



Cape Cod Bird Club

VOLUME II

JANUARY-FEBRUARY 1991

ISSUE 3

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Peter Trimble

I hope you are enjoying your winter birding. If you haven't visited your local duck pond to see the waterfowl, make the effort. The ponds of Falmouth have had better than 15 species, including Redhead, Canvasback, and Hooded Merganser. As I write this message it has yet to snow. My feeders have not been too busy, but I suspect, as December progresses and the winter weather kicks in, the activity will increase. There have been nuthatches, chickadees, and the other common birds, as well as a single Pine Warbler. There have been some exciting birds during the early winter. Tops on my list is the Gyrfalcon that has been present around Morris Island. Dovekies in Wellfleet Harbor have been cooperative and Northern Gannets off South Island (North Beach) numerous and active as they fish.

The highlights of the waterfowl survey of Dec 1 and 2 will appear in the next newsletter, but I would like to make a few comments. In the last newsletter, I asked if anyone would like to join me "ducking" in the Upper Cape. There are 100 or so ponds covered in Sandwich, Bourne, Mashpee and Falmouth; and I thought I might find a few more observers. Warren Nestler, a new member who recently moved to Cotuit joined Jeremiah and me as we surveyed for ducks. At one early stop, we counted 1 Pied-billed Grebe, 2 Mute Swans, 8 Black Ducks, 26 Mallard, 140 Scaup, 1 Green-winged Teal, and 1 Common Moorhen. As we watched, a Marsh Wren and some Swamp Sparrows popped up within 25 yards. We weren't sure if the day would get any better, but what a start! One final thought on the Waterfowl Survey. With the magnitude of the event, I try and help Blair organize the coverage of the Upper Cape. I divide up ponds so each group has a similar and "reasonable" number to check. This year, I truly appreciate the effort of everyone who volunteered. To give you an idea of the dedication, George Martin covered better than 20 ponds (and some of the most difficult), and when I tried to give Barbara Perryclear a few less ponds, she said she'd find time to check them all. Thanks to all the birders who worked on this project.

When this newsletter arrives, the Christmas Bird Counts will be history, but as I write this note, they are a week or so away. I can't wait. Jeremiah and I are "psyched." As always, feel free to get in touch with me if you want to join these club activities or just want to go birding sometime.

What's In A Name?

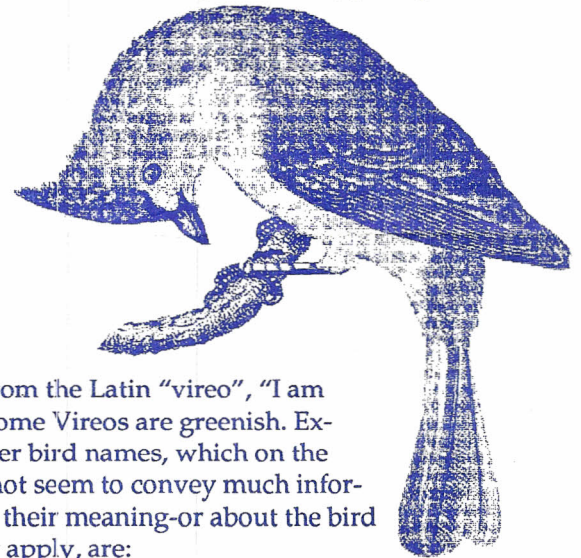
Art King

When you see a Yellow-rumped Warbler, you know why it was so named: a warbler with a yellow rump, or a Wood Thrush: a thrush that lives in the woods, or a Kingfisher: a bird that feeds by catching fish. Birds are named in various ways, e.g. habitat: Marsh Wren; color: bluebird; voice: Whip-poor-will, and so on, and you make a connection quickly, but what of such names as Gannet? Or Junco? Or Vireo? What do they mean?

Gannet is from the Anglo-Saxon word "ganot", "little goose." It was once thought to be a type of goose.

Junco is from the Latin "juncus", a rush. This is a strange one, for Juncos certainly do not seem to spend much time in rushes. Vireo is a bit

clearer. It is from the Latin "vireo", "I am green," and some Vireos are greenish. Examples of other bird names, which on the surface may not seem to convey much information about their meaning-or about the bird to which they apply, are:



Merganser-from the Latin "mergere", to dive; and "anser", goose, or a diving goose

Cormorant-Latin "corvus", crow; "marinus", pertaining to the sea: "a sea crow." That seems a fitting name for this bird.

Gallinule-Latin "gallina", "a little hen". This seems to fit with the present name "Moorhen" for our former "Common Gallinule".

Jaeger-German "jager", hunter.

Goshawk-Anglo-Saxon "gos", goose. Presumably for the bird the hawk preyed upon.

Titmouse-"tittr", Icelandic for anything small; and "mase", Anglo-Saxon for a small bird. As one can see, the true plural of Titmouse should be Titmouses, but because of the confusion with the word "mouse", it has become Titmice.

What's In A Name? Continued on Page 3

THE ALTERNATE FEEDER LIST

Last year we presented the Academic All-Star Feeder List. This year we present the Bird Watcher's General Store Bird Feeder List. This list has survived the tests of time, the market place, and Cape Cod's hungry squirrels.

1. Droll Yankee Big Top Feeder.

It is easy to clean, durable, birds like it, but it is not squirrel proof. Cornell even agrees with this one.

2. Any Droll Yankee Tube Feeder.

Pick your size or shape, either the A-6, B-7, or A6-XL.

3. The Aviarium Window Feeder

No little trays to fall out.

4. The Absolute Squirrel-Proof Feeder

This feeder is made from metal, so it can't be chewed. It has a spring action that closes the seed tray when large birds or squirrels land on it.

5. A Screen Based Platform Feeder

It won't keep the squirrels away, but it attracts everything, and there are no restrictions about what foods you put in it: doughnuts, bagels, popcorn.

**We're
Back!**



6. The Audubon Hanging Feeder

This one ranked low on the Cornell list, one reason being that it takes a few minutes and a screw driver to assemble. However, it has withstood the ultimate test of the trained kamikaze squirrels at the editor's house. In despair, they finally chewed apart the rope it was hanging from, so buy some wire reinforced rope at the Birdwatcher's General Store before hanging it.

EDITORIAL

Jim Talin

Homeward Bound

The debate between those who believe humans should manipulate "nature" to serve human ends, and those who believe such manipulation goes against "nature" has been intensifying. I picked up Audubon magazine and on one page read that animal rights are nothing more than sentimentality; and on another page found a plea to value the rights of birds, animals, forests and ecosystems. On the radio, I heard a similar but more ambitious debate between realists and idealists in a current rendering of an age old dispute. This time, the quarrel is over the planet Mars.

In one camp, the realist scientific establishment wishes to take the worst of modern society and use it in a rude alchemy to transform lifeless Mars, not in seven days, but over a few hundred years. The idea is to take all that we have learned about the Greenhouse Effect and apply it to a planet that needs a little jump-start toward life as we know it. If we could raise Mars' temperature,

the thinking goes, why then life might sustain itself there. In the beginning, for Mars anyway, there was a scientist. In the other, the idealist camp, a group of explorers have set up a biosphere in the desert and have adopted the thinking of J. E. Lovelock that planet Earth is actually a living organism called Gaia. Gaia maintains a totality of chemical, atmospherical and biological systems whose purpose is to support life as we know it. Two years sequestered inside the biosphere are intended to prove this belief and show how we should colonize Mars.

I wonder what the realists would do if they bumped into life in outer space. Would they kill it, dissect it, name it after themselves, or even eat it? Given that we have driven a variety of intelligent life forms such as whales and elephants to the brink of extinction on Earth, why would life on Mars or Venus be any different? On the other hand, the idealists would seem to overlook human beings. Try explaining Gaia in Dudley or Park Square. If Gaia is smart enough to design this whole system, I asked a prominent Gaia-ist once, how do you explain human destruction of the biosphere? Are we aliens? A Gaia cancer? Is Gaia just a new age religion?

No matter what we think about these efforts to redesign life, the first essential step is to take responsibility for what we do here on Earth and not to divert ourselves with god-like fantasies.

PAGE 2



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

Circulation - Charlotte Smith

PROGRAMS/ MEETINGS

Monday evening **January 14** at 7:45 at the Cape Cod Museum of Natural History located on Route 6A in Brewster, *Kestrels* -success and failures of their habitat in Southeastern Mass. Joanne Mason & Mike Maurer from Wareham will have a slide presentation as well as examples of Kestrel nest boxes.

Monday evening **February 11** at 7:45 at the Cape Cod Museum of Natural History located on Route 6A in Brewster, William Davis, Eagle Project Leader for the Division of Fisheries and Wildlife, will present a program on two subjects. One segment will be devoted to the *Bald Eagle Restoration Project*. He will focus on the nine year effort to restore the bald eagle as a nesting bird in Massachusetts, current nesting activity, wintering eagles in Massachusetts and some problems that still exist for the birds. The second segment will be devoted to the *Osprey Recovery* during the DDT era to the present and will include current information on nesting range and productivity, and the cooperative effort that has been largely responsible for the birds' comeback. In addition to questions on birds of prey, Bill will be glad to answer any questions on other wildlife in Massachusetts.

Cajun Birding and California Dreaming

Blair Nikula is planning two bird club trips for 1991: The Gulf Coast from Louisiana to Alabama in April and northern California in late August. The Gulf Coast trip, tentatively scheduled for April 13-21, will coincide with the peak of spring migration in that area and will include visits to Dauphin Island, Sabine and Laccasine refuges, Holly Beach, and the vast (and birdy) rice fields of Cameron Parish. The pace of the trip should be fairly leisurely with ample opportunities to sample the area's renown cuisine. Cost is expected to be approx. \$1000, including airfare.

The northern California trip, tentatively scheduled for the last 10 days or so of August, will cover the coast from Monterey to Point Reyes and will include at least one pelagic trip. For more details on either of these trips, contact Blair Nikula at 945-2153 (evenings).

Field Trips and Backyard Birding

Sally McNair

January

New Year's Day. **START WITH ART!** Tuesday **Jan. 1st.** Meet in the lower parking lot, Fort Hill, Eastham. 9 am. Art King. 255-8919

Thursday **Jan. 10th** Backyard Birding at Bill and Harriet Dixon's house. 10 am. 176 Quanset Rd, S. Orleans. Call for directions 255-0294.

Saturday **Jan 19th.** Birding the South Shore with David Ludlow. 9 am. Meet at the Daniel Webster Wildlife Sanctuary in Marshfield. Coordinated by Fahy Bygate. (617) 934-6978.

December

Monday **Feb. 4th.** Eastham. 9 am. Meet in the lower parking lot, Fort Hill. Art King. 255-8919.

Wednesday **Feb. 27th.** Provincetown. 10 am. Meet in the Race Point Parking lot. A naturalist from the Wellfleet Bay Wildlife Sanctuary will lead. 349-2615.

Winter Birding Network. If you would like to go on unscheduled outings, call Sally McNair at 349-6043. Let weather conditions determine when and where!

Continued from Page 1

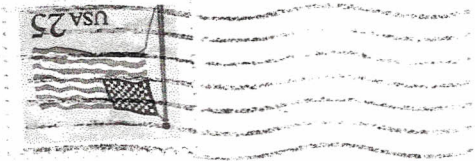
What's In A Name ?

Oriole-Latin "aureus", golden.

Phalarope-Greek "phalaris", coot; and "pous", foot. Coot-footed, referring to the lobes on the toes of the Phalarope, like those of a Coot.

As you know, there are many facets to birding, and learning the meanings of the birds' names is just another one. It opens up a whole new area you may never have thought about. The next time you hear a name like Guillemot, or Kittiwake, or Ptarmigan become curious and start looking for the meaning. You will learn more about the bird, and you will have fun.

Frank Caruso
17 Freedom Rd
Forestdale MA 02644



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

Cape Cod Bird Club

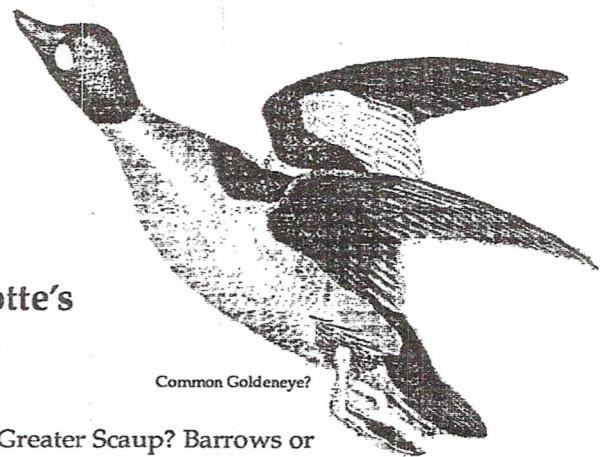


A fall day
with all the best warmth of summer
still lingering
imminence of chill nights
urging seizure of the moment,
an hour between ice and fire
when every second counts.

We stand in the White Cedar Swamp
in a perfect silence,
crimson spray of swamp maple leaves
in sunlight above us
against the sky,
and the only sound
is the nearly inaudible Tic
of one leaf at a time
dropping,
letting go,
falling through motionless air
to land on the plank walk
where we pause.



Bob Pease



Common Goldeneye?

Charlotte's Ducks

Lesser or Greater Scaup? Barrows or
Common Goldeneye? Can you tell the difference?
Charlotte Smith can clarify things with identification
clues that you won't find in Peterson. "The Lesser
Scaup," she says, "has a flat head and looks like his
mother let him sleep on the back of his head too long
when he was a baby. When you're looking for a
Barrows, forget about the white spot in front of the
eye. Look for a dripping of black from the shoulder to
the breast, like a thumb. And look for two lines of
white."