



# The Kingfisher

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Winter (January-March 2024)

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*Cape Cod Bird Club meets on the 2nd Monday of each month, Sept through May, at 7:00PM. January and February meetings will be by Zoom. Others will be hybrid meetings, simultaneously live and online. We meet at the Cape Cod Museum of Natural History, 869 Route 6A, Brewster.*

*The Kingfisher* is published quarterly.

**Deadline for the next issue is March 8, 2024.**

Send submissions by email. Attach text as a MS Word document or plain text. Attach images as separate files; please do not embed them in the email body. Send the largest resolution possible for your images; they will not print well if preformatted for the Web. Please credit the images. Submissions might be edited for style or length. Editor has the final say on content.

### Editor:

Carolyn Kennedy

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

### Webmaster:

Terry Gavin

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

### Facebook:

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

## President's Message

### Greetings, Cape Cod Bird Club!

Winter birding can be both challenging and fun. The fun part is seeing the species that we don't see any other time of year. While we say goodbye to (most) of our plovers and sandpipers as they head south, we welcome our many winter species like Bufflehead, Ring-necked Duck, scaups, eiders, scoters, goldeneyes, mergansers, and grebes. Similarly for our inland species, we say goodbye to many warblers, but welcome our Pine Siskins, Snow Buntings, kinglets, redpolls, crossbills, juncos, and several sparrow species. The challenging part is usually the weather. A wise person once told me that "There's no such thing as bad weather, only bad clothing." I like to test this out by going out New Year's Day on our Club's first walk of the year, trying to squeeze on as many layers as I possibly can!

Our Club recently completed our annual Waterfowl Survey in the first weekend of December. Many thanks to the ~34 volunteers who surveyed 341 freshwater ponds on the Cape. This valuable data collection project was started 40 years ago by Blair Nikula for the CCBC. It is now being managed by our Walks Director, Mary Jo Foti. We are so lucky to have people like Blair, MJ, and all our Survey volunteers who collect these data.

We had our Holiday Party in December featuring a short program from our teen Hog Island Scholarship recipient, Megan Morey. Many thanks to all the many people who helped put this fun event together by planning activities, cooking, setting up and cleaning up! Now, we will have five more meetings till the end of our season in May. January and February will be Zoom-only, and the next three will be hybrid. Page 2 has more information on these programs.



Northern Flicker. Peter Fang, photographer

Happy New Year  
and  
Happy Birding!

Peter Fang, President

## Club Meetings—Gloria Smith, Programs Director

Cape Cod Bird Club is delighted to offer the following presentations in 2024! Our meetings are free and begin at 7 pm. No registration is required. A Zoom link will be emailed to our members and published on the CCBC website. Please note below whether a meeting is Hybrid (in-person and Zoom), or Zoom-only. **Meetings in January and February will be by Zoom only.** Monthly meetings and programs from **March through May will be a “hybrid”** of in-person gatherings at the Cape Cod Museum of Natural History in Brewster with simultaneous Zoom broadcasts. The Museum doors open at 6:30 pm to allow time to mingle and gather information.

**Please stay home (and Zoom!) if you do not feel well or have recently been exposed to someone with COVID or COVID-like symptoms. Masks are optional but individuals should feel comfortable wearing a mask at any point during a meeting.**

### MONDAY, JANUARY 8, 2024 (ZOOM-only) - “Winter Ecology of the Common Loon”



James D. Paruk, Ph.D., educator, researcher and author, is one of the world’s leading experts on the Common Loon. He has studied breeding and wintering loons in several US states and Canada for over 30 years. James will share the most current detailed account of what we know about loon biology, behavior and conservation, as depicted in his recently published book, “Loon Lessons: Uncommon Encounters with the Great Northern Diver”.

**MONDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 2024 (ZOOM-only) – “Birds of the Caribbean”** - Lisa Sorenson, Ph.D., Executive Director and past president of BirdsCaribbean, has been working in the Caribbean for over 30 years in various research, education and conservation capacities. Lisa is passionate about her work of raising awareness and making a difference to help conserve the Caribbean’s amazing birds and its biodiversity.

**MONDAY, MARCH 11, 2024 (HYBRID) – “Bird Banding Wing Island”** – Longtime CCBC member Sue Finnegan has been bird banding since 1994, and has banded over 60,000 birds and over 150 species! She became a Certified Master Bird Bander in 2000, and founded the Wing Island Bird Banding Station at Cape Cod Museum of Natural History. In 2005, she received trainer level certification, as well as her permit to band hummingbirds. Enjoy Sue’s amazing photos, insights and stories of her bird banding experiences on Wing Island, right here on Cape Cod.

**MONDAY, APRIL 8, 2024 (HYBRID) – “The Return of the Peregrine Falcon”** – Steve Broker, a scientist and educator for over 45 years, has served as president, vice-president, and secretary of the Connecticut Ornithological Association, president of the New Haven Bird Club, and is currently a member of the CCBC. In 1999, while birding in a New Haven state park, Steve made a rare discovery; a pair of nesting Peregrine Falcons – a species all but destroyed in the east by the effects of DDT. Steve will share this falcon’s history and life strategies as well as his 25 years of incredible photos, studies, and stories of the fastest bird in the world.

**MONDAY, MAY 13, 2024 (HYBRID) – “Safari Brazil”** – Naturalist and CCBC member, Gina Nichol, founder and principal tour leader of Sunrise Birding, began leading eco-tours for Audubon Nature Odysseys in the early 1990s. She has led tours, conducted research projects, and given presentations worldwide. Grab your safari hat and enjoy her striking photos that illustrate the area’s marsh, river and rain-forest habitats, as well as vividly documenting the intriguing exotic, wild residents of the Pantanel region of west central Brazil.

## Cape Cod Bird Club Winter Walks – Mary Jo Foti January – March, 2024

Join us on these free Club trips.

Please email the trip leader if you plan to attend.

Check the website for updates or cancellations.

### **New Year's Day with Ed Banks – Mid-Cape**      **Monday, January 1, 2024 - 12-4 PM**

Meet in the Stop & Shop parking lot at Patriot Square on Route 134 in South Dennis. Please join us for this annual New Year's Day walk. Get your 2024 checklist off to a great start. Click off your yard birds in the morning and join us at noon. We will bird the mid-Cape and perhaps some other hotspots. Party hats optional! Leader: Ed Banks, [68edbanks@gmail.com](mailto:68edbanks@gmail.com) (508-769-6762).

### **Pier to Pier Sweep – Outer Cape**      **Thursday, January 4 - 8AM**

We will meet at Wellfleet Town Pier and venture across several stops from Wellfleet to Provincetown to scope for wintering waterfowl, alcids and other northern visitors. We'll also keep our eyes and ears open for passerines sheltering in the brush. You can carpool with friends/family members or drive individually. Leader: Ginie Page [pageginie@gmail.com](mailto:pageginie@gmail.com)

### **Race Point, Herring Cove, Hatches Harbor - P-town**      **Tuesday, January 9 - 8AM**

Meet at Race Point Beach parking lot at the far corner near the National Park Service Ranger Station. Scope the beaches of the National Seashore to observe gulls, alcids, loons, gannets and overwintering waterfowl. We'll also be heading to Hatches Harbor to walk the dike and scan the marshes before finishing up at Herring Cove. Prepare properly — layer up and bring snacks and your hot beverage of choice for a morning of winter birding on the outer Cape.

Leader: Keegan Burke [keeganburke19@gmail.com](mailto:keeganburke19@gmail.com)

### **Owl Prowl - West Barnstable**      **Sunday, January 14 - 5PM**

We will explore West Barnstable Conservation Area in search of resident owls including Barred Owl, Great Horned Owl, Eastern Screech Owl and Northern Saw-whet Owl. From the Marston Mills Rotary, head west on Race Lane (towards the airport hangar) for 1.2 miles. Turn right onto Crooked Cartway and follow the road until it opens onto a large, dirt parking area. Dress warmly and bring a flashlight. We'll be walking about 1.5 miles of flat, hardpack trails which can be uneven and strewn with gravel. Leaders: MJ Foti, [maryjo1226@yahoo.com](mailto:maryjo1226@yahoo.com), Keelin Miller, [capekeelin@hotmail.com](mailto:capekeelin@hotmail.com)

### **Corporation Beach, Dennis and Brewster Ponds**      **Sunday, January 21 - 8AM**

Meet at Corporation Beach off Route 6A in South Dennis where you can observe a variety of overwintering waterfowl, grebes, loons, alcids and the occasional Harlequin Duck directly from the parking area. From there we'll visit freshwater ponds including Scargo Lake, Slough Pond and Walkers Pond where we'll observe additional overwintering species. Our observations are primarily stationary. Bring a scope if you have one.

Leader: Jeff Bryant, [five\\_loons@yahoo.com](mailto:five_loons@yahoo.com)

## Cape Cod Bird Club Winter Walks, continued

### **Eastham Ponds and First Encounter Beach**      **Saturday, January 27 - 8AM**

Meet at Great Pond beach parking area by turning right off Samoset Road onto Great Pond Road to begin the day viewing a nice variety of dabbling and diving ducks. Wiley Park is the next stop where we'll explore a short, wooded trail offering additional views of Great Pond. From there we'll head to First Encounter Beach and finally, a short hop to Herring Pond - a productive spot for wintering waterfowl. If you have a scope, bring it along. Varied terrain with 1.5 - 2 miles of walking.

Leader: Jeff Bryant, [five\\_loons@yahoo.com](mailto:five_loons@yahoo.com)

### **Dowses and Craigville Beaches - Barnstable**      **Tuesday, January 30 - 8AM**

Take Route 149 (Exit 65, off Route 6) and drive south about 4 miles to Route 28. Turn left at the light and in 0.7 miles turn right onto South County Road, which becomes Main Street as you drive through Osterville. In 2.2 miles, turn right onto East Bay Road. Proceed 0.7 miles to Dowses Beach. Plentiful waterfowl can include the occasional Barrow's Goldeneye. Shorebirds can include Ruddy Turnstone and Purple Sandpiper while Snow Bunting, Savannah Sparrow and other passerines may be seen in the thickets bordering the entrance road. From there we'll head to Craigville Beach where we hope to see the Iceland Gull which has been an annual visitor here for many a year. Observations are primarily stationary though you can expect short walks on varied terrain.

Leader: MJ Foti, [maryjo1226@yahoo.com](mailto:maryjo1226@yahoo.com)

### **Crane Wildlife Management Area - East Falmouth**      **Sunday, February 4 - 8AM**

From Mashpee rotary, take Rt.151 West (Nathan Ellis Highway) approx. 4.3 miles. Shortly after Sandwich Rd intersection, the entrance to Crane will be on the right next to Allietta Softball Field. Dress in layers, especially when the wind is up, to enjoy this unique grassland habitat which is host to a rich variety of over-wintering species including Eastern Meadowlark, rare passerines such as Vesper Sparrow and a possible Northern Shrike. Hard pack trails can give way to more rock-strewn narrow paths — between 1.5 and 3 miles of walking. Leader: Ross Sormani, [rsormani@yahoo.com](mailto:rsormani@yahoo.com)

### **Mass. Waterfowl Prowl (Cosponsored by Brookline Bird Club)**      **Sunday, February 11 - 8AM**

Take Scusset Beach Road to the main entrance of Scusset Beach State Reservation. Parking is .25 miles past the entrance at the fishing pier. Brookline Bird Club will be joining us as we visit the ponds, marshes, bays and backwaters of the Upper and Lower Cape and other areas in search of 25+ species of ducks, loons, grebes, swans and geese. Leader: MJ Foti, [maryjo1226@yahoo.com](mailto:maryjo1226@yahoo.com)

### **Cooks Farm Conservation Area - Sandwich**      **Wednesday, February 14 - 8AM**

Use Exit 59 from Route 6 and take Route 130 North towards Sandwich Center. In 0.8 miles there is a small lot for Cooks Farm Conservation Area on the left. If the lot is full, we are free to park at the permanently closed Henry T. Wing School at 33 Water Street on the right, then walk directly across Route 130 to the conservation area. This is a lightly-visited area with wide trails, scenic overlooks and a charming footbridge. We hope to see wintering passerines in the mature forest and wooded wetlands and scope portions of Shawme Pond and Upper Shawme Lake for wintering waterfowl. Expect about 1.5 - 2 miles of walking on varied trails. Leader: Jeff Bryant, [five\\_loons@yahoo.com](mailto:five_loons@yahoo.com)

### **Hinckleys, Seymour and Long Ponds - Harwich/Brewster**      **Monday, February 19 - 8AM**

Meet at the Rail Trail parking lot off Headwaters Drive. From Route 124 (Pleasant Lake Ave.) turn on Headwaters Drive and drive less than a half mile to access the Cape Cod Rail Trail parking area. Explore these mid-Cape ponds that host a variety of waterfowl species including Greater and Lesser Scaup, mergansers, Bufflehead and American Coot. We'll begin with Hinckleys Pond — about a half mile walk on a paved bike trail, then head to Seymour Pond with a bike trail parking lot not far from the pond. Finally, we will reach the large parking area of Long Pond from nearby Crowells Bog Rd. Aside from pond hopping, there is only about 1 mile of walking on paved trail. If you have a scope, bring it along. Leader: MJ Foti [maryjo1226@yahoo.com](mailto:maryjo1226@yahoo.com)

## Cape Cod Bird Club Winter Walks, continued

### Herring River – Wellfleet

**Sunday, February 25 - 8AM**

We'll meet at the parking area at the far side of the dike on Chequessett Neck Road in Wellfleet. The tide will be low so ample parking will be available on both sides of the street. We'll scan for waterfowl from the dike itself. Then we will hike the trail on the west side of Herring River to High Toss Road before crossing back again. This is a great area for rail and heron activity. The abutting woodland is winter habitat for woodpeckers and a variety of sparrow species. This is also a strong area for sightings of birds of prey. Expect up to 2 miles of walking on uneven terrain. Warm, waterproof footwear is recommended. Leader: Ross Sormani, [rsormani@yahoo.com](mailto:rsormani@yahoo.com)

### Fort Hill – Eastham

**Wednesday, March 6 - 8AM**

Join us for a walk along the loop trail to Hemenway Landing as we watch for marshland species more easily observed on the high tide. Bitterns and rails are possible along with a variety of waterfowl and raptors. High tide will be about 7:46 AM. Wear knee-high boots if you want to search for passerines in the marsh. Expect at least 2 miles of trail walking on varied terrain with mixed elevation.

Leader: MJ Foti, [maryjo1226@yahoo.com](mailto:maryjo1226@yahoo.com)

### Bells Neck Conservation Area – Harwich

**Sunday, March 10 - 8AM**

Meet at Bells Neck Road at the landing of the West Reservoir. Take advantage of low tide conditions on the East Reservoir, enjoy the marsh overlook at the footbridge and scan the car bridge for raptors, waterfowl, and a possible bittern or rail. Waterproof footwear is recommended. Expect about 2 miles of walking on varied terrain, sometimes narrow dirt trails with a slightly steep hill leading to the foot bridge. Leader: Jeff Bryant, [five\\_loons@yahoo.com](mailto:five_loons@yahoo.com)

### Cape Cod Canal and Sandwich Marina - Sandwich

**Saturday, March 16 - 8AM**

Meet in the parking lot of Tree House Brewery (formerly Horizon's Restaurant) at the end of Town Neck Road, Sandwich. We will scope the water from the parking area to look for eiders, loons, grebes, scoters and maybe a Harlequin Duck or King Eider. Winter shorebirds are possible along the jetties. From there we will head over to the Sandwich Marina in search of more wintering species. Please bring your scope if you have one. Leader: MJ Foti, [maryjo1226@yahoo.com](mailto:maryjo1226@yahoo.com)

### Scusset Beach State Reservation, Sagamore

**Sunday, March 24 - 8 AM**

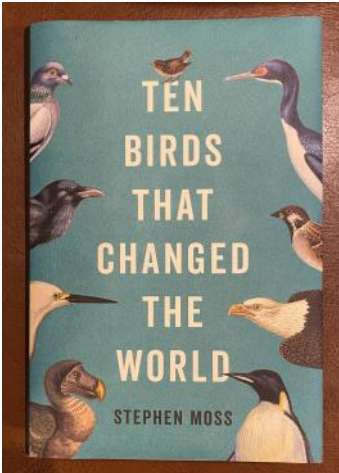
Take Scusset Beach Road to the main entrance. Parking is .25 miles past the entrance at the fishing pier. We'll walk the bike path that parallels the canal to view impressive numbers of wintering waterfowl, Great Cormorant and possible alcid species. The campground area and adjacent field by the playground hosts a variety of wintering passerines, including Horned Lark, an occasional Snow Bunting and possibly Lapland Longspur. Expect 2 to 3 miles of paved trail and possibly some wooded dirt trails.

Leader: Jeff Bryant, [five\\_loons@yahoo.com](mailto:five_loons@yahoo.com)

### Cape Cod Bird Club Health Guidelines: January-March 2024

- Please do not participate in trips if you do not feel well, or have recently been exposed to someone with COVID or COVID-like symptoms;
- Individuals should feel comfortable wearing a mask at any point during a trip.
- It is up to each participant to decide whether or not they wish to carpool. Though a trip leader may offer to carpool, it is the personal choice of each individual leader.

## *Ten Birds That Changed the World*—Book review by Bonnie McEwan



By Stephen Moss.

Basic Books, \$30.00 (408p)  
ISBN 978-1-5416-0446-9

Most birders will likely guess at least a few of the ten birds featured in this book by British nature writer Stephen Moss. (Hint: Think Poe and Darwin.) There are a few that may surprise, however, such as the guanay cormorant, a

South American species that Moss calls “the most valuable wild bird in human history.”<sup>1</sup> Assuming you don’t already know why, it is worth reading the book to find out.

But beware. Readers should come to this book prepared for an emotional challenge, as nearly every bird’s story is an unhappy one that involves some sort of exploitation by humans. It is not an exaggeration to say that all ten species have changed the world mostly through their own suffering. Snowy egrets, for instance, were hunted to near extinction at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century because their feathers were in high demand by milliners, who used them to decorate the hats of wealthy women.

These birds were not just killed, but killed cruelly, as noted by Gilbert Pearson, a conservationist who visited a colony of snowy egrets. He was horrified by the specter of piles of dead adult birds stripped of their skins, surrounded by “ ‘young orphan birds...clamoring piteously for food which their dead parents could never again bring them.’ ”<sup>2</sup> Moss attributes the cause of this particular devastation to the “vanity” of the hat-wearing women, which created a market for “rich traders, who would pay poor men...a small sum to collect the feathers.”<sup>3</sup> *Collect* is a euphemism so profoundly misleading as to be offensive. Also disturbing is the author’s failure to

assign at least some of the blame to unchecked, Gilded Age capitalism, an underlying cause far more insidious than any woman’s fashion statement. In any case, by the end of the Snowy Egret chapter this reader felt especially grateful for the advent of synthetic fibers and the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

In his introduction, Moss discusses why humans are so fascinated by the lives of birds. He references a comment by Boris Sax, a cultural historian, who noted that birds “behave in ways that look remarkably like an avian equivalent of human society.” Thus, we humans have a tendency to assume that birds’ behaviors are motivated by human-like emotions. Take, for example, a woman’s story featured in the chapter about ravens.

She was working in her garden in Boulder, Colorado when a large raven landed nearby and began making loud, raucous cries. At first she ignored the bird, thinking it would eventually move away. Still, the cawing continued and the woman noticed that the raven flew directly over her head, crying all the way. Exasperated, she looked up to see a cougar crouched 20 feet away, staring at her and about to pounce. The woman backed off, calling to her husband, who came out of the house and scared the big cat away. In an interview with the local TV news, the woman said, “That raven saved my life!”<sup>4</sup>

Moss presents a different theory, pointing out that ravens and apex predators have a long history—since the Stone Age—of cooperating in the hunt for food. While these predators, humans included, have the agility and skill to kill large prey, they lack the raven’s ability to fly. The ravens know that if the mammalian predator makes a kill they too will have a meal, so they fly high in the sky to survey the land and

## *Ten Birds That Changed the World, continued*

and then lead the hunter to the target. That's a bit chilling, as it reminds us that nature is a complex system of creatures, conditions and processes of which we humans have only the most basic understanding.

Nowhere is this more obvious than in the current climate crisis, which is symbolized by the Emperor Penguin. This bird can exist only in a single place—Antarctica—where the icescape is rapidly melting, reforming, and crumbling into the surrounding sea. Like the other stories in this book, the penguin's is heartbreaking, yet that alone is not the reason these birds are linked to climate change. In fact, their current circumstances present a fundamental and profound question to birders, conservationists, researchers, and others of

our ilk: Do we continue to hold to the principle of noninterference—the idea that we simply observe nature and avoid interfering with it—or do we acknowledge that human forces have already interfered, so much so that “natural processes” are no longer natural? Is human intervention now a moral imperative? If so, what does that look like?

*Ten Birds That Changed the World* is far more important than the average bird book because it presents birds as a lens through which we glimpse the current state of life on earth. It highlights creatures that are familiar to most humans and shows us how our choices and actions imperil *everything*, including our own existence. You should read it.

Footnotes: <sup>1</sup>p.1 81. <sup>2</sup>p. 216. <sup>3</sup>p. 217. <sup>4</sup>p.14.

*Bonnie McEwan is a member of the Cape Cod Bird Club. This review was done upon request of the publisher.*

## **My Experience On Hog Island — Megan Morey**

In June 2023, I was fortunate enough to attend a teen birding camp on Hog Island in Maine, hosted by National Audubon Society. As an inexperienced bird watcher and a photographer I was a bit nervous, but as the curious nature lover with a profound passion for animals I was ecstatic to expand my knowledge of both birding and the natural world. For part of the week we stayed on Hog Island lodged in cozy log cabins that served as our base as we explored the lush sanctuary. Although only a few minutes from shore, the quaint island was a haven for all sorts of wildlife, completely immersing us in a different world. We would wake up to graceful splashes of diving Roseate Terns and (try to) fall asleep to the rumble of distant Wood Frogs.

After two days on the Island, we began our journey to Borestone Mountain Sanctuary, where we traversed the slippery climb up to the peak, and resided in historic accommodations on the water.



*Above: Sunset Pond, boat moving luggage and campers to Borestone Mtn Lodge (seen at right,)*

Here we experienced complete isolation from civilization, with no cell service and very limited electricity.

These few days were the calmest and most connected to nature I have ever been. (Cont. p 8)



## My Experience On Hog Island, continued

One of the highlights of the whole trip was our viewing of the elusive Loggerhead Shrike at the fiery Kennebunk Plains; this species had not been sighted in Maine since 1990. At the moment, I was oblivious to the uniqueness of the situation, but I could tell by our camp counselor's giddy excitement it was something special. I am still struck at the impeccable timing, and like to think the Loggerhead Shrike came out especially for us.

Puffins were one of the birds I never expected to see in my lifetime, as I always imagined them to live only in remote, out-of-reach places. I have never expected them to be so close to the Cape as in Maine, much less to visit their home on Eastern Egg Rock, a breeding hotspot, on the very first day of camp. They were even more stunning than in the photographs, and once they slowed down enough for you to see them they reminded me of charismatic rubber duckies.



Atlantic Puffin, Eastern Egg Rock, ME

**Megan Morey** is a Junior at Cape Cod Academy. She was chosen by the Cape Cod Bird Club to receive this year's teen birder scholarship to Hog Island. She was raised on the Cape and always had a passion for photography, wildlife, and most recently, birding. She hopes to pursue a study of animal sciences in college and continue to add to her eBird entries. *Photos in this article taken by Megan.*

Despite the focus on birds, the people were what I was most in awe of. The camp's incredible staff possessed both overwhelming kindness and contagious passion. It was inspiring and intimidating to witness their expertise in all different branches of ornithology.

My fellow bunkmates were equally remarkable, young birders hailing from Nebraska to Florida flew thousands of miles just to be there. It was the first time I was surrounded by so many people sharing an enthusiasm for wildlife, and I don't want it to be the last. Though, I was utterly demolished in nightly sessions of bird trivia.

Lastly, I would like to thank the Cape Cod Bird Club for giving me this unforgettable opportunity, In no classroom, or with any book could I have learned more about birding than on Hog Island.

When I close my eyes I can still see the blur of puffins and hear the dives of terns. This indelible experience has solidified my desire to pursue a career in wildlife. But until then I will continue to hone my skills and hope to share the knowledge and love of birds I gained at Hog Island with others.



Roseate Tern, Hog Island, ME

**Teen Birding Camp Scholarships for Summer 2024.** We are pleased to announce that Cape Cod Bird Club is offering scholarships for two Cape Cod students, 14-17 years old, to attend a bird-watching and natural history camp, June 23-28, 2024. The successful students will each receive a full-tuition (\$1,690) scholarship to attend **Mountains to Sea Birding for Teens Camp** at Hog Island Audubon Camp in Bremen, Maine. **Application deadline is January 31, 2024. Applicants must be residents of Cape Cod.** For information and application form, go to [Mountains to Sea Teen Birding Camp, on the CCBC website](#). The recipients are responsible for other costs including transportation to and from the starting point at Portland (Maine) International Airport. Contact: [info@capecodbirdclub.org](mailto:info@capecodbirdclub.org). **Please pass this information along to interested teens.**



**Welcome to Our New Members**

Emily Boles	- Bourne	Karen Lacasse	- Cataumet
Laurie Clayton	- Mashpee	Joseph Masse	- Brewster
Alicia Crabbe	- Rochester, MA	Sheila & James Meehan	- South Dennis
Gavin Christie	- Brighton	Morey Family	- Mashpee
William Cummins	- Orleans	Rebecca Norton	- Sandwich
Linda Daily	- San Clemente, CA	Stephanie Parker	- Yarmouth
Jamie Demas	- Orleans	Kim Richardson	- Brewster
Christa Drew	- Eastham	Jaden Salett	- Needham
Emma Hardigan	- West Yarmouth	Brandt Schurenberg	- Cincinnati, OH
Mary Herlihy	- Newburyport	Ethan Seufert	- Chatham
Jane Hofherr	- Marshfield	Brandi Sikorski	- Belmont
Lois Katanik	- East Dennis	Donna-Lee Taylor	- North Haven, CT
Teresa & Ernst Kratschmer	- South Dennis	Beverly Wiksten	- Carver

**November Program Recap: New England Wildlife Center of Barnstable**



Dr. Priya Patel and injured red phase Screech Owl

Dr. Priya Patel presented the November program highlighting the work and challenges of the New England Wildlife Center of Barnstable. As a wildlife veterinarian, she is intimately involved in caring for the most severely injured wildlife patients.

Among the hawks and owls seen at the Center, rodenticides used by Cape residents are causing poisoning and death. Dr Patel strongly urged us to find other ways to combat mice and rats that enter our homes, garages and outbuildings.

This call for action was also emphasized by Stephanie Ellis, Executive Director of Wild Care in Eastham, when she spoke at an earlier program.

New Year’s Resolution for Concerned Birders:  
***Find a less toxic alternative.***

## How Do Birds Survive Winter? — Peggy Sagan

This time of year, there are few seasonal rentals to be found in balmy southern resort towns. So once again, we wanna-be “snow birds” will spend our winter here. If birds can survive Cape Cod’s frigid temperatures and howling winds, so can we. But we have heat and indoor plumbing; how do THEY do it?

**Feathers.** When I moved to New England, I noticed that in the winter, everyone dressed androgynously in puffy down jackets. Although the jackets certainly weren’t flattering, they were warm. Just as the air pockets between the fluffy down kept us toasty, the air between birds’ fluffed-up feathers keeps them insulated against the cold. And, interestingly, there are many species of birds that grow *extra* feathers as an added defense against winter.

**Body Temperature.** Keeping warm requires energy – produced by burning calories. During daylight hours, birds can usually consume sufficient calories to maintain their body temperature. But at night, when food is not available, smaller species such as kinglets and chickadees can conserve their energy requirements by lowering their body temperature (“controlled hypothermia”). Some species conserve body temperature by cuddling – or huddling – with others of their kind. A variety of species, from woodpeckers to titmice, seek the added protection of cavities, roosting boxes, or thick foliage to serve as a wind barrier.

**Circulation.** Gulls, ducks, and even some perching birds avoid cold feet while maintaining a warm core thanks to an efficient circulatory system. These species allow the temperature in their feet to approach freezing, maintaining *just enough* blood flow to prevent permanent injury. How do they manage? First, recall how incredibly thin birds’ leg (actually, foot) bones are. Now picture how close the arteries (flowing away from the body) and the veins (flowing toward the body) must be to fit in that narrow space. As the blood from their warm bodies flows toward their feet, the blood naturally cools; on its return to the body, the blood is warmed from heat transferred from the warm arteries to the cool veins. Wouldn’t that be a useful adaptation to have on the Christmas

Bird Count?

**Food.** As post-holiday gym sign-ups attest, nothing says “winter” like a few extra pounds – or grams, if you’re a bird. Bulking up on whatever food source is available – whether provided by nature or bird-loving humans – is an essential survival strategy. Some species (including chickadees, woodpeckers, shrikes, jays, titmice, and nuthatches) take matters into their own beaks by caching food during the summer and fall, when supplies are plentiful, to be “harvested” in winter. Some corvids employ devilish diversionary tactics to conceal their cache from competitors – a behavior often cited as yet another example of bird intelligence.

**Reminder.** Just as holidays and calories go hand in hand, so do food and water. Access to fresh water is essential to bird survival in the winter (for drinking and feather maintenance), so consider investing in a birdbath heater. For under \$50, your yard will be the most popular in the neighborhood with your avian friends.

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



American Robin. Photo by Peggy Sagan

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

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