or if you have a brief slide show or some other Bird Nature art to display or any short birding activity you're willing to share with the members, please call Barbara Anton, 432-6027, or Susan Weliky, 548-8747. Yes... Bill Kyle will also be doing some new bird calls. Also a representative from the Mass. Fish and Wildlife Division will be briefly speaking on some conservation topics that affect birders. So remember it's time to clean out your closets and look for nature items you have no use for; donate that unwanted bird-related Christmas gift, at any rate be sure to give Susan or Barbara a call to inform them of what you're bringing.

On April 10th Paul Roberts will present his talk "Cape Hawk Watching in the Spring." Cape Cod is probably the best area in New England — perhaps east of the Great Lakes — from which to observe hawk migration. Through the efforts of HawkWatch, we are just beginning to understand the nature and magnitude of the spring migration. Paul, of Medford, MA, has been hawk watching for more than two decades. He has given classes on hawk identification and hawk migration for almost as many years. In 1976 he founded the Eastern Mass HawkWatch, which he led for two decades. His slide presentation highlights the species you'll see easily and will also include the rare migrants that make Cape hawk watching so exciting. When he isn't watching hawks, he's the Director of Corporate Communications for a large electronics engineering firm. Melissa Lowe of the Wellfleet Bay Sanctuary's Cape Hawk Watch will also present information.

"One swallow does not make a summer, but one skein of geese cleaving the murk of a March thaw, is the spring." *Aldo Leopold*

A FEW BIRDS TO WATCH FOR NOW

Stauffer Miller


As the harsh hand of winter relaxes somewhat its grip in the next few months, bird club members will want to be out and birding. Here are a few species to be alert for.

If your birding takes you by some good thickets, listen for the cheery song of the Fox Sparrow. This fine-looking sparrow is a scarce migrant on the Cape but nevertheless can be most anywhere that has a good thicket. Start listening for the sprightly song (the only time you'll hear it here all year) from the first through about the 20th of March. One might also appear on the ground under a feeder.

Another bird, but with a more squeaky and less obvious "song," to listen for beginning about mid-March is the Rusty Blackbird. Rusties like to perch in trees in semi-flooded woods or on the edge of a shallow pond. Two good spots for them are in West Barnstable: along Navigation Road off of Route 6A and woods trail at the end of Gemini Road.

If you're an early riser and have a large, un-broken stand of forest nearby, you might be fortunate enough to hear the drumming of the Ruffed Grouse. Listen on calm early April mornings that aren't too cold. I like the sand roads and trails that interlace north and west of Moody Pond in Mashpee and the Ryder Conservation Area off of Cotuit Road in South Sandwich.

A special bird to watch for around the 25th of April is the Purple Sandpiper. I have had good luck with finding small numbers of them at that time of year on any of the stone jetties in front of the Horizons Restaurant in Sandwich. They are a unique shorebird in that they are found almost nowhere except on rocks.

March and April have their own special bird-ing rewards. You don't have to wait till May to see and hear some nice birds. 


DO YOU KNOW ...

the historical significance of the 18th of April? If the first thing that came to mind was the midnight ride of Paul Revere to warn of the advancing British, of course, you're not wrong. However, you should know that this is also a significant date in the Mass. birding world, the date when the piping plovers return to our shores!

AMENDMENT TO THE BY-LAWS

Ron Ayotte, Secretary


At the general meeting on January 11, 2000, President Phil Kyle presented the proposed amendment to Article IV of the Club's by-laws for approval. Having determined that notice was given in accordance with Article VII and that a quorum was present, the amendment was put to a vote. After a brief discussion during which members were satisfied that the current editor had been consulted, the amendment was passed with no dissenting votes. Accordingly, Article IV now reads: "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."

At the direction of the President, the Secretary is working on an updated copy of the by-laws and will make a limited number of copies available in the spring. Members are reminded that the Secretary has a copy of the by-laws and minutes with him. 

CAPE COD CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

Blair Nikula

The 68th Cape Cod Christmas Bird Count was held on 19 December, with 43 participants recording 47,839 individuals of 128 species. Mild weather preceding the count and pleasant weather on the count day combined to produce record high totals for many species: 23 species were found in record high numbers, an amazing feat for a 68-year old event. Among the more notable totals were 16 Harlequin Ducks, 284 Hooded Mergansers (more than double the previous high), 358 Ruddy Ducks, 12 Cooper's Hawk, 125 Downy Woodpeckers, 204 Tufted Titmice, 141 White-breasted Nuthatches (nearly double the previous high), 167 Carolina Wrens, 16 Yellow-breasted Chats, 505 Northern Cardinals, and 419 Song Sparrows. The 16 Yellow-breasted Chats established not only a local record for this secretive species, but was the highest ever for any CBC in North America!


Tardy individuals comprised most of the unusual sightings, most notable among which was a Blackpoll Warbler, a first for the count. Other lingerers included a Semipalmated Plover, a Semipalmated Sandpiper, and four Western Sandpipers. 

Ronald Hindman


Don Scott

IF YOU BELIEVE THIS: Last June 17, while walking around the seven-acre cranberry bog located at the end of my street, a Red-Tailed Hawk left the tree in which he had been perched. As he flew across the bog he came close to a smaller bird in flight. The smaller bird, which was too far away to identify at the time, went after the hawk, diving at him several times, and then, to my amazement landed on the hawk's back, the hawk still flying across the bog!

This bird rode the hawk's back for at least two hundred yards until the hawk landed in another tree. It turned out not to be a good tree, for there were seven or eight other birds already there. They immediately began to harass the hawk, diving at him, flying all around him, until the hawk had had enough and took off. These birds, which by now I had recognized as Baltimore Orioles, followed him to the next tree, about one hundred yards away and again began harassing the hawk. This went on for three or four minutes until again the hawk, who by now I began to feel sorry for, flew off for yet another tree. The orioles followed.

Only this time the hawk landed in a tree where there were a half dozen Blue Jays, who now, along with the pursuing Orioles, also began to harass this poor hawk. Only the jays made frequent contact, brushing the hawk's back and tail. The thing that amazed me most about this protracted assault was the initial event, the landing of the oriole on the Red Tail's back while in flight and getting a ride to the tree! 


J. Stewart

SEEING IS BELIEVING: We have a "squirrel-proof" feeder which I have mounted on a tall wood post. The mounting scheme left two unused screw holes exposed on the bottom. The Redbellied Woodpeckers have figured out that they can creep up the post and worry a seed out through the screw hole, which they take around to the other side of the post where there is a long vertical crack. They stuff the seed into the crack and proceed to eat it. We have never seen these woodpeckers take seeds out of the front in the normal manner. 

A BIRD IN THE HAND: As rewarding as the visual aspects of birding can be, there are few things in life that provide the thrill of having a chickadee fly to one's hand to re-trieve a sunflower seed.


I can still recall the first time that happened to me. I was probably around 10 years old and living in a very rural part of southwestern New York State, south of Buffalo and near the Pennsylvania line. Our local dentist, Dr. Robert Common, was an active birder and it was he who introduced my family to this wonderful experience — and clearly opened the eyes of my parents and me to the joys of birding.

Over the years, the need for a "chickadee fix" continues, and the Beech Forest is an excellent place to alleviate the need. But early last December, while visiting friends in the Rochester, NY, area, Carol and I moved to the next level. We were walking on a trail in a lovely park in Mendon, NY, with chickadees flooding to our hands.

Suddenly, to our great amazement, we were besieged by Red-breasted Nuthatches doing the same thing. As we continued our walk, a White breasted Nuthatch joined the effort, but he/she would not go to a gloved hand, only to a bare one. And throughout the entire walk, a lone Downy Woodpecker followed us the entire way but could never gather the courage to join the crowd. 

Janet Heywood

DID I SEE WHAT I THINK I SAW?: Today [January 22] as I drove through the [Mount Auburn] Cemetery I saw a bright red spot stuck to a sugar maple about 2 feet off the ground. I stopped for a closer look — it was a flicker, looking glued to the bark. But the bird seemed to have NO head. The back feathers were ruffled and wings slightly spread. Was this a decapitated bird frozen in place? How odd! I walked up quietly and reached forward to touch it. The flicker pulled its head from somewhere (from beneath its wing?), turned, looked at me, fluffed its feathers, flew to a nearby pine and began to preen.

I felt guilty for having disturbed its sleep and went off to fetch more suet. How do birds react to extreme cold? Resting on the sunny side of a tree trunk was a good idea until I came along. Did I really see a bird with its head tucked under its wing? 

MID-CAPE CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

Peter Trimble

Red-throated Loon	77
Pacific Loon	1
Common Loon	74
Pied-billed Grebe	10
Horned Grebe	109
Red-necked Grebe	4
Northern Gannet	106
Great Cormorant	29
Double-crested Cormorant	3
Great Blue Heron	75
Black-crowned Night-Heron	1
Snow Goose	2
Canada Goose	1082
Brant	105
Mute Swan	134
Wood Duck	6
Gadwall	273
Eurasian Wigeon	2
American Wigeon	241
American Black Duck	2334
Mallard	1285
Blue-winged Teal	2
Northern Pintail	16
Green-winged Teal	150
Canvasback	61
Ring-necked Duck	59
Greater Scaup	53
Lesser Scaup	47
scaup spp.	96
Common Eider	1226
Surf Scoter	165
White-winged Scoter	292
Black Scoter	20
Oldsquaw	379
Bufflehead	1580
Common Goldeneye	362
Hooded Merganser	196
Red-breasted Merganser	1276
Common Merganser	222
Ruddy Duck	1
Northern Harrier	25
Sharp-shinned Hawk	10
Cooper's Hawk	8
Red-shouldered Hawk	1
Red-tailed Hawk	26
American Kestrel	2
Merlin	3
Wild Turkey	6
Northern Bobwhite	7

Virginia Rail	11
American Coot	94
Black-bellied Plover	2
Killdeer	8
Greater Yellowlegs	13
Whimbrel	1
Sanderling	111
Dunlin	668
Long-billed Dowitcher	4
Common Snipe	7
American Woodcock	1
Black-headed Gull	2
Bonaparte's Gull	170
Ring-billed Gull	775
Herring Gull	1851
Lesser Black-backed Gull	1
Great Black-backed Gull	350
Black-legged Kittiwake	75
Rock Dove	351
Mourning Dove	312
Eastern Screech-Owl	19
Great Horned Owl	11
Long-eared Owl	2
Short-eared Owl	3
Northern Saw-whet Owl	1
Belted Kingfisher	35
Red-bellied Woodpecker	14
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	1
Downy Woodpecker	106
Hairy Woodpecker	22
Northern Flicker	76
Eastern Phoebe	2
Blue Jay	732
American Crow	1038
Horned Lark	40
Black-capped Chickadee	1254
Tufted Titmouse	292
Red-breasted Nuthatch	55
White-breasted Nuthatch	125
Brown Creeper	11
Carolina Wren	185
Winter Wren	14
Marsh Wren	2
Golden-crowned Kinglet	18
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	5
Eastern Bluebird	45
Hermit Thrush	44
American Robin	1289
Gray Catbird	18

Northern Mockingbird	185
Brown Thrasher	1
European Starling	1774
American Pipit	1
Cedar Waxwing	114
Orange-crowned Warbler	1
Yellow-rumped Warbler	265
Pine Warbler	8
Palm Warbler	17
Eastern Towhee	9
American Tree Sparrow	117
Field Sparrow	30
Savannah Sparrow	24
Ipswich' Sparrow	2
sharp-tailed sparrow sp.	7
Fox Sparrow	5
Song Sparrow	436
Swamp Sparrow	75
White-throated Sparrow	359
Dark-eyed Junco	187
Snow Bunting	10
Northern Cardinal	496
Red-winged Blackbird	80
Eastern Meadowlark	189
Rusty Blackbird	1
Common Grackle	1
Brown-headed Cowbird	3
Purple Finch	1
House Finch	583
Red Crossbill	40
White-winged Crossbill	15
American Goldfinch	445
House Sparrow	1405
Total Individuals	30,396
Total Species	129
Observers	32
Total party-hours	96.5
Total party-miles	411
Hours owling	10.5

TOWN RESULTS

As always, Falmouth out-distanced all other towns by a wide margin, with 3247 birds or 26% of the Capewide total. Barnstable was runner-up with 2165 birds (17%), followed distantly by Yarmouth's 1399 birds (11%). The best variety was found in Barnstable (21 species), Yarmouth (19 species), and Falmouth (18 species). Truro outdueled Wellfleet for the bottom of the heap with just 75 birds of eight species.

POND RESULTS

An average of 33 birds/pond were seen. However, 88 (23%) ponds had no birds at all. Salt Pond in Falmouth traditionally harbors a large flock of scaup and consequently takes top honors every year for the largest number of birds: This year 1243 individuals of 7 species included 975 scaup. Second this year was Great Pond in Eastham with 390 birds, followed by Hinckley's Pond in Harwich with 350 birds (less than half of last year's total there). The best variety was again on Hinckley's Pond, where 12 species were found, followed by Pilgrim Lake in Orleans and Tom Matthew's Pond in Yarmouth with 11 species each.

PARTICIPATION

Thanks to each and every one who helped with this survey: Ron Ayotte, Courtney Armentraut, Mary Beers, Axel & C.J. Berg, Carl Bergfors, Keith Brunell, Frank Caruso, Kathleen Casey, Sally Clifton, Dick Comeau, Ruth Connaughton, F. Durr, Don Dyer, Helen & Bob Elias, Green Brier Nature Center "Conservation Action Teens," Sue & Ned Handy, Arnold Henson, Ron Hindman, Seward Highley, Mark Kasprzyk, Phil Kyle, Joyce Leary, Monica Lindo, Joann McGuire, George Martin, Kathy & Rives McGinley, Paul McHugh, Stauffer Miller, Priscilla Moor, Blair Nikula, Tom Noonan, Dennis Oliver, Stephanie & Aaron Orciuch, Alida Pellegrini-Toole, Bob Prescott, John Redfern, Diane Reynolds, Alison Robb, Don Scott, Kip Sherman, Janet & Arky Silverio, Dick Stacy, Barbara Stanton, Betsy Stepney, Polly Stevens, Bill Swift, Jim Talin, Aurele Thomas, J.Toole, Peter Trimble, Jean Turnbull, Mark Tuttle, Bob Vander Pyl, Dennis Wiehe, and Ellie Winslow.

For additional copies of this summary, send a large S.A.S.E. to Blair Nikula, 2 Gilbert Lane, Harwich Port, MA 02646.

April

by Sara Teasdale

The roofs are shining from the rain,
The sparrows twitter as they fly;
And with a windy April grace
The little clouds go by.

Yet the backyards are bare and brown
With only one unchanging tree—
I could not be so sure of Spring
Save that it sings in me.

April Rain Song

by Langston Hughes


Let the rain kiss you.
Let the rain beat upon your head
with silver liquid drops.
Let the rain sing you a lullaby.

The rain makes still pools on the sidewalk.
The rain makes running pools in the gutter.
The rain plays a little sleep-song
on our roof at night--

And I love the rain.

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. 

A WILD KITCHEN RECIPE

If a late winter or early spring snowstorm should cover the ground, you can help bluebirds and robins find fitting food by providing them with Marvel-Meal. Just scatter it on the ground.

Marvel-Meal

- 1 cup peanut butter
- 4 cups white or yellow corn meal
- 1 cup shortening
- 1 cup white flour.

Mix by hand all ingredients to form a doughy mixture. Recipe yields about 2 pounds. Store in refrigerator. 

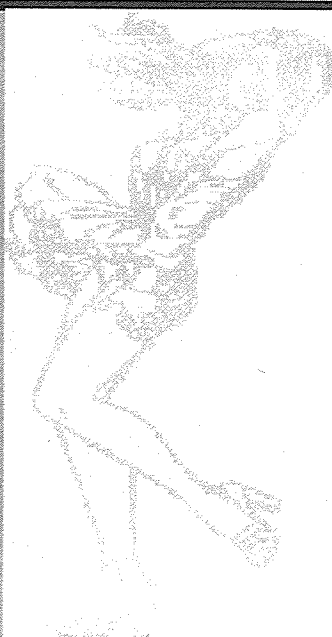
"I heard a robin in the distance, the first I had heard in many a thousand years, and thought, whose note I shall not forget for many a thousand more — the same sweet and powerful song as of yore." *Henry David Thoreau*



MARCH

by Emily Dickinson

Dear March, come in!
How glad I am!
I looked for you before.
Put down your hat —
You must have walked —
How out of breath you are!
Dear March, how are you?
And the rest?
Did you leave Nature well?
Oh, March, come right
upstairs with me.
I have so much to tell.




HAND FEEDING BACKYARD BIRDS

If you would like to experience the pleasure that Don Scott describes in hand-feeding birds, you will enjoy *Hand-feeding Backyard Birds: A step-by-step guide* by Hugh Wiberg and published by Storey Books. The birds Mr. Wiberg, a Massachusetts resident, has brought to his hand are chickadees, titmice, both red-breasted and white-breasted nut-hatches, and downy woodpeckers, and he believes that many other species are likely to come to hand feeding, as well. If you cannot find the book locally, contact Storeybooks.com.

sightings continued from page 6

(J.Young), with a similar number near Wellfleet Center a few days later (B.Nikula). Singles and small groups were reported from various other sites in those two towns, but the only report from elsewhere on the Cape was of two birds in Yarmouth on 13 December (K.Hamilton). Several **Northern Shrikes** were reported during the period, though none seemed to linger in any one area.

Among the lingering warblers, most surprising was a **Blackpoll Warbler** in Eastham on 19 December (C.Neill). Somewhat less surprising were three **Nashville Warblers**: two in Falmouth on 18 December and one in Hyannis on 31 December (K.Rademaker). A **Western Tanager** appeared again in E. Orleans in late January, in the same neighborhood where one wintered last year. Single **Pine Grosbeaks** were found in Sandwich and Chatham on New Year's day (B.Nikula). **Red Crossbills**, in flocks of up to 20 birds, were widely reported in December, but apparently had largely disappeared by mid-January.

Flocks of **White-winged Crossbills**, all in the mid-Cape area, included 25 in S. Dennis on 15 December (G.Ralston), 25 in Yarmouth the same day (K.Hamilton), 15 in Yarmouth on 27 December (S.Miller et al), and 20 in Dennis on 2-3 January (R.Fisher). It has been a long, long time since crossbills have been seen in such numbers on Cape Cod. A huge flock of **Redpolls**, numbering at least 250 birds, was in Provincetown on 9 January (B.Nikula), while singles and small groups were widely reported, with some appearing at feeders in January. 

Unusually mild weather prevailed into mid-January and many of the bird highlights were of species lingering much later than prudence would dictate. Although true vagrants were lacking, several northern species, most notably Bohemian Waxwings, crossbills, and redpolls were widely reported and birders did not lack for things to see.

A **Pacific Loon**, picked out among the loons in Barnstable Harbor during the Mid-Cape CBC, was one of the more notable finds (J.Trimble et al). Following the large numbers last summer and fall, very late **Greater Shearwaters** were seen in Provincetown and Eastham on 12 December (B.Nikula).

A flock of six **Tundra Swans** sitting on the ocean off of Highland Light in Truro 27 December must have been a startling sight (M.Lynch et al). Two **Blue-winged Teal** lingered in Marston's Mills into late December (M. Tuttle et al), and six **Northern Shovelers** were present on the flats at the north end of Nauset Marsh on 1 January (B.Nikula). Two **Eurasian Wigeon** were found in the W. Barnstable - Osterville area during the period, but none was reported from Chatham for the first time in several years. A male **Redhead** was a rare find in Marston's Mills on 23 December (J.Liller); presumably the same bird was in Cotuit on 12 January (J.Trimble). As many as 17 **Harlequin Ducks** at Nauset Beach (J.Sones et al.) was a record high count for Cape Cod. Up to three **Barrow's Goldeneyes** (2 males and a female) were in Nantucket Sound off of Surf Drive in Falmouth during the period, and one was off the Sandy Neck parking lot in early January.

An adult **Red-shouldered Hawk** was seen on a couple of occasions in W. Barnstable (D.Dyer et al.). **Turkey Vultures**, rare at any season not so long ago, have become nearly year-round residents recently; there were several reports of up to half a dozen birds this winter.

The mild weather induced a number of shorebirds to linger later than normal. Among these were a **Semipalmated Plover** on South Beach in Chatham on 19 December (V.Laux et al); several **Killdeer** at the old fish hatchery in E. Sandwich into early January; **Greater Yellowlegs** at several sites; a **Whimbrel** at Sea Gull Beach in Yarmouth (P. Trimble et al) into at least early January (the third consecutive year for this bird!); a

Semipalmated Sandpiper with four **Western Sandpipers** on South Beach on 19 December (P.Trimble et al); and four **Long-billed Dowitchers** in Hyannisport into at least late December (B.Nikula et al). A **Purple Sandpiper**, always a nice find on sandy Cape Cod, was at Corporation Beach in Dennis on 6 December (R.Graham).

A storm blew 18 **Pomarine Jaegers** and another 35 unidentified jaegers past First Encounter Beach on the first of December, with 17 Pomarines still there the following day (B.Nikula). **Common Black-headed Gulls** were well-represented with an adult in Wellfleet Harbor in December (B.Nikula et al), two on Lake Wequaquet in Barnstable in late December (B.Nikula et al), and an adult in Osterville on 12 January (J.Trimble). A **Lesser Black-backed Gull** was found in Brewster on 19 December (J.Kenneally et al). Large numbers of **Black-legged Kittiwakes** were present off of Provincetown in January, with as many as 800+ estimated late in the month. A very late **Forster's Tern** was found at Chapin Beach in Dennis on 13 December (K.Hamilton).

As many as three **Thick-billed Murres** were in Provincetown Harbor during early December (J.Sones et al). **Razorbills** were rather scarce until late January when hundreds appeared off of Provincetown and Truro.

A **Long-eared Owl** made a brief appearance in an Eastham backyard on 20 January (D.Murley). Three were found in Sandwich on the Buzzard's Bay Christmas Count, 18 December (J.Trimble et al), and another two were in Marston's Mills on 27 December (J.Trimble et al). A **Northern Saw-whet Owl** was found in a Falmouth yard on 4 December (B.Vanderpyl), several were heard calling at various locales during the Christmas Bird Counts, and one unfortunate individual expired after striking a window in Eastham on 23 January, a white-footed mouse still firmly clutched in its talons!

A late **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** was found in Dennis on 6 January (M.Tuttle). **Eastern Bluebirds** were widely reported and at least 3-4 **Brown Thrashers** visited feeders during January. **Bohemian Waxwings** staged another good flight, with most reports coming from the Wellfleet/Truro area, as has become typical. As many as 25 were seen on South Pamet Road in Truro in early January

sightings continued on page 5



The 17th annual Cape Cod Lake and Pond Waterfowl Survey was conducted on the weekend of December 4-5, 1999. The weather preceding the count was again very mild, and ice-free conditions prevailed during the survey.

A record 60 observers - 11 more than ever before (!) censused 375 ponds, just five ponds fewer than the record number. Curiously, only 23 species of waterfowl were found, the poorest variety we've ever had. Five species were found in record high numbers, with two additional species achieving their second highest totals in fifteen years. Two species, though, were in record low numbers. However, the total of 12,423 individuals, although more than a thousand birds less than last year's record high, was still the third highest in the count history.

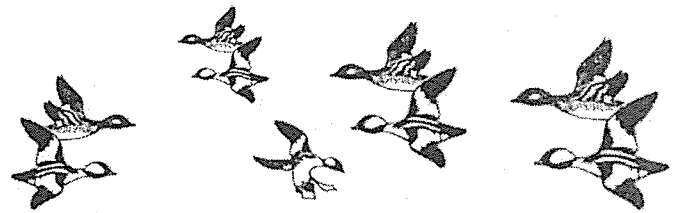
SPECIES RESULTS

Common Loon was missed for the first time. However, this species has never been recorded in numbers, averaging only eight individuals annually, so their absence this year seems more a curiosity than a matter of any significance.

Mute Swans continued their recent rebound, this year's 255 birds just six shy of the 15-year record, and 44% above average. Canada Goose numbers have been all over the board lately. Survey totals plunged to a record low in 1996, then rebounded over the past two years, only to plunge again this year. The total of 474 birds is the second lowest ever, 51% below the 15-year average.

Green-winged Teal went through the roof this year, thanks to an amazing concentration of over 200 birds at the old fish hatchery in Sandwich. Their 298 birds is almost four times last year's record and a whopping 730% above average!

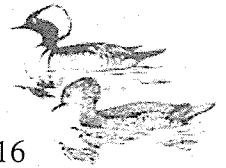
Mallards established a new high with 2228 birds, 40% above the 15-year average. They were found on 187 ponds, far more than any other species. American Wigeon also set a new record with 253 birds, 180% above average.



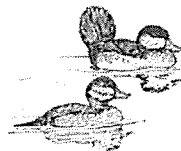
Canvasbacks continued their sad decline, establishing a record low of just 57 birds, 89% below average. This handsome duck was found on only four ponds this year. Ring-necked Ducks were again numerous, with 362 birds comprising their second highest total ever, 76% above average. Scaup (both species combined) established a new low, with just 1421 birds, 46% below average.

Buffleheads totaled 2279 birds, the third highest ever, 31% above average. They were found at 135 sites, once again making them the second most widespread species on the survey.

Hooded Mergansers continued their steady rise, establishing yet another record with 1037 birds, the first time they have cracked the thousand mark. This represents a 102% increase over the survey average. They were also found on 104 ponds, making them the fourth most widespread species. In 16 years, this lovely duck has gone from the tenth most common species on the survey to the fifth, with their numbers increasing enormously!



Ruddy Duck numbers went through the roof, 444 birds attesting last year's record high. This is almost 10 times the 15-year average. They were also found at 17 sites, compared with just six sites last year.



American Coot numbers dropped from last year's record high, but at 340 birds were still well above average (+145%).



A SUMMING UP

Bufflehead (2279 birds) outnumbered all other species, closely followed by Mallard (2228), Black Duck (1929), and scaup (both species combined, 1421 birds). These five species combined comprised about 63% of the overall total.

In terms of unusual species, 1999 was the most uneventful year in the survey's history. Two Eurasian Wigeon in Chatham, and a White-winged Scoter in Barnstable were the only species of even modest note.



The above items are for sale at each meeting.

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



bird club gift ideas

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Cape Cod Bird Club
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From your editor: I want to thank Janet Heywood, Ron Hindman, Stauffer Miller, Blair Nikula, Don Scott, J. Stewart and Peter Trimble for their special contributions to this issue. 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:

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