



# Cape Cod Bird Club

VOLUME 24

SEPTEMBER ~ OCTOBER 1994

ISSUE 1

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

*Richard D. Hall*

It's early August, and the oppressive July humidity, the worst in recent memory, has been swept away by a massive Canadian front. The air is crystal clear. The wind from the North is cool and strong. Already it feels like late September. Standing on North Monomoy looking Northwest, I can clearly see six or seven water towers silhouetted in stark relief. Can I really be seeing to South Yarmouth or beyond?

Nearer to hand, the front has deposited a plethora of shore birds on return migration.

Yesterday was surely one of the best shore-birding days of the Summer. Sixty

Hudsonian Godwits,

hundreds of

Semipalmated

Plovers and

Sandpipers so

close field

glasses were

unnecessary.

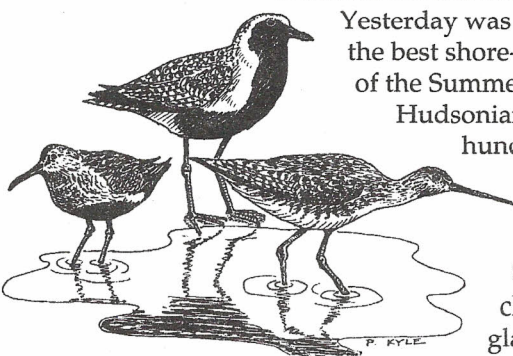


Illustration by Phil Kyle

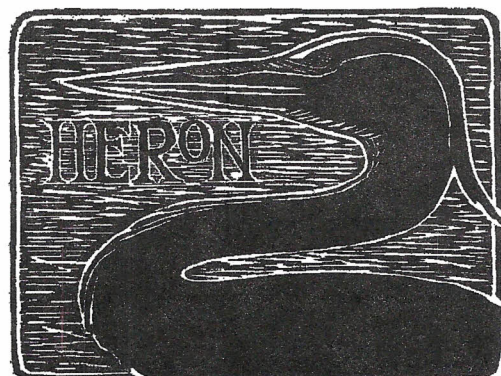
Clusters of Red Knots and Short-Billed Dowitchers probe the mud in search of a meal. A short distance away a mixed flock of hyperactive Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs race up and down a tidal pool stirring up minnows and crustaceans. Five elegant Snowy Egrets follow in their wake dancing and spearing.

The tide is coming in fast now as we work our way to the edge of the salt marsh. Standing in ankle deep water we come upon a raised island of sand no more than seven or eight feet long and two feet wide. Apparently something has deposited eggs at this spot, a Horseshoe Crab perhaps. Every inch of sand is covered with shorebirds in a full feeding frenzy. Godwits, Turnstones, Sanderlings, Peeps, Dowitchers and Willets are all mixed together in this seething mass of bills, feathers, wings and legs.

The birds are oblivious to our presence, and we get very close. Why didn't I think to bring my camera? If only Roger Everett were on the Island. No matter though, I know I'm returning tomorrow and I'll bring my telephoto and lots of film. And so I return the next day fully armed. But to my dismay those same beneficent and cooling winds which deposited the migrants in the last few days, have now carried many of those same birds further south. The number of birds seems reduced by half. There will be no feeding frenzy this day. There will be no worry about shutter speed or aperture setting. The rhythms of nature are indifferent to human desire. An observer must be prepared to meet nature on her terms. If not, such opportunities may be forfeited forever.

Just as the sun,  
behind us,  
goes under a rim of trees,  
we turn to retrace our steps.  
Marsh and railway in shadow now,  
the sky alight with rays cast upward  
on mare's tails of gray cloud,  
long brush strokes in wisps  
and plumes high above us,  
we stop in wonder and see  
how the track has become  
a twin ribbon of silver  
and the sky above it,  
where the sun was,  
is the color of beaten brass.  
Silhouetted against this,  
slow-pumping,  
long legs trailing,  
a great blue heron  
comes flapping,  
returning,  
he too,  
to a roost  
for the night.

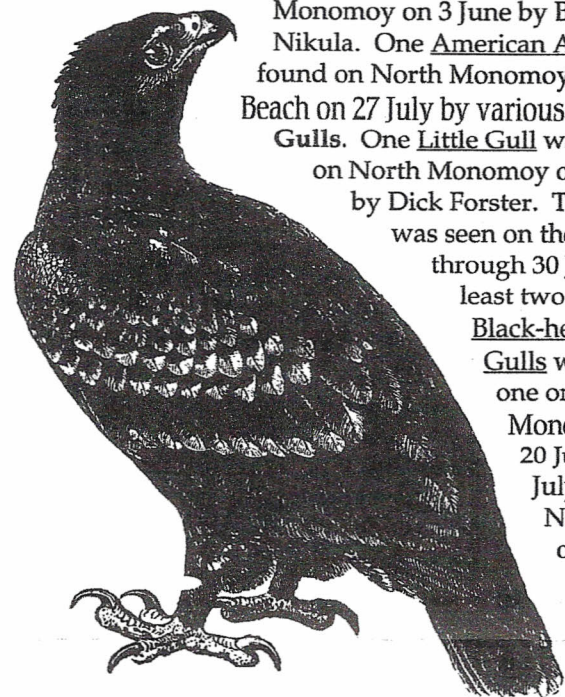
*Robert Pease*



Woodcut by Tom Noonan

Jackie Sones

**Shorebirds.** The first Snowy Plover seen in Massachusetts showed up on South Beach in Chatham on 13 June. This bird was also seen on Popponeset Beach in Mashpee and Seagull Beach in Yarmouth during June. One Lesser Golden Plover was observed on North Monomoy on 17 June by Blair Nikula. A female Ruff was sighted on North



Monomoy on 3 June by Blair Nikula. One American Avocet was found on North Monomoy/South Beach on 27 July by various observers.

**Gulls.** One Little Gull was spotted on North Monomoy on 2 June by Dick Forster. This bird was seen on the island through 30 June. At

least two Common Black-headed

Gulls were seen:

one on North Monomoy on 20 June and 1 July by Blair Nikula, and one in Nauset Marsh on 19

July by Simon Geary.

**Terns.** Several Royal Terns were observed in various locations around the Cape, with most sightings during July from Nauset Marsh and North Monomoy. One Caspian Tern was seen in Nauset Marsh on 13 July by Simon Geary. Up to seven Black Terns were counted on South Beach on 24 July by Blair Nikula and the Trimbles.

**Black Skimmers.** At least four pairs of skimmers attempted to nest in Nauset Marsh this summer. A fifth pair tried South Beach in Chatham but was unsuccessful.

**Herons.** Two Little Blue Herons were spotted at the Wellfleet Sanctuary on 16 June by Jackie Sones. Two Tricolored Herons were observed at the Wellfleet Sanctuary, one on 16 June by Jackie Sones, and one on 5 July by Simon Geary.

**Bald Eagles.** Reports of Bald Eagles have come in from Sandwich to Provincetown. Sightings have been of one to two birds, mostly immatures. Most sightings seem to have come from Nickerson State Park, the Punkhorn Parklands, and the Wellfleet Ponds (Gull, Higgins, and Williams).

**Red-bellied Woodpecker.** One individual was seen in South Orleans on 12 June by Kathy McGinley. This species has been confirmed breeding on the Cape only once, in Woods Hole.

*Continued on Page 4*

**EDITORIAL**

**WHAT'S A BIRD TO DO ?**


Jim Talin

Another hot day. 90 degrees, 80% humidity. No wind. Except for insects, all of nature quiets down. Even the robin running across grass pauses to pant, and the crows strut beside the road with their beaks open like winded marathoners. Every nesting bird in the neighborhood is waiting in line at the bird bath. It's the middle of a record heat spell. There's no relief from the oppressive heat, particularly for birds.

A bird's body temperature varies with its cycle of activity, being the lowest at night and peaking at mid-day. According to John Terres, a passerine in flight produces about 9 times more heat than it does at rest. Warm-blooded, like humans, birds lack our principle means of cooling down. They do not have sweat glands. So what's a bird to do on a hot and sultry day? Respiration

becomes its main built-in means of lowering their body temperature. Birds can lose up to half of their excess body temperature by increasing respiration and panting. Some birds like doves, herons, and cormorants increase the blood flow to the throat (which releases internal heat) by doing a throat or gular flutter as they breathe. When it pants, a bird loses moisture that it must replace.

A combination of other abilities and strategies allow birds to cool down further on hot days. Some birds are lucky and the color of their plumage helps prevent heat absorption. The white plumage of gulls and terns will reflect much of the sun's heat. Other birds spread their wings and let them hang. The line at the bird bath on a hot day attests to the fact that bathing will lower body temperatures. If a bird such as a buteo rides a thermal high enough, the ambient air temperature can drop up to 50 degrees. Some birds have less dense and thinner plumage in the summer. Compressing feathers also has a cooling effect, the opposite of the insulating effect of fluffing them. And if worse comes to worst, a bird can limit its activities to the cooler hours of dawn and dusk, seeking refuge in a shaded grotto, which is just the place to be in the heat of the day.



**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

Ruth Connaughton

On Monday evening **September 12th** at 7:45 pm at the Cape Cod Museum of Natural History on Route 6A in Brewster, Bob Clements will present a program entitled "Mostly India." Bob Clements entertained us in December 1991 with slides on night birds, hummingbirds, etc. from South America; he has traveled widely throughout the world identifying and photographing birds with his brother Jim (author of "Birds of the World, A Checklist") David Finch, and other well-known birders. Bob currently lives in New Hampshire and continues to teach part-time at Phillips-Exeter Academy where he served as Chairman of the Mathematics Department until his retirement in 1991.

On Monday evening **October 10th** at 7:45 pm at the Cape Cod Museum of Natural History on Route 6A in Brewster, Congressman Gerry Studds is scheduled to address the Club on the "Environmental Challenge: A Washington Perspective." (There is always a possibility that unforeseen circumstances may make it impossible to leave Washington. Although Mr. Studds fully plans to be here, he has asked the Club to schedule a backup program just in case.)

### New Directors and Responsibilities

Don Scott and Jinks Keil were newly elected to the Board last Spring. Don will be handling Press matters while Jinks takes over scheduling Field Trips from Ruth Connaughton. Ruth is the new programs director, a job formerly handled by Tish Noyes. Tish will be the Sea Call Farm coordinator for the Club, a new position.

Meanwhile, Bob Scott, who has been a member of the Club for more than 20 years and a Board member or Officer for about a third of those years, has resigned this Summer. We all owe Bob a huge "Thank You" for years of able and generous service to the Club. He has scheduled walks, kept the books, and good naturedly tolerated long and sometime tedious meetings, not to mention policies of which he did not always approve. The Board has asked Barbara Stanton of Harwich to serve out Bob's term. Barbara will assume responsibility for refreshments this year.

### The Cape Cod Bird Club

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, PO Box 1710, Brewster, MA 02631.

## FIELD TRIPS

Jinks Keil

September

**Saturday, September 10th.** Morris Island, Chatham. 9:00 am. Meet at the Monomoy Wildlife Refuge parking lot. Tom Noonan, 394-4588 & Jim Talin, 896-7169.

**Sunday, Sept. 11th.** Fort Hill. 8:00 am. Meet in the lower parking lot. Art King, 255-8919.

**Wednesday, September 14th.** Falmouth. 8:00 am. Meet behind Town Hall, Falmouth Center. Mary Ropes, 548-6086.

**Thursday, September 22nd.** Harwich Conservation Area. 8:00 am. Meet at the Conservation Area on Bell's Neck Road, in W. Harwich. Bessie Tirrell, 432-9248.

**Thursday, September 29th.** Chicken Farm in Truro. 9:00 am. Meet in back of Bird Watcher's General Store, Orleans. Mike O'Connor, 255-6974.

October

**Saturday, October 8th.** Sandwich, Sandy Neck, West Barnstable. 8:30 am. Meet at Sandy Neck Parking Lot. Bob Pease, 790-1351.

**Sunday, October 9th.** Fort Hill. 8:00 am. Meet in the lower parking lot. Art King, 255-8919.

**Tuesday, October 11th.** Wellfleet Bay Wildlife Sanctuary: Sunset Walk. 4:30 pm-6:30 pm. Bob Prescott, 349-2615.

**Thursday, October 20th.** Birding Harwich & Chatham. 8:00 am. Meet at Saquatucket Harbor (across from Thompson's Farm Market, Route 28, Harwichport). Bessie Tirrell, 432-9248.

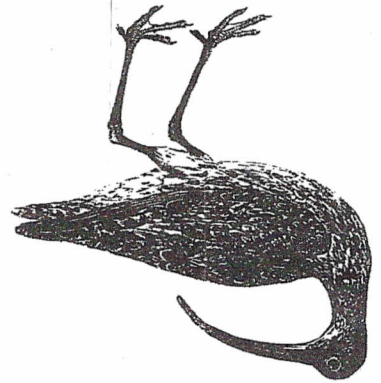
**Saturday, October 22nd.** South Cape Beach. 9:00 am. Meet in the State parking lot at the end of Great Oak Rd. From Mashpee Rotary follow signs to South Cape Beach State Park. Stauffer Miller, 362-3384.

### New Members

The Clubs extends a warm welcome to the following new members who have joined recently.

**Paul S. DeBruyn** of West Roxbury; **Tina Castellano** of Brewster; **Peter Grahame** of Framingham; **Robert and Jacqueline Oliver** of Brewster; **Deborah Shiflett-Fitton** of West Barnstable.

Frank Caruso  
17 Freedom Rd  
Forestdale, MA 02644



Cape Cod Bird Club  
The Cape Cod Museum Of Natural History  
PO BOX 1710, Brewster, MA 02631



## BIRD SIGHTINGS

*Continued from Page 2*

**White-eyed Vireo.** One individual was observed in Sandwich on 11 June by Don Dyer. This year this species was not confirmed breeding, but during the Massachusetts Breeding Bird Atlas (1974 - 1979), breeding was confirmed for one pair and considered probable for four pairs; all were in the Sandwich/Falmouth area.

**Warbling Vireo.** One individual was seen in Barnstable on 11 June by the Millers. Warbling Vireos have not yet been confirmed breeding on Cape Cod.

**Northern Parula.** One individual was heard in Brewster on 26 June by Blair Nikula. In Massachusetts, this species is basically restricted as a breeding species to Cape Cod and Martha's Vineyard. Prior to this year, breeding had been reported from Mashpee and Harwich, and Chatham.

**Mid-Cape Cod Breeding Bird Census.** Some of the highlights from this census on 11 June included the following: Nine Blue-winged Warblers, five Willow Flycatchers, and twenty-four Osprey

*To report sightings, please call Jackie Sones at 349-2615 or Blair Nikula at 432-6348.*

## Rare Bird Hot Line

Mark Tuttle

Our Cape Cod rare bird hot line was generally very successful this past year, and we plan to continue the same basic format. If you were on the hot line last year and would like to have your name removed from the list, or if you would like to join the hot line, either let us know at the September meeting or get in touch with Mark Tuttle, Box 635, Barnstable, MA 02630 (tel: 362-3015) by no later than September 15th.

Please do not join the hot line unless you are willing to make every effort to keep the word of a sighting moving promptly and accurately. Members who have been on the hot line and wish to continue on it need not sign up again.