

I'm delighted you are to be our new president -
 Though I hate to lose you as program chairman - Charlotte



Cape Cod Bird Club

VOLUME 21

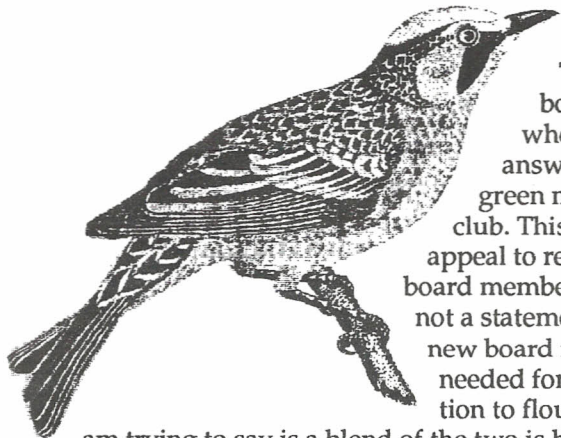
MAY ~ JUNE 1992

ISSUE 5

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Peter Trimble

My last message as president, and I am not sure how to begin. There are many thoughts I would like to share. One reflection has to do with the dynamics of the club. The last few years have seen the production of Birding Cape Cod and an innovative newsletter. It seems there are many new faces at meetings. The Cape Cod Bird Club is thriving. As I consider the changes of the previous years during which time I was a board member or an officer, the people I worked with were key. Our thoughts and beliefs were pivotal in how the club matured. A crucial element of these groups of people "nails me to the wall."* New board members have fresh ideas and divergent talents. They are important to the vivaciousness of the club. But, during these previous years, there has



always been guidance. Those past board members who had the answers for the green members of the club. This is not an appeal to recycle all late board members. Just as it is not a statement that only new board members are needed for an organization to flourish. What I

am trying to say is a blend of the two is healthy and will lead to prosperity for the Cape Cod Bird Club.

I thank all those who were responsible for making my three years as president so wonderful. The board members who served with me were invaluable. The continued assistance of Bessie Tirrell and Charlotte Smith as regards to our monthly meetings and bimonthly newsletters is fabulous. In closing and knowing that I have forgotten something, I would like to express my appreciation to Tom Noonan and Jim Talin for their work on the Cape Cod Bird Club newsletter. The time and effort they put in is apparent by the quality of the publication.

Good luck to Frank and Tom as they pick up the reins. I will see all of you at meetings and our birding. Remember May and June mean that "spring" (what's that?) on Cape Cod is coming to an end, and there may be warblers waiting in the woods.

* Footnote—"Hits me between the eyes"—Is very clear to me.

Quiet Spring

Blair Nikula

Those of us who have been birding actively on Cape Cod for any length of time have been sadly aware of an apparent deterioration of songbird migration in this area over the past decade or two. This situation, of course, is not unique to Cape Cod; birders throughout eastern North America have formed similar impressions. However, impressions all too often are flawed, even when shared by many. Is the apparent local decline in migrant songbirds real or simply the collective distortion of aging memories?

Since 1981, I have been censusing spring migrants in Provincetown's Beech Forest, the Cape's premier spring migrant trap. The censusing method is quite simple. I walk the same route through the forest each time, at about the same time in the early morning, record all the birds I see or hear, and record the time it takes to complete the circuit (so that the results can be standardized by converting the totals to the number of birds per hour.)

To determine if the perceived declines are real, I used a statistical technique called linear regression to look for trends in my warbler totals for the 10-year period 1981-1990. The results are disturbing and do indeed confirm our impressions. Of the 23 warbler species that occur regularly in the Beech Forest, 19 exhibit a negative trend, although for only six of these can the results be considered significant in a statistical sense. All 19 of these species are considered as a group, the negative trend is highly significant statistically.

Decreasing Warbler Species * statistically significant

Tennessee*	Prairie
Nashville	Bay-breasted
Northern Parula	Blackpoll*
Yellow	Black & White
Chestnut-sided	American Redstart
Magnolia*	Ovenbird
Cape May	Northern Waterthrush*
Black-throated Green*	Common Yellowthroat
Blackburnian	Wilson's
Canada*	

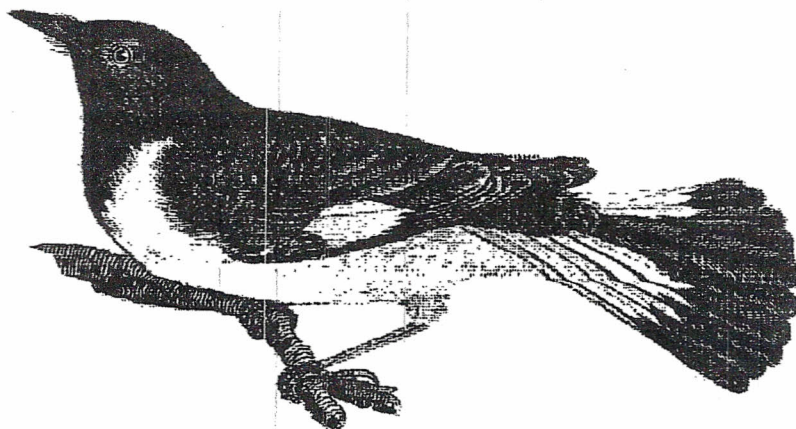
Increasing Warbler Species

Black-throated Blue	Pine*
Yellow-rumped*	Palm

Continued from page one

Of the remaining four species, two show a statistically positive trend: Yellow-rumped and Pine warblers. Both of these winter primarily in the southeastern U.S., while another species of the four, the Palm Warbler, also winters extensively in the southeastern U.S., as well as in the West Indies.

Some caveats are in order. First, ten years is a very short period of time when considering population trends, although at the accelerating pace of habit deterioration a lot can be lost in ten years. Second, these results are from but one small site on the fringes of normal spring migration pathways, and may not reflect trends on a larger scale; population fluctuations, however, are often most evident at the periphery of a species' range. Finally, from a mathematical point of view (which, like it or not, is the only view accepted by powers-that-be), the so-called sample sizes in this case are small and the results thus easily questioned. I plan to continue the Beach Forest census indefinitely, and by the turn of the century should be able to make some more definitive (and hopefully less depressing) conclusions!



The trends in Provincetown to date generally are in accord with those detected at other sites in eastern North America, and whatever they do or do not imply about warbler populations overall, they clearly confirm our impressions that springs on Cape Cod, though not yet silent, have become distressingly quiet.

EDITORIAL

Jim Talin

Don't Widen The Road

Industrial tourism: it's not a word you hear often, probably because it doesn't sound right, not like green tourism. So, what is industrial tourism? Two examples come to mind. The first consists of a proposal to build a huge movie theater at the entrance to Zion National Park. That way pressure on the park would be relieved; many people wouldn't bother to go in it. They'd watch the movie instead. As one educator observed, "We don't want to go out and watch a bird build a nest. We want to see it on TV."

The second example brings industrial tourism down to home. To Beech Forest to be exact. The Park Service wants to improve the road to Race Point Beach. It would be widened, trees cut down, curves straightened, and dunes leveled. All to make the road better, safer, more accessible to cars. All so that people could get to where they're going faster. But there is more happening at Beech Forest than can be seen in a blur from a car. Beech

Forest is an important stop for migrant birds. Bird populations are declining not just because wintering territory has been lost in Central and South America, and because northern breeding territory is fragmented, but also because staging areas on the northward migration route are being lost. Lost not just here, but along the whole coast which faces enormous development pressures. For example, in New Jersey a thousand acre area, once planned for inclusion in the Cape May Wildlife Refuge, is going to be developed instead. At any stopping point on the northern flyway, birds concentrate in high numbers in small areas. That is why cutting down a few hundred trees at Beech Forest represents an important loss.

Should tourists who come to oceanside, with its shimmering beaches and its sweet salt scented air, who leave behind the paved cities and the blacktopped stripmalls of urban America, be given more of the same? About thirty-five years ago, Edward Abbey took a job as part time ranger at Arches National Monument in Utah, and he wrote a book about his time there called Desert Solitaire. He not only witnessed the damming and filling in of Glen Canyon, but he also witnessed the expansion of auto access to parks in a process that has turned many of them into theme or amusement parks. He had a simple, Abbesque solution. Put up a sign at the park entrance that tells people to park their cars and proceed on foot. Why is that such a revolutionary idea?



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

Frank Caruso

Monday evening **May 11** at 7:45 at the Museum, Don Reid, Teacher and Naturalist for the Massachusetts Audubon Society at Wellfleet Bay Wildlife Sanctuary, will offer a program entitled, "*A Naturalist's View of Southeastern Arizona*". He will share his experiences in the desert and mountain environments of this area of the southwest which has the reputation of being a particularly exciting place for birders and wildlife enthusiasts. He will also enlighten us with some of his more interesting experiences with the area wildlife. Before coming to Wellfleet, Don worked for the Nature Conservancy in Arizona, and has been exploring the natural world of the southwest for many years. He continues to lead trips into the southwest to MAS. It should be a very entertaining program, and we hope to see you there!

Migration Trivia

The average songbird weighs between 11 and 18 grams, which is said to be the equivalent of three pennies. Hormone activity causes birds to accumulate large amounts of fat under their skin just prior to migration. In the fall a migratory blackpoll warbler stores enough fat reserves to fly non-stop 85 hours across the ocean to South America. Just a few grams of fat provides the energy needed for this trip. If an automobile were to burn its fuel as efficiently, it would get 720,000 miles to a gallon of gas. A male ruby-throated hummingbird can use 2 grams of fat to fly nonstop for 26 hours at 40 miles per hour. The peregrine falcon can travel up to 1300 miles in one day.

Nominations

President - Frank Caruso

Vice-President - Tom Noonan

Treasurer - Mark Tuttle

Secretary - Susan Thompson

Directors for three years - Patricia Noyes and Jim Talin

Director to complete Carl Bergfors term - Warren Nestler

Nominating Chairman - Blair Nikula

FIELD TRIPS

Sally McNair

May

Saturday May 2nd. Open Option Off-Cape Trip with Dick Comeau. Meet in the Burger King parking lot at the intersection of Routes 6 and 132 at 7 am. Bring a lunch. Dick Comeau 432-9033.

Monday May 4th. Eastham, 8 am. Meet in the lower parking lot, Fort Hill. Art King. 255-8919.

Wednesday May 6th. Falmouth, 8 am. Meet behind Town Hall, Falmouth Center. Mary Ropes. 548-6086.

Saturday May 13th. 5:30 pm. Blair's evening walk at the Harwich Conservation Area. Meet at Bell's Neck Rd. in West Harwich. Bring a picnic if you like. Blair Nikula. 432-6348.

Wednesday May 20th. Provincetown. 8 am. Meet in the Beech Forest parking lot. Bessie Tirrell. 432-9248.

Thursday May 28th. Wellfleet Bay wildlife Sanctuary. 8 am. Meet in the parking lot. A naturalist will lead. 349-2615.

Beech Forest Weekends.

There will be a leader at the Beech Forest in Provincetown every Saturday and Sunday during May. Meet at 8 am in the parking lot.

June

Saturday June 13th. Mid-Cape Breeding Bird Census followed by the Annual CCBC Picnic at Gray's Beach in Yarmouthport. Peter Trimble. 477-3847.

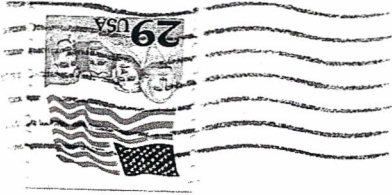
Saturday June 20th. 6 am. Crane Wildlife Area and Mashpee River. Meet in the shopping center parking lot at the New Seabury Rotary in Mashpee. Blair Nikula. 432-6348.

Summer

Saturday July 25th. Great Island, Wellfleet. 8 am. Meet in the parking lot. Bring a lunch. Bessie Tirrell. 432-9248.

Saturday August 22nd. Great Island, Wellfleet. 8 am. Meet in the parking lot. Bring a lunch. Bessie Tirrell. 432-9248.

Frank Carruso
17 Freedom Rd
Forestdale MA 02644



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The Cape Cod Museum Of Natural History
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Doing a Christmas Count Part Two The Tally by Fahy Bygate

Some crass souls have suggested that some of us are only interested in Christmas Counts so that we can have another excuse to have a party. What an idea! Of course, it is a lot of fun. The party part can be terrific if the compiler (the boss) understands the word "party". I once went to a Count where we all stood in a cold kitchen and ate potato chips standing up before we sat down to do the tally. This is not a party. This is grim. The best parties abound in delicious dips and cheeses, cakes and cookies, drinks hard and soft, and lots of bird talk with the best people I know.

But it seems to me the best part is the tally itself. When the compiler starts the tally with "Red-throated Loon?", I get shivers. Around and around the room it goes with each team contributing its own numbers. Numbers that have been, up till now, secrets held as close to the chest as a winning poker hand. When the various teams come stamping in out of the cold, tired and shivering, suffering from terminal hay hair, they all head straight for the food and drinks (do I have that reversed?), but immediately afterwards they sneak off into some corner to try to make some sense out of their scribbled numbers from the day. There is even an occasional noise from some teams that sounds remarkably like bickering, but I'm sure I could be wrong! Eventually, the compiler will say, "Okay, let's get

started." The teams are arranged in some order, and the tally begins.

There is great suspense as no self-respecting team will give the slightest clue beforehand about their best birds. You can see it coming, however. The compiler will skip over certain groups of birds that are gone by Christmas Count or are usually gone. Then some smug team captain will say, "Wait a minute, didn't you miss something?" Everyone gets quiet. A "good bird" is coming. Then when the team captain announces his find, there is much mock skepticism and teasing about authenticity of the bird or veracity of the team. The flip side of this scene is one where a species is missed by every team. "Brown Creeper, Team A?", "Zero." "Team B?" "Zero." And so on around the room. Everybody groans. A bad miss. Numbers are down again this year. The mood isn't quite as gay. Every year the numbers have been down. The feeling is that by the time somebody pays attention to this it will be too late. Sometimes a species will *nearly* go all of the way around the room, and the very last team will pull it out! Great jubilation! People whoop and holler, and the mood is up again. Hope dies hard. We can't wait to do the next count. Maybe we'll do better next year. Maybe I'll be a big cheese...well, maybe not. Better still, maybe I'll stand out in the cold dawn and hear a Great Horned Owl calling...