



Cape Cod Bird Club

VOLUME 30 – ISSUE 2

NOVEMBER – DECEMBER 2001

The Cape Cod Bird Club newsletter is published bi-monthly.

Cape Cod Bird Club meetings are 7:30 PM the second Monday of each month (unless otherwise indicated) at the Museum of Natural History, Rte 6A, Brewster.

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President's Message

Birding in the cold months is not something that all birders look forward to. Some birders are even WARM WEATHER BIRDERS only! Unbelievable! Usually there is a reward for venturing out when the temperature drops and (hopefully) the wind isn't blowing hard. As the saying goes, "If you go birding, they will come."

As Blair Nikula has mentioned in past newsletters, November is a transition month for birds and birders. Many of our winter residents arrive. Ducks, Gannets, Kittiwakes, maybe a Shrike, Lapland Longspur, or a group of Red Crossbills. Perhaps a Snowy Owl will make an appearance. Mass Audubon maintains that November is a month of "flocks." Whether it's sea ducks or ground birds, they hang out together. Look for Horned Larks and Snow Buntings around beaches and dunes. Nor'easters push pelagic species toward the coast. You might get a glimpse of Razorbills, Dovekies, Murres, Jaegers, a Fulmar, or even a Puffin after a storm.

"In December," Blair says, "the winter residents have pretty much settled into their traditional haunts but there are always a few surprises because a few oddball birds will linger

later than prudence would dictate." The Mass Audubon Society asserts that an exceptionally high tide December 31st (at 1:30 PM in Nauset Marsh, Eastham; 12:30 PM Sandwich Town Marsh, and 11:30 AM Great Marsh, near Sandy Neck Beach Barnstable) forces the marsh skulkers, Bitterns and Sparrows, UP and makes them much more visible. Be there!

Also visit Long Pond in Yarmouth to catch glimpses of Canvasbacks, Ring-necked Ducks and maybe Pied-billed Grebes. Check out fresh-water marshes, especially if they have a trickle of water still left to attract water birds, like Rails, Sparrows and Snipe. (That's if they've resisted the urge to move south.)

If you have a chance, also check out the marsh and dunes at First Encounter Beach and environs in Eastham; West Dennis Beach and Sandy Neck, Barnstable for Winter Hawks, Horned Larks, Snow Buntings or even a Shrike.

November and December can be great months for spotting birds if you can plan ahead and avoid the "character building" experiences!

Phil Kyle

"Exploring Arizona" with Shawn Carey - November 12th

Come along with Shawn Carey as he explores Arizona with a multi-image slide presentation on DVD. We'll visit stunning mountain and canyon sites, meet the people, and see the birds in beautiful Arizona.

Shawn will take us to the Grand Canyon, Sedona, and deserts dotted with rocks and cacti, doves and thrashers. He'll have us meet up with two local characters who know ocotillos from

saguaros, and rattlesnakes, as well as a great sunset. He'll then focus on species like Montezuma Quail, Black-chinned Hummingbird, Phainopepla, Acorn Woodpecker, and many others.

These stunning photographs and Chris Duval's evocative sound track will inspire you to visit amazing Arizona and experience its beauties first-hand.

Sam Fried to Present December 10th Program

THE YUKON, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES AND THE DEMPSTER HIGHWAY – Dec. 10th

Winding like a gravel ribbon for 450 miles through the boreal forest and across the arctic tundra, The Dempster Highway offers unparalleled scenery and opportunities for birding and wildlife viewing. Golden eagle, Long-tailed Jaeger, and Willow and Rock Ptarmigan are common birds seen from the road. Gyrfalcon and Peregrine build their aeries on roadside

cliffs, and 25 species of ducks and swans are easily observed. Northern Hawk Owls sit atop spruce trees as we pass by. In tundra areas, Smith's and Lapland Longspurs breed, while Northern Wheatear can be found in the talus slopes.

Mammals will not be overshadowed, as we encounter moose, gray wolf, caribou, snowshoe hare, grizzly and black bears, and lynx. Truly one of the continent's most exciting drives, the Dempster Highway is the road to adventure!

Sam Fried, past president of Hartford Audubon Society, has published hundreds of photographs and many articles in field guides, books and magazines worldwide. He wrote several chapters in the popular new book *Birdwatching*, published by the Discovery Channel and Insight Guides. He recently became the Wildlife Expert for Gorp.com on AOL, with a featured weekly column.

Of the 730 species of birds in North America, Sam has photographed 702 of them!

July in Iceland – Part II

Jack Palmer

Emerging from the Keflavik airport on arrival, we immediately encountered Northern Wheatears, Lesser Black-backed Gulls, and Snow Buntings; two rare sightings for a Cape Codder, plus a lifer. A Merlin streaked by after a Redwing; the falcon put on a final burst of speed for the capture and the two crashed into the bushes. Almost instantly the pair emerged with the chased now chasing the chaser! An auspicious beginning for the next two weeks.

One evening at sunset (11 PM that far north), I checked a shoreline to see if the flood tide had forced the shorebirds in close. It had not. Instead, the birds had gathered on the little skerries that dot the intertidal. On one nearby were over 200 Red Knots crowded together. All faced me with their pink breasts (the islandica subspecies) florid, illuminated by the setting sun. Quite a sight. On a neighboring skerry were just as many Purple Sandpipers.

The general habitat in Iceland seems ideal for Snipe. It is somewhat difficult to walk through low cover without flushing one, which either ducks down again or gains altitude and begins its winnowing dives.

When I first heard their winnow, it didn't sound "right." The pitch seemed low. There is a reason: the Icelandic version has two fewer tail feathers than ours and the outer ones, those responsible for the audio display, are bulkier and vibrate at a slower rate.

The birds we worked hardest to find were the Gyrfalcon, the White-tailed Eagle and the Red Phalarope. We finally found a single gray-morph of the former, the National Bird of Iceland. Twice we found eagles, each time with two young; their numbers are bouncing back from near extinction by buckshot from Eider farmers. In our phalarope search, we found probably a thousand Red-necked Phalaropes spinning around in one large shallow pond readying themselves for migration out over the ocean, but we never did find a Red Phalarope. The closest I came was a print of one hanging on the wall of a bed-and-breakfast room.

There is one bird none of us will ever see. Several miles off the south shore of Iceland is the island of Elday, not much more than a straight-sided column of featureless rock. It was the nesting site of the last pair of Great

Auks on earth. On June 3, 1884, three sailors clubbed the pair to death and stomped on the last egg.

Today the flat top of the island is home to the third largest colony of Gannets in the North Atlantic.

Even if everything is left undone, Everyone must make time to sit still and watch the leaves turn. — Elizabeth Lawrence

CCBC Rare Bird Hot Line

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

Area One:
Mark Tuttle 508-362-3015
Peter Trimble 508-477-3947

Area Two
Blair Nikula 508-432-6348
Bessie Tirrell 508-432-9248

Area Three
Art King 508-255-8919
Aurele Thomas 508-255-1409

November-December Field Trips Schedule

Stauffer Miller

November

Nov. 3 (Saturday) -Fort Hill, Eastham. Meet at the lower parking lot at Fort Hill at 9:00 AM.
Leader: Dick Koeppen, 430-1822.

Nov. 9 (Friday) - Meet at Windsurfer's Cottage at West Dennis Beach in West Dennis to bird there and go on to Harwich and Chatham for waterfowl and other birds. Leaders: Mike Dettrey and Diane Silverstein, 398-9484, email mikeanddian@hotmail.com.

Nov. 10 (Saturday) -Gulls and seabirds of Wellfleet/Provincetown. Meet and carpool at Friendly's near rotary in Orleans at 9:00 AM. Scope helpful. Leader: Stauffer Miller, 362-3384, email emiller@seepub.com.

Nov. 11 (Sunday) - Falmouth, 9:00 AM. Meet at the Locust Street parking area of the bike path. Leaders: Bob Vander Pyl and Alison Robb, 540-2408.

Nov. 17 (Saturday) -Waterfowl of Nauset Beach and other points in Orleans and Eastham. Meet at 8:00 AM at Friendly's near rotary in Orleans.
Leader: Mark Tuttle, 362-3015.

December

December 1 and 2: Annual Waterfowl Count. Call Blair Nikula at 432-6348 to sign up.

Dec. 1 (Saturday) -Tiverton, RI, Westport and other points in Bristol County. Meet at 7:30 AM at Tedeshi's commuter bus parking lot near rotary in Bourne. Leader: Stauffer Miller, 362-3384, email emiller@seepub.com.

Dec. 7 (Sunday) - Falmouth, 9:00 AM. Meet at the Locust Street parking area of the bike path. Leaders: Bob Vander Pyl and Alison Robb, 540-2408.

Dec. 14 (Friday) - Meet at 9:00 AM at Corporation Beach in Dennis and then on to First Encounter Beach, Eastham. Leaders: Mike Dettrey and Diane Silverstein, 398-9484, email mikeanddian@hotmail.com.

Dec. 15 (Saturday) - Fort Hill, Eastham. Meet at the lower parking lot at Fort Hill at 9:00 AM.
Leader, Dick Koeppen, 430-1822.

CHRISTMAS COUNTS

Dec. 16 (Sunday) - Annual Cape Cod Christmas Count. Sign up with Blair Nikula at the December meeting.

Annual Mid-Cape Christmas Count: Date to be announced at December meeting or call Peter Trimble, 477-3897.

Project Feeder Watch

The following was sent to us by Diane Silverstein. Diane and her husband participate in Project FeederWatch and enjoy it. Perhaps you, too, might want to get involved. To see last winter's bird population highlights or to get involved this year, please see the note at end of this article.

Last winter, Cornell Lab of Ornithology received phone calls and emails from birding enthusiasts in the U.S. Northeast regarding a lack of birds at their feeders. To find answers, researchers at Cornell Lab of Ornithology turned to data reported by participants in Project FeederWatch, the Lab's citizen-science project in which bird enthusiasts throughout North America count the numbers and kinds of birds that visit their feeders from November through early April. Data are combined by Lab researchers to determine

population distribution and abundance of some 100 bird species that regularly visit feeders. According to Laura Kammermeier, project leader for Feeder Watch, "Each year, we expect to document findings from Project FeederWatch to help researchers understand changes in North American feeder bird populations, not only during a particular winter but also over many years. We need as many people as possible to become the 'eyes and ears' of our scientists."

FeederWatch was the first study to document cyclical changes in Varied Thrush abundance. It also was the first to clearly document the irruptive patterns and movements of the Common Redpoll. Most recently, FeederWatchers are helping track the spread of mycoplasmal conjunctivitis, often referred to as House Finch eye disease because it primarily affects House Finches.

Participants receive a Research Kit that includes a full-color feeder bird poster and calendar, and the FeederWatcher's Handbook. They also receive summaries of FeederWatch data and other findings published in the Lab's quarterly newsletter, Birdscope. A \$15 fee helps cover the cost of materials and data analysis.

People of all ages and skill levels are encouraged to participate. FeederWatch is a wonderful family activity and is a great way for parents to prove to their kids that their observations matter.

For more information or to sign up, call the Cornell Lab of Ornithology at 800/ 843-2473 (or visit the FeederWatch web site at <<http://birds.cornell.edu/pfw>>).

Teachers are invited to inquire about Classroom FeederWatch. Project FeederWatch 159 Sapsucker Woods Rd., Ithaca, NY 14850 (607) 254-2427

What's Around

Ron Ayotte

NOTE: This is the first in what I hope will be a regular newsletter "column" on bird sightings on the Cape.

It will be based on my own observations, supplemented by occasional reports from others (earnestly solicited), or from the Mass Audubon Bird Observer (on the Web). The latter two will be separately identified. My observations are not definitive; they are from my participation in programs at the Museum and Wellfleet Bay Sanctuary, and are roughly based on our Club-published "Birding Cape Cod." I will leave out the "usual suspects" and focus on what I think is interesting.

Reader comments can be sent to me e-mail at ayotterc@cape.com, or by letter to me c/o of the Club.

Mid-August to Mid-September, South Beach, North Monomoy Island, Cape Cod Bay:

Cory's Shearwater, Greater Shearwater, Sooty Shearwater, Manx Shearwater, Wilson's Storm Petrel, Northern Gannet, Double-crested Cormorant (5000+), Glossy Ibis, Blue-winged Teal, Green-winged Teal, Northern Harrier, Black-bellied Plover (3000+), Semipalmated Plover (1000+), Piping Plover, American Oystercatcher (50+), Greater Yellowlegs, Willet, Whimbrel, Hudsonian Godwit (40+), Marbled Godwit, Ruddy Turnstone (200+), Red Knot (2000+), Sanderling (3000+), Semipalmated Sandpiper, Least Sandpiper, White-rumped Sandpiper, Buff-breasted

Sandpiper (!), Parasitic Jaeger (!), Laughing Gull, Bonaparte's Gull, Lesser Black-backed Gull (<10), Roseate Tern, Arctic Tern (1), Forster's Tern, Black Tern (<10, one in breeding plumage).

September 17, Morris Island,

Chatham: Northern Gannet, Great Blue Heron, Northern Harrier, Cooper's Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, Black-bellied Plover, American Oystercatcher (50+), Greater Yellowlegs, Least Sanderling, Least Sandpiper, Laughing Gull (15+), Common Tern (10+), Tree Swallow (100+), Barn Swallow, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Yellow-rumped (Myrtle) Warbler, American Redstart. From Mass Audubon: Lark Sparrow(!), Vesper Sparrow in Wellfleet, Orange-crowned Warbler on Nantucket.

September 24, Wellfleet: Greater Yellowlegs, Ruddy Turnstone, Common Tern (50+), Belted Kingfisher, Cedar Waxwing, Eastern Towhee, Chipping Sparrow. From Mass Audubon: Cory's, Greater, Manx and Sooty Shearwaters, Northern Fulmar, Wilson's Storm-petrel, Parasitic Jaeger, Black Tern and Black-legged Kittiwake (Provincetown).

October 8, Truro: Red-tailed Hawk, Tree Swallow (50+), Gray Catbird, Cedar Waxwing (20+), Yellow-rumped (Myrtle) Warbler, Blue Grosbeak, Eastern Towhee, Field Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Swamp Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, White-crowned Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco. From Mass Audubon: Lincoln's Sparrow, Indigo Bunting, Bobolink (Truro).

October 12, Brewster: Pied-billed Grebe (2), Brant (500+), American Black Duck, Common Eider, White-winged Scoter, Black-bellied Plover, Semipalmated Plover, Sanderling, Bonaparte's Gull, Common Tern (15+), Cedar Waxwing, Common Yellowthroat (1), Song Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, Swamp Sparrow, Common Grackle.

BIRD CLUB Gift Ideas (on sale at meetings)

CCBC Decals	\$1.00
CCBC Checklist	.50
CCBC Patches	3.00
Book: Birding Cape Cod	10.00
Binoc/Camera Straps	12.50
Organizer Packs	17.00
<u>New</u> CCBC Hats	15.00

LOOKING FOR:

- **BINOCULARS** for Junior Bird Club members. If you have a pair you would be willing to donate or loan, please contact Nancy Reider.
- Someone with **WEBSITE** expertise who is willing to help with our (future) site. Please contact Phil Kyle or Ron Ayotte.
- **Commemorative Stamps** or unused picture postcards. Bring them to the next meeting and they will be used to help the raptor rehab center.

Venezuelan Adventures

Don Scott

For the past several years, Carol and I and a small group of birding friends from the Cape and other parts of the country have visited different spots in Central and South America.

This year we re-visited Venezuela, which has become a favorite, partly because of the spectacular birds, but mostly because we travel with a wonderful young Venezuelan guide named David Ascanio, who is second to no one in spotting and listening skills and, most importantly, in personality.

Our most recent trip took us to the far southeastern part of the country, south of the Orinoco River, and within hailing distance of Brazil. Other than our first and last nights, which were spent in Caracas, we saw no hot water, we shared bathrooms, ate very well, and were regularly fortified by the local beverage of choice, Polar beer.

We counted over 300 species, but the quests for a special two — the Guianan Cock-of-the-Rock and the Harpy Eagle — are worthy of comment. The Cock-of-the-Rock is a spectacular, chicken-sized bird that nests in rocky cliffs, mostly in areas surrounded by dense forests. The male is bright yellow-orange with brown-black wings, has an incredible fanshaped crest, flies close to the speed of light and is generally highly secretive. The female is basically brown and equally speedy.

We spent most of one morning in search of this bird, walking along a road in an area where they are known to nest, moving in and out of the forest on occasion, but having little luck beyond an occasional blur of orange or

brown as one or the other flew in and out of the forest and over the road. Many other gorgeous birds held our interest — tanagers of all sorts, antbirds, and raptors — but we finally gave up and moved on to new territory to find other birds. Late in the day, on our way back to the cold water showers and much needed Polar, we were walking down a stretch of road when one of our group — a particularly sharp spotter from North Carolina — said, in a loud whisper, "Look!" There on our left, barely off the road and slightly above eye level, was a male Cock-of-the-Rock! For some seven minutes (longer, according to David, than he has ever watched this bird) it flew up, down, back and forth, in clear view. Sadly, all of us had left our cameras in the van which trailed us by several hundred yards and no one dared leave this great sight. It was truly a moment to remember.

The quest for the Harpy Eagle was totally different, with mixed results. This eagle is one of the largest in the world, and is endangered. The adult stands close to 40" tall, has a wing-span of 9' and lives in large nests at the top of very tall trees in extremely remote and dense forests. Usually they are found by loggers in the area who report their presence, and, we were told, then leave the nearby area untouched. To get there, we were at breakfast at 4:30 AM (cold canned tuna mixed with onion and tomato), drove on broken roads in our van for a half hour, then transferred to 4-wheel drive vehicles (quite unlike the SUV's with which we are all familiar) for another hour. As the light of day

began to appear, we hiked for a final hour, uphill and mostly in mud, to the site of the eagle's nest. Alas, no adults were there! According to David, they were likely in quest of food — generally sloth or monkey — to feed themselves and their lone chick who was perched next to the nest in full glory. This chick was four months old and will spend two years in the nest before fledging. He/she was the size of an osprey, fluffy white with a magnificent feathery crest and was quite cooperative for those with cameras.

When we returned "home" after more great birding, David asked who might like to make another try the next morning, in hopes of seeing the adults. Seven of our group of twelve decided to do it — with similar results — big chick, no adults. We did, however, encounter a deadly poisonous Fer de Lance on the trail up, which posed a moment or two of quick activity as David, after shouting "Don, don't move!" (I didn't), used the extended leg of his scope to move this small, but nasty, creature out of harm's way.

All of us look forward to yet another trip to this lovely country and a new adventure with David — hopefully to the high Andes.

Ed Note:

Thanks to all who submitted articles for this newsletter!

Question to Members: What was the defining moment when YOU realized you loved birding? Was there a special bird you will always remember? Tell me about it.

DECEMBER 10 – Cut-off date for next newsletter submissions!

026444X1725

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

☐ Have NOT been paid

☒ Have been paid

Your dues for 2001-2002



Cape Cod Bird Club
The Cape Cod Museum of Natural History
PO Box 1710, Brewster, MA 02631



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**

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Newsletter

Editor ~ Sylvia Jurkowski (mumjay@earthlink.net)
Circulation ~ Ron Ayotte

Nominating Committee Chair

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