

RYE DRIFTWOOD GARDEN CLUB

The Seacoast Offers a Wealth of Bird Watching Opportunities

By Claire Larrabee

Due to Covid 19, Rye Driftwood Garden Club will not be holding meetings until further notice. Please visit our website <http://www.ryehgardenclub.org/> to get the latest update on our Club's activities and news.

Did you ever wonder why White-breasted Nuthatches like to hang upside down or walk down trees? Well, that's a question that continues to puzzle even the scientists, but theories are that walking down a tree gives nuthatches a different view of all the nooks and crannies that might contain tasty bugs that other birds will miss.

We are blessed with an abundance of bird life here on the Seacoast. From our familiar all-year Downy and Hairy Woodpeckers and occasional winter visitors like the Pine Siskin and Red Breasted Nuthatch to our "snowbird" friends the Baltimore Orioles, Catbirds and Ruby-throated Hummingbirds who show up for the summer, bird watching around here is a rewarding experience.

One of the special treats of spring is the warblers. Many are passing through, but some stay for the summer. Warblers are insect eaters, so they won't show up at your feeders. However, like orioles, they are partial to fruit, so you can sometimes catch a Black-throated Blue Warbler or a Common Yellow-throat grabbing a taste of grape jelly out of an oriole feeder. Constantly in motion, warblers can be found hunting for caterpillars in many of our garden shrubs. The best strategy for catching a glimpse of these charming birds decked out in bright yellows and oranges, snappy black and white and even deep blue outfits is to sit quietly near shrubs for a while and watch for movement among the leaves. Here on the Seacoast, we often find the second and third week of May is a peak time for encountering these treasures.

Birds all over the country are having a tough time. A 2019 study published by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology has found that wild bird populations in the U.S. and Canada have declined by almost 30% since 1970. This is a loss of nearly three billion birds in just 50 years. We can help reverse this trend by adding plants to our gardens that are good for birds. Birds love to eat berries from shrubs and trees like viburnum, elderberry, winterberry, and serviceberry. Cedar, spruce, rhododendron and other evergreens provide food, nesting and roosting resources. A wide range of perennial flowers offer seeds and nectar to hungry birds, such as bee balm, coneflowers, foxgloves, black-eyed susans, asters, and columbine. What could be better than not only creating a beautiful garden but one that helps our feathered friends thrive!

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Black Throated Blue Warbler



Baltimore Oriole



Magnolia Warbler



Pine Siskin