



Cape Cod Bird Club

VOLUME 25

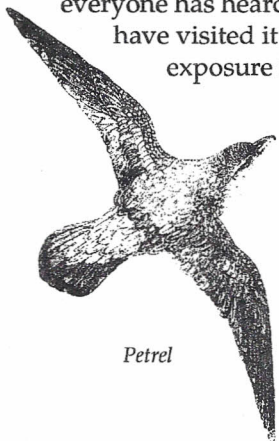
SEPTEMBER ~ OCTOBER 1995

ISSUE 1

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Richard D. Hall

Occasionally, a new book appears which really does deserve consideration from everyone seriously interested in the Cape's Natural History. Stellwagen Bank, by Nathalie Ward of the Center for Coastal Studies, is a reference guide to this important ecosystem lying just north of Cape Cod Bay and Provincetown. Just about everyone has heard of Stellwagen, and many of us have visited it a few times. But for most, our exposure is limited to a whale watching trip or sailing cruise. From this vantage point, the Bank seems to consist of a few large marine mammals, a smattering of pelagic birds if you're lucky, and vast expanses of rolling gray-green ocean swells.



Petrel

Through a stunning combination of undersea photographs, artists' illustrations, charts and computer-simulated graphics, the author takes you to

those parts of Stellwagen only marine biologists usually see. The macrophotography of marine invertebrates is superb, as is the entire visual appeal of this guide. The chapter on Stellwagen's ecosystem that details the complex food web, beginning with the seasonal plankton bloom, is lucid and concise. The chapter on sea birds stresses their unique adaptations to pelagic life, and contains a number of interesting graphics illustrating these traits. There is also a useful chart prepared by Wayne Peterson on the seasonal status of the nearly forty species that regularly occur on the bank. In a refreshing departure for field guides, Ms. Ward treats human presence as an integral part of the ecosystem. It should hardly be otherwise, given the enormous impact fisherman and mariners have had upon the Bank for nearly four centuries. There is a brief biography of Henry Stellwagen, the Bank's discoverer, and a short profile of the major harbors which face the Bank.

The discussion on commercial fishing offers a good overview of the hows and whys of fishing techniques and strategies, a necessary starting point if you hope to understand the crisis the fisheries now find themselves in. But this chapter was for me also the most disappointing. While acknowledging "profound changes in the composition of marine fish populations," the author seems unable to take the next logical step and assign responsibility for what most of us consider a growing catastrophe. In an apparent effort to accommodate the fisherman's point of view, she seems unwilling to

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BIRDING BASICS

Kathleen Casey

If I were to sort birding into three categories of Beginner, Intermediate, and Advanced, I would place myself in the latter part of the Beginning stage. The following is a list of some of the tips that have helped me progress and that I hope will help other new birders.

- Birds in my yard are most active in the early morning and late afternoon. Remember, the early birder catches the bird!
- When trying to identify a new bird, compare its size and shape to a familiar bird, for example a crow, robin, or chickadee. Also notice where the bird is and what it is doing.
- Carry binoculars and a field guide in your car. Murphy's Law dictates that you will see the most wondrous birds when you don't have the above.
- When driving by irrigation ditches or little streams, pull over and have a look. Birds love the water.
- Speaking of water, provide it in your yard with a bird bath. Every week, scrub out the basin and add fresh water. A bird bath heating unit will allow the birds to bathe and drink during the frigid months.
- I started out filling my feeder with black oil sunflower seeds. Now, I also spread fine, cracked corn on the ground, put out suet, and have a thistle feeder. In the Spring I cut oranges in half for the orioles and start filling my hummingbird feeder (4 parts water to 1 part sugar, which I change after a few days when the solution starts to get cloudy.) Many types of food will attract different species of birds to your yard. I also let many of my flowers go to seed.
- Take notice of the birds who visit your yard and the time that they visit. You'll begin to see a pattern.
- When landscaping your yard, remember that plants can offer food, shelter, and nesting sights for birds.
- Let some parts of your yard go wild.
- Discover organic gardening.
- When on a birding trip, move slowly, speak softly, stop and have a look before entering wide open spaces, and scan tree tops or power lines. Also, look closely at marsh and pond edges.
- Read about birds in field guides, the club's Birding Cape Cod, and birding periodicals.
- Listen to bird audio tapes.
- Visit area natural history museums, bird sanctuaries, and local bird stores.
- Talk to other birders.
- Ask questions.
- Become a member of the **Cape Cod Bird Club**.
- Join us at the monthly meetings or on the many free guided walks.
- Have fun and keep on birding!

EDITORIAL

Jim Talin

One sunny summer afternoon, I was stuck in a column of slow traffic as I drove past the Museum of Natural History. Its principal parking lot was filled, as was the town lot across the street, and cars were parked on the causeway along both sides of Route 6A. Out in the marsh, a naturalist led a crowded walk of at least 25 people. It was summer on Cape Cod. People were everywhere. In the summer, a weekend walk at Fort Hill can resemble a walk in a city park. I read in the local paper that around 100,000 people visit the Mass Audubon Sanctuary in South Wellfleet in a year. How many cars, how many feet tramp the trails in the various nature preserves each season? Do these crowds reflect the success of the programs offered at these nature areas, or are they a simple extension of the fact that, as of the latest census, Cape Cod has become a metropolitan area?

There is no clear answer. I lived in a metropolitan suburb for a short while before I moved to Cape Cod over twenty years ago. Once when I was tired of the city, I commented to a friend from Long Island that I had to "get away from the city to Cape Cod." "Get away?" he responded with incredulity. "It's just one big city there too." And he was right, even then. Orleans, Yarmouth, Dennis, Harwich and other towns are as densely populated as any city suburb. But there is a profound difference. If you walk to the eastern town line in Orleans, you don't enter another town. You are stopped by the edge of the Atlantic Ocean where you confront a vast expanse of wave and surf. Because it is a peninsula jutting into the sea, Cape Cod shares a sense of remoteness and seclusion with an island. It is this sense of isolation, born of the proximity of the ocean, that leads us to believe we have put America behind us when we stand on a beach facing the waves, until we turn around to find that America seems to have caught up with us.



Cape Cod Bird Club Inc.

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

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Editor ~ Jim Talin
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BIRD SIGHTING

Jackie Sones

June and July 1995

Seabirds. A few seabirds were spotted at First Encounter Beach in Eastham on 8 June. Blair Nikula reported the following: 4 Sooty Shearwaters, 145 Northern Gannets, 1 jaeger, and 2 alcids (possibly puffins!). Observers on boats in Wellfleet Harbor, on Stellwagen Bank, and east of Chatham reported small numbers of Sooty Shearwaters, Greater Shearwaters, and Wilson's Storm-Petrels throughout the month of July.

Rails and Gallinules. One Sora and one Common Moorhen were seen on South Monomoy Island in Chatham on 28 and 29 June respectively, by Sharon Ware and other observers.

Shorebirds. Three Stilt Sandpipers were spotted on South Monomoy Island in Chatham on 13 July by Jackie Sones. Shorebird counts by Blair Nikula on North Monomoy Island in Chatham on 30 July included the following: 250 Semipalmated Plovers, 2300 Semipalmated Sandpipers, 1400 Short-billed Dowitchers, 1200 Sanderlings, 200 Red Knots, 200 Willets, and 1 Marbled Godwit.

Terns and Skimmers. The following sightings came from Nauset Marsh in Eastham: at least two pairs of Arctic Terns on Plover Island and four pairs of Black Skimmers (three on Plover Island and one on New Island) throughout June and July; and two Royal Terns on New Island on 18 July. Peter Trimble also reported two Royal Terns from Cuttyhunk Island on 30 July. Up to six Black Terns were observed on South Beach in Chatham during late July by various observers.

Bald Eagle. Two immature birds were seen by many observers in Provincetown and Wellfleet throughout June and July. Kyle Jones reported a high count of five immature eagles at Pilgrim Lake in Truro on 13 June.

Mississippi Kite. Kyle Jones reported a Mississippi Kite from Pilgrim Heights in Truro on 17 June. The next day a Mississippi Kite was observed in So. Wellfleet by Jackie Sones. On 19 June, Kevin Ryan spotted two Mississippi Kites at Nauset Beach.

Acadian Flycatcher. One bird was heard singing in the Punkhorn Parklands in Brewster on 16 June by Blair Nikula. One or two Acadian Flycatchers are recorded almost annually on Cape Cod, usually during spring migration in late May or early June. There are no breeding records for this species on the Cape.

Swallows and Martins. One Cliff Swallow and one Purple Martin were reported from Race Point in Provincetown on 8 June by Blair Nikula.

Ruddy Duck. Three birds (one male and two females) were seen on South Monomoy Island in Chatham on 28 and 29 June by Sharon Ware and other observers. It is possible these represent breeding birds. South Monomoy is one of the two known breeding sites for Ruddy Ducks in Massachusetts (the other is Plum Island).

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 individual membership,
\$15 family membership to
CCBC, Cape Cod Museum of Natural History,
PO Box 1710, Brewster, MA 02631

PROGRAMS/ MEETINGS

Ruth Connaughton

On Monday evening **September 11th**, 7:45 pm at the Cape Cod Museum of Natural History on Route 6A in Brewster. Chris Leahy will present a program entitled *Birds and The Natural History of Mongolia*. Chris Leahy is an accomplished naturalist and birder. For the last 12 years he has traveled the seven continents, leading international trips for Mass. Audubon. Chris is also the author of *Birdwatchers Companion*.

On Monday evening **October 9th** at 7:45 pm at the Cape Cod Museum of Natural History on Route 6A in Brewster. Alvah Sanborn will present a program entitled *Island Magic*. Alvah Sanborn, was former director of Mass Audubon's Pleasant Valley Sanctuary and Nature Center in Lenox for twenty-seven years. He has suffered from a mild case of isleomania for many years. He has visited and photographed wildlife on over twenty islands from Islesboro to Trinidad and west to Heron Island on the barrier reef off Australia.

A Thank You

Barbara Stanton

I would like to thank the following people for making my year as "the cookie lady" go so smoothly. Thanks to: Phyllis Lemack, Kay Walcott, Kathy McGinley, Jean Dean, Kathleen Hall, Jinks Keil, Bobsie Whitlock, Elinor Miller, Lois Tillson, Betsy Hewlett, Janet Silverio, Betty Verdery, Eleanor Winslow, Bessie Tirrell, Margot Hakes, Anne Glover, Kathleen Casey, Elaine Heath, Ruth Connaughton, Dot Kierstead, Janet Judd, Sue Handy and Janet Evans. If there is anyone I have forgotten to mention, my sincere apology; one month I forgot to bring the sign-up sheet with me and relied upon a stray piece of paper that I have since lost. Janet Silverio will be my successor this year as I will be more involved in the distribution of the newsletter. So, thanks again, and I look forward to seeing you all again.

LETTERS

Greetings to all. A friend took this photo at a park called Los Haitises. (Note: the photo shows a variety of terns roosting on dock pilings.) Also recently visited the Laguna de Oviedo, a wonderful place like Monomoy with Mangroves, great blues, great egrets plus flamingos, black bellied plovers, willets, yellowlegs, dowitchers plus stilts & in the woods endemic flycatchers and vireos. If you put my list in the newsletter, please urge people to visit. Once here the transportation is cheap, and I know some great places to stay for \$50 (RD)=\$4 a night. I like this life; it's a bit crazy but most of the time very mellow. Greetings and thanks for the newsletter.

Kate Wallace

(Kate works for the Peace Corps in the Dominican Republic.)

FIELD TRIPS

Jinks Keil

September

Saturday, September 9th. Morris Island, Chatham. 9:00 AM. Meet at the Monomoy Wildlife Refuge Parking Lot. Tom Noonan, 394-4588, and Jim Talin, 896-7169.

Sunday, September 10th. Fort Hill, Eastham. 8:00 AM. Meet in the lower parking lot. Art King, 255-8919.

Tuesday, September 12th. Yarmouth area. 6:45 AM. Meet at the "Yarmouth Meeting Trails" parking lot on Higgins Crowell Rd, 0.4 miles north of Buck Island Rd. 6:45 am. Stauffer Miller, 362-3384.

Wednesday, September 20th. Falmouth. 8:00 AM. Meet behind Town Hall, Falmouth center. Mary Ropes, 548-6086.

Monday, September 25. Yarmouthport. 8:00 AM. Meet beside playground. Bud Marchant, 362-6675.

Tuesday, September 26th. Harwich Conservation Area. 8:00 AM. Meet at Conservation Area on Bells Neck Rd in West Harwich. Bessie Tirrell, 432-9248.

October

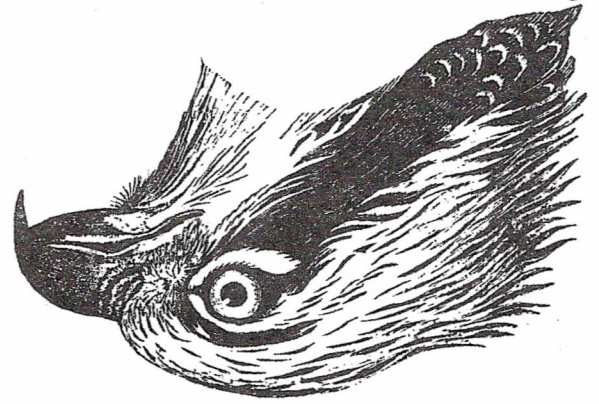
Sunday, October 1st. Wellfleet Bay Wildlife Sanctuary Sunset Walk. 4:30-6:30 PM. Bob Prescott, 349-2615.

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

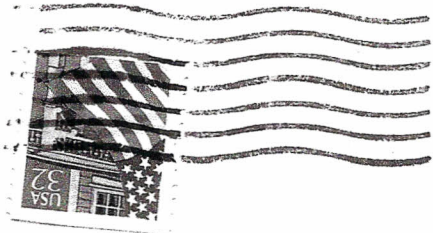
Saturday, October 14th. Marstons Mills Airport Area. 8:00 AM. Meet at the Glider Parking lot off Race Lane, north of Route 149. Stauffer Miller, 362-3384.

Thursday, October 19th. 8:00 AM. Birding Harwich and Chatham. Meet at Saquatucket Harbor across from Thompson's Farm Market, Route 28, Harwichport. Bessie Tirrell, 432-9248.

Tuesday, October 24th, Sandwich, Sandy Neck, West Barnstable. 8:30 AM. Meet in the Sandy Neck Parking Lot. Bob Pease, 790-1351.



Frank Caruso
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The Cape Cod Museum Of Natural History
PO BOX 1710, Brewster, MA 02631

Cape Cod Bird Club



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 hotline 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,
or call 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.

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

conclude that overfishing is the cause of the crisis, although she repeatedly hints she believes this to be the case. Despite this failure of nerve, the book breaks new ground simply by opening up an important marine environment few of us get much exposure to. In addition, the guide is full of tantalizing historical nuggets such as the reason nations only claimed legal jurisdiction three miles out from the coastline. For a couple of centuries, three miles was the maximum distance coastal batteries could hurl a cannon ball.

Although clearly more field guide than literature, this handsome volume can take its rightful place on any Cape Cod nature lover's bookshelf next to Henry Beston's Outermost House, Thoreau's Cape Cod Journal, Robert Finch's essays, and, of course, our own Birding Cape Cod. Stellwagen Bank is published by Down East Books, Camden, Maine. It sells for \$14.95.