



Cape Cod Bird Club

JANUARY - FEBRUARY ~~1989~~ / 1990

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Peter Trimble

1990, a new decade of birding begins. What changes in the aviform will occur? Which species of birds will increase? Decrease? Or have a range change? What rare vagrant will appear on Monomoy? At Sandy Neck? At Wellfleet Bay, in Woods Hole, or on Cuttyhunk? These questions, as well as the sheer wonder and beauty of birds, create that desire which has us watching.

Much of the information that answers the above question will be gathered through the efforts of birders participating in various counts or censuses. As I write this message, we have yet to conduct our Annual Waterfowl Census (Dec 2,3) or Christmas Bird Counts (Buzzards Bay-Dec.12-16, Outer Cape-Dec12-17, Mid-Cape Cod-Dec12-28). If you are unfamiliar with these activities and/or would like to take part in future counts, call me (477-3847). By the way, we have a great time.

Winter has arrived. The meteorologist predicted 2-4 inches for Thanksgiving Day, but I measured, and it should be closer to 14 inches in Mashpee. Slight difference. This morning (Nov. 25), I went looking for "winter" birds. As I drove along, I noticed a flock flying over and managed to pull off onto the shoulder. The flock turned out to be 66 Evening Grosbeaks. Nearby, I found 2 Hairy Woodpeckers, 8 Tree Sparrows, 6 Pine Grosbeaks, one Black Scoter, 4 Common Mergansers, and 2 Ravens. You might have guessed that I went birding in Northern New Hampshire. Robin and I even ventured over the Canadian Border for lunch and found 30 Evening Grosbeaks, 7 Pine Grosbeaks, 160 "French" (American) Crows, and 5 "French" (English) Sparrows. Birding in Dixville Notch (The Balsams Wilderness Area); Colebrook and Whiteface, N. H.; Canaan, Vt., and Quebec, Canada is quite a contrast to Cape Cod. What these areas lack in diversity of bird life is compensated for by beautiful scenery and the chance to see more northern species.

January and February on Cape Cod may be harsh, but there are always good birding opportunities. Bird feeders tend to attract quite a few species, and waterfowl tend to become concentrated as ponds and lakes start to freeze. For land birds, I often search around wet areas (pond edges and marshes) that are surrounded by protective vegetation. These areas, such as Salt and Seders Ponds in Falmouth, the cranberry bogs behind Cape Cod Hospital, and the "Big Thickets" in various towns, often harbor a diverse group of birds. Remember there is usually a beautiful day in February, often towards the end of the month, just perfect for walking to Race Point, where Iceland and Glaucous Gulls, Razorbills and Murres, are just a few of the possibilities. Good Birding!

FIELD NOTES

Art King

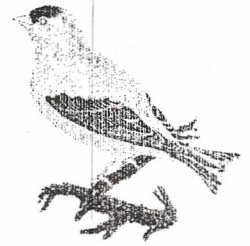
Cold Weather does not mean less birding. It just means different birding. Get out and enjoy.

There have been many reports of Red-breasted Nuthatches and of Carolina Wrens from various places. Pine Siskins were seen in Orleans, and two Dickcissels at a feeder in Eastham. A Eurasian Wigeon was at Lovers Lake in Chatham. It might still be there.

A Rough-legged Hawk was spotted in Harwich, Red-throated Loons off the wharf in Wellfleet, Meadowlarks and a Western Kingbird at Fort Hill in Eastham. (The Western Kingbird was seen Nov. 15-16. Last year, a Western Kingbird was at the same location Nov. 14-19. Same bird??)

Snow buntings and Horned Larks have arrived at First Encounter Beach in Eastham, Ruddy Ducks and American Wigeons (Baldpates) in ponds in Eastham, a Goshawk in Falmouth; and a Painted Bunting in Truro. At Wellfleet Bay Wildlife Sanctuary, a Bohemian Waxwing, a fish crow, and a pheasant were seen. Brants line the bay shore of the Lower Cape. The sea ducks are back, and Gannets can often be seen off shore. Search carefully along the skyline.

You have probably noted that most of these reports are from the Lower Cape. Let us know of sightings from the Mid-Cape and Upper Cape.



Special Thanks

Dedicated volunteers are at the heart of every Bird Club activity. We would like the following people for their efforts this fall.

For baking at our meetings: Fahy Bygate, Sue Talin, Mary Field, Lois Tillson, Mary Ropes, Anne White, Jonnie Fisk, Jean Iverson, Janet Judd, Ginny Redfern and Peggy Rath. Above all, thanks are due to Mary Field for her coordination of the bakers.

A special thanks for "our long suffering walk leaders," the people who come out despite the weather and despite the turn-out: Mary Ropes, Charlotte Smith, Art King, Bessie Tirrell, John and Ginny Redfern, and the Wellfleet Audubon Staff.

No list would even be partially complete without thanking Fahy Bygate for tirelessly scheduling and promoting the Bird Club walks.

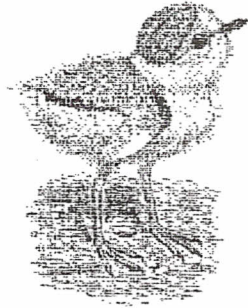
Our gratitude to everyone who participated in this fall's events.

BREEDING CENSUS

Piping Plover Breeding Census

(from information compiled by Brad Blodget, State Ornithologist)

1989 represented the second consecutive year of improvement in the number of reported breeding pairs of Piping Plovers in Massachusetts. A total of 137 breeding pairs were reported in the state, compared with 134 pairs in



1988 and 126 pairs in 1987. Productivity also increased at each nesting site. An average of 1.59 chicks were fledged per nesting pair in 1989, up from 1.29 in 1988 and 1.10 in 1987. This favorable increase is tied to positive results obtained from the use of predator enclosure devices such as fencing around nesting areas. Of the 58

nesting pairs which were protected with enclosures, 50 (or 86%) successfully hatched eggs. On Cape Cod, 56 pairs of Piping Plovers nested, representing about 41% of the state total of nesting pairs. 79 chicks were fledged on Cape Cod.



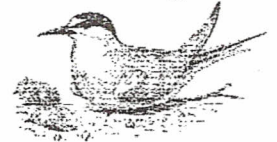
Tern Breeding Census

(from information compiled by Brad Blodget, State Ornithologist)

Results of the 1989 tern breeding inventory were mixed, though generally there was no dramatic change compared with 1988's results.

The biggest news for 1989 was the continuing improve-

ment in Common Tern numbers. For the fifth consecutive year, Common Terns increased, breaking over the 10,000 pair mark to attain their highest level since careful monitoring began in 1970. A total of 10,199 pairs bred at 25 locations, which represents a 7% improvement over 9,533 pairs in 1988. Since 1985, improvement has averaged 8% annually. On Monomoy North Island, the number of breeding Common Terns rose 86% to 670 pairs. Unfortunately, estimated numbers of the endangered



Roseate Tern slipped for a third consecutive year to 1,576 pairs, down 5%. It is still difficult to state whether this marks a significant trend, since these estimates fall within

the low end of the range calculated from 1970-1988. However, it is mysterious and worrisome that Roseates do not seem to be mirroring the trend seen in the Common Tern population. 60

pairs nested on Nauset-New Island on Cape Cod, the same number as in 1988.



Nesting Arctic Terns also declined in number, slipping below the previous low of 16 pairs recorded in 1984-85 to total only 15 pairs at 3 sites. On Cape Cod, eight pairs were established at Nauset-New Island, Orleans and a single pair near Race Point Light, Provincetown.

Least Terns, coming down off the record 1988 results, declined nearly 17% to 2,233 pairs at 43 locations. In 1989, nesting occurred late at some sites such as Monomoy-South. At other Cape locations, 370 pairs nested at Nauset-Orleans, 182 pairs at Dunbar Point in Barnstable, and 128 pairs at West Dennis Beach.

EDITORIAL

A Modest Buy-out

Jim Talin

At this year's Pugwash Conference, Brazil's Jose Goldemberg observed that you could buy two-thirds of the Brazilian Rain forest, "the lungs of the planet," for \$3 billion, a bargain at 40 cents an acre. The same week that I read this fact, the pilots of United Airlines offered \$6.2 billion for the airline, and Congress was debating whether to spend \$6 billion a year for ten years on the B-2 Stealth bomber. It goes without saying that our values as a society are reflected by the way we spend money. We accept some expenses as necessities, as beyond question, and view other expenses as indulgences. Investors would

no more put money into a purchase of rain-forest than they would buy penguin commodity futures. Rather than preach about this fact, I have a modest suggestion.

Ecologist should act by putting together a leveraged buy-out of United Airlines. A treaty such as the one that protects Antarctica could be drafted. Then United could be presented to the Brazilian government in return for the establishment of an international preserve in the Amazon. The exchange of United for the rain forest might blunt nationalistic pressures in Brazil by establishing a sort of trust fund that would pay poor Brazilians dividends. The grip of poverty on the land and on the people might be loosened. Meanwhile, the First World would protect a means of recycling industrial carbon dioxide.

Who knows? A deal like this might go down in history beside the Louisiana purchase and Seward's folly. Maybe some publicity starved stock baron might get interested after all, and get credit for saving an irreplaceable, and invaluable, resource.



Cape Cod Bird Club Newsletter

The Cape Cod Museum Of Natural History
RR 1, Route 6A, Brewster, MA 02631

Editor - Jim Talin

Design - Tom Noonan

PROGRAMS/ MEETINGS

January 8 at 7:45 at the Cape Cod Museum of Natural History—*Animal Tracking* by Paul Rezendes and Paulette Ray. Paul Rezendes and Paulette Ray are from Western Massachusetts where they have studied Common Loons, and have conducted classes in the Quabbin area on mammals such as beavers and otters. They will describe how to recognize various animal tracks, emphasizing Turkey, Grouse, and other bird tracks.

February 12 at 7:45 at the Cape Cod Museum of Natural History—*Members Night*. This is the members turn to star, to look back on the year, and to share experiences, travels, and bird stories. Bring your slides.

Roger Everett Slide Show

Roger Everett will present a slide show of his recent bird photographs on **Friday January 19th** at 7:00 at the Artists' and Craftmen's Gallery on Route 28 in West Harwich. Roger will be showing slides taken up and down the East coast on his travels from Mohegan to Maryland. The show is free and open to the public.

Bird Box Day

On a Saturday morning in **February**, the date to be announced at the February meeting, the Club will hold its annual bird box building day. Carl Bergfors will coordinate this effort. If you are interested in participating, sign-up with Carl at 362-2321. Bring a hammer, ideas, and plans.

Coastsweep '89—A Success

Information provided by Coast Zone Management Newsletter

Statewide during Coastweek '89 this fall, close to 30 tons of debris were cleared from approximately 200 miles of Massachusetts shoreline by almost 3,000 individual volunteers. Of particular interest, at Monomoy Island, an ideal location to study water-borne debris due to the low number of visitors to this national wildlife refuge, eleven volunteers picked up 1455 items, of which 68% was plastic or polystyrene foam. Prominent among the debris items were plastic bags, rope, plastic caps and lids, plastic and glass bottles, and metal cans. Many 6-pack ring holders made of degradable plastic were found to be brittle and broke apart when handled. New legislation requiring a 60-day degradation period will further lessen the threat to marine life of these plastic yokes. Medical debris, as last year, was a miniscule portion of the total number of items retrieved.

Twenty-three states, five territories and two foreign nations took part in Coastweek '89.

UPCOMING WALKS

Fahy Bygate

January

Wednesday Jan 3—Falmouth. 9 AM. Meet behind Town Hall, Falmouth Center. Mary Ropes. 548-6086.

Monday Jan 8—Eastham. 9 AM. Meet in the lower parking lot, Fort Hill. Art King. 255-8919. Please Note: This walk occurs on the second, not the first, Monday of January for this month only. (Jan 1 is the first Monday.)

Saturday Jan 13—Sandwich. 9 AM. Meet at Angelo's parking lot of 6A in Sandwich. Bessie Tirrell. 432-9248.

Wednesday Jan 17—Wellfleet Bay Audubon Society. 9 AM. Meet at parking lot. Naturalist will lead.

Thursday Jan 18—Yarmouth. 9 AM. Meet at intersection of 6A and Union Street. Charlotte Smith. 362-6891.

Thursday, Jan 25—Harwich. 9 AM. meet at Saquatucket Harbor in Harwich. John & Ginny Redfern. 432-6426.

Special Walk A Bird Club Favorite

Birding the South Shore with Mass Audubon Naturalist David Ludlow.

Saturday Jan 27—9 AM. Meet at Daniel Webster Farm in Marshfield. Call Fahy Bygate for details at 617-934-6978.

February

Monday Feb 5—Eastham. 9 AM. Meet in the lower parking lot, Fort Hill. Art King. 255-8919.

Wednesday Feb 7—Falmouth. 9 AM. Meet behind Town Hall, Falmouth Center. Mary Ropes. 548-6086.

Saturday Feb 17—Sandwich. 9 AM. Meet at Angelo's parking lot of 6A in Sandwich. Bessie Tirrell. 432-9248.

Wednesday Feb 21—Wellfleet Bay Audubon Society. 9 AM. Meet at parking lot. Naturalist will lead.

Thursday Feb 22—Yarmouth. 9 AM. Meet at intersection of 6A and Union Street. Charlotte Smith. 362-6891.

Special Walk

Special North Shore Weekend

Birding Cape Ann and Newburyport, two of the North Shore's finest birding spots. This will be an overnight trip with two leaders and is scheduled for the weekend of

February 10-11. You must inform Fahy Bygate of your desire to attend by **January 20** at 617-934-6978.

Frank Caruso
 17 Freedom Rd
 Forestdale MA 02644



The Cape Cod Museum Of Natural History
 RR 1, Route 6A, Brewster, MA 02631



WANTED

WANTED: Sea Turtles, Seals, & Dead Birds

The Wellfleet Bay Wildlife Sanctuary (at 349-2615) asks people to be on the lookout for stranded sea turtles. As water temperature drops, the activity of any turtles that may have lingered too long in Cape Cod Bay will slow down, and they may be blown ashore. If you can help keep an eye on a beach, or if you find a stranded turtle, call the Sanctuary.

Harbor seals have begun to arrive in the waters off Cape Cod which will be their winter home. Seals may be seen swimming just off beaches, in harbors around the Cape, or hauled up sunning themselves in some isolated spots. If you see any, call the Sanctuary.

Finally, an unusual request, the Sanctuary needs dead birds and dead small mammals. During the winter months, they often get injured hawks and owls that need to be fed songbirds and rodents. So if you find a dead bird or mouse, drop it off at the Sanctuary.

What is Endangered?

The Endangered Species Act of 1966 developed a system of listing birds that were in immediate danger of extinction and of protecting them by making them wards of the US Fish and Wildlife Service. An "endangered species" is literally "in danger of extinction throughout all or in a significant portion of its range." As of February 1988, the Bald Eagle, Peregrine Falcon, Upland Sandpiper, Eskimo Curlew, Roseate Tern, Short-eared Owl, Sedge Wren, Loggerhead Shrike and Henslow's Sparrow were listed as endangered. Small things can tip the balance from survival toward extinction for endangered birds. For instance, Hurricane Hugo blew down most of the trees used by nesting Bald Eagles

(and Red-Cockaded Woodpeckers) in South Carolina. One step below endangered is a "threatened species," which is potentially on the verge



of extinction. The Piping Plover is a 'threatened species.' A species of 'special concern' is suffering a decline or becoming restricted in range so that could become threatened. The Least Tern is of "special concern." In the US, anyone found molesting protected birds in any way is violating the law and should be reported to the US Fish and Wildlife Service.



Cape Cod Bird Club

Questionnaire

Because of the very low attendance at our regularly scheduled bird walks, we would like the membership to fill out the following questionnaire, and to turn it in at the next meeting or through the mail to...

Fahy Bygate, 49 Island Creek Road, Duxbury, MA 02332.

1. I attend Bird Club Walks (check one)

- never
- occasionally
- frequently

2. I seldom attend Bird Club Walks because (check any)

- I prefer to enjoy birds in my backyard
- I prefer to bird alone
- the times/places are inconvenient for me
- I lack transportation
- other

3. Bird Club walks would be better attended if (check any)

- there were more weekend walks
- there were different leaders
- there were fewer weekly walks and more special walks
- there were more off-Cape walks
- the time of day were different
- other

4. I would enjoy a two-part walk with an emphasis on a particular type of bird. For example, a lecture on warblers (or shorebirds, owls, etc) followed by a related field excursion:

- very much interested
 - somewhat interested
 - not at all interested
-