

THE IPA NEWSLETTER

Mystic Lake, Middle Pond, and Hamblin Pond

Spring 2008

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Vol. 8 No. 2



COME AND HELP CELEBRATE 50 YEARS AT THE IPA ANNUAL MEETING

The 2008 Annual Meeting of the Indian Ponds Association will be held Sunday, July 13. As last year, it will be held outdoors at the home of Jon and Debby Halpert at 470 Turtleback Road in Marstons Mills from 4:00 to 6:00 PM. The short business meeting and guest speaker will be from 4:00 to 5:00 PM followed by a special social hour in commemoration of the IPA's 50th anniversary. Business will include various reports, election of new Directors, the presentation of checks to recipients of the Edward Schwarm Memorial Scholarship, and a few other things. In case of rain, the meeting will be indoors at the home of Lewis and Nancy Solomon at 28 Heath Row in Marstons Mills. Reminder postcards, including directions to the Halpert home, will be sent to IPA members two weeks before the meeting.

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TOWN COUNCIL FUNDS ALUM TREATMENT FOR MYSTIC LAKE

By a vote of 9–1, the Barnstable Town Council, the evening of May 15, voted to authorize the expenditure of \$275,000 to fund the second phase of the alum treatment for Mystic Lake. Concerns about the possible linkage between aluminum and Alzheimer's disease were raised and discussed, but strong evidence to the contrary convinced most councilors to vote in favor of the alum treatment.

The first phase, the design and permitting phase approved last year by the Council, is still ongoing under the direction of the environmental firm ENSR. The actual implementation of the treatment, the second phase, could take place as early as this fall if all necessary permits are obtained. Dr. David Mitchell of ENSR will provide an update on the first phase and answer questions at the July 13 IPA Annual Meeting.

GRAY WILLOW REMOVAL PROJECT SET TO GO

The removal project for invasive gray willows growing around the shores of the Indian Ponds has received an extremely positive response and endorsement from waterfront property owners and is slated to proceed as planned. The project, the plans for which were developed by the IPA Board of Directors, the Town Conservation Division, and Bartlett Tree Experts of Osterville, will involve the cutting and removal of gray willows and the treatment of stumps with herbicide on properties whose owners sign up to participate.



Steven Heywood, Local
Manager, Bartlett Tree
Experts, Osterville.

As of this writing (May 13), Steve Heywood of Bartlett Tree Experts reported that he has visited and mailed work/cost proposals for the properties belonging to 56 of the 126 waterfront owners on the three ponds. Of that total, 38 have returned signed contracts according to the following breakdown by pond: Mystic Lake – 18, Middle Pond – 8, and Hamblin Pond – 12. Heywood expects additional signed contracts to be returned in the coming days. According to the original promise by Bartlett, a 10% discount would be given if at least 20 properties signed up, and a 15% discount if at least 40 properties signed up. It appears evident that the 15% discount will be given to all who sign up.

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The IPA is a 501(c)(3) organization and a registered public charity. All dues and contributions are tax deductible.

This newsletter, with a circulation of over 650, is a forum for the exchange of ideas on matters germane to the IPA mission and, as such, the views expressed by authors of articles do not necessarily represent official IPA policy.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT



The President's Report has been an infrequent part of this news letter over the past several years mainly because most of what I would have reported was already included in other articles. However, since my time on the Board and as President will expire this July following the Annual Meeting, I thought it appropriate to share some thoughts.

I was elected to the Board at the 2001 Annual Meeting, which was prior to the adoption of our present By-laws that now limit service to a maximum of three consecutive two-year terms. The following year, I was elected Vice President, and two years after that, President, an office that I have held four years. During these seven years, it has been my honor and pleasure to work with numerous Directors and officers, all of whom have injected their special talents, interests, dedication, and energy into the process of promoting the mission of the Indian Ponds Association and managing its various activities and projects. I thank each and every one of them for their service to the IPA and for their help to me. I am also appreciative of the extremely cordial working relations I have had with Town Manager John Klimm, Conservation Commission Division Director Rob Gatewood, and Ed Eichner and Tom Camberari of the Cape Cod Commission's Water Resources Office.

During the past seven years, the IPA emerged from a period of relative dormancy to assume a very active role in preserving and protecting the natural environment and ecological systems of the Indian Ponds and surrounding parcels of land and watershed. Our largest and most successful venture was the study of the three ponds in collaboration with the Cape Cod Commission and the Town of Barnstable. Planning began in 2003, the study was conducted in 2004 and 2005, and the report was completed in 2006. A major outcome was that Mystic Lake was impaired by excessive phosphorus in the sediments causing increased algal blooms, reduced oxygen in deep water, reduced water clarity, and loss of fish habitat. The Town Manager and Town Council responded by funding an alum treatment to neutralize the phosphorus. Another successful program has been our efforts to remove invasive plant species from the Indian Ponds, beginning in 2006 with the pulling of purple loosestrife from the shores of Hamblin and Middle Ponds and continuing this year with the removal of gray willow trees from waterfront properties in collaboration with Bartlett Tree Experts. It has been gratifying to observe the IPA being recognized and applauded by outsiders for its strong initiative and forward thinking with both the pond study and the removal of invasive plant species, particularly the gray willow. On a smaller scale, we have tried to keep the Indian Ponds cleaner by participating in the annual Coastsweep cleanup of public beaches and by initiating, in 2006, our own annual Derelict

Boat and Debris Cleanup in late May.

Our educational efforts have also been successful. In 2003, the IPA published a useful booklet entitled *A Resident's Guide to Living on the Indian Ponds*. As part of our 50th anniversary activities, an enlarged and updated booklet entitled *A Resident's Guide to the Indian Ponds* is being prepared and will be available by the time of the Annual Meeting. *The IPA Newsletter*, which was launched in 2001 and issued three times a year until 2003, is now a greatly improved and widely read quarterly publication sent to about 650 households as well as local, state, and national government officials. The Edward Schwarm Memorial Scholarship program has grown substantially in three short years from a single \$500 award to two \$1,000 awards, thanks to the generosity of IPA members.

As an organization, the IPA has rapidly evolved in the last seven years in many ways. In 2002 and 2003, we became incorporated, were designated a public charity, and achieved 501(c)(3) status. The number of household memberships, a useful metric for gauging public interest, has broken records each year, increasing from 106 in 2004 to 141 in 2005 to 153 in 2006 and to 172 in 2007. Based on renewals and new memberships received thus far, we anticipate reaching or exceeding the 2007 level. This demonstrates to me that the IPA is a vibrant and relevant organization successfully addressing the interests and concerns of the residents of the Indian Ponds area.

I intend to remain involved in the work and activities of the IPA for a little while. However, it's time for new people with new ideas to assume leadership positions in the IPA. I wish my successor all the best and trust that the IPA will continue to do good things for the ponds and for the people of Marstons Mills.

Emory D. Anderson, Ph.D.

GRAY WILLOW REMOVAL PROJECT SET TO GO

(Continued from page 1)

Heywood gives high marks to the IPA for initiating this project. He recently stated, "In general, the owners that I have talked with have been very receptive of the project and it's benefit to the ponds. I remain impressed by your association and its active leadership to be so proactive and forward thinking."

In the 2008 Winter issue of this newsletter and in the letters mailed to waterfront property owners in early February, a deadline of March 31 was specified for signing up for this project. However, that deadline has now been extended to Monday, June 2. Bartlett plans to send another letter to all owners thanking those who have signed up, encouraging those with a proposal in hand to sign and return it, and inviting others to ask for a visit and a cost estimate. Owners

wishing to participate must have a signed contract returned to Bartlett by no later than this date. Owners who have not yet contacted Bartlett are urged to do so as soon as possible to take advantage of this opportunity. Please contact Steven Heywood, Local Manager, Bartlett Tree Experts, P.O. Box 177, Osterville, MA 02655 (phone: 508-428-2397, fax: 508-428-2398, e-mail: sheywood@bartlett.com).

The group permit for the removal project will be prepared over the next several weeks and finalized shortly after June 2. The hearing of the Conservation Commission to consider this request is scheduled for June 24. At this time, we are not anticipating any problems with securing the Commission's authorization to go forward with the project, which is set for the period July 14–28.

DERELICT BOAT AND DEBRIS CLEANUP

On Saturday, May 31, the IPA will sponsor its third annual cleanup of derelict boats and debris from around the shores of Mystic Lake and Middle Pond. This activity the last two years has involved 8-10 volunteers and produced a sizable amount of abandoned material which was removed and disposed of by personnel from the Town's Highway and Solid Waste Divisions. However, because of the much larger volume of material collected and disposed of in the first year (2006), last year's removal effort produced markedly less debris.

IPA Director Bob Derderian reported that Hamblin Pond was relatively free of debris at the time this article was written and did not require any major cleanup. Waterfront residents of Hamblin Pond, however, are encouraged to pick up and dispose of any stray items that might appear in the future.

Boat and float owners are asked to ensure that their property is well labeled and can be identified and returned if it drifts away. Also, boats should be tidily moored, docked, or properly secured on the shore and not left in such a state as to suggest abandonment.

Anyone wishing to participate in the cleanup this year should meet at 9:00 AM at IPA Director Bob Kohl's dock at the north end of Mystic Lake (1153 Race Lane). If you have a boat with motor, please come with that together with rope, rubber boots, and any other items of equipment that might assist in gathering and towing debris to the Town beach.

Waterfront residents or others who may have left or lost boats, floats, docks or dock parts, or other items are urged to retrieve them before May 31. **Unless retrieved or otherwise claimed by owners prior to this date, all items collected will be removed.**

JULY 4th BOAT PARADE



Some residents are planning a boat parade around Mystic Lake and Middle Pond on the afternoon of July 4 and would welcome anyone with a boat, canoe, or kayak to join in the fun to help celebrate the IPA's 50th anniversary and also to carry on a tradition begun some years ago.

Long-time residents will remember that former IPA member and Director Ted Elliott, who died last August, had a tradition of traveling around the two ponds on the 4th on his pontoon boat that was decorated with flags and colorful bunting as patriotic music was playing. He always visited the public and private beaches to present small U.S. flags to all children and to wish Independence Day greetings to everyone.

The plan is for participating boats to assemble at 3:00 PM on July 4 in the northeast cove of Mystic Lake. The parade will then proceed counter-clockwise around Mystic Lake, stopping at each beach to present flags, and then proceeding through the cut into Middle Pond to do the same. Pontoon boat owners are especially encouraged to decorate their boats and join in the parade. Don and Judith Houghton (508-420-3095) have agreed to coordinate the parade. Anyone wishing to participate or obtain further information should contact them. In case of rain, the parade will be on July 5.

This event is not sponsored by the IPA nor can the IPA be held liable for any accidents to participants. Individuals will be responsible for their own safety.

**DON'T FORGET — YOU'RE INVITED
IPA ANNUAL MEETING**

SUNDAY, JULY 13, 2008, 4:00 PM

COME AND CELEBRATE 50 YEARS AT THE IPA ANNUAL MEETING (Continued from page 1)

The guest speaker for the 2008 IPA Annual Meeting will be Dr. David Mitchell, Project Manager of the Mystic Lake Nutrient Inactivation Design and Permitting Project being handled by ENSR International, a global provider of environmental and energy development services to industry and government. He will speak about the issues and problems being addressed in designing the actual alum treatment and securing the necessary local and state permits.

Eleven good reasons to attend the Annual Meeting

- Help celebrate our 50th anniversary
- Get answers to your questions regarding the IPA projects
- Share your special pictures from the past and IPA memorabilia (such as Mystic Lake milk bottles, etc.)
- Meet the IPA Schwarm Scholarship recipients
- Marvel at the winning posters (3rd and 4th grade environmental poster competition)
- Receive a free copy of the new booklet entitled *A Resident's Guide to the Indian Ponds*
- Meet your friends and neighbors
- Enjoy the refreshments and a glass of wine
- Enjoy the spacious and beautiful venue
- Meet and thank the generous and gracious hosts, Jon and Debby Halpert
- Purchase an IPA cap and join the crowd



Attentive audience at 2007 Annual Meeting prior to a lively social hour.

NEW RESIDENT'S GUIDE PUBLISHED

A new booklet entitled, *A Resident's Guide to the Indian Ponds*, prepared by IPA Director and Vice President Holly Hobart, will be printed in June and be available for distribution by the time of the Annual Meeting. Printed in color and magazine size (8½ x 11 in), the 24-page booklet will feature many photographs and illustrations and considerably more information than the earlier publication, *A Resident's Guide to Living on the Indian Ponds*, issued by the IPA in 2003.

Here are the chapter headings of the *Guide*:

- The Ponds Themselves
- Ponds and People: Social and Cultural History
- Beaches and Boating
- Maps of the Indian Ponds
- Fishing in the Indian Ponds
- Herring and the Herring Run
- Common Submerged Pond Plants
- Some Pond Shore Wildflowers
- Special Pond Creatures: Mussels
- Dragonflies and Damselflies of the Ponds
- Cranberry Bogs
- Resident's Guide to What's Legal
- Threats to the Ponds
- Septic Systems and the Ponds
- Lawns, Garden, Driveways, and Groundwater
- Invasive Plants of the Indian Ponds
- Planting a Buffer Strip
- IPA: Celebrating Fifty Years of Service
- IPA: Organization, Projects, Other Information
- Ideas for Responsible Pondsides Living



Copies of the new booklet will be provided free of charge to everyone on the IPA's newsletter mailing list. Those attending the July 13 Annual Meeting may pick up their copy then.

TWO RECIPIENTS OF SCHWARM MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIPS

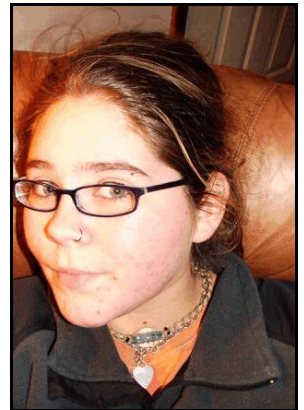


Robyn Pitera

Two graduating seniors from Barnstable High School have been selected by the IPA to receive Edward Schwarm Memorial Scholarships. The recipients are Robyn Pitera, daughter of John and Cheri Pitera of 47 Little Neck Way, Marstons Mills, and Rebecca Cabral, daughter of Neil and Moira Cabral of 544 Flint Street, Marstons Mills. Both young women will be presented with \$1,000 checks at the IPA Annual Meeting on Sunday, July 13.

The Schwarm Memorial Scholarship was established in 2005 in memory of Edward Schwarm, a former IPA Director and officer who died in May 2005. When the Scholarship was set up, the intent was to give a \$500 award annually to a single recipient. Last year, however, the IPA selection committee judged two applicants, both young women, to be deserving of scholarships, and thanks to the generosity of IPA members contributing to the Scholarship fund, the amount of the award

was increased to \$750. This year, two recipients were again selected to receive scholarships based on their scholastic achievements and extracurricular activities or community service related to the mission of the IPA. In addition, because of the generosity of IPA members and a decision by IPA member Thomas Schwarm and his family to transfer over \$2,000 from the Erla Z. Schwarm Memorial Scholarship at The Federated Church of Hyannis to the IPA's Schwarm Scholarship fund, the Board decided to increase the amount of the award to \$1,000.



Rebecca Cabral

Rebecca will be enrolling at Unity College in Maine this fall and plans to major in wildlife biology. Robyn has decided to attend Clemson University and is interested in biology and medicine. We wish both of them success in their educational and career pursuits.

SCHOOL KIDS' POSTER CONTEST



As one of the activities to celebrate 50 years of stewardship of the Indian Ponds, the IPA is involving 3rd and 4th grade students from two schools in a poster contest. At this writing, the children are creating colorful signs to show recycling, stopping pollution, disposing of litter, and picking up pet poop properly. Three poster winners from each grade level in each school will be chosen and prizes (i.e. gift certificates) will be awarded. The winning creations and the names of the recipients will be on display at the IPA Annual Meeting on Sunday, July 13.

If Town officials approve, winning posters will be made into permanent signs to be posted at Town beaches. Perhaps creative, colorful signs made by our kids might further encourage us to care for our Cape Cod and its precious natural resources.

Jane Smith

JOIN THE IPA

**INVITE YOUR FRIENDS
TO JOIN THE IPA**

IPA CAPS FOR SALE

Support and publicize the IPA!

Price: \$15

**To buy caps,
call Geri Anderson
(508-420-2303)**



QUESTIONS ABOUT ALUM, PUBLIC HEALTH, AND SAFETY

Note: In the Fall 2007 issue of this newsletter, we included a Q and A on alum and public safety. Because public interest on this topic has increased as we get closer to the actual time when Mystic Lake will be treated for excessive phosphorous, we have decided to run the Q and A again, but with more detail concerning health effects.

What is Alum?

Alum is the common name for aluminum sulfate, a compound derived from aluminum.

Is alum safe?

Yes. Alum and related forms of aluminum are extensively used in food (baking powder), medicines (antacids, buffered aspirin), and to purify drinking water. Alum is also extensively used to provide effective control of algae in contaminated lakes. Alum has been shown to be harmless to water creatures and aquatic plants. After many years of extensive testing, alum has also been shown to have no adverse effects on living creatures, including humans. In fact, fish populations in lakes contaminated by phosphorous are generally much healthier after an alum treatment because they have more oxygen to breathe.

Is aluminum safe?

Aluminum, the most abundant metal on Earth, is found in soil, water, and even the air. Aluminum also occurs naturally in many foods, especially tea. Because aluminum is present throughout the environment and is used in a wide variety of products and processes, it is impossible to avoid exposure to aluminum on a daily basis. Because aluminum is the most common metal found in soil, even the purest artesian well water will contain aluminum due to the fact that it percolates through soil to get to us. In effect, we humans live in a "sea" of aluminum. Because of this unavoidable exposure, researchers have long been studying its effects on humans. Research has focused on a possible link between aluminum ingestion and Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, and Lou Gehrig's diseases. No evidence exists to suggest that ingested aluminum poses a health threat. Some studies that were done years ago suggested aluminum may play a role in Alzheimer's disease because higher-than-normal concentrations of aluminum were found in the brains of deceased people who had the disease. Later work proved that higher aluminum was a result and not the cause of the disease. All work done since then confirms that aluminum exposure is not linked to this age-related disease. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and leading medical experts concur that aluminum does not pose a health risk. However, one can still find Internet web-sites today that state just the opposite.

How is alum used in water treatment plants?

Most surface water treatment plants around the world use alum to help remove harmful waterborne microorganisms and other particles by causing them to clump together (coagulate) into larger particles that then are easily removed by sedimentation or filtration. In the United States alone, hundreds of thousands of tons of alum are used annually by water treatment plants.



The active ingredients of Maalox include 48% aluminum hydroxide, the compound formed when alum is injected into water.

How does alum control algae in lakes and ponds?

An alum treatment does not kill algae. Alum is not a poison. What it does is greatly reduce the availability of phosphorus — a necessary food source for algae — although it never completely eliminates all phosphorus, leaving enough to ensure normal levels of algae needed as food for zooplankton, larval fish, and freshwater mussels..

How does alum trap phosphorus?

When alum is injected into water, aluminum hydroxide (the principal ingredient in common antacids) is formed. This fluffy substance, called "floc", settles to the bottom of the lake. On the way down, it interacts with phosphorus to form aluminum phosphate that is insoluble in water. The results: phosphorus in the water is permanently trapped in lake bottom sediments and can no longer be used as a food by algae. An added bonus: as the floc descends through the water, it also collects other suspended particles in the water, carrying them to the bottom and leaving the lake noticeably clearer.

What happens to the alum that has been added to the lake?

The floc settles to the bottom of the lake. As it combines with and traps the phosphorus, it becomes an insoluble and permanent part of the sediment layer at the bottom of the lake. In effect, the aluminum in the alum joins all of the other aluminum in the soil that is already at the bottom of the lake.

Carl Thut, Ph.D.

Source material: Executive Office of Environmental Affairs, Commonwealth of Massachusetts "Eutrophication and aquatic plant management in Massachusetts"; Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board "Alum treatments"; Health Canada "Aluminum and Human Health"; American Chemical Society "Aluminum compounds"; and Q Chef "Cooking with Alum".

HERRING RUN HAS GOOD VOLUME

The 2008 herring run on the Marstons Mills River has seen significantly higher numbers this year than in 2007 and 2006. This is just our third year in the Herring Counting Program, and we don't have much history, but just the same, it's showing a good trend.

The fish arriving this year to spawn were born 3-4 years ago, so there isn't a direct correlation year to year. And since we don't have numbers from 3-4 years ago, we don't know if the run is up or down from that "crop".

As of this writing, we have perhaps another week to count, but here are some approximate numbers: the total number of fish counted (not the projection of those counts) is going to end up at about 5,200 this year. In 2007, the total counted was 1,741 and in 2006, just 720.

In addition to taking counts at Mill Pond, as we have in the past two years, this year we also counted at the entrance to Middle Pond. But with just this first year's numbers from there, it's hard to draw any conclusions, other than to note that just about half as many fish were counted at Middle Pond than at Mill Pond. There are some issues with the

passage of fish from the first ladder at Mill Pond to the second ladder at Middle Pond that we'll be working on this year.

We had 29 terrific volunteers who did the counting this year — we count 10 minutes at a time, nine times each day during the run — which started on April 10 this year (April 20 in 2007, April 12 in 2006). That's a total of almost 700 counts taken this year — and we missed just 6 of them!

The numbers we collect will be sent off to the Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries to be entered into a computer model that will extrapolate the counts into a total projection for the run. We'll have that number in an about a month (in 2007, the total projection was 14,018; in 2006, it was 6,906).

If you'd like to monitor the remaining days on the run and see the details of the counting, you can visit our blog — just search for "marstons mills herring" in Google. If you'd like to count with us next year, you can register from there as well.

If you don't have access to the internet, please call me at 508-420-0075 and I'll mail you the information.

Kevin Galvin
Herring Counting Project Manager



Participants in a talk and walking tour of invasive plant species around Hamblin Pond at River Day. Left to right: Eddie Flanagan, Sean Korsis, Jim McGuire, Rebecca Cabral, and David Gorrill.

WET RIVER DAY

Attendance at the Sunday, May 4 Marstons Mills River Day was significantly lowered by rainy weather. However, all the participating organizations, including the IPA, displayed their educational exhibits under the shelter of a big tent. The brave souls who ventured to Burgess Park to show their support were greatly appreciated. In between raindrops, IPA Director Jim McGuire was joined in his talking and walking tour of invasive plant species around Hamblin Pond by a small group including Barnstable High School science teacher David Gorrill and several of his students.

IPA Director Carl Thut was on site to give a talk on phosphorus containment using alum, but the dreary weather discouraged any attendees. Thanks to all of the IPA members who stopped and/or assisted at our table.

PHOSPHORUS BILL SIGNED BY GOVERNOR

The state Legislature has passed Senate Bill No. 536 which will ban phosphorus from dishwashing detergents. The bill, sponsored by Sen. Pamela Resor, a Democrat from the Middlesex and Worcester district, received a unanimous vote in the House on February 13 and was signed into law by Governor Deval Patrick on February 21. It reads: "No household cleansing product which contains a phosphorous compound in concentrations in excess of a trace quantity, except those used in commercial dishwashing machines, commercial laundries, for cleansing medical and surgical equipment, food and beverage processing equipment, and dairy equipment shall be distributed, sold, offered or exposed for sale at retail, wholesale, or used in a commercial establishment in the commonwealth after July 1, 2010. All manufacturers of household cleansing products for household dishwashing machines shall be required to reduce the concentration of phosphorous in these detergents to a trace quantity by July 1, 2010."

BIRDING NEWS

Well, it seems as though spring has sprung. All of our human snowbirds may not have arrived back from warmer climes yet, but the feathered snowbirds are here in force. I'm not especially excited by tiny little warblers and vireos that don't sit still long enough to be observed, but I do like to see some of the birds that come back to haunt our backyards in the spring and summer.



Eastern towhee

The first of the returnees that I spotted was the eastern towhee. The colorful male all dressed up in a little tuxedo with a rust waistcoat is always fun to see. He looks like a short, fat alderman out on his rounds around town. The towhee is one of the largest of the sparrow family. They spend the spring, summer, and early fall with us and breed and raise their broods in our area. When the weather starts to change in the fall, he beats feet south, wintering from Virginia to Florida.

Towhees establish nests on the ground at the base of up-right vegetation, or in vine tangles, or under shrubs. They feed on seeds, fruit, spiders, insects, and other small invertebrates. In our yards, they can usually be seen under hanging feeders. They have a fairly unique method of scratching — a two-footed backward hop.

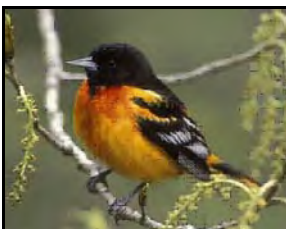


Gray catbird

The gray catbirds have returned in their usual great numbers and almost all of us have seen this jaunty little gray bird with the black cap. Although these birds are usually quite secretive across most of their range, on Cape Cod they are seen mixing it up with all the rest of our birds. When they

are establishing or defending a territory, they use a loud raucous call, but when near their nest or their mate, they have a softer, more melodious call that is usually repeated back to them by their mate.

They are not necessarily monogamous. One catbird has been known to have two mates and nest in two territories separated by the territory of another catbird. He also defends both territories. They summer and breed from southern Canada south to Florida and winter along the east coast, south to Florida, the Caribbean, and Central America.

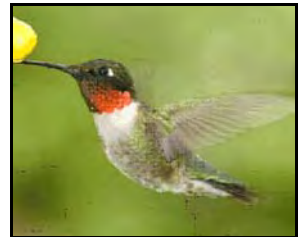


Baltimore oriole

One of my favorites is the Baltimore oriole. At the moment, we have five or six in our yard.

Like the American robin, the oriole is named after a similar-appearing Old World bird. It is not a member of the family Oriolidae, but is more closely related to blackbirds and meadowlarks. They summer and breed from southern Canada as far south as Texas, Louisiana, and Georgia, and winter in Florida, the Caribbean, Mexico, Central America, and northern South America. They are omnivorous birds, eating caterpillars and insects as well as fruits and nectars. I hang out a suet holder cage with orange halves in it and they love it. The flock we have goes through an orange a day and are not particular. They like the cheaper Florida oranges just as well as the more expensive navels!

If you see a hummingbird on Cape Cod, you are looking at a ruby-throated hummingbird. It is the only hummingbird species in eastern North America. It summers from the Mississippi east and from southern Canada south to Florida and winters in Mexico and Central America south to Costa Rica. They always return to the same area around Mother's Day. Regardless what some experts say, they do not necessarily look for red feeders. They remember where their favorite feeder was last year and look for a feeder, regardless of color, there this year. They will accept some small movement, say from one side of the deck to another, but know their feeder and will defend it from all comers. They will come to hummingbird feeders, so putting one out is almost guaranteed to get you one of these little jewels.



Ruby-throated hummingbird

For me, the rarest bird of this spring has been the brown-headed cowbird. I'm sure they have been here every year, but in 35 years, I had never seen one on Cape Cod and had to go to Texas to see my first bird. That is really strange, too, because these birds try to lay their eggs in the nest of a gray catbird and trick the catbird into raising their babies; consequently, they are usually seen wherever catbirds are breeding. The brown-headed cowbird is the only brood parasite across the whole of North America. That is, the bird does not build a nest of its own. The female will lay eggs in nests other than those of the catbird, but an individual female will always lay her eggs in the nest of the same species. So far this year, we have had them on our deck twice, and I have also seen them on one other occasion. They winter in Baja and southern Mexico, and summer and breed all across North America and southern Canada.



Brown-headed cowbird

Dave Reid