

The Cape Cod Bird Club Newsletter

The Kingfisher

VOL 49 (3)

Spring (April-June 2021)

The Cape Cod Bird Club meets on the second Monday of each month, Sept through May, at 7:00PM—*now via Zoom*—and at the Cape Cod Museum of Natural History, 869 Route 6A, Brewster, MA when in person meetings are permitted again.

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www.capecodbirdclub.org
(with color copy of Kingfisher)

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CCBC Facebook page: www.facebook.com/CapeCodBirdClub



Eastern Bluebird D. Clapp

President's Message

"Spring won't let me stay in this house any longer! I must get out and breathe the air deeply again." – Gustav Mahler

I'm with Mahler! To that end, your CCBC Board has been working hard to figure out how we are going to be able to open up ... and when. MJ Foti, our Walks Director, is looking at various models (including Mass Audubon) and determining how we can adapt the rules to suit our situation. We expect to have details announced soon, so please keep a close eye on the CCBC Website for details and timing. We will send out an email blast to all members when our plan is ready. With regard to in-person, indoor meetings, we will decide at the end of the summer, and it will depend upon the policy of the CC Museum of Natural History, where we hold our meetings. We will keep you informed. Clearly, the more people who are vaccinated, the sooner will we be in a position to get back to normal.

It's been 10 years since the CCBC surveyed its membership, so we have decided to solicit your views. Rather than asking you to answer a comprehensive survey covering lots of different topics, we will be sending out links to a series of short surveys (10-12 questions; 5-7 minutes to complete the survey) at three to four week intervals. You will have about 10 days to respond to each survey. The more responses we get, the more valid will be the results. By the time you read this column, you should still have time to fill out the first survey—on your opinion of *The Kingfisher*. If you have not taken the survey yet, please do so now by clicking on this link: http://bit.ly/CCBC-survey-1.

We are still seeking a member willing to serve on the CCBC Board as Secretary--a one-year term starting July 1. Contact me if you are interested. Elections will be held at the May Zoom meeting; the slate of nominees will be emailed to all members before May 1.

Your editors have put together another fine issue, and we have two fine Zoom programs set up for April and May.

We've signed up 48 new households/75 new

members since the start of our fiscal year in July, and I haven't met most of you.

I can't wait to meet in person again!

Good birding!

Peter Bono, President



Forbidden City, Beijing, China – May 2014

Programs (Spring 2021); Walks

► Monthly meetings and programs will be via Zoom until it's safe to once again gather at the Cape Cod Museum of Natural History in Brewster, hopefully in the fall. Our meetings are free and open to the public and start at 7 pm online via the Zoom teleconferencing platform. No registration necessary. A link will be sent to all active members. If you are not a member and wish to attend, email pbono@prba.com a few days before the meeting to request a link. Check the CCBC website for detailed information.

Apr 12, 7 pm - Birding & Beyond in Cuba

Join us on a "visit" to key bird locations on the island—Viñales, Zapata, Guanahacabibes, Cayo



Cuban Trogon

Coco, Baracoa, Topes de Collantes, and Havana—as well as examine opportunities for "connecting" with our counterparts in Cuba. We will look at the fascinating birds, places, and people in terms of advancing bird education, conservation, and responsible eco-tourism.

Paul Baicich and Sole Pagliuca wish to convey to you some of the birds, nature, and potential on the island, opportunities that can be

found at one of our country's closest neighbors.

Paul has been an active birder since his early teens and has led or co-led birding tours from Alaska to Cuba. He co-edits (with Wayne Petersen) the popular monthly Birding Community E-bulletin and writes a regular column, "Quick Takes," for *Bird Watcher's Digest*.

Soledad spent many years working on human rights issues in Central America. Currently she is Projects Director of the Friendship Association, which sponsors delegations to Cuba in support of their conservation projects.

Read more about them on our Programs page.

May 10, 7 pm - Citizen Science—eBird

Birding can make a big difference for the natural world. In this presentation, learn how your bird sightings are valuable to researchers and conservationists through eBird, helping support efforts to better protect and understand birds around the world. eBird is a great example of Citizen Science and each of us can play a part. Our presenter, Ian Davies got his start right here in Mass and on the Cape.

Ian Davies introwas duced to the world of birding \mathbf{at} the Manomet Bird Observatory at 13 and has never looked back. After spending his forma-



tive years birding on the South Shore and Cape, he's had the good fortune to travel to 50 countries in pursuit of all things feathered and now works at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology as the eBird Project Coordinator.

Read more on our Programs page.

Club Bird Walks continue to be on hold as of this writing. Feel free to check the website for any policy changes during the April – June time period covered in the newsletter. Here are suggestions for spring migration from MJ Foti.

- Beech Forest Walks Provincetown It's time for spring migration! One of the most popular spots from late April through May is Beech Forest. You are sure to run into birders beginning at sunrise and continuing throughout the day, though early morning is generally most productive. From Route 6, turn north onto Race Point Road. The parking lot is about 0.5 mile down the road on the left. Take your time scanning the parking lot, then stroll along the sandy loop trail around Blackwater Pond for migrating warblers and other passerines.
- Scusset Beach State Park -- Sagamore Begin your walk at the parking lot in front of the fish pier. Walk the wooded trails directly across from the parking lot, stroll the bike trail along the canal, or scan grasses and thickets by the campground at the end of the road for warblers, vireos, and flycatchers. There's much ground to cover. Take exit 1A from Route 6W towards Hyannis, Boston and follow Scusset Beach Rd. until you reach the parking lot.
- Robert F. Smith Cold Brook Preserve Harwich Take an easy, leisurely walk around this overgrown cranberry bog and remember to scan the skies above for raptors and the tree-lined thickets for a nice mix of songbirds. Managed by Harwich Conservation Trust, and formerly known as "Bank Street Bogs," it's an easily overlooked turn into a generous parking lot. Located on Bank Street on the east side of the road between Main Street and Route 28.

Don't forget to check out the <u>Mass Audubon website</u> for a list of sanctuaries located on Cape Cod and beyond. While you're at it, if you're looking for walks in the Falmouth area, check out The 300 Committee Land Trust website (300committee.org). It's loaded with great information and excellent trail maps. Happy Birding!

Signs of the Season, Merchandise

Signs of the Season/Spring by Peggy Sagan

Growing up in the South, I was subjected to seasonal sartorial rules. Breaking the rules, such as wearing patent leather shoes before Memorial Day, could have serious unnamed consequences, but I was too law-abiding to find out what they were.

We had other misconceptions related to the seasons. A common belief was that robins presage the arrival of spring. "Au contraire," I was admonished early in my birding "career" by more experienced birders, who set me straight. Soon I observed that robins are indeed with us throughout the winter – this year, especially.

For one to whom New England winters seem interminably long, dark, and cold, spring cannot arrive soon enough. But how do I know spring is here, especially when the weather doesn't match the date on the calendar? I look out the window:

Who's visiting our feeders and bird bath or paddling in the marsh behind our house? known to rush the season by celebrating the arrival of male Red-winged Blackbirds, even though we see them occasionally throughout the winter. By mid-March they are regulars in our yard, squabbling over the feeder perches and flashing their red epaulets, followed in a week or two by flocks of Common Grackles, sent (we suspect) by Mike O'Connor to empty our feeders.

But the true harbinger of spring is the nasal call of the American Woodcock. Starting in early March, we hop in the car at twilight and drive slowly toward the Marconi Wireless Station in South Wellfleet, windows down, heat turned on "high," listening for their weird call and wing whistles. When we hear "peent" -- magical! Suffering from annual bird name aphasia, I'm likely to shout "Whirly Birds!" until my husband supplies the correct name.



American Woodcock

Throughout April, we look for shore birds stopping over on their way north. In 2020, a cloud of 15 Greater Yellowlegs descended on the marsh on April 19,

feeding frenetically. Black-bellied Ployers arrived later in May, departing almost as quickly as they arrived on their way to claim the best nesting spots in the tundra.

> The early morning bird chorus swells toward the end of April, as summer breeders start to arrive. At the bird banding station at Mass Audubon Wellfleet, by the first week of May there's a surge in the number of Common Yellowthroats, Gray Catbirds, Baltimore Orioles, and Orchard Orioles observed and banded, and the first of the Baltimore Orioles turn up at our house, looking for their jelly feeder. May also brings the long-awaited return of migrating warblers -- tiny, flitting, leaf

> -obscured teases. Although over 25 species typically pass through the Outer Cape each spring, our yard usually hosts only two or three. In 2020, however, during

Mass Audubon's Bird-at-Home-a-Thon, we observed five "new" species in our yard, including Chestnut -sided, Black-throated Blue, Blackpoll, Black-and-white, and Wilson's warblers – but, of course, the mid-May 2020 fall-out will go down in the record books.

For me, spring departs with the last Blackpoll, signaling that it's time to retrieve my patent leather shoes from the back of the closet. And time to await the birds of summer.

Peggy Sagan is a bird feeder, bird watcher, Cape Cod Bird Club director, and volunteer bird bander at the Wellfleet Bay Wildlife Sanctuary.

Merchandise Corner—shop, support, and promote the Club



Greater Yellowlegs

Our collaboration with Cape Cod Embroidery will be open for two weeks starting on the day of our monthly Zoom membership meetings in April and May.

During those times, please visit the website (https://ccbird.itemorder.com/), where 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@worcester.edu).



Barnstable Birding, Monomoy, Wing Island Banding

Barnstable Land Trust Birding

Variously known as the Pogorelc Sanctuary (eBird), Brickyard Pond (eBird), and the Barnstable Land Trust (the sign on Rt 6A near the intersection with Parker Rd), this property has an easy path to great views of a heron rookery and is a great guick birding stop.

Park at the Land Trust building and head back from the northeast corner of the lot. Continue straight at a left fork to an observation platform, about 100 yards total and easy walking. The platform overlooks a pond with a rook-



ery on the far side. Last September and October it was very active with Great and Snowy egrets, Black-crowned and Yellow-crowned night-herons, and various allies such as Double-crested Cormorant. The birds are fairly close, giving good observation and photo opportunities.

Returning to that fork in the path leads to a short trail that nears railroad tracks and gives another (not so easy) view of the same pond and nesting trees. Even though we live about an hour from this area, we visited it twice after hearing about it during a CCBC meeting and plan to return at least a couple of times during other times this year. The call-it-whatever-you-like birding spot is well worth a stop! *Peter Baer Galvin*

Monomoy birding trips with Capt Ken Eldredge

Beginning in late June and going through September, Capt Eldredge will take birders to Monomoy Island from Stage Harbor. You will be dropped off on a falling tide and picked up 4 hours later. No go on windy or foggy days. \$55 round trip. Only 4 passengers per trip.

T: 508.237.1619



Wing Island Bird Banding Station

Your Conservation Fund made a donation to bird bander, Sue Finnegan. Here is her 2020 report:



Hooded Warbler

For the past twenty years, I have run a bird banding station on Wing Island, a 9-acre parcel of land consisting of upland shrub/woodland surrounded on all sides by a large salt marsh, at the Cape Cod Museum of Natural History in Brewster.

This year, 78 species were banded. As of this writing, a total of 52,896 birds have been banded since opening the station. With the 2020 winter finch irruption we banded our first Pine Siskins (53) and Common Redpolls (21). Our top ten species for 2020 were: Gray Catbird (745), Myrtle Warbler (228), Song Sparrow (162), Common Yellowthroat (118), Black-capped Chickadee (88), American Goldfinch (80), Northern Cardinal (66), Pine Siskin (53), Blue Jay (48), and Swamp Sparrow (71). Other birds of note banded this year included five Yellow-billed Cuckoos, three Gray-cheeked Thrushes, two Con-

necticut Warblers, and a Rufous Hummingbird banded at a private home in December.

Of those birds, 138 had been banded by us in previous years. The most exciting recapture was a Prairie Warbler we originally banded in 2012 as an ASY (After Second Year) bird, meaning we knew he was older than 2 years but couldn't age him beyond that. Recapturing him in 2020 meant he was at least 11 years and 3 months old, making him the oldest Prairie Warbler on record! We had one foreign recapture, meaning another banding station banded the bird, which was a Myrtle Warbler first banded in 2019 in Wellfleet.

A number of biologists came to learn from me during the fall season, either from scratch or to improve their ageing skills. Alex Burdo, who spent the whole season with me, learned everything from extracting birds from mist nets to being able to process most birds without my help. Cat Werth, Keegan Burke, Dan Errichetti, and Keenan Yakola also spent some time brushing up on processing and ageing techniques. Mike Babcock, a ringer from the U.K. who banded with me last year, spent most of this fall improving his ageing skills before returning home. A big thank you of course to Gretchen Putonen, a bander who has helped me since 2002 and numerous other people who helped out for a short time. Thanks also to Gerry and Karen Beetham who helped to maintain the net lanes and Michelle Chambers who helped with data input.



Alex Burdo with Blackpoll Warbler

Thanks very much to the Cape Cod Bird Club for the generous grant of \$1,000 to help us buy much-needed mist nets. The French Foundation has also donated in the past and we get occasional monetary support from the museum.

I'll be looking for volunteers in the spring so for those with an interest or if you know of any biologists that may like to learn banding, please contact me. Other ways to help include mending nets or keeping net lanes clear of brush please contact me at suefinnegan@comcast.net.

Sue Finnegan is the manager of Wing Island Banding Station at Cape Cod Museum of Natural History in Brewster, MA and a NABC Certified Master Bander and Trainer. Follow her on Facebook at **Wing Island Bird Banding Station** and **wing_banders** on Instagram

Citizen Science, Student Bird Club

Crowes Pasture Nestbox Monitoring

Ever wonder what goes on inside a nesting box? Some kids think that birds use them for year-round housing. We know that particular species use them during nesting season as a relatively safe place to raise young or on a frigid winter night perhaps several chickadees huddle together in a box.

It would be fun to have an ongoing mini-cam to see what really happens when we humans are not around. We know the boxes are used by mice in the winter if they can climb the poles, as do bats, wasps, ants, and more.

But trying to piece together the "true story" of summer nesting is fun too. Cape Cod Bird Club members have been working with the Dennis Natural Resources Department since the spring of 2004 to monitor nest boxes at Crowes Pasture in East Dennis. We started with six and now have fourteen. The final tally for the summer of 2020

- 5 Eastern Bluebirds fledged from 2 nests
- 37 Tree Swallows fledged from 10 nests
- 33 House Wrens fledged from 7 nests.

In earlier years we had nesting Tufted Titmice, Blackcapped Chickadees, and House Sparrows. Those are now gone, replaced by very aggressive House Wrens. With 16



years of records, we can see that Tree Swallows now arrive a week earlier and don't give the resident Eastern Bluebirds much of an opportunity to get nests established before squabbling and takeovers occur. House trading and building one nest atop another goes on all summer long.

Want to join CCBC members who help monitor our cavity-nesting species? Watch

newborns emerge from the shell? Watch parents entice fledglings to take their first flight? Give me a call for the details on how you can help, about once every two weeks for a couple of hours. Training provided.

Kennedy, Contact: Carolvn 508-255-7564, clkenn@verizon.net. Thank you to Steve Petruska and Sue Parkinson for monitoring last summer.

Pleasant Bay Bird Survey

From October 2016 through April 2017, Walter McClennen surveyed the birds of Pleasant Bay west and south shores several days per week, morning and evening, and kept excellent records. During 55 days of observations in seven months, he saw 42 species at four different sites.

Here is an example of his work, showing species, location, number of individuals, morning or evening:

March 26, 2017: American Black Ducks (CBO/5/am), Herring Gulls (CBO/3/am), Red-breasted Mergansers (CBO/2/am), Herring Gulls (HB/15/am), Buffleheads (HB/25/am), American Black Ducks (HB/7/am), Redbreasted Mergansers (HB/4/am), Blue Jay (HB/S/am), Mallards (TM/5/am), Hooded Mergansers (TM/4/am), American Black Ducks (TM/5/am)

Walter reached out to the Cape Cod Bird Club to ask if anyone might be interested in his notes (e.g, enter the data into eBird). This could be a project for a young birder, a conservationist, someone wanting to learn the birds in a specific area, or someone learning how to survey. His notes would be a great springboard.

If interested, please contact Walter at 508-416-7212 or cwmcclennen@gmail.com.







Barnstable Intermediate School (BIS) Student Bird Club (SBC) Update

by Maria Curley, CCBC Treasurer & SBC Advisor

The first three months of the inaugural CCBC Student Bird Club Chapter at Barnstable Intermediate School have been incredible! Students are actively engaged and learning about local birds coming in and around the BIS feeders and environs. They have been introduced to topics including, but not limited to, bird identification, behavior, vocalizations, birding apps, eBird checklists, Cornell, Journey North for tracking migration, feeding, roosting, and most recently, courtship and nesting behavior. SBC students are also now passing on their newfound knowledge by informally teaching their peers about local birds.

About 20 species have been identified and tallied at BIS. The most frequent visitors include Black-capped Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, Northern Cardinal, Song Sparrow, European Starling, Common Grackle, Red-winged Blackbird, Mourning Dove, Blue Jay, Downy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, and Crow (American and Fish). Students were delighted on Tuesday, March 9, when a Red-tailed Hawk flew up and perched in a bush right across from our classroom windows! It is not uncommon for a Cooper's Hawk to fly right over during bird club, outdoor recess, or mask breaks. Above are some pictures we would like to share from our Club.

Many thanks to all the membership who have supported our Conservation and Education Fund, which has helped make this Club possible. The students thank you too! ~ Maria

Conservation. New Members

Conservation & Education by John Goodchild

Last year, under the expert guidance of Herb Raffaele, the Cape Cod Bird Club awarded a number of grants to support bird conservation in the Caribbean. Herb has written several field guides to the birds of this area and spent much of his career there studying them and working for their protection. He believes that conservation should start by first gaining support of the local population. The overarching theme of the projects we supported was to stimulate, in children especially, an awareness, interest, and pride in the local birds that are part of their culture and heritage. People living in remote or rural areas may not know that the birds they see around them are special and some occur nowhere else in the world. To learn this makes them stakeholders in the survival of these birds.

Two grants were made to help organizations in Cuba promote bird conservation within communities near the protected area of San Miguel de Parada and on the coast of the Baconao Biosphere Reserve, both located in the province of Santiago de Cuba. In the San Miguel region alone, within a period of four months, over 600 local people participated in activities that included the following.

- Field work including discussions, bird walks, the use of optics, nest counts, and garbage removal from protected areas.
- Talks, meetings, and workshops for locals and for school children and their teachers.
- Games for different age groups.
- Nature related arts projects and competitions.
- Radio and TV program to report on activities.

Some photographs taken at these events are shown below.



The club's ability to support these important initiatives resulted from the generosity of you, our members. Thank you! We hope to make more awards during 2021 and would welcome your help to get the word out to possible applicants. Guidelines for submitting applications are posted on the club's website at Conservation & Education - Cape Cod Bird Club.

Thayne Cameron & Rich Garvey - South Yarmouth

David & Michelle Weber Johnson - Barnstable

Lynne Cherry - Falmouth

Johan Krobb, Bob & Hadley Pierce - Woods Hole

Teresa Corcoran & John Grieb - Wellfleet

Suzanne Kenney - Brewster

Margaret Creeth - Marstons Mills

Lori LaFargue - Dennisport

James, Julia, & Mary Doherty & - Truro

Doreen LePage - Boynton Beach, FL

Brett Wilhelm

Robert Longley - Delmar, NY

Judson Evans & Bill Faguin - Holbrook

Joan Mashburn - Arlington, VA

Tony Felix - Yarmouth Port

Deborah N Mauger - Wellfleet

Kristen Ferrar & Gerry Orlando - Hyannis Michael & Alyssa Giaquinto - Harwich

Nancy Hunley & Cynthia Marvin - Yarmouthport

Nancy & Bob Paulding - Yarmouthport

Brittany Griffin - Falmouth

Thomas Gwin - Pocasset

Loren Shure - Truro

Laura Semonche Jones - Falmouth

Pamela Saras - Harwichport Bev Travis - Bourne

Cemetery Birding

Cemeteries—Alive with Birds by David Clapp

The Cape is a great place to bird - and to get away from people, crowds, and anxiety. There are parks, beaches, Town ConCom lands, State and National Parks, and (are you ready?) cemeteries. These often pastoral and well-planted properties may not compete with The National Seashore; Shawme, Mashpee, The Provincelands, and Nickerson State lands; or even with the smaller jewels acquired by each Cape Town through the Conservation Commission or by open-space-holding nonprofits. So, if you have made a resolution to walk, to exercise, to shed some Pandemic pudginess, or get in your daily 10,000 steps (and perhaps see some birds), here are a few little visited sites.



The ones that I mention here are large properties, open to the public with wide paths, special plantings, and great visibility. Many are on the flight paths that northward moving migrants follow in the spring and simply must be passed through (or, yes, over) in the autumn as well. These are just a few of the many cemeteries found in our communities. There are a couple dozen cemeteries on the Cape, and I will give you a starter list of some of the largest and best located. I am thinking of spring migration as I write this, hence the justification for these sites may be biased a bit. But when you think of the Cape overall, it is pretty small and narrow, so every par-

cel has year-round potential.

Several bird species and families frequent cemeteries. Flickers are often common, and ground-feeding birds such as robins and sparrows like the short grasses. Then there are those that favor the dense shrubbery of memorial sites. American Crows poke into the grassy terrain for beetle grubs, and



Northern Flicker

migrant vireos, warblers, grosbeaks, and orioles will populate the vegetation. The low dense shrubs will be used by many migrants as well.

There are three nice spots spread across the Cape to consider: one each from Provincetown, Yarmouth, and Sandwich.

Let's start way out at the tip of the Cape in Provincetown. The hilly cemetery in P-town consists of two parts: Saint Peters Cemetery and Town Cemetery. They are essentially one parcel, which offers a 360-degree vista of the area and is between town and Route 6. It is a good place to watch Turkey Vultures, Red-tailed and Broad-winged hawks in the springtime. In winter, it's good for finches and perhaps a Northern Shrike. And you might see a Peregrine Falcon on the monument from here.

Harwich and Yarmouth have a great deal of open space. The Ancient Cemetery out near Gray's Beach (in Yarmouth Port, north of Route 6A on Center Street) and the Botanical Trails (Historical Society of Old Yarmouth) off Route 6A are



American Robin

both very nice. But the Island Pond Cemetery (in Harwich) is a real feature for both birds and strolling. A lovely rolling terrain covered with Pitch Pine and oak offers a small pond and lots of cover for birds. Access is from Island Pond Road just off Main Street (Great Western) near the First Congregational Church at Route 124 and Main Street.

Over on the western side of the Cape we find Mashpee, Falmouth, and Sandwich, all with extensive open space. Sandwich is a geographically large town and has a most interesting, though smallish, cemetery that I think has great potential. The Sandwich Town Cemetery is a linear parcel along Route 130. It is well wooded and abuts the huge Joint Base landscape. It should be good for both birds and walking. This is a parcel that I think will provide a few surprises to the regular visitor. The dense evergreen plantings may harbor a Mourning Warbler or two the last week of May.

This is a very short list and leaves out some real highlight properties (like the Oakdale/Pleasant Hill Cemeteries in Wellfleet). As these are memorial properties, all activities should be undertaken with appropriate respect. Most of these parcels are already known to neighborhood walkers as nice places for exercise and/or contemplation. Birders may be a new type of visitor, but we wouldn't be the first to use the sites for a respite. Please enter your bird sightings into eBird so we can begin to get a sense of the importance of these open spaces for our breeding and migratory birds.

Photos by David Clapp



Cape Cod Bird Club PO Box 351 Centerville, MA 02632

Cape Cod Bird Club, Inc.

An organization whose members are interested in the protection and conservation of the bird life and natural resources of Cape Cod. *Please join us!*

- To join and pay dues online, visit www.capecodbirdclub.org/wordpress/join/join-online/.
- If you prefer to send a check, please download a membership form from the website at https://www.capecodbirdclub.org/wordpress/join/join-by-mail/ and send it along with your check to: CCBC, PO Box 351, Centerville, MA 02632

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