

# The Kingfisher

VOLUME 31 – ISSUE 5

The Cape Cod Bird Club Newsletter

SUMMER 2003

*Cape Cod Bird Club meetings are 7:30 PM the second Monday of each month – Sept. thru May – at the Museum of Natural History, 869 Rte 6A, Brewster, MA.*

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*Deadline for submissions for next issue is: August 8th.*

Send to: [ccbc\\_kingfisher@hotmail.com](mailto:ccbc_kingfisher@hotmail.com)

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

## ***President's Message***

I can't believe how fast this CCBC year has gone! Seems like only yesterday you handed your new Leadership Team the reins. I hope you all agree we have had an exciting year, with lots of fun and SPECIAL birding along the way! As we prepare for Summer "Recess," I'd like to update everyone on a few key areas.

\* CCBC Membership is on the rise ... which is a tribute to you all! Good News travels fast and the word is out that OUR club offers birding expertise, special friendships AND memories that can't be beat!

\* We are hard at work on the update to Birding Cape Cod. Lots of enthusiastic volunteers are participating, working hard and having an exciting time in the process. The new target for completion and availability is May 2004.

\* At the May 2003 CCBC meeting we will be electing THREE, not two, new Board Members. Ellie Miller is stepping down as a Board Member and Program Chairman "par excellence" for the past several years. Thank you, Ellie, for all your dedicated hard work and the wonderful programs. We encourage all members to attend the meeting on May 12th and help select YOUR new Leadership Team.

Thank you all for your encouragement and support during the past year. You have helped make the CCBC what it is ... a TERRIFIC organization and wonderful experience for us all!

Ready or not Summer 2003 ... HERE WE COME!! Enjoy the many birding adventures available on Cape Cod. See you in the Fall!

*Dick Jurkowski*

## **CCBC Program for May 12th**

### **Beautiful Birds of Africa**

Adam Riley, co-founder of South Africa's Rockjumper Tours, will take us on a photographic journey of Africa's most beautiful birds.

Adam has traveled extensively in Africa, Europe, Asia, Australasia and the Americas, leading trips to several areas of South Africa, Namibia, Botswana, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Ethiopia, Madagascar, Uganda and Ghana. Adam also guided for six months at Ecuador's Sacha Lodge.

He has contributed to the preparation of the KwaZulu-Natal area of S. Africa bird locality guide for Robert's Birds on CD-ROM and is currently in the process of preparing a guide to birding in Madagascar.

Adam is team leader of "No Tern Unstoned," the current record holders (with 274 species) of BirdLife South Africa's annual Birding Big Day event, and has been a long-serving committee member for his local branch of Birdlife South Africa.

Adam is incredibly accomplished as a birder and tour leader, as well as a photographer.

See you May 12th at 7:30 p.m.

Who will be the recipient of the Ludlow Griscom Award? Come to the May meeting and find out!

## Crowes Pasture - A Cape Treasure

Diane Silverstein

In the town of Dennis there is a place sometimes referred to as “the last great place in Dennis” and quite possibly it is one of the last great places in all of Cape Cod. It is called Crowes Pasture and its 250 acres house such diverse habitats as beach and dunes, pine/oak forests, vernal pools, freshwater ponds and creek, saltmarsh, and coastal grassland. Such a unique area is truly a treasure and one that all Cape Codders should seek to protect.

In 2001, it was learned that only 98 acres of the 250 were protected by Dennis as conservation land when developers sought to build there. Several private homes are presently scattered around Crowes Pasture.

In March of 2002, a subcommittee of the Assembly of Delegates (Barn-

stable County) voted to recommend a District of Critical Planning Concern (DCPC) designation for Crowes Pasture to the full committee. In 2002, the Cape Cod Commission designated 250 acres, including Crowes Pasture and neighboring Quivet Creek, as a DCPC. This designation blocked development until town officials could draft zoning regulations to protect the area.

**Monday, May 6th, a Dennis town meeting will be held. If you are available, please come to this meeting and voice your support.**

This meeting is of utmost importance. Thirty-three acres presently owned by three developers is being offered for sale at the hefty price of \$4.9 million. At this meeting it will be decided if these 33 acres should be pur-

chased with town land bank money. Dennis land bank officials have agreed to put up the money, but town residents need to agree to use that money to purchase these acres. The town then has until July 15, 2003 to come up with the entire \$4.9 million, so many fundraisers are planned.

Bird surveys in 2002 conducted by Michael Dettrey, Ginie Page, and I revealed approximately 55 species including Prairie Warbler, Osprey, Yellow Warbler, Baltimore Oriole, Semi-palmated Plover, Barn Swallow, Pine Warbler, Black and White Warbler, Downy Woodpecker, Turkey Vulture, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Green Heron, Sanderling, Eastern Phoebe, Great-crested Flycatcher and Purple Finch. Truly this is land worth saving!

## Hummin' Along

Martha Tarafa

Late April and early May is a special time in our yard in Falmouth. Not only is this the finest hour for azaleas, tulips, lily-of-the-valley, and bleeding hearts, but this is also the time when the hummingbirds arrive from their wintering grounds.

We have had hummers in our yard since we moved into our house nine years ago. Soon after we settled in, a neighbor stopped by to make our acquaintance. She hoped we would enjoy the neighborhood, she said, especially the hummingbirds.

Hummingbirds??

Her passing comment started what is now a nine-year love affair with these miniscule wonders. I have maintained hummingbird feeders in our yard in Falmouth and traveled to Costa Rica, Belize, Guatemala, and Texas for a glimpse of what Brazilians call “beija flor” or “flower kissers.”

Ruby-throated hummingbirds have arrived in our yard as early as April 23 (2001) and as late as May 5 (1995).

The males are first to arrive; the females follow about a week later. They depart in early to mid-September. In 2002 we saw our last hummer on September 17th.

I hang two or three hummingbird feeders at different locations throughout my yard. I have a total of six feeders so I can clean and dry some of them while others are in use. I fill the feeders with a mixture of 1 part sugar to 4 parts water. I boil the water for 1 to 2 minutes and stir in the sugar while the water is still hot. The mixture is cooled completely before filling the feeders and the unused syrup set aside in the refrigerator for up to two weeks. This recipe approximates the average sucrose content of flowers favored by North American hummingbirds (about 21 percent). The experts tell me that a more concentrated sugar mixture can dehydrate the birds and that adding red dye to the mixture can be equally harmful. I do not use, nor recommend, packaged nectar mixtures. They usually contain red dye and are expensive in comparison to ordinary sugar.

I am fastidious about maintaining immaculate feeders to please the cleanliness-conscious hummers. I scrub the feeders with soap and water every four days and let them air dry. Two or three times a summer I soak the feeders for a few hours in a diluted bleach solution to get rid of any mold that may be developing. HummZinger feeders are easy to clean and have a built-in “ant moat” to trap pesky ants hoping for a sip of sugar water. I do not like yellow on the feeders, such as the so-called bee guards, because they actually attract wasps and yellow jackets. There are many beautiful hummingbird feeders on the market, but hummers do not seem to have an artistic eye. In general, the gaudier, the brighter, the redder — the better. Gaudy and easy to clean are the secrets to success.

For more information including hummingbird migration maps, visit Lanny Chambers' web site [www.hummingbirds.net](http://www.hummingbirds.net).

**Field Trips — May thru early September**

Ginie Page, Coordinator

All are welcome to join our field trips. There is no fee and no registration, unless noted. Please check [www.massbird.org/CCBC](http://www.massbird.org/CCBC) (often) for additional trips and a possible pelagic/whale watch in the late summer.

**BEECH FOREST WALKS**

As in the past, the Club will have a Walk in the Beech Forest in Provincetown each Saturday and Sunday (and one Monday) in May.

The Beech Forest is the best spot on the Cape to see and hear spring migrant warblers and other songbirds. (To get to Beech Forest, take Rte 6 to the Race Point exit. The parking lot is on the left.) All walks begin at 8:00AM in the parking lot.

The Walks and Leaders are:

**Sat – May 3** Blair Nikula 432-6348 or [odenews@attbi.com](mailto:odenews@attbi.com)

**Sun – May 4** Stauffer Miller 362-3384 or [stauffer@seepub.com](mailto:stauffer@seepub.com)

**Sat – May 10** Sue Thompson 255-1451

**Sun – May 11** Bob Vander Pyl 457-0864

**Sat – May 17** Sue Weliky 548-8747

**Sun – May 18** Leader: TBA

**Mon – May 19** Ellie Winslow 888-1760

**Sat – May 24** Ruth Connaughton 432-1580 & Nancy Reider 398-8296

**Sun – May 25** Frank Caruso 477-9807

Interested Hawk Watchers are welcome to join in the Hawk Watch at Pilgrim Heights in N. Truro – any day during April and May. The Hawk Watch is run by the Mass Audubon Wellfleet Bay Sanctuary, the Eastern Mass Hawk Watch, along with the National Park Service.

**OTHER WALKS**

**May 7 – Wed – 5:30 PM West Harwich.** Park on Bells Neck Rd. Enjoy an evening of great birds in this very special conservation area. Leader: Blair Nikula 432-6348 or [odenews@attbi.com](mailto:odenews@attbi.com)

**May 9 – Fri – Mt Auburn Cemetery, Cambridge.** See spring warblers in a beautiful setting, one of the best migrant traps in New England! **Meet at 6AM** (location TBA when you RSVP) for carpooling. **Call to RSVP before May 8th.** Leaders: Mike Dettrey & Diane Silverstein 398-9484.

**May 27 – Tue – 7AM Truro – Pilgrim Heights** (off Rte.6) NPS area. We will look for warblers and breeding birds as well as visit the hawk watch site. Leader: Ginie Page 349-6810 ([vgpage@juno.com](mailto:vgpage@juno.com))

**May 29 – Thurs – 8AM Ryder Conservation Property, Cotuit Rd., So. Sandwich** (park at brown sign). This special property with varied habitats of forest, lake, and an old cranberry bog should be good for nesting birds as well as spring migrants. Leader: Ellie Winslow 508-888-1760.

**June 6 – Fri – 7:30AM West Harwich Conservation Lands.** 200 acres of marshlands, pine woods, reservoirs and the Herring River. Join us for a 3 to 4 mile walk. Meet at 7:30 AM at our home – 62 Mild Bay Circle, Dennisport, and we will walk across the street to the conservation lands. Call or e-mail for directions! Coffee at our house after! Leaders: Michael Dettrey & Diane Silverstein 508-398-9484 or [Birder526@aol.com](mailto:Birder526@aol.com)

**SOUTH BEACH TRIPS**

**July 11 – Fri – 9AM South Beach, Chatham.** It's time to look for south-bound migrating shorebirds! We'll take a boat from Outermost Harbor (OMH) to S. Beach. Cost – approx. \$10 round trip.) Be prepared to walk 4 or more miles. Departure from OMH will be 9AM (high tide is 10:10AM). Bring all of the essentials: WATER, snack, sun and bug protection. Return time is contingent on bird activity! Leaders: Diane and Mike 508-398-9484 or [Birder526@aol.com](mailto:Birder526@aol.com)

**Aug 29 - Fri – Noon – South Beach, Chatham -** (see July 11 trip above). More shorebirds! Departure time for this trip will be 12:00 noon from OMH (high tide is 1:16pm). Cost – approx.\$10. Don't forget the essentials! Leaders: Diane and Mike 508-398-9484 or [Birder526@aol.com](mailto:Birder526@aol.com)

**June 8 – Sun – 9AM South Cape Beach State Park, Mashpee.** Take Great Neck Rd. South to Great Oak Rd. to the state park. Meet in Mashpee town parking lot. We'll walk behind the dunes and on the beach. Leader: Alison Robb 540-2408.

**July 24 – 8AM Foster Road Beach East Sandwich.** If you have never seen the tidal pond at the end of Foster Rd. at the right tide, which this trip will be, then you have missed a delightful spot. Looking for a nice mixture of shorebirds, gulls and terns, and maybe a few herons! Meet at the Dunkin Donuts at the convenience store at the intersection of Ploughed Neck and Rte. 6A in East Sandwich. Leader: Stauffer Miller 508-362-3384 or [stauffer@attbi.com](mailto:stauffer@attbi.com)

**August 23 – Sat – 8AM Foster Road Beach, E. Sandwich.** A tidal pond later in the season. (See July 24th above.)

**Sept 6 – Sat – 8:30 – Coast Guard Beach, Eastham.** Shorebirds on Nauset Marsh, views over the ocean, and osprey in residence. Park at the Coast Guard station building. Leader: Mark Tuttle 362-3015

**BIRD CLUB Merchandise perfect for birding this summer**

|                        |        |
|------------------------|--------|
| CCBC Decals            | \$1.00 |
| CCBC Checklist         | .50    |
| CCBC Patches           | 3.00   |
| Camera/Binoc. Straps   | 12.50  |
| CCBC Knit Hats Reduced | 10.00  |
| Organizer Packs        | 17.00  |
| <u>New</u> CCBC Caps   | 15.00  |

## The World Series of Birding

Peter Trimble

New Jersey Audubon has hosted a major conservation fundraiser for 19 years that involves birding at its craziest. The World Series of Birding is a 24-hour birding marathon, which may cover the entire state of New Jersey, and raises money for conservation organizations. One such organization is the Lloyd Center in Dartmouth.

A team of intrepid birders, on behalf of the Lloyd Center, will participate in the 20<sup>th</sup> World Series of Birding on May 10, 2003. We are asking for your support.

To give you an idea of what an event like this entails, the following is a brief account of the time we spent birding New Jersey last year.

First, let me introduce the team. Our driver is Geoff Garth. Geoff is the public relations person at the Lloyd Center and in an earlier life must have driven race cars. He is a tremendous stick man and doesn't know the meaning of 'keep right.' Mike Sylvia and Rich McGeough have both been affiliated with the Lloyd Center as volunteers and enjoy birding a great deal. Mike seems to arrange work around birding trips to far-flung places. Jeremiah Trimble has the ears and eyes of a falcon. His ability to find birds is phenomenal. And, oh yeah, he's my son. Vern Laux is among the finest field birders I have had the privilege to spend time with. He hails from the Vineyard and has been a great friend for years. Spending time in the field with these guys is the best. My name is Peter Trimble and you know me as a long time member of the Cape Cod Bird Club.

Scouting for birds and skill are the keys to a great big day. The winning teams have groups of scouts that search the state for weeks. We left Massachusetts on a Wednesday night with plans to scout the whole state of New Jersey in two days. We tend to be an optimistic group. Thursday and Friday we drove hundreds of miles trying to locate good habitat and birds. Friday evening came much too quickly and we finished up our scouting in the Hackensack Meadows area of New Jersey. About 6:45 pm, I settled in for a 3-4 hour rest. Wake up call was set for 11:15 pm. Plenty of time for a shower and to head

back to Hackensack Meadows and our midnight start.

We were met at the Meadows by the sounds of music. It seems a local school group was having a formal dance in the public building associated with the park. Limos and fancy-dressed teens were plentiful, but not countable. We searched the half-lit impoundments (light pollution from New York City casts a wide net) for the species we had located the 'night' before. The Lesser Scaup we were counting on did not appear in the darkness, but a Ruddy Duck did. Our most interesting sighting here was of Black Skimmers. We watched these most unusual birds as they fed with their longer lower mandible cutting through the water in the near darkness.

Once begun, a big day becomes a blur. Time and distance become more than physics concepts. Where does the time go? How far is it to Cape May? Was that a Barred Owl calling or a great human imitation? How many people counted Jeremiah's Eastern Screech-Owl call? We spent time at many nice locations. Night birds were heard in the Great Swamp and the dawn chorus at the picturesque High Point State Park produced lots of species. Ten minutes at Bull Island was too long. The time spent in Florence looking across the river at the huge landfill was eye opening and unnerving, but worthwhile for the gulls we picked up.

We experienced highs and lows throughout the day. We missed some breeding birds that we thought were guaranteed and found some very cool unexpected birds. A Loggerhead Shrike flying in off the Atlantic was extraordinary. The Swainson's Warbler at Jake's Landing was a life bird for me. A Merlin, our team namesake, provided a great show. We were standing on a causeway along the ocean shore. Vern noticed a Merlin streaking down the marsh between him and a group of over 50 birders. He had to get his team members to see the bird without notifying the other competitors. Vern wanted to scream **Merlin!!!** in his normal quiet way, but stopped himself. We all saw

the bird as it skirted the backs of the many birders looking out to sea.

Time seemed to be slipping away from us. We wanted to be in four places at once. We needed to spend time in the afternoon at Brigantine looking for shorebirds, wading birds, and waterfowl. This large expanse of marsh and upland is amazing. We decided to listen for species that might call at dusk here as well. This was a good decision. As we waited for darkness to descend, a Northern Bobwhite called from the fields. We spread out along one of the dirt roads that separates the fields from the woods and listened. Soon we heard the calls of both the Whip-poor-will and the Chuck-will's Widow. We headed for our vehicle in the dark. It seemed 200 species was in reach. This is a major goal of many big day teams, and a barrier for most.

Mike, who was in charge of our list of species, counted our birds. It seemed we had 199 species. We decided Jake's Landing, where Black Rail is heard some years, would be our next stop. This, we thought, would place us at the magical mark of 200 species in one day. By this time, our minds and bodies were slowing down. Mike decided to recount the bird list. He rubbed his eyes and counted again. He broke the news triumphantly. It seems we had reached 200 species before we left Brigantine. A 'mild' celebration followed his announcement and we continued on the road for number 201. Kic-kic-kerr, we heard the call of the Black Rail across the darkened marsh. This would be the last species added to our list. What a great way to end a fantastic day. After catching our breath we headed for Cape May and the official check-in. Over cold drinks and food birders shared their successes. Totals were tallied. The "Merlins" from Massachusetts and the Lloyd Center landed near the top. When the dust settled we were in fourth place out of more than 60 teams. We were pleased with this result on our first attempt. At the awards brunch the next day, our conversations turned to next year.

Good Birding, Jeremiah, Peter, and the rest of the "Merlins"!

*To find out how to provide support – See page 6)*

## 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.

*Note: Bad weather early in February limited my observations.*

### Early to Mid-February:

**MassAudubon:** Northern Gannet, Barrow's Goldeneye, Tufted Duck, Bald Eagle, Turkey Vulture, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Purple Sandpiper, Iceland Gull, Black-legged Kittiwake, Razorbill, Great Horned Owl, Short-eared Owl, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Brown Creeper, Eastern Bluebird, Carolina Wren, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Northern Flicker, Wild Turkey, Common Grackle, Brown Thrasher, Cedar Waxwing, Savannah "Ipswich" Sparrow, Fox Sparrow.

**February 24, Wellfleet:** Red-throated and Common loons, Northern Gannet, Great Cormorant, Great Blue Heron, Brant, Black and Whitewinged scoters, Common Goldeneye, Bufflehead, Red-breasted Merganser, Red-tailed Hawk, Ring-billed Gull, Mourning Dove, Downy Woodpecker, Song Sparrow.

**MassAudubon:** Pacific Loon, Red-necked Grebe, Merlin, Iceland Gull, Common and Thick-billed murre, Razorbill.

**March 10, Marstons Mills, Dennis, Harwich:** Common Loon, Horned Grebe, Great Cormorant, Brant, Green-winged Teal, Gadwall, Common Eider, Common Goldeneye, Bufflehead, Hooded, Common and Red-breasted mergansers, Northern Harrier, Red-tailed Hawk, Sanderling, Dunlin, Ring-

billed Gull, Northern Flicker, Song Sparrow, Red-winged Blackbird, Common Grackle. **MassAudubon:** Red-throated and Pacific loons, Northern Gannet, Iceland Gull, Common and Thick-billed murre, Razorbill, Turkey Vulture, Bald Eagle, Merlin, American Kestrel, Canvasback, Surf and White-winged scoters, Killdeer, Double-crested Cormorant, Hermit Thrush, Northern Bobwhite, Horned Lark, Snow Bunting, Eastern Meadowlark, Black-headed Grosbeak.

### March 17, Dennis, Yarmouth,

**Barnstable:** Common Loon, Horned and Red-necked grebes, Green-winged Teal, Ring-necked Duck, Common Eider, Long-tailed Duck, White-winged Scoter, Common Goldeneye, Bufflehead, Hooded, Common and Red-breasted mergansers, Red-tailed Hawk, Killdeer, Sanderling, Dunlin, Ring-billed Gull, Downy Woodpecker, Carolina Wren. **MassAudubon:** American Oystercatcher, Black-headed Gull, Iceland Gull, Lesser Black-backed Gull (all Nantucket); Black-crowned Night-Heron, Wood Duck, American Wigeon, Northern Pintail, Greater Scaup, Osprey, Red-shouldered Hawk, Merlin, Clapper Rail, Black-bellied Plover, American Woodcock, Common Murre, Razorbill, Eastern Phoebe, Cedar Waxwing.

### March 28, Orleans, Eastham:

Red-throated and Common loons, Horned Grebe, Northern Gannet, Turkey Vulture, Brant, Common Eider, Harlequin Duck, Surf and Black scoters, Bufflehead, Common Goldeneye, Red-breasted Merganser, Osprey, Northern Harrier, Red-tailed Hawk, Sanderling, Ring-billed Gull, Northern Flicker, Carolina Wren.

**MassAudubon:** Red-necked Grebe, Northern Gannet, Great Cormorant, Great and Snowy egrets, American Wigeon, King and Common eiders, Long-tailed Duck, Red-shouldered and Rough-legged hawks, Gyrfalcon, Peregrine Falcon, Piping Plover, Killdeer, American Woodcock, Common Snipe, Laughing and Iceland gulls, Short-eared and Saw-whet owls, Eastern Phoebe, Fish Crow, Great-crested Flycatcher, Tree Swallow, Northern Rough-winged Swallow, Purple Martin, Brown Creeper, Brown Thrasher, Pine Warbler, Fox Sparrow.

### Summertime Suet

Jane and Hager Johnson of Harwich sent in a recipe for a 'summertime suet' and they say it's been very successful with all their birds. "Moms and Dads bring their young to the feeder for a quick protein fix." They add that most suet melts and turns rancid in hot weather but this will not melt.

Over low heat, melt one cup of Lard with one cup of crunchy Peanut Butter. Stir in two cups of "Quick Cook" Oats, two cups of Cornmeal (coarse if you can find it), one cup of white Flour and one-third cup of Sugar.

Pour the mixture into a cookie sheet with sides and then let it harden in a cool place. Later, cut into 'feeder size' squares with a pizza cutter, wrap each in wax paper and then put all into a zip-lock bag in your freezer to use as needed.

The Johnsons tell us that unfortunately this recipe is very popular with grackles and starlings. To help keep the larger birds out, they have used a regular wire suet feeder which is enclosed in a ball of chicken wire. This lets the small birds through and keeps out the larger birds.

Happy bird watching!

## Hoopoes At Large

John and Jane Sloane

The African night has an aural magic all its own, which starts just as the sun is setting. This pizzicato builds slowly as wakefulness comes to the nocturnal animals, while many others which have spent the day browsing, follow the elephant to the water holes to bask in the more comfortable temperatures of early evening.

It was just at such a time, with the three-quarter moon already visible in the East-Southeast, that our safari guide motioned to Olotu, the driver, to pull over. The bottomlands by the Mbalageti River in Tanzania's Serengeti National Park is a fabulous place to see either birds or the big mammals for which East Africa is so justly famous, and dusk is an excellent time to see them. Kevin Clement, our guide, had spotted a Hoopoe, *Upupa epops*, on the road ahead, and this was a species which we were anxious to see.

Even before our Nissan safari van had lurched to a stop, we were standing, our faces and binoculars out of the pop-top roof, and there, to our great satisfaction, were not one but two Hoopoes – a lifetime first for both of us. At 11 inches in length, it may not be a big bird, but the Hoopoe is a big eyeful with its long curved bill, big showy black-tipped crest, chestnut body and black-and-white wings. The duller female was happily probing the sandy ground, but the male in a nearby tree was raising his crest, though whether in agitation or ardor it was hard to tell. Fully extended, the male Hoopoe's crest would do Syd Vicious proud and we were in a fair state of suppressed exhilaration when another safari van

pulled up behind us. Now in Africa's National Parks nothing attracts another faster than a safari van full of gawkers all attentively focused on the same thing, so we were not surprised by new arrivals.

In an urgent whisper Kevin tried to let the newcomers know what all the excitement was about. "Two Hoopoes!" he breathed, trying not to further alarm the male, lest they both fly. The four occupants of the second van seemed pleased, if a bit perplexed, and hauled out binoculars trying to intuit where to look from the direction of our stare.

Soon enough their binoculars came down and patent puzzlement replaced mild perplexity. Clearly, they couldn't pick out the birds. Kevin tried harder. "Two Hoopoes," he repeated, whispering more forcefully, "one on the ground to the right-hand side of the tracks, about 10 feet from the front of the van." The binoculars went up. "The other is on the lowest branch up the right-hand side of the tree," Kevin pointed surreptitiously, "second to the right." The binoculars came down, and the watchers exchanged glances of confusion. Kevin tried harder still. It is his job, after all, to make sure that everybody sees the wildlife. Opting for the more obvious bird, he whispered ever more loudly, "this little tree to the right, on the lowest branch on the right, about 3 feet from the trunk. A male Hoopoe!" The binoculars didn't even come up this time, remaining obstinately inactive.

Kevin turned his back to the other van and looked at us. "Am I speaking English?" he asked in a quiet tone of genuine bewilderment, tinged with

his characteristic rye sense of humor. We assured him that he was but could offer nothing to unravel the mystery. The birds were obvious, exactly where he described them, and utterly resplendent. Kevin tried again. Leaning toward the other vehicle, and making solid eye contact with its occupants, he repeated, slowly and firmly, in what was now a voice of urgent verisimilitude, "there is a Hoopoe in the tree on the right." There was no longer anything subtle in his pointing.

But his entreaties fell on deaf ears. In unison the occupants of the other van sat down huffily and, as they did, we could all hear one of them observe, in an articulation of unrequited frustration, "Well! What did he mean about a hippo in a tree?"

**Reading and References:** [http://www.serengetipark.org/Serengeti Shall Not Die](http://www.serengetipark.org/Serengeti%20Shall%20Not%20Die) by Bernhard Grzimek, Paperback (May 1974), Ballantine Books

*World Series of Birding (Cont'd from page 4)*

May 10, 2003 is the date of the 20<sup>th</sup> World Series of Birding. The 'Merlins' plan on being there and would appreciate your support.

Donations can be made in two ways. You may pledge a specific total amount or a certain amount per species found.

To make a pledge, please send me your name, mailing address, and pledge amount.

You may send this information to: Peter Trimble, 22 Somerset Road, Mashpee, MA 02649 or [merlin@capecod.net](mailto:merlin@capecod.net)

We thank you for your support!!

## Eastern Screech Owl Studies

Stauffer Miller

*The following excerpts were taken from an article entitled "Eastern Screech Owl Studies." This was authored by William H. Beatty of Ohio County, West Virginia and appeared in the July 2002 issue of The Redstart, a West Virginia birding publication. I extracted a few tidbits from the article which I thought Cape Cod Bird Club members might find of interest.*

Mr. Beatty began to study Eastern Screech Owls in 1973. He has run Screech Owl surveys in his area of West Virginia since then. The highest number of Screech Owls he has recorded in one night was 170 in 1990. The most important factor in limiting Screech Owl populations is snow cover. The greater the snow cover, and the longer it lasts through the winter, the fewer the number of Screech Owls. Snow cover both reduces Screech Owl prey populations, and makes the prey more unattainable to the owl.

Screech Owls have small territories. This is because of their feeding efficiency and the large variety of prey species and size they will take. They eat any bird or small mammal plus many amphibians and insects. Mourning Doves are a common prey item. If the owls have a nest cavity or nest box near a stream, they will feed on fish, salamanders and crayfish. Their territory size is about one quarter square mile.

Screech Owls like the darkest nights. Lowest counts during surveys occurred during a full moon. Advancing weather fronts, with clouds and wind also produce lower counts on owl surveys. Dark nights with calm conditions and clear skies lead to the highest counts.

Mr. Beatty places nest boxes 15–20 feet high and he says it doesn't matter which way the box faces. He recommends a spring cleaning of the box.

## Q & A Corner:

**Q. Is it necessary to bake eggshells for birds, and why do they like or need them?**

**A.** The eggshells are baked in an oven for 1/2 hour at 350 degrees to kill off any bacteria left from the egg residue. The heat kills any nasty stuff that might make the birds sick. Birds eat the eggshells for the **calcium** they provide. During the egg-laying season female birds need to replace calcium lost in egg production. Eggshells are a great source of this important mineral.

**Q. I have a woodpecker that is pecking holes in my house siding. Is there anything I can do to get him to stop?**

**A.** A woodpecker drilling on your wooden house is only doing what comes naturally to it – drilling into wood in search of shelter or food. Most house-

wrecking woodpeckers do their damage in the fall, which is when they begin making their winter roost holes. Try mounting a nest box with an approximately sized hole over the drilled area. Fill the house with wood chips, and you may divert the bird's attention and gain a tenant. Woodpeckers also use wood and sometimes metal parts of houses as drumming sites. They drill their bills against the surface in a rapid staccato beat. This drumming noise is a territorial announcement, and a method for attracting a mate. Drumming happens most regularly in the spring.

There are several things you can try. One of them may work.

1. Place some sheet metal or heavy aluminum foil over the area the bird is using.
2. Hang some aluminum pie plates around the affected area. Make sure

## Editor Reflections

As we come to our 'summer recess' as far as The Kingfisher is concerned, I want to extend a sincere thank you to all who have sent in articles, poetry, and other tidbits for each edition.

I especially want to thank Ron Ayotte for his faithfulness in letting us know 'What's Around' our area each edition. Our members appreciate keeping up with our Cape birds wherever they may be as they read it. (We have some members who also like to 'migrate' in the fall.)

As editor, I find myself chuckling over articles (eg. The Hoopoes story) and getting caught up in the excitement of 'the hunt' (as we all did while reading Peter Trimble's account). Our birding experts who take time to write for The Kingfisher are appreciated by us all. They add to our birding knowledge.

**I want to ask you** to consider, this summer, writing and sharing with all of us a special birding experience you've had here on the Cape or elsewhere. Do you have a suggestion for a future Speaker or suggestions for the newsletter itself? Let us know. Do you have a favorite 'birding spot'? Tell us where and why. If you have artwork or poetry you'd like to see in the newsletter, I'd love to hear from you. (Deadline for the next issue is August 8th.)

The Kingfisher is the newsletter of the Cape Cod Bird Club. Let's keep it interesting, informative, and fun to read.

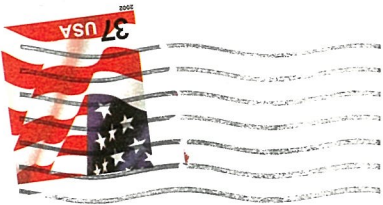
Have a wonderful summer of warm days and exciting birding! See you in September.

*Sylvia Jurkowski*

- they move in the wind (to scare the bird).
3. Place a rubber snake near the drilling area (to scare the bird away).
  4. Repeatedly scare the bird when it lands on your house.
  5. If nothing else works, call your local wildlife official who may come to your house to "remove" the offending bird.

Resource: Bird Watchers Digest website

Frank Caruso and Barbara Steller  
17 Freedom Rd  
Forestdale MA 02644



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

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### *Newsletter*

Editor ~ Sylvia Jurkowski (ccbc\_kingfisher@hotmail.com)  
Circulation ~ Ron Ayotte

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