

Kelly's Corner

BY JAN KELLY



When I am enjoying the Beech Forest, as I do almost every day, I often wonder about those unaware of the natural wealth and beauty that occurs there season after season. I invite many to go, have taught bird watching and nature courses there. The impression is slow in the pace of nature, but once the student is caught, taken out of limiting reality, they are enraptured with its beauty--the oohs and ahhs of wonderment! I am puzzled why more Provincetowners are not involved in this area beyond an infrequent walk or dog walk. There is so much to see.

Well, Shawn Carey would impress you. On a chilly spring Sunday morning he was a vision in our Beech Forest, looking every bit a National Geographic or Discovery Channel photographer on location. Shawn Carey of Braintree, is a photographer, and has his own business, "Migration Productions," dedicated to his work. He has a website and you can experience the splendors of Shawn's superb work on the computer screen, or even take

one of his seminars and courses. I immediately respected this avian photographer's dedication, bearing the chilly East wind of the Cape's spring patiently waiting, listening and preparing for a warbler to come within range of his powerful equipment. This commitment to these birds is impressive. It again caused me to wonder why everybody doesn't let themselves experience this special geographic spot. It's the best location on the Cape for warbler migrations. For the month of May, these tiny birds, weighing only as much as three pennies, pass through. From South and Central America as far as Alaska they travel to keep their species thriving. Some stay, nest, and fledge here. Yellow is the warbler's predominant color, but the songs are varied and being insect eaters, they are constantly moving.

But this opportunity won't last all summer. Once the yearly courtships are over, the birds are much less visible. The female is on the nest. The male is fetching food (in some specials both the male and female gather food). By June, the songs of love are quieted. Safe and hidden nests are the work then. So come out in May and enjoy as many as 20 species

Fly Like an Eagle



A Prothonotary Warbler peeks out of its home.

Shawn Carey sets up his shot.





A Northern Harrier takes flight

on a good day. The Cape Cod Bird club gives walks every Saturday and Sunday in May at 8 am, meeting at the Beech Forest parking lot. Everyone is welcome. Audubon gives walks each Wednesday in May at 7 am, starting at the same location. Registration is required though. Call 508.349.2615 for more info. In Provincetown, we are so close to this rare opportunity. Enthusiasts travel miles to enjoy our Beech Forest. Don't miss out!

When you've finished your walk and are taking a mid-morning coffee break reviewing your list for the day, you can gear up for the next experience.

Continue up to Pilgrim Heights. There you will have quite a different birding experience: a hawk watch. This program is in its 6th year. Melissa Lowe is the coordinator of this program sponsored by the Wellfleet Audubon. Don Manchester, is the stalwart volunteer who is there daily, weather permitting. Though the program only runs on Saturday and Sunday 9 am to 3 pm, Don travels down daily from Sandwich. So is his love for birds of prey.

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The sightings are recorded for the Hawk Migration Association of North America. Last year 2,444 hawks were sighted representing 14 species. Volunteers serve as the counters, and guides. Scopes, binoculars and books are provided. The volunteers are invaluable to the count. You could be one, even if you are a beginner. If you need more information you can call Melissa Lowe at the Wellfleet Audubon (508.349.2615). Or you can just go to the next lookout at Pilgrim Heights and you'll be in good company.

When I visited Sunday I was greeted by a cheerful young man with, "I love hawks, don't you?" I asked, "What do you love about them?" He replied, "I especially love the Accipiters. They're pretty. I like them as they fly, and I like watching them hunt." I introduced myself to Eric Rego, a 5th grader at Truro Center School. I asked him how he became interested in the hawk project: "Well, I was reading about it in the paper and it occurred to me that I might like this. And I live close by, so it made sense."

Eric continued spotting, giving and asking information. The information is catalogued by the volunteers who record each sighting listing time, age, sex, morph, distance, direction, cloud cover, visibility, wind direction, wind speed, temperature, and weather.



Don Manchester & Ginie Page see something in the distance.

During my stay on Sunday we saw: an American Kestrel, a Turkey Vulture, a Sharp-Shinned, a Merlin an unidentified Buteo, an Osprey, a Cooper's and three immature Bald Eagles.

So much to do in our neighborhoods. Come out and join us. ■

Bird photos compliments of Shawn Carey