



# The Kingfisher

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Summer (Jul— Sep) 2020

The Cape Cod Bird Club meets on the second Monday of each month, Sept through May, at 7:00PM at the Cape Cod Museum of Natural History, 869 Route 6A, Brewster, MA.

## President's Message

Dear CCBC Supporters,

It's been a very strange three months. I hope you and your family are well. We've all had to learn new habits to keep ourselves and our neighbors safe. We are very fortunate to live here on Cape Cod, where it is possible to walk amongst nature and still maintain a proper physical distance, while still appreciating the sights and the sounds of our birds—be they local residents, returning breeders, or passage migrants.

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On page 3, you will read a report from our Director of Conservation and Education, Herb Raffaele, who gives us an update on the first results of our investments made just a year ago. We all can be very proud of this new initiative—taken under Herb's inspirational and knowledgeable leadership, and I hope you will continue to support the Conservation Fund as we look for other outstanding opportunities to leverage our investments in the future of the migrating birds we so eagerly await each spring.

For some light reading, on pages 4-5, consider Peggy Sagan's winter getaway to Southeast Arizona informed by eBird and Merlin—two online birding apps.

While no final decisions have yet been taken regarding our programs in the fall (your Executive Committee will meet in July to plan for 2020-21), it is likely that we will be continuing our online Zoom-hosted meetings at least until the December holiday meeting. The Annual Meeting in May was attended by nearly 50 participants who heard and saw an enjoyable presentation by Gina Nichols on "Spring Migration in Lesbos, Greece." We will host another online Zoom meeting in July (see page 2).

Watch our Website for program updates and for the possibility of resuming guided walks in September—with limitations on the numbers of participants and with other Covid-19-related restrictions. In the meantime, on pages 2 and 3, MJ Foti has put together a list of suggested Cape Cod sites for summer birding—sites at which it should be possible to practice physical distancing.

**HELP WANTED:** I am *still* looking for someone to take on the responsibilities of **Newsletter Editor**. All the work can be done at home by computer on one's own schedule once per quarter. Please consider helping out the Club by volunteering for this important job, which I have been filling on an *interim* (!) basis for the past three years.

Good birding! *Peter Bono, President*

## IMPORTANT — PLEASE RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP

The new membership year starts on September 1. We need your membership support to print and distribute this newsletter, to host our website, to pay for our Zoom account, to pay our speakers, and to fund our Young Birder Scholarship, as well as to support other worthy bird causes through the Conservation Fund.

**Check the Mailing Label:** the expiration date of your membership is given after your name. If it doesn't say "(8/21)" or later, then you have not renewed for 2021.

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Send articles, images, etc. to the editor, Peter Bono, at [pbono@prba.com](mailto:pbono@prba.com)

CCBC Website:

[www.capecodbirdclub.org](http://www.capecodbirdclub.org)  
(with color copy of *Kingfisher*)

Webmaster: Terry Gavin

[wbmstr@capecodbirdclub.org](mailto:wbmstr@capecodbirdclub.org)

CCBC Facebook page:

[www.facebook.com/  
CapeCodBirdClub](https://www.facebook.com/CapeCodBirdClub)

American  
Oystercatcher

Cape Cod

photo by  
MJ Foti



## Programs and Club Bird Walks (Summer 2020)

► **Monthly meetings and programs** are a time to converse with your fellow birders, hear about their recent excursions and life birds, and enjoy a great program. The meetings are **free** and open to the public and **start at 7 pm—normally at the Cape Cod Museum of Natural History in Brewster, but, until large group meetings are again allowed, we will host the programs online via the Zoom teleconferencing platform. No registration necessary. Link sent to all active members. If you are not a member, email pbono@prba.com to request a link.** Check the Club website ([www.capecodbirdclub.org](http://www.capecodbirdclub.org)) for detailed information about the programs.



### July 13, 2020: 7 pm Zoom Meeting Share your sightings and view two videos: Colombia and Squirrel Wars

Diego Calderón was researching birds in a remote area of Colombia when he was kidnapped by FARC—the rebels fighting the government. Now, years later, he's decided to return to meet former FARC members and hopefully find some meaning in what happened.

Colombia is home to more species of birds than any other country on earth. Diego guides us through just one of the many endemic-rich regions: the Caribbean coast and the Santa Marta mountains.

Anyone who has ever installed a backyard bird feeder has quickly become aware that these structures not only lure birds but that the feeder is a natural squirrel-magnet. Indeed, entire books have been written about "squirrel wars." You might assume that a former NASA Jet Propulsion Laboratory engineer could solve the problem, but as Mark Rober confirmed, this is not so easy. Join us to learn the outcome of scientist versus squirrel!

**Check the Website for future Zoom Meetings as they are scheduled.**

**It is unlikely that we will be meeting again as a group in person until December at the earliest.**

## Club Bird Walks (Summer 2020)

**All CCBC Walks for the foreseeable future have been cancelled due to the Covid-19 restrictions.**

However, check the CCBC website for any walks that might be scheduled for fall migration. If we do resume holding walks, there will be strict rules to be followed, so make sure you understand your obligations before signing up for and attending a walk. Thank you for your patience and cooperation as we navigate these uncharted seas.

Head to [West Dennis Beach](#) parking lot and drive towards the breakwater and Bass River as far as you are permitted to drive. Look for summer-breeding Piping Plovers, Least Terns, Willets, and Osprey, as well as migrating shorebirds. You'll find a variety of gulls and terns; keep a lookout for Lesser Black-backed Gull which can usually be seen here every year. Adults will show yellow legs and will be slightly smaller, more slender, and darker gray above than Herring Gull.

[Crane Wildlife Management Area](#), located off Route 151 in Falmouth, is a unique birding destination that features grassland habitat ideal for Eastern Meadowlark, nesting American Kestrels, Killdeer, Prairie Warbler, Baltimore and Orchard Oriole, and an interesting array of sparrow species, including Grasshopper Sparrow, Savannah Sparrow, the occasional and rare Clay Colored Sparrow, and more. You can also enjoy the Blue Grosbeaks that have been returning to this site for a number of years during summer months to nest in the "bowl" that lies past the parking area and to the right.

*Walks continue on the next page*

## Bird Walks (continued); Conservation Fund Update

Bell's Neck Recreation Area is a beautiful spot which can be reached from Depot Street in Harwich, off Rte. 28. Turn where you see the large, white church and bear right at the fork to get onto Bell's Neck Rd. You'll reach the "car bridge" where you can scan for swallows, raptors, Marsh Wren, and the possible American, or more rare, Least Bittern. Continue on and there will be a dirt road to the right. This will take you to the "foot bridge". Once you've gotten an eyeful of the meandering, marshy inlets, head back to the main road and scan the East Reservoir to your right, and the West Reservoir, which is wide open and more easily scoped. Black-crowned Night Heron, Cormorants, and the occasional Bald Eagle are just a small sampling of the species you can run into here. Return in the fall to greet the overwintering waterfowl as well. You never know what can turn up at Bell's Neck.

Sandy Neck Beach Park in Sandwich can be easily accessed by parking at the lot near the gatehouse if you plan on hiking the trails that border Great Marsh. Walk the loop along the Marsh Trail, through the dunes, and back along the beach, looking for migrating shorebirds, songbirds, and terns. You might even be treated to some pelagic species as you walk the beach. It's about 1.5 miles of walking in soft sand.

Fort Hill in Eastham provides truly breathtaking vistas, from the lower or upper parking lots just past the Captain Penniman House, all the way to Hemenway Landing. You can walk the 1 mile main loop trail, which crosses open fields and also connects with the Red Maple Swamp Trail. In addition to a variety of shorebirds, songbirds, and gulls, keep an eye out for Northern Harrier and American Kestrel. This is a bird-rich spot that won't disappoint.

### **Making a Difference in Bird Conservation—by Herb Raffaele, Director, Conservation and Education**

June 1<sup>st</sup> was a historic day for the CCBC – we received our first "final report" for a bird conservation grant the Club provided to **Antigua/Barbuda**, a small island nation in the heart of the Caribbean. And what a success it was! Thanks to the Club's \$1,000 donation, the Environmental Awareness Group (EAG), run out of Antigua's local museum, conducted 6 lengthy training workshops for 35 participants ranging in age from teenagers to a 39-year-old. You can find details about the training on our website. Most significantly, the participants were so excited by the experience that they met after the course to form Antigua/Barbuda's first bird club.

This is no small accomplishment. Only a few years ago islands like Antigua/Barbuda were fortunate to have a single individual moderately knowledgeable about birds. To now have an actual club of bird enthusiasts is historic. I do not believe any other Caribbean island of similar size can claim the same.

In our pipeline, to build upon this success, the Club has projects presently underway in **Jamaica, Puerto Rico, and Haiti**. It is also considering new bird conservation initiatives in **Cuba**, the **British Virgin Islands**, and one spanning all of the Caribbean's Spanish-speaking countries: **Dominican Republic, Cuba and Puerto Rico** (a Commonwealth of the U.S.). This latter initiative is worth further detail. Over the past several years, a team of local experts from throughout the Caribbean have compiled a beautiful and educational coloring book of about 50 birds found only among the Caribbean islands. It will knock your socks off when you see it. Its intent is to stimulate in young children pride in the special birds that share their small island nations with them. Just off the presses, the book, however, is available only in English. Yet, the first language of three of the five largest Caribbean nations is Spanish. That's a problem – a common one in the Caribbean. Oftentimes, it is never surmounted.

Minor financial assistance from the CCBC has the potential to help make this important tool a reality for Spanish-speaking children – thousands of children – in highly needy countries, who have little in the way of stimulus regarding the uniqueness of the avifauna which surrounds them. Your Board feels very fortunate to be able to assist with this very special initiative. So, here's where you come in. While our Club has available some discretionary funds to dedicate to projects such as this, such funds are quite limited. To that end, we urge interested members to learn more regarding our new conservation initiatives and to contribute funds specifically to enhance their impact.

This conservation fund of the CCBC, despite lacking a catchy name or fancy logo, is no fly-by-night operation. The funds the Club is spending will have a positive conservation impact on birds far beyond what your donations to famous bird and nature conservation groups will generate. Our bang-for-the-buck is likely 5-10 times greater than theirs. If you have any inclination to help to conserve the avian creatures that you, I, and everyone in the Club derive so much pleasure from, please consider contributing specifically to your Club's conservation fund. Should you desire further information on this initiative, feel free to contact me at [birds.18@hotmail.com](mailto:birds.18@hotmail.com).

## Club News; Club Merchandise; Birding in Southeast Arizona

### Welcome to Our New Members (Apr 2020 — Jun 2020)

Margaret Bergstrom, Cotuit

Christine Dugan, Lincoln, MA

Phoebe Gibson, Marston Mills

Frank Graves, Lincoln, MA

Andrew Lear, Watertown, MA

Jack &amp; Susan Martin, South Dennis

Joe Moneghan, East Sandwich

Chime Pelzom, Hyannis

Emily Swift, West Barnstable

### Merchandise Corner

Our collaboration with Cape Cod Embroidery is closed until Covid-19 restrictions are lifted. We will notify members when we reopen our website (<https://ccbird.itemorder.com/>). You will be able to purchase items such as shirts, caps, hats, jackets and backpacks bearing the club's Belted Kingfisher logo. Meanwhile, if you need anything, contact John Goodchild, the CCBC Merchandise Director ([john.goodchild@worchester.edu](mailto:john.goodchild@worchester.edu)).

### Technology-enabled Birding in Southeast Arizona, by Peggy Sagan

In late February, we were lucky enough to escape the Cape Cod winter with a two-week trip to Arizona. We planned the trip on short notice but with a clear objective: to get outdoors and bird as much as possible. Fortunately, we succeeded on both counts, with lots of help from eBird.

Let's begin with a disclaimer. I'm an okay birder and a reluctant user of technology. However, I was familiar enough with eBird to know that it would help us identify "Hotspots" and find out what species had been seen recently. We had visited the Tucson area once before, plus we had recommendations from friends who winter there, and so we arrived with some target destinations in mind.

**Tohono Chul Park** provided ample opportunity to become reacquainted with Cactus Wren, Gambel's Quail, Verdin, Lesser Goldfinch, and Black-tailed Gnatcatchers, for starters, as we wandered through the desert landscape. This was pre-Covid 19, so we were able to enjoy a delightful lunch on the patio at Tohono Chul before continuing our (successful) search for Costa's Hummingbird. On day two, we headed to **Sweetwater Wetlands**, a favorite from our last trip and only a 15-minute drive from our Airbnb. There, in addition to Ruddy Ducks, Northern Shovelers, **Cinnamon Teal**, and Gadwalls in full breeding plumage, we got our first-of-trip encounter with a charismatic Greater Roadrunner, vocal Ladder-backed Woodpecker (which sounds like our Downy), and shuffling Abert's Towhees.



Tucson is flanked on two sides by **Saguaro National Park**, with driving loops through beautiful, desolate country and crisscrossed by hiking trails. A morning walk on the Mica View trail (SNP East) yielded Curve-billed Thrashers, Phainopepla, Rufous-winged Sparrows, and the usual assortments of woodpeckers.



Of course, no trip to Tucson is complete without a visit to the **Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum**, west of town. Upon our arrival, we spotted a Cedar Waxwing and Black-throated Sparrow in the parking lot. The winding trails through the "outdoor museum" revealed pockets of birds, including a Townsend's Solitaire and Hermit Thrush. Although we couldn't enter them on our eBird list, we reveled in the numerous raptors who literally put on a show for us ("Raptor Free Flight" at 10:00 and 2:00): Crested Caracara, **Harris's Hawk** (a handsome species that hunts cooperatively in family groups), Peregrine Falcon, Chihuahuan Raven, and the familiar Red-tailed Hawk (but the darker western form).

By day five, we needed some direction, and that's where eBird became indispensable. Most evenings we planned for the following day by logging into the eBird website on our iPads, clicking on the "Explore" tab, and entering Pima County in the search box. We were immediately rewarded with a wealth of online data -- too much, in fact, to be helpful! So we targeted our search. First, we selected the "Hotspots" tab and then specified the current month and year. (No sense looking for fall migrants in late March.) Now we had relevant data, but eBird provided even more help. By clicking on the map at the right of the screen, we could see the location of the Hotspots, making it easy to determine which were within our driving range. Finding a site convenient to us (or not), we then reviewed the recent sightings lists. When we came across a species we weren't familiar with, voila, we clicked on the species name and were immediately connected to Merlin, seamlessly, where we could see photos and read about the unfamiliar bird. Seeing the "recent sightings" list was often the deciding factor in choosing the next day's destination.

Each morning, with a plan, our bins and scope, and a bag of peanut butter and jelly sandwiches (who wants to take time out from birding for lunch?), we plugged our destination into Waze and were on our way.

In the field, we relied on the eBird app for the iPhone to record our species. The added benefit of using the app is that it identifies your GPS location and then pulls up a list of likely species in a 20 x 20 km area. This was extremely helpful in narrowing down the options when trying to identify an unfamiliar bird. By clicking on the species name, the “Observation Details” screen popped up, including the link to Merlin. Not the sparrow we’re seeing? Click on the next name of the list and check out its photo. In eight out of ten cases, we felt confident enough in our technology-enhanced-ID skills to enter the bird on our list.

This system of identifying and exploring e-Bird Hotspots introduced us to locations only the locals know about, including **Gene C. Reid Park** (in the middle of Tucson). While families picnicked and kids ignored the “Do not feed the ducks” signs, we spotted a solitary **Snow Goose** intermingled with literally hundreds of wintering ducks and coots, Say’s and Black Phoebe, a Cassin’s Kingbird, and brilliant Vermilion Flycatchers.

As our week in Tucson drew to a close, we joined a volunteer-led bird walk through the bone-dry riparian habitat of **Catalina State Park**. In addition to the now familiar Verdin, Lesser Goldfinch, Gila Woodpeckers, and Common Ravens, we spotted our first Crissal Thrasher, Gray Flycatcher, and Green-tailed Towhee of the trip. Then we packed the car and began week two with a short drive south (it looked much further on the map) to **Sahuarita/Green Valley**, “Gateway to Madera Canyon.” As we reviewed the eBird sightings for the area, we knew it was going to be more challenging to add “new” life birds to our lists. Recognizing our limitations as birders, we had arranged a day with a birding guide, Laurens Halsey, whom we had hired on our previous trip, to take us further south to Patagonia. He asked us what our target birds were. “Anything, but we wouldn’t mind seeing the Elegant Trogon.”



Laurens planned a route with stops along the way. At the **Paton Center for Hummingbirds**, we were delighted to see the Blue Grosbeaks, Bridled Titmouse, Violet-crowned Hummingbirds, and Lazuli Buntings (much more brilliantly plumaged than the one who wintered at the Wellfleet Bay Wildlife Sanctuary several years ago), as we rested comfortably on a shaded bench. Highlights of **Patagonia State Park** – other than the beautifully maintained trails, picnic areas, and viewing platforms – were three (3!) Elegant Trogons and a Hutton’s Vireo. Working our way home, we stopped at the **de Anza Trail in Tubac**, where Laurens found us two Rose-breasted Becards, Bewick’s Wrens, and both Gilded and Northern Flickers. Satisfying!

On our own the remainder of our trip, we relied on eBird and Waze to direct us to prime birding spots. Although it was a long drive, the day we spent at **Lake Cochise** in Wilcox was worthwhile, with thousands of waterfowl, a solitary Eared Grebe, Mexican Ducks, Wilson’s Snipes, Sandhill Cranes, and Western Meadowlarks, singing away. At **Madera Canyon**, we picked up Acorn Woodpeckers and more familiar Dark-eyed Juncos, Blue-grey and Black-tailed Gnatcatchers, and Ruby-crowned Kinglets. A generous tree close to the entrance of the lower **Florida Canyon** yielded eight species of birds, including Black-throated Grey Warblers, Townsend’s Warblers, and Hammond’s Flycatcher. The **Green Valley Water**

**Treatment Plant** (WRF), with very limited access, attracted an abundance of waterfowl and shorebirds, including Killdeer, Lesser Scaup, Ring-necked Ducks, and the lone Great-Blue Heron of our trip. Five species of sparrows headlined the list on our naturalist-led trip at **Canoa Ranch Conservation Park** – a success story for reestablishing native habitats.

Into each life, some rain must fall. And it did, on our last day, but we knew that birds must eat – so we headed to the feeding station at the **Santa Rita Lodge at Madera Canyon**. What a feast, for us and them! The covered viewing deck was crowded with birders delighted at the spectacle: Rivoli’s Hummingbirds, Arizona and Acorn Woodpeckers, boisterous Mexican Jays, Yellow-eyed Juncos (mixed in with the more familiar dark-eyed cousins), Spotted Towhees, and one Hepatic Tanager.

Although we would have seen more species had we been traveling with a guide, we had the satisfaction of identifying 117 species on our own (a few thanks to Lauren) in our 12 days of birding Southeastern Arizona. And next time we visit, we may even remember some of them and where to find them – with help from eBird and Merlin.

Member Photo Gallery



February 2020 in Thailand, MJ Foti photos: (1) Brahminy Kite, (2) Greater Coucal, (3) Scarlet-backed Flowerpecker, (4) Stripe-throated Bulbul, (5) Greater Racket-tailed Drongo



Cape Cod's "Celebrity," out-of-range Purple Gallinule at Dennis Pond, Yarmouth Port: photos by MJ Foti and Peter Bono (left to right)



Hybrid Bufflehead x Common Goldeneye, Chatham, by David Clapp



Turkey Vultures eating a possum, Provincetown, by David Clapp

Membership Form for New and Renewing Members

**Membership Form for the Cape Cod Bird Club 2020-2021 Membership Year—RENEW NOW**

This page may be used as your CCBC Membership **renewal form** and also may be used by new members joining for the first time. Remember—**dues should be paid before September 1, 2020**, and your membership will expire on Aug. 31, 2021. **New members may join at any time.**

- Individual Membership \$20.00                       Family (Household) Membership \$25.00  
 Scholar \$50.00                       Sponsor \$75.00                       Patron \$100.00

Additional tax-deductable donations are much appreciated. Thank you for your support.

**Membership dues** \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
**Conservation & Education Fund** \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
**Extra Gift to Club** \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
**Total Enclosed** \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Please return this form with your check made out to Cape Cod Bird Club and mail to:  
**Cape Cod Bird Club, Attn: Membership, PO Box 351, Centerville, MA 02632**

**Household Address (required):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Household Tel. No. (required):** \_\_\_\_\_

Name(s)	M/F*	Email Address**	Approx. Year of Birth*

**Notes:** \* (Optional) Please provide your gender and approx. year of birth (it doesn't need to be exact), so that we can design programs to serve you better.

\*\* (Optional) If we have your email address, we can send periodic, updated notifications in a timely manner regarding speakers, meeting cancellations due to bad weather, and so forth.

Your email address is not shared with any other organization.

**CHECK HERE** if you would like to save the Club postage expenses, by electing to receive your newsletter (*The Kingfisher*) **by email only.**



**Cape Cod Bird Club**  
**PO Box 351**  
**Centerville, MA 02632**

### **The Cape Cod Bird Club, Inc.**

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 your dues along with the membership form available for downloading from our web site ([www.capecodbirdclub.org/join/](http://www.capecodbirdclub.org/join/)) or on page 7 to: **CCBC, PO Box 351, Centerville, MA 02632**

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