



# Monticello Bird Club

February 2015 Newsletter  
Website: [www.monticellobirdclub.org](http://www.monticellobirdclub.org)

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*MBC Monthly Meeting*—Thursday, February 12th at 7:00pm

## Comments from the President

Doug Rogers

Joanne and I have been birding together for over ten years now. While we are not serious “life listers” (our life list is somewhere north of 500 species), we do enjoy being able to identify all the species we see. Shorebirds, as a group, have been the most difficult for us to identify – especially in winter.

In the second week of January of this year, on the not-too-sunny Gulf Coast of Florida, we had our highest exposure to shorebirds ever. Herewith is some of what we learned. (This will be “old hat” for many of you; informative to some others.)

**Willet:** A large shorebird with long legs and a long, straight beak, is most easily recognized by the striking black and white pattern on its wings, which is only visible in flight. Many of the Wil-



lets we saw were resting and standing on only one leg. This pictured Willet (even though it had two legs!) landed on only one. Why do they do that?

**Dunlin:** A medium-sized sandpiper with a moderately short neck, longer than head-size drooping bill, and fairly long, blackish legs. It has a slightly hunched appearance. Non-breeding plumage is all dull brownish gray, with whitish belly.



**Piping plover:** A small shorebird approximately seven inches long with sand-colored plumage on its back and crown with white underparts. During winter, the birds lose their breeding plumage black bands, the legs fade to pale yellow, and the bill becomes mostly black.



**Sanderling:** A straight-billed, small shorebird that feeds by running down the beach after a receding wave to pick up stranded invertebrates or probe for prey hidden in the wet sand. Its diet includes small crabs, amphipods and other small crustaceans, worms, mollusks, and horseshoe crab eggs.



**Ruddy Turnstone:** A relatively easy to ID (hooray!) medium shorebird that feeds on invertebrates such as crustaceans, mollusks, and worms in winter.



It was good fun! We can now identify – at least these five species – (fairly) reliably.

*Shorebird Photos  
by Doug Rogers*

## Speaker of the Month: Jim Nix — Birding Cambodia and Laos

Stauffer Miller

Monticello Bird Club member Jim Nix will speak to the group February 12th. Jim has been a member of MBC since it was founded in 1986 and has held every position in the officer structure except treasurer. He has given several programs to the club, most recently one about birding in Colombia.

Last year Jim had the opportunity to visit the far side of the world by taking a Birdquest trip to Cambodia and Laos. Not only did he get to see exotic countries but also birds he had never heard of such as munias, minivets, ioras and treepies. While exhausting, the birding was spectacular and the countries fascinating. Since these two countries have only recently become accessible to birding groups, bird discoveries continue to be made. Jim’s group saw several species only recently described and a number that are rare and critically endangered. This is a rare opportunity to hear about birds we know little of that dwell in a far off part of the world, many of whom have a tenuous conservation status.



*Pied Kingfisher  
Sangker River, Cambodia  
Photo by Harold Hoyer  
Wikimedia Commons*

We take our speakers to dinner at the Brick Oven Restaurant at Rio Hill Shopping Area, so hope to see you there February 12th at 5:30 pm. The March 12th program will be given by our own Jenny Gaden, former president of the club. She traveled to Montana in 2014 to learn about the western owls and will present a program on what she encountered there.

**Birding Tidbits** about a bird you might find on the Bird Walk at Ivy Creek in February  
by Jenny Gaden

**First Saturday Bird Walk**  
February 7 at 7:30am

The House Finch is a common bird at our feeders and in much of our local countryside, but this was not always so. The bird is native to the hot deserts and grasslands of the US southwest. Early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century it was brought east by the pet bird trade and sold as the Hollywood Finch. I suppose this is because it was pretty and had a good voice. In 1939 a few individuals were released from a pet store in New York City and from there they rapidly expanded to occupy a variety of habitats all over North America and parts of Canada. Indeed, they swarmed our feeders until the winter of 1994 when there was a sudden interruption in their trajectory of success. House Finches with swollen, crusty eyes were noticed at feeders in Virginia and Maryland. The disease, *Mycoplasma gallisepticum*, a bacteria that causes a form of conjunctivitis, spread rapidly across the East and within a few years killed about half of the eastern House Finches. Today it is estimated that about 5 – 10% of this population is infected, but there is no longer a threat of a dramatic spread of the disease. At [feed-erwatch.org](http://feed-erwatch.org) there is lots of information about this condition and how we can help prevent disease at our feeders. House Finches are here year round so you should have no trouble finding them in the wild as well as at feeders.

On the first Saturday of each month, the Monticello Bird Club offers a bird walk, led by a Club member, at Ivy Creek Natural Area. Participants gather in the parking lot at 7:30am. Birders of all levels are welcome.

**Walk Leaders  
Winter-Spring 2014**

Jan. 3 .... David White

**Feb. 7... Teresa Shaner**

Mar. 7 .... Stauffer Miller

Apr. 4.... Gabriel Mapel

For information about opportunities and events at Ivy Creek Natural Area, follow this link to the [Ivy Creek Foundation Public Program Calendar](#).



A chilly, but healthy House Finch  
Photo by Doug Rogers

**Field Trips**

Organized by Gabriel Mapel



**Highland County** (rescheduled from Jan. 24th)

**Date: Saturday, February 7th**

**Meeting Place & Time: 7am at Bed Bath & Beyond parking lot in Barracks Road Shopping Center or meet us en route (7:45-8am) at the shopping center at the intersection of routes 42 and 250 in Churchville.**

**Leader: Doug Rogers**  
[doug5996@gmail.com](mailto:doug5996@gmail.com)

Our target bird on this annual trek is the Golden Eagle; other possibilities include Rough-legged Hawks, Horned Larks, various sparrows and winter birds. After a brief pit stop at the Confederate Breastworks, we will pass through McDowell and on to Monterey, where we will bird the beautiful Blue Grass Valley. Plan on having lunch in a local Monterey restaurant. After eating, we may visit a pond on Route 220 that frequently has several species of waterfowl. Dress warmly in layers. Bring spotting scopes and walkie-talkies. Plan on having a great day.

**Dutch Gap**

**Date: Saturday, February 14th**

**Meeting Place & Time: 8am in parking lot in front of Starbucks on Pantops**

**Leader: John Holden**  
[runningwitantlers@gmail.com](mailto:runningwitantlers@gmail.com)  
434-973-9179  
434-249-0806 (on day of trip only)



Bald Eagle (above)  
Wood Ducks (below, right)  
Photos by Jeannie Holden  
Dutch Gap, January 2015

Dutch Gap is a one hour and 25 minute drive from Charlottesville. It is usually a very productive winter trip. Initially we will spend about 1 1/2 to 2 hours on two platforms, where several species of ducks are abundant. The males will be in breeding plumage. This winter has been especially good for Wood Ducks. Kestrels are often seen as well, chasing songbirds along the marsh edges.

After moving to the Visitor Center parking lot and taking a lunch break, we will hike a five minute bluff-top trail rich with birds to a magnificent overlook of the James, known for Bald Eagle sightings (and a nest). We will then walk for about two miles round trip to view a Heron Rookery and a Cormorant island. There is an excellent pine grove on the way out.

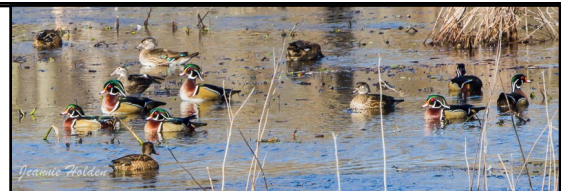
This is an all day trip, but you are free to leave earlier. John will carry two spotting scopes for all to use.

**Waterfowl: Albemarle County**

**Date: Saturday, February 21st**

**Meeting Place & Time: 7:30am in the Kmart parking lot on Hydraulic Road**

**Leader: Leigh Surdulowski**  
[lsurdulowski@gmail.com](mailto:lsurdulowski@gmail.com)  
434-0295-8241



Depending upon ice coverage and duck species reports, the group will take either a southern or northern tour of the county in search of waterfowl. The trip will last 2-3 hours.

## Treasurer's Notes

by Maynard K. Davis



Earlier this month, we made our regular annual contributions to the American Bird Conservancy, Ivy Creek Foundation, National Audubon Society, Rockfish Gap Hawk Watch, Rockfish Wildlife Sanctuary, and the Virginia Society of Ornithology. The forecast for the fiscal year is to finish with a small budget surplus. Contact me with any questions you may have.

*Maynard*

## Membership Notes

by Lesslie Crowell



MBC extends a warm welcome to our newest members—

Nancy & Joseph Garland  
Anne & Bill Nelson

The club now has a total of 143 members, 22 of whom are new. We are fast approaching our membership goal of 150.

*Lesslie*

## MBC Minutes, January 8, 2015

Submitted by Lesslie Crowell for Peggy Cornett, Secretary



-**President Doug Rogers** presided at the meeting with **53 in attendance**.

-The three reported **bird sightings** were a Redpoll, Pine Siskins seen by Jenny Gaden, and a Screech Owl in a nest box in Pam Bartlett's city back yard.

-Doug greeted **visitors** Sharon and Terri Ellison and Pam Bartlett.

-Doug gave the **Treasurer's Report**, noting that we are just about on budget, anticipating a \$67 surplus, the same as last year.

-Doug gave the **Newsletter Editor's Report**: please submit articles telling how a specific technology has enhanced your birding.

-**Membership Chair** Lesslie Crowell welcomed new Sponsor Nancy Garland and her husband Joseph. With membership at 142, she noted it would be desirable for people to wear name tags.

-Doug gave the **Field Trips Report**:

January 11 Gabriel Mapel leads a trip to the Shenandoah Valley.

January 24 Doug Rogers leads members to Highland County to look for Golden Eagles, Rough-legged Hawks, and Sparrows.

January 31 Jim Nix will lead a trip to Totier Creek Park, near Scottsville.

In February, John Holden takes MBC to Dutch Gap Conservation Area in Chesterfield County.

-**Announcements**: Eve Gaige mentioned the Blue Ridge Young Birders Club fundraiser—a species count in January (last year 140 species were spotted). If you are interested in pledging an amount per species or a flat dollar amount, please contact Eve at [egaige@embarqmail.com](mailto:egaige@embarqmail.com).

-Nancy Newman brought **birding and conservation magazines** for people to take for free.

-Stauffer Miller introduced the **speaker, Suzanne Shoemaker**, a wildlife rehabilitator from her non-profit Owl Moon Raptor Center in Boyds, Maryland. She treated the group to many photos of about seven species of owls, which she has cared for and released back into the wild. If you are interested in supporting the Center by purchasing her Owl Moon calendar, please contact her at [owlmoon.org](http://owlmoon.org).

## Upcoming PVCC Field Ornithology Class



This spring Piedmont VA Community College will offer Field Ornithology, a 15 week course on the birds of Central VA and the Blue Ridge Mountains. While covering many aspects of avian biology, the course is primarily about learning to identify birds by sight and sound. Classes are on Saturday mornings 7-10am, February through May, and all sessions are held outdoors at various

locations, mostly in Albemarle County. The course qualifies for 3 semester credits, but can also be audited, and it's not necessary to attend every class. Appropriate for beginners and nature enthusiasts of any experience level. Register in person at PVCC, or online ([www.pvcc.edu](http://www.pvcc.edu)—course designation NAS 160 under Natural Sciences). For more information contact Dan Bieker. [danbieker@gmail.com](mailto:danbieker@gmail.com), 434-971-9618



*Northern Shoveler at Dutch Gap*  
Photo by Eve Gaige, who accompanied the Blue Ridge Young Birders there on a productive January 2015 field trip.

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## Gardening for Wildlife: *Wisdom, musings, and photographs from Omanu*

by Bill Leaning

### The Joy of Gardening for the Birds

*This month I have chosen to submit a short description of our water garden and a few pictures of the birds we have recently seen enjoying this garden feature. Bill*

Having named our property "Omanu" or "Place of the Birds," we had to go about attracting them. When we moved in to our newly built home in March 1998, one of our first landscaping projects was a water garden. Birds need water, don't they! We had some magnificent (huge) granite blocks uncovered by the bulldozer in forming our driveway. They made a great retaining wall. We, also, had access to a dry river bed in west Virginia that was to be filled in with soil to establish an orchard. These wonderful river stones have created the main pond and have lined the stream bed leading in to the pond.

I have the re-circulating pump on year round. Even, in the most severe winters, we have always had water moving over the three small waterfalls in the stream. We positioned the water garden and bird feeders in direct view from a kitchen eating area adjacent to large bay windows.

This past few weeks has reinforced the joy we have had over almost 17 years of watching the birds using the water garden for drinking and bathing. Our home has been our photography blind. I have sacrificed image quality somewhat by photographing through closed windows in order to leave the birds, completely undisturbed.

We hope you enjoy these few images as much as we do.



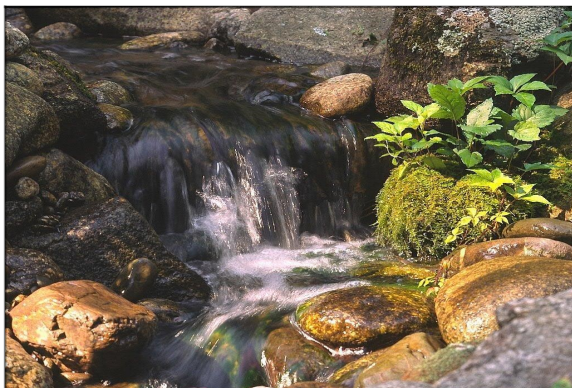
Omanu Water Garden—Winter View



Bathing Cedar Waxwings



Sipping Cedar Waxings and Bluebird



Omanu Water Garden—Summer View



Scarlet Tanager  
An eagerly anticipated warm weather visitor



**Birding & Technology:** (Your Editor asked readers to share birding technology that has enhanced your birding experience. Please feel free to submit your findings for publication in future newsletters to keep us aware and informed. Thanks! Also, some of the apps mentioned below are not named in full, but you can find them in your App Store by using the boldfaced keywords below.)



**Links to Articles of Interest**

If you are interested in ornithological specimens and avian art, **Betty Mooney** sent along word of a spring exhibit entitled "[Aves: Birds from the Natural History and Art Collections at Randolph College.](#)" Follow the link for further details about this exhibit on view from now until April 12th at the Maier Museum of Art at Randolph College in Lynchburg, VA.



**MBC Members recommend...**

I'm new at birding and greatly enjoy the MBC Club. On my iPhone and iPad I have about eight birding apps, **Merlin Bird ID, BirdsEye NA, Hotspots, Peterson, Sibley Birds, Audubon Birds, iBird Journal** and my new one "**iKnow Bird Songs**" which I like a lot to help me learn bird songs. The "iKnow Bird Songs" app would be great for those who want to learn the songs of different birds and this app can be found at the App Store if you type in the name. It uses flip cards to learn the different bird songs.



*Gary Huff*

I have downloaded the free app from the Cornell Lab called **Merlin Bird ID**. I've had success each time I've used it.

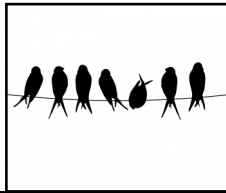
*Stacey Aikman*

I use **BirdLog North America**, which was suggested to me by Eve Gaige and Janet Paisley last year during Birding before Work weeks. BirdLog connects to eBird, which is just about my favorite tool for browsing who has seen what and where. It also gave me a reason to review my notes and photos from my time in South Africa, and enter historical sightings that now help me remember what the heck I've seen.

I will also start using **Larkwire** in the next couple of weeks to try to get my warbler ears back on. I've used it in the past couple of years with a good amount of success. It was great for training in the common woodland birds when I was just starting, and it has many many more levels of difficulty to explore.

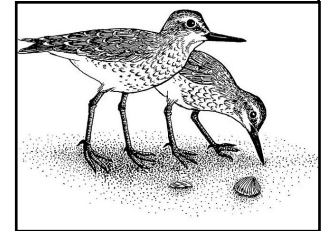
If anyone has suggestions for a good coffee thermos, though, that's the technology I'm really lacking.

*Ari Sommer*



MBC member **Linda Lester**, also a member of the Hilton Head Audubon Society, sent in a link to a humorous article from the HH local newspaper, the Island Packet, that was posted to the HH Audubon Facebook page. It's entitled "[Cracking the Nut that Is a Birder's Brain](#)" and includes a video of the local Audubon Society Veep imitating shorebird behavior. It's definitely worth a look and a chuckle.

Also, if you continue reading the entire posting (which includes articles and videos, both fun and informative), you will eventually come to an article (in the right hand column) called "Top 3 Apps for Birders," with good descriptions and links for **iBird Pro Guide to Birds, BirdTunes** and **Bird Log North America** (the latter cited as well by Ari Sommer, at left).



**Monticello Bird Club**  
P.O. Box 4362  
Charlottesville, Virginia 22905



Visit our website at [www.monticellobirdclub.org](http://www.monticellobirdclub.org) for club and membership information.

The **Club meets** on the **second Thursday** of each month, September through June, at the **Education Building of the Ivy Creek Natural Area** on Earlsyville Rd, 1/2 mile north of Hydraulic Rd.

The editor of the **MBC Newsletter** welcome submissions, including articles, photographs and notices. **DEADLINE** for each issue is **9:00AM on the 20th** of the month.

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