



The Kingfisher

VOLUME 31 – ISSUE 4

The Cape Cod Bird Club Newsletter

MARCH – APRIL, 2003

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

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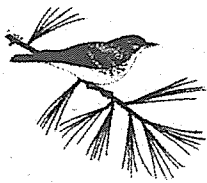
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Send to: ccbc_kingfisher@hotmail.com

Website: <http://www.massbird.org/CCBC>

President's Message



I've always loved winter birding in New England and on the Cape...especially when we have at least a little snow to go along with the cold! It can be a real challenge to locate our Winter residents and an occasional straggler or wanderer, while keeping warm at the same time! But the record-breaking single digit temperatures for several weeks of the past two months was another matter! I'm now ready for Spring!

I don't know about you, but I have two favorite Spring birding spots here on the Cape ... the Beech Forest and the Old Sandwich Game Farm. Both are hard to beat for all the songbirds soon coming our way. The Game Farm is only 15 minutes from where we live, so it's hard NOT to go there on a regular basis!

As we travel through the rest of the 2002-2003 CCBC year, this is a good time to remind all members that two Board Members (Dick Stacey and Nancy Reider) will be completing their 3 year terms and getting some much deserved time off!

At the May meeting, we will be electing two new Board Members and we need YOU! If you are interested in serving, please contact Phil Kyle, the CCBC Nominating Committee Chairman at 508-495-0196.

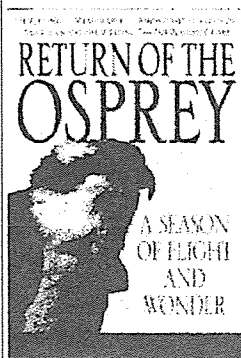
The Board meets briefly before each monthly meeting and each member contributes only a little time each month handling a few extra tasks. You will meet and work with TERRIFIC folks on the Board, and help plan the future direction of the CCBC. You'll have fun while working with a SPECIAL team ... just ask Dick, Nancy or any Board Member.

Enough of this business talk ... LET'S GO BIRDING! See you somewhere on the Cape real soon!

Dick Jurkowski

CCBC Programs for March and April

March 10 – The World of Ospreys



David Gessner, who summered on the Cape as a child, settled here in 1997 to immerse himself in the lives of four pairs of ospreys over the course of a full nesting season. David will share with us what he witnessed of the ospreys' day-to-day living, from nest-building, courtship, birth, first flights, the

(Cont'd on page 2)

April 14 – Blackstone National Corridor

Mark Lynch, teacher, trip leader, ecological monitor for Broad Meadow Brook in Worcester MA, docent and teacher at the Worcester Art Museum is also book review editor for *Bird Observer* and the host of *Inquiry*, an interview show on the Arts and Sciences on WICN. Mark co-edited and contributed several sections to the soon-to-be-published book on *Finding Birds in Western Massachusetts*.

Sheila Carroll has been a Human Resources executive for more than 20 years

(Cont'd on page 2)

March 10th - Ospreys (Cont'd from page 1)

murder of one fledgling by another, and the osprey's swift and forceful dive into the sea.

David Gessner is the author of The Return of the Osprey, a Book-of-the-Month selection in 2001 and a book highly acclaimed by The Boston Globe and other reviewers. David also authored A Wild, Rank Place and Under the Devil's Thumb.

David and his wife divide their time between Colorado and Massachusetts, where he teaches creative nonfiction at the Harvard Extension School.

April 14 - Blackstone (Cont'd from page 1)

and has held a number of board positions with non-profit organizations. Currently serving on the Advisory Board to MassAudubon's Broad Meadow Brook Sanctuary, Sheila has been an avid birder and nature photographer for more than a quarter of a century.

Together, Mark and Sheila have been working on extensive avifaunal surveys of the Blackstone National Corridor coordinating Corridor-wide monitoring projects and are working on a book about Birds in the National Corridor.

The unique National Park known as the Blackstone National Corridor runs along the watershed of the Blackstone River from Worcester, MA to Providence, RI. This was the site of the beginning of the Industrial Revolution and a magnet to hundreds of immigrants seeking employment. The Blackstone Watershed also featured a unique canal linking Worcester to the ocean. Tragically, the Blackstone River soon became one of the most polluted rivers in the nation. Come and learn more!

Field Trips in March & April**Genie Page, Coordinator****MARCH**

March 1 - Sat. - 8:30AM Orleans and Eastham including Nauset Beach. Meet at Friendly's near the Orleans rotary. Leader: Mark Tuttle 508-362-3015

March 8 - Sat. - 9AM - Fort Hill Eastham. Meet at the lower parking lot. Leader: Dick Koeppen 508-430-1822

March 9 - Sun. - 1PM - Falmouth Meet at the Locust St. parking area at the Bicycle Path, Falmouth. We'll go to our favorite sites. Leader: Alison Robb 508-540-2408.

March 13 - Thurs. - 8:30 AM - E. Sandwich Game Farm. Look for early Spring arrivals. Meet at Amari's Restaurant parking lot on 6A near Sandy Neck Rd. Leader: Dick Jurkowski 508-428-8494.

March 14 - Fri. - 8:30AM - Cumberland Farms fields in Middleboro, Assawompsett Pond and others in Lakeville for winter specialties. Eagles and other raptors could be good! Meet at Ocean State Job Lot, Buzzards Bay (next to rotary) Leader: Frank Caruso 508-477-9807

March 18 - Tues. - 5:30 PM South Wellfleet - A full moon evening to see if we can find Woodcock in display. We should see both sunset and moon rise over water. Bring a flashlight. Meet at the NPS Marconi Wireless Site beyond the headquarters building (off Rte. 6 in So. Wellfleet). Leader: Genie Page 508-349-6810.

March 20 - Thurs. - All day Bristol County - Visit the backroads of Tiverton and Little Compton, RI & Acoaxet, MA. This is a surprisingly undeveloped area, with lots of thickets, ponds and ocean. Two areas not previously visited will be included. An all day trip with lunch in Little Compton. Leader: Stauffer Miller 508-362-3384 stauffer@seepub.com). Meet 7:30 AM at my house (72 Keveney Ln, Yarmouthport) or 8AM at Tedeschi's at Bourne Rotary.

March 21 - Fri. - 4PM - Cummaquid. Celebrate Spring's arrival! Let's look for woodcocks displaying! Meet at 4PM in the parking lot at Mass Audubon's 'Long Pasture' sanctuary, on Bonehill Road in Cummaquid. Bonehill Road is off Rt. 6A (look for Marshside Restaurant sign on Rt. 6A). We'll walk some trails before

we look for woodcocks! (Maybe go for pizza after?) Leaders: Mike Dettrey & Diane Silverstein - 508-398-9484.

March 22 - Sat. - 8:30AM - Cape Beaches and Ponds: Dennis area. Meet at Corporation Beach in Dennis. Leader: Mark Tuttle 508-362-3015

APRIL

April 5 - Sat. - 9AM - Fort Hill, Eastham - Meet at the lower parking lot. Leader: Dick Koeppen 508-430-1822

April 5 - Sat. - 8AM-Noon Marstons Mills. Come by between 8 AM-Noon Great "Yard Birds" in a superb natural and enhanced habitat! 68 Liberty Lane, Marstons Mills. Leaders: Dick & Sylvia Jurkowski 508-428-8494

April 13 - Sun. - 1 PM - Meet at Crane Wildlife Management Area, Rte. 151, Hatchville. Turn north between Nickelodeon theater and baseball field, opposite Ranch Rd. Go as far as you can to last parking lot. Leader: Alison Robb - 508-540-2408.

April 18 - Fri. - 8AM - Dennis Let's bird at one of the Cape's treasures .. **Crowe's Pasture in Dennis!** Meet at 8AM and discover this special spot that many Dennis residents are trying to save from future development. Take Rt. 6A to where it intersects with Airline and School. Turn onto School (left if you're heading east; right if you're heading west on Rt. 6A). Then make the first right onto South St. and follow it to the cemetery on your right...we'll meet there! Leaders: Mike Dettrey & Diane Silverstein - 508-398-9484.

April 22 - Tuesday - 7:30PM South Wellfleet - Listen for the chorus of Whip-poor-wills. Perhaps a few other evening species will chime in. Marconi site. (see March 18.) Leader: Genie Page 508-349-6810 or vgpage@juno.com.

April 24 - Thurs. - 8AM Monument Beach and area - Meet at Dunkin Donuts inside Gray Gable Food Market on Shore Rd. in Bourne to visit a variety of sites, including the North Falmouth sewage beds. Trip will last til about noon. Leader: Stauffer Miller. 508-362-3384 or stauffer@seepub.com.

Birding Field Trips Need YOU!

Diane Silverstein

It takes many eyes to find the birds! And, if **you** aren't on our field walks, then our chances of finding that one special bird go down significantly!

Each month, the Cape Cod Bird Club offers field trips to the plentiful hotspots here on-Cape. And, at **NO COST** to you! How can you afford to pass up great birding with great people for free?

Our membership totals almost 400 people, yet each week only a small number of you join our trip leaders for a few hours of birding. Those diehards who show up regularly, regardless of weather or hour, do so because of the thrill of birding with friends in great locations — Race Point, Beech Forest, W. Harwich Conservation Lands, Falmouth ponds, First Encounter Beach,

and many more.

Standing on a windy beach, hearing your companions call out "Razorbills flying left!" or "Red-throated Loon straight ahead!" or walking through Nickerson State Park and hearing "Yellow-bellied Sapsucker in that oak tree to the right!" makes your heart quicken as you try to get on that bird.

(Cont'd on page 4)

What's Around

Ron Ayotte

This article on birds seen on Cape Cod is based on personal observations, supplemented by information from the Rare Bird Alerts (RBAs) of MassAudubon. It roughly follows the outline of *Birding Cape Cod*, published by the Club and MassAudubon. Very common birds are omitted.

December 9, 2002, Eastham: Common Loon, Pied-billed Grebe, Northern Gannet, Great Cormorant, Great Blue Heron, Mute Swan, Brant, Green-winged Teal, American Wigeon, Ring-necked Duck, Common Eider, Common Goldeneye, Bufflehead, Hooded, Common and Red-breasted mergansers, Ruddy Duck, Northern Harrier, Sanderling, Dunlin, Ring-billed Gull, Horned Lark, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Song Sparrow. **MassAudubon:** Lesser Scaup, Thick-billed Kingbird, Black-bellied and Piping plovers, Ruddy Turnstone, Red Knot, Razorbill, Bonaparte's Gull, Greater Shearwater, Pomarine Jaeger, Black-legged Kittiwake, Pine Warbler, Greater Yellowlegs, Tree Swallow, Winter Wren, Gray Catbird, Hermit Thrush, Eastern Bluebird, Yellow-breasted Chat, Eastern Towhee, Rusty Blackbird, Baltimore Oriole.

December 13, 2002, Brewster: Common Loon, Pied-billed Grebe, Brant, Mute Swan, Scaup species, Common Eider, White-winged Scoter, Bufflehead, Common Goldeneye, Hooded, Red-breasted and Common mergansers, Red-shouldered Hawk, Sanderling, Dunlin, Bonaparte's and Ring-billed gulls, Downy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker.

December 23, 2002: Chatham, Harwich: Great Blue Heron, Brant, Common Eider, Long-tailed Duck, Surf and White-winged scoters, Common Goldeneye, Bufflehead, Common and Red-breasted mergansers, Sanderling, Dunlin, Ring-billed Gull, Northern Flicker, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Eastern Bluebird, American Robin, Song and White-throated sparrows. **MassAudubon:** Skua species, Pomarine Jaeger, Dovekie, Thick-billed Murre, Razorbill.

January 3, 2003, Eastham: Common Loon, Northern Gannet, Double-crested Cormorant, Great Blue Heron, Snow Goose, Brant, Mute Swan, American Wigeon, Ring-necked Duck, Common Eider, White-winged and Black scoters, Long-tailed Duck, Bufflehead, Common Goldeneye, Hooded and Red-breasted mergansers, Ruddy Duck, Northern Harrier, Ring-billed, Iceland and Glaucous gulls, Black-legged Kittiwake, Razorbill, Downy Woodpecker, Carolina Wren, American Robin, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Song Sparrow. **MassAudubon:** Northern Gannet, Pomarine Jaeger, Atlantic Puffin, Little and Bonaparte's gulls.

January 10 and 11, 2003, Wellfleet, Truro, Provincetown: Red-throated and Common loons, Red-necked Grebe, Northern Gannet, Great Cormorant, Great Blue Heron, Brant, Ring-necked Duck, Greater Scaup, Common Eider, Surf and White-winged scoters, Long-tailed Duck, Bufflehead, Common Goldeneye, Hooded, Red-breasted and Common mergansers, Red-tailed Hawk, Sanderling, Ring-billed, Iceland and Glaucous gulls, Black-legged Kittiwake, Razorbill, Black Guillemot, Downy

Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Cedar Waxwing, Yellow-rumped and Palm warblers, Song Sparrow. **MassAudubon:** Pacific Loon, Merlin, American Kestrel, Black-bellied Plover, Ruddy Turnstone, Red Knot, Western Sandpiper, Harlequin Duck, Black Scoter, Pomarine Jaeger, Atlantic Puffin, Little Gull, King Eider, Turkey Vulture, Barrow's Goldeneye.

January 20, 2003, Dennis, Harwich: Great Blue Heron, Mute Swan, Green-winged Teal, Common Eider, White-winged Scoter, Common Goldeneye, Bufflehead, Hooded, Red-breasted and Common mergansers, Northern Harrier, Red-tailed Hawk, Sanderling, Dunlin, Downy Woodpecker, American Robin, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Song Sparrow. **MassAudubon:** Pacific Loon, Great Cormorant, Iceland Gull, Forster's Tern, Purple Sandpiper, Turkey Vulture, Monk Parakeet, Northern Bobwhite, Eastern Bluebird, Baltimore Oriole, Palm and Nashville warblers, Red-breasted Nuthatch.

January 27, 2003, Dennis: Common Loon, Horned Grebe, Brant, Gadwall, American Wigeon, Common Eider, Long-tailed Duck, Common Goldeneye, Bufflehead, Red-breasted Merganser, Sanderling, Dunlin, Bonaparte's Gull, Downy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, American Robin, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Song Sparrow. **MassAudubon:** Eurasian Wigeon, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Turkey Vulture, Bald Eagle, Barrow's Goldeneye, Black-legged Kittiwake, Razorbill, Eastern Bluebird, Hermit Thrush, Carolina Wren.

Birding in Brazil

Ron Ayotte

When Don Scott called in May to invite me to go on a birding trip to Brazil in November, I was a little hesitant. November, when the ducks come in, is one of my favorite birding seasons on the Cape. Besides, I thought, I haven't seen all the birds here; why should I go birding in South America? But more adventurous heads (Don's and my wife's) prevailed and I said OK. As the time to go approached, however, I became more and more apprehensive. I needed a visa, there were shots to get, and then the weather – a mini-Nor'easter promised real trouble in

*It's not so much the exotic birds,
but the whole experience!*

meeting the group in Miami. By the day before the trip I was in a snit. "Not to worry," said my spouse, "it'll all work out." And work out it did! With a little finagling and a sympathetic American Airlines clerk, I got an earlier flight to Miami and met up with the group without a hitch. Soon we were off to

Sao Paulo, Cuiaba, the Pantanal (a wet scrub savannah) and the Chapada dos Guimaraes (a higher, drier scrub savannah with many sandstone cliffs and formations).

What the expectations of the others were, I haven't a clue, but the trip so far exceeded what I expected that even now I have a hard time believing it. It's not so much the exotic birds but the whole experience! The wonderful group of birders, ready for anything at 4 o'clock in the morning or 10 o'clock at night, unfailingly cheerful and accommodating; the incredibly competent guide, Braulio Carlos from the Pantanal Bird Club, who not only could find the birds but call them to a place where each of us could see them (and who wouldn't rest until each did!); the warm and hospitable people we met and lived with in a wilderness 100 km from the nearest paved road, or in a resort area only two hours' drive from Cuiaba; the excellent food (and cold beer) everywhere. But, when you come right down to it, it WAS the birds, after all!

I'd love to give a list of the birds we saw, but it really wouldn't do; there's no space, and lists are boring (unless they're one's own). Suffice it to say that some of them were incredibly beautiful (like the Hyacinth Macaw, or Green and Rufous Kingfisher, or Sunbittern), while others were rather plain (the Mato Grosso Antbird or Plumbeous Seed-eater). Some were secretive (the Small-billed Tinamou or Plain-crested Elaenia), while others were everywhere (the Rufous Hornero, or Rufescent Tiger-heron). Some were common (the Yellow-billed Cardinal or Southern Lapwing) while others were rare (the Zig-zag Heron or Blue Finch). But all of them (with

very few exceptions like the American Kestrel or the House Sparrow) were birds many (most?) of us had never seen before. By my calculation, at the end of the trip we had seen (and I do mean SEEN) 272 species of birds. Of those, 256 species were life birds for me, and that was done in eight days of birding. (By contrast, it has taken me about 6 years to see 270 species of birds on Cape Cod.) What an experience!

I'm really thankful to Don (and Carol) Scott for organizing an outstanding birding trip. And to my wife for convincing me to go. It was an unforgettable birding experience and a thoroughly enjoyable trip. Problem is, now the birds of Brazil have taken hold of my imagination and I want to see more. I hope I'll have a chance to renew acquaintances with them in the future.

Field Trips Need You (Cont'd from page 3)

But, without **YOUR** eyes, we might miss that one out of the ordinary bird. You don't want that guilt hanging over your head, do you?

Won't you check the listing of upcoming trips in "The Kingfisher" or on our website and think about coming out? There's no need to pre-register and no fees to pay. It's just a group of happy birders out for a few hours of socializing and watching.

Whether you're a new birder or a seasoned one, please come on out! Call the trip leader with your questions or just show up! You might be missing out on that one "lifer" by staying at home when the next trip rolls around!!

Welcome New CCBC Members

- Samuel I. A. Anderson, Barnstable
- Dennis & Marie Corcoran – Needham and E. Dennis
- Alice Curran – Centerville
- Judith B. Gordon & George W. Gove – E. Falmouth
- Peter Gray – W. Yarmouth
- John Kricher & Martha Vaughan – Pocasset
- Jeanne P. LeGrand – Hyannis
- Lou & Mary Ann Lozano – Southington, CT & Brewster
- Herb Luther – Waquoit
- Zachary Rolsten – Brewster
- Don & Shirley Sutphen – Brewster
- Ann Treimann – Marstons Mills

Freeze Frame

Barbie Learnard Chase

I can remember clearly the day my fascination with raptors began. My brother and I were standing by the Coast Guard Station in Eastham above Nauset Marsh when Sandy asked me if I knew what bird we were looking down upon, as it floated low over the marsh. I didn't at that point. "A male marsh hawk," said Sandy, as the bird was known in those days; nowadays, of course, it is a Northern Harrier.

My fascination has not dimmed through the years.

The male harrier is now more a rarity than the female for some reason. I have seen "her" many times but most dramatically on South Monomoy Island, at times quite close, while "she" hunts near the Light-keeper's Quarters. I have seen the male previously, but nothing in comparison to the sightings two friends and I had recently at Long Pasture Wildlife Sanctuary in Cummaquid.

On a chilly but sunny, almost windless December day, we three

walked the Sherman Parker Trail and, as we exited the thickets at the edge of the Old Corn Field, we spotted a flash of white. There before us, alternately hovering and swooping low, was a solitary male harrier. The behavior and the quite obvious white rump made identification very easy. The meadow was bathed in "cape light" with varying shades of tans against the blue, blue sky. This gleaming raptor paid us no mind at all as he repeated his hunt back and forth, up and down, catching the sun on his underbelly which glowed whiter and whiter. We stood frozen to the spot! No cameras, of course — just three sets of bugged eyes glued to our binoculars gazing in amazed delight at the soundless beauty before us.

We soon had to head on because of the cold, but "our friend" was still around and our last sighting was of Himself, atop a cedar (!), preening and looking for all the world totally unlike a Northern Harrier. How would we ever have known it was a harrier had

we not seen him before he perched? Perhaps only by the vivid yellow of his legs.

Normally, I do not like to witness that part of nature when predator catches prey, but I must admit I really wanted that slim, graceful, gorgeous creature to find his prey that day!

Q&A: Winter Robins

Q. There were more than 40 robins in our snow-covered backyard this January. I know that robins are known to overwinter in the North, but to have seen so many seems to indicate migrating flocks. Could that be?

A. American robins are surprisingly hardy as long as they have access to their winter food sources: berries and fruits. They switch over in winter from their mostly insect-based summer diet. As such, robins are facultative migrants. This means that they will migrate only as far south as they need to or are forced to by bad weather or food shortages. During ice storms, when berries and fruit are covered in a thick coating of ice, many robins flock together and move south. In the same way, if a robin spends the winter in your region, it's probably because there's enough food to see it through. The idea that robins are the true first sign of spring is somewhat mythical. In much of northern North America, a few robins overwinter, but they stick to the woods and thickets where they can find fruit and berries. Most backyard bird watchers do notice the robins' return when these birds appear on lawns with the onset of warm weather, seeking their warm-weather food: earthworms, grubs, caterpillars, and other insects.

Source: Bird Watchers Digest

A Rhode Island Outing

Stauffer Miller

A group of twelve of us from the bird club had an outing to Southeastern Rhode Island and nearby Massachusetts on January 16th. I was rather amazed that eleven birders would be willing to go out with me in wind chills of around zero degrees to gaze at frozen ponds and stare at woods and fields decked in the grim dress of winter. I guess those eleven were about as crazy as me.

You would think the birds would be pretty scarce on a day like that. But, with everyone in our group working pretty hard, 60 species were found.

The best find was a Woodcock taking a slow stroll across a road just as we drove by. I believe everybody had the



look of a lifetime at a Woodcock. Also, there was a large and close flock of Horned Larks, some very close

Dunlins, a Kestrel, Turkey Vultures, and a raft of Canvasbacks in good light. Mixed into this was lunch at a little restaurant in Little Compton.

It's an unwritten law of birding that you shouldn't return to a site of previous success. Nevertheless, I'm curious to see this area in a more thawed state so I may offer this same trip in March. Maybe I'll see YOU then.

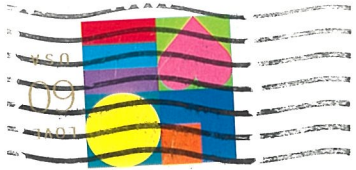
(Note: This trip is scheduled for March 20th)

Thank You to all who submitted articles or artwork for this newsletter. Your contributions are vital and appreciated!



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Cape Cod Bird Club
The Cape Cod Museum of Natural History
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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
869 Rte 6A, Brewster, MA 02631**

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Newsletter

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