



Cape Cod Bird Club

VOLUME 23

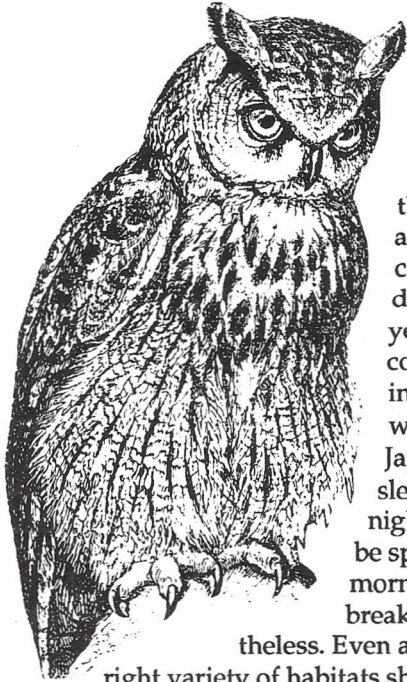
JANUARY ~ FEBRUARY 1994

ISSUE 3

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Richard Hall

For many birders, and I include myself among them, New Year's Day is eagerly anticipated. The holiday madness is blessedly over. Even though the coldest



weather of the year lies ahead, the daylight hours are growing noticeably longer. But the special appeal of January First lies in its promise. For those of us who keep an annual list, even if done casually or just for fun, this day is the only day of the year when every species constitutes a new 'year-bird' including the commonest whether Chickadee, Junco, Jay or Crow. Instead of sleeping off the previous night's revelries, birders can be spotted in the field this first morning, maybe not at dawn's break, but early enough none-

theless. Even a moderate effort in the right variety of habitats should yield a 50 to 60 'new' species in four or so hours of targeted birding. It will be a long four months until May before any of us approach that degree of productivity again.

Winter birding on the Cape is among the best in the state. Our maritime geography affords us the mildest winter climate in New England, and the corresponding opportunity to find migratory birds out of season. With many fresh water ponds and creeks still open, otherwise hard to find waterfowl, such as Coot, Canvasback, Redhead, Green-winged Teal, and Eurasian Widgeon can usually be located. Great Blue Heron and Kingfisher are common. Black-crowned Night Heron, Bittern and Snipe are good possibilities. Offshore the sharp-sighted may be rewarded with Alcids, Kittiwakes and Gannets. Drake King Eider and Harlequin Duck often grace us with an appearance. Inland large flocks of Robin and Cedar Waxwing can be seen.

Just as Sharpies are attracted to the seed-eaters at our feeders, mainland birders are drawn to Cape Cod's abundance of winter avian life. Encountering small caravans of listers from such frigid and faraway locales as Athol-on-the-Quabbin, Worcester and Essex Counties only adds to the fun. Like many of us, these folks are easy

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BIRDER'S NOTEBOOK

Sue Thompson

July 1, 1993. Last night at half past midnight a crow cawed loudly followed by another crow close by the first. After several caws to each other they were joined by others roosting further away. The noise eventually died away with the final caws sounding like they were from one bird who was in flight. I decided a Great Horned Owl must have snatched a roost mate to cause such a ruckus in the middle of the night. This thought was reinforced by a vigorous mobbing that took place at dawn in the same area. However a thorough search during the day failed to produce more than a molt feather here and there. I guess I'll never know what caused such alarm in the night.

July 8, 1993. Something of a repeat. At half past ten two crows started making noise. One cawed. It sounded like he was flying away. The other make squawking noises for several minutes. Long enough for me to finally decide to get out of bed and stand in the window to listen more closely hoping to hear more than the squawks. Then all became silent. A search the following morning turned up a few fresh feathers that appeared to be from the breast. They were short and downy. They reinforced my suspicion that a Great Horned Owl had visited again. The owl apparently takes the crow away after it is subdued to eat it.



HOTLINE

Mark Tuttle's newly revamped rare bird hotline has been busy and successful. Recent highlights include White Pelican, Common Moorhen, Western Kingbird, Western Tanager, Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, and Common Redpoll, to name a few. There will be an opportunity for new sign-ups to the Club hotline at our February members' night meeting.

There were a lot of good bird sightings during October and November! Unfortunately, many have been omitted here due to lack of space. I apologize to those of you whose sightings do not appear. If anyone is interested in the sightings omitted, feel free to ask me about them!

Seabirds. The 13th of October was the best day for seabirds this fall. At First Encounter Beach, Ken Hamilton noted hundreds of Cory's Shearwaters, with smaller numbers of Sooty, Manx, and Greater shearwaters, Leach's Storm-Petrels, and Black-legged Kittiwakes.

American White Pelican. Two individuals were observed on 5 November by Diane Brooks on the Bumps River in Centerville. These birds were subsequently seen around Barnstable Harbor, Great Island in Yarmouth, Cotuit, Dartmouth, and Falmouth, as late as 20 November.

Waders. Three American Bitterns were spotted at Fort Hill on 17 October by Derek Moore. One Cattle Egret was seen at Fort Hill on 4 November by Frank Caruso.

Geese and Ducks. Seven Snow Geese were reported this fall: one on North Monomoy on 24 October by Jackie Sones, four at Fort Hill from 6 November to 16 November by various observers, one in Orleans on 6 November by Adele Scott, and one "blue goose" on North Monomoy on 13 November by Blair Nikula. Four Eurasian Wigeons were reported: one from South Monomoy on 16 October by Blair Nikula, one from the Bumps River in Centerville on 6 November by Vernon Laux, one from Mill Pond in Marstons Mills on 27 November by Sally Clifton and Jeremiah Trimble, and one from South Orleans on 28 November by George Martin.

Common Moorhen. One individual was observed at the West Harwich Conservation Area on 1 November by Chris Brothers and Nancy Israel.

Shorebirds. Two late Hudsonian Godwits were reported from First Encounter Beach at the end of October by various observers. Six Marbled Godwits remained on North Monomoy into mid-November, with one individual staying until 23 November seen by Jackie Sones. One albino Sanderling was seen on North Monomoy

on 6 November by Blair Nikula. One Purple Sandpiper was reported from South Monomoy on 23 November by Jackie Sones and Blair Nikula.

Gulls. Two Common Black-headed Gulls were reported, one from the Bumps River in Centerville on 6 November by Peter Trimble and one from Pleasant Bay on 8 November by Jackie Sones. One Little Gull was seen amongst a few Bonaparte's Gulls from Morris Island on 27 November by Blair Nikula.

Black-backed Woodpecker. One individual was reported in South Eastham on 2 November by George Lilja.

Flycatchers. Four Western Kingbirds were reported, one from Chatham on 23 October by Bob Clem, one from Corn Hill on 24 October by the Brookline Bird Club, and two from Wellfleet Bay on 11 November by Chris Brothers (one still there on 28 November). One Scissor-tailed Flycatcher spent six days at Fort Hill (from 24 October to 29 October); it was first observed by Nancy Israel.

Swallows. One very late Purple Martin was seen at Corn Hill on 30 October by the Trimbles (previously, the latest date for the state was 5 October). Two Cliff Swallows were reported, both from Corn Hill, one on 12 October by Dick Forster and one on 14 October by Mark Tuttle.

Bohemian Waxwings. A probable total of four individuals was seen, two by Sally Clifton and Seward Highley and four by Blair Nikula. All were observed near the Wellfleet/Truro town line on Old County Road on 21 November.

Western Tanager. One individual was reported at Wellfleet Bay on 19 November by Jackie Sones. This individual stayed in Wellfleet until at least the 28th of November.

Indigo Bunting. One late individual was reported from Wellfleet Bay on 21 November by Robert Prescott (most Indigo Buntings have gone by late October).

Orchard Oriole. One very late individual was reported from Corn Hill on 25 October by Roger Everett and Jackie Sones (previously, the latest date for the state was 26 September).

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EDITORIAL

The Mystery of Migration

Jim Talin

In the Romantic era, science was supposed to kill the mystery of the world. John Keats used the thrush to express this belief when he wrote, "O fret not after knowledge-I have none,/And yet my song comes native with the warmth." To Keats, knowledge was sterile, but nature was filled with wonder. But if Keats had known about the migration of the thrush, wouldn't he have found the bird even more mysterious? For a long time scientists and poets alike had no idea that birds migrated. Birds were thought to hibernate. In 1640, the poet Thomas Carew wrote *The Spring* in which the "warm sun thaws

the benumbed earth...gives a sacred birth/to the dead swallow; wakes in the hollow tree/The drowsy cuckoo and the humble bee." What would Keats or Carew have written if they had known that like all good voyagers, birds steer by star and sun, using the Big Dipper as a guide, and that somehow birds, as well as other species of animals and bacteria, have an internal compass that senses the direction and modulation of the Earth's magnetic field. Recent experiments with Savannah Sparrows show that these birds can actually see patterns of polarization in the daylight sky. Dr. James Gould, a biologist at Princeton, says: "Probably these birds see a very dark polarized band in the sky 90 degrees from the sun. The tilt of this band, which is invisible to human eyes, would tell a bird the position of the sun and his orientation on earth" (NY Times). It has also been discovered that Australian silver eyebirds can actually see the Earth's magnetic field. If they had known these things, perhaps Keats and Carew would have concluded, as Francis Bacon did, that wonder is the seed of knowledge.



Cape Cod Bird Club Newsletter

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

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PROGRAMS/ MEETINGS

Tish Noyes

On Monday evening **January 10** at 7:45 pm at the Museum of Natural History on Route 6A in Brewster, there will be a program entitled "*Conservation for Grassland Birds in Massachusetts and New England: The Need for Regional Perspective.*" It will be presented by Peter Vickery, Ph.D who has worked for the Mass Audubon Society for the past 10 years. He is currently their Avian Ecologist. He recently received his doctorate from the University of Maine in the study of the breeding biology of grassland birds. Peter will share the results of his research with us, which includes threatened species that are found here on the Cape.

On Monday evening **February 14** at 7:45 pm at the Museum of Natural History on Route 6A in Brewster, we will have our *Annual Members' Night*. Please bring your best or worst slides to share with other Club members. Anyone who'd like to share any bird related items that they make and/or collect should get in touch with Tish at 255-9810 to arrange for display space.

A few members have suggested some new ideas for **Members' Night**, such as a book sale, or a silent auction. Time is short, but if there is interest, members willing to help organize such an event, should get in touch with Tish at 255-9810 or Richie Hall at 945-4882.

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BIRD SIGHTINGS

OCTOBER ~ NOVEMBER 1993

Jackie Sones

Northern Vagrants. One White-winged Crossbill was reported from Eastham in early October by Carl Goodrich. Up to thirty Common Redpolls were seen at Corn Hill on 23 October by George Martin and various observers. Up to six Pine Siskins were seen on Art King's feeder in Brewster on 31 October. At least 6 flocks (ranging from 1 to about 20 individuals) of Evening Grosbeaks were reported from scattered locations during late October and November.

To report sightings during December and January, please call Jackie Sones at 349-2615 or Blair Nikula at 432-6348.

John James Audubon at the MFA

An exhibit of 87 rarely seen Audubon watercolors will be on view in Boston at the Museum of Fine Arts, from February 9th to April 10th, 1994. Admission to the exhibit and Museum is \$7, but if a group of 10 or more Club members go as a group, a discount can be arranged. Interested members should get in touch with Ruth Connaughton (432-1589) for further information.

A Newsletter Riddle

Question: What do Dick Forster, The Club's September speaker; Betsey Hewlett, a cookie volunteer; and Bob Mallet, a new member, all have in common?

Answer: Each of their names was recently misspelled in this newsletter. We are now interviewing for proofreaders. We apologize to all concerned.

FIELD TRIPS

Ruth Connaughton

January

Start With Art! Saturday, January 1st. Eastham, 9 am. Meet in the lower parking lot, Fort Hill. Art King, 255-8919.

Tuesday, January 4th. Yarmouth. Meet in playground on Route 6A. 9:00am. Bob Scott, 362-4866.

Thursday, January 13th. Backyard birding at Harriet and Bill Dickson's house. 10:30 am 176 Quanset Rd., Orleans. Get directions at Dec. 13th meeting, or call 255-0299.

Sunday, January 16. Birding the South Shore with David Ludlow. 9 am. Meet at the Daniel Webster Wildlife Sanctuary in Marshfield. Coordinated by Fahy Bygate. (617) 934-8978. Call Ruth Connaughton (508) 432-1580 for directions.

Sunday, January 23. Eastham Ponds. 9 am. Meet at Fort Hill, Eastham. Kate Wallace, 255-5095.

February

Monday, February 7th. Eastham, 9 am. Meet in the lower parking lot, Fort Hill. Aurell Thomas, 255-1409.

Friday, February 18th. Provincetown. 1 pm. Meet in Race Point Parking lot. A naturalist from Wellfleet Bay Wildlife Sanctuary will lead. 349-2615.

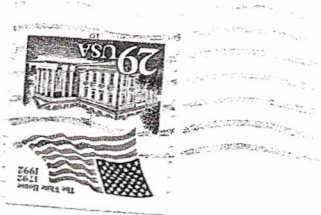
Tuesday, February 24th. Sandwich. 9 am. Meet in Purity parking lot off Route 6A in Sandwich. Bessie Tirrell, 432-9248.

New Members

The Club welcomes the following individuals who have joined during the past two months.

John Alciati: Reston, Virginia; **Betty Bagshaw:** West Harwich; **Edlow Banks:** Worcester; **Helen Barnes:** West Falmouth; **Cam Beale:** Falmouth; **Sara Beckley:** Chatham; **Joan Campbell:** Belmont; **Richard Campbell:** Placida Florida; **Edward Charlebois:** Wellfleet; **John Cook & Joanne Cook:** Plymouth; **Penny Corn:** Brewster; **Jean Dickie:** Malden; **Leo Edwards:** Pittsburgh, PA; **Patricia Feeney:** Orleans; **Dorothy Hall:** Dedham; **Frederick Jones:** Eastham; **George Lilja & Norma Lilja:** Eastham; **James McMorrow:** Plymouth; **Betty Mitman:** Orleans; **Derek Moore:** Colchester, U.K.; **Bob O'Neil:** Mashpee; **Elizabeth Pierce:** North Falmouth; **Jean Smith:** Brewster; **Sharon Ware:** West Chatham; **Carol Whalen:** Truro.

Frank Caruso
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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

to spot. Their war-wagons fashion the latest in C-B Radios and sport enough window decals to give the Registry of Motor Vehicles concern.

If past winters are any guide, the right combination of snow, well-stocked feeders and alert watchers will produce our share of 1994 vagrants like the Sprague's Pipit, Painted Buntings and Barnacle Geese of years past. Why is it that so many rarities turn up in Massachusetts? Roger Tory Peterson thinks that because there are so many birders here, accidentals have very little chance of escaping notice. With the arrival of January First, we eagerly await this year's surprises. Armed with a sharpened pencil and a fresh checklist, not to mention long-johns, wool caps, gloves, boots, Cortex and down, I'll be looking for you along with the birds this first day. Happy New Year!

The Latest in Head-Gear Fashion

Richard Hall

For the first time ever, custom embroidered Baseball caps bearing the CCBC name and logo are available for purchase through the Club. The cotton twill caps come in blue, green, white, and brown. These caps will be for sale at the regular monthly meeting. The price is \$14 for one, or \$25 for two with all profits accruing to the Club treasury. Caps may also be ordered from members Dennis Wiehe (833-0467) or Richie Hall (945-4822). Although there is a certain cost associated with the production of custom embroidery, a member of the Club, who has asked to remain anonymous, has generously under-written set-up costs, which are considerable on a small scale project like this. The thinking here is that "project bird-cap" is an enjoyable and profitable way for the Club to increase its visibility, raise some much needed money, and keep the sun out of its members' eyes. We hope no member will want to be without one.