

# MBC Monthly Meeting—Thursday, March 12th at 7:00pm

#### Comments from the President Doug Rogers

W irginia Society of Ornithology. To some folks, the VSO seems kind of scholarly, out of their comfort zone, research papers – that sort of thing. On balance, it can be all of those, but our experience with the VSO has been quite different. We have been on several of the VSO field trips – Virginia Beach, CBBT, Chincoteague and OBX to name a few – and we have found the people who attend to be warm and friendly. We have always learned a lot from those outings, laughed a lot and had good fun. Their field trips are open to all, not just to members. Your Club supports the VSO with a Club membership.

Every year, the VSO holds an Annual Meeting at different locations around the state. This year, your Monticello Club and the Augusta Club are jointly hosting the VSO Annual

Meeting at Wintergreen on May 8 - 10. There will be multiple field trips, two speakers (Marshall Faintich and Scott Wiedensaul), some vendors, a banquet and, yes, some research papers. There will be many fine birding opportunites and good camaraderie. This is a premier birding event! More information will be coming out in March.

As with every non-profit organization, there will be a **need for volunteers** to assist. Especially needed will be volunteers to assist with registration and such – about 80 to 120 birders normally attend. The volunteer commitment would be about 2 hours on Friday and/or Saturday. This is an opportunity to help make a significant Virginia birding weekend a real success. Please consider this. Again, I will have more information in March.



Take heart, spring migration is coming!

### Speaker of the Month: Jenny Gaden — Montana Owl Research Stauffer Miller



Our speaker for the March 12th program will be Jenny Gaden. Jenny, who is wellknown to the club, has been its past president and currently coordinates and compiles the Charlottesville Christmas Count. In the past she has taught bird identification courses through the OLLI program. She began birding in 1967 when teaching fifth grade in the Islip, Long Island, New York public schools.

In 2014, Jenny attended the Montana Owl Workshop sponsored by the Owl Research Institute in Charlo, Montana. She will speak about her experiences as she accompanied researchers into the field and searched for nesting owls. Each species required a different search technique. Jenny is a first-rate speaker and instructor, so come hear about her experiences in Montana. Just before Jenny's talk, Patti Reum (and perhaps Dan Bieker) will take a few minutes to talk about the Kestrel nest box project.

Continuing our custom, we take speakers to dinner before their talks. Come to the Brick Oven Restaurant in Rio Hill Shopping Plaza March 12th at 5:30 pm to participate in that. Hope to see you there.

**BirdingTidbits** about a bird you might find on the Bird Walk at Ivy Creek in March by Jenny Gaden

For sure, the Brown Creeper resides at the Ivy Creek Natural Area in the winter, but finding it is another matter. This is not because it is a rare bird. It isn't, though it is uncommon. It is because the Creeper is an almost invisible bird. With a length of 5.25 inches, it is larger than the two kinglets, our smallest winter birds, but they are far more conspicuous. The Brown Creeper is difficult to find because its cryptic coloration blends perfectly with the tree trunks where it forages for food. To quote T. W. Tyler in his contribution to A. C. Bent's volume about nuthatches and kin, "The Brown creeper, as he hitches along the bole of a tree,



Brown Creeper Photo by Jenny Gaden

looks like a fragment of detached bark that is defying the law of gravitation...". Movement and the white underparts first catch the eye as the bird spirals in little jerky movements up the tree trunk. When it reaches the top the creeper often flies down to the base of another tree to resume its ascent. The slender decurved bill is designed to probe tiny spaces in the bark for invertebrates, morsels that the nuthatch might miss from its opposite perspective, as the larger gray bird moves <u>down</u> the tree. Breeding records in Virginia are rare, so it's unlikely that we would ever see the

Field Trips Organized by Gabriel Mapel

diminutive hammock-like nest the Brown Creeper hides behind a loose piece of bark.

## The Cumberland Marsh and York River State Park

Date: Saturday, March 14th

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

Leader: John Holden runningwithantlers@gmail.com 434-973-9179

> **Redhead** Photo by Eve Gaige



# American Woodcocks near White Hall

Date: Friday, March 20th

*Meeting Place & Time:* 6:30pm at parking area across from the Piedmont Store on Route 810, just after Garth Road (Rt 614) joins it in White Hall. We will carpool the short distance to the Woodcock fields on Clark Road.

Leader: Jenny Gaden

## **Lickinghole Creek**

Date: Saturday, March 28th

Meeting Place & Time: 7:30am at the Great Valu along Hwy 240 in the east end of Crozet

Leader: Peter Brask peterbrask@yahoo.com 434-823-2363 Peter will lead us on a morning walk at Lickinghole Creek, which includes a resevoir, a stream, a swamp, fields, and woods. We should find a mix of lingering winter residents and early spring



Jenny will lead this evening field trip in search of American Woodcocks

'peenting." Bring a flashlight to help

putting on their aerial display and

**Red-winged Blackbird** Photo by Jeannie Holden on a cold winter's day at Dutch Gap

## First Saturday Bird Walk March 7 at 7:30am

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 May 2.....Jim Nix

For information about opportunities and events at Ivy Creek Natural Area, follow this link to the <u>Ivy Creek Foundation Public</u> <u>Program Calendar.</u>

Our first destination will be The Nature Conservancy refuge on the Cumberland Marsh, a good site for raptors over the adjoining fields, wintering ducks in the marsh and warblers in the holly and pine forests and on the river bluffs. After a short time on an observation platform, we will walk about a level mile and a half (round trip) to visit 3 distinct habitats. The drive time is about 1 1/2 hours.

Next we will visit York River State Park, about another 1/2 hour away and walk 2 short trails to several viewing platforms or beach locations. There are usually large rafts of Redheads, Ruddy Ducks and Buffleheads in the York River, warblers in the pines, Red-headed Woodpeckers in a forest area, and Bald Eagles soaring overhead. You may prefer to do only the Cumberland Marsh portion of the trip, but doing both sites, we should head for home by 3pm. Please wear warm, layered clothing and bring a pack with water, snacks, and lunch. We will take a lunch break on picnic tables at York River.

you see at dusk.

migrants.

#### Birding Before Work Walks Need Leaders — How about You? by Gabriel Mapel

A s spring approaches we set our eyes toward warblers and the other wonders of Spring Migration! To celebrate migration, we will once again be having our annual **Birding Before Work** walks. For the last week of April and the first week of May, we will hold a walk each weekday morning from 7-8:30am at one of three locations — Ivy Creek Natural Area (**ICNA**), Observatory Hill (**O-Hill**), and Riverview Park (**RP**). These walks are always fun, enjoyable, and birdy! The walk schedule follows:



WEEK 1	
Date	Site
April 27	ICNA
April 28	O-Hill
April 29	ICNA
April 30	RP
May 1	O-Hill

WEEK 2	
Date	Site
May 4	O-Hill
May 5	ICNA
May 6	RP
May 7	ICNA
May 8	O-Hill

In order to make the program a success, **we need leaders!** Please consider signing up to a lead a Birding Before Work walk! To do so, Contact Gabriel Mapel (birdmangabriel@yahoo.com or 540-363-5035), and please specify which walk you would like to lead. Thank you so much for considering this!

### MBC Officers & Directors for Fiscal Year 2015-16 by Doug Rogers



E very non-profit organization lives or dies by the strength and commitment of its members who volunteer to do the work. The MBC is no exception. At this time each year, I start looking for people to do the work of the coming fiscal year.

While I haven't heard back from all of the current Board members yet, I know of two who would like to be replaced (V.P. and Membership),and there

are two positions that remain vacant (Birdseed Sale and Publicity).

Kathy Sudduth has done a great job as V.P. but would like to have someone else take on this role. The role entails keeping the Club's website up-to-date and accurate and backing up the President. Lesslie Crowell has had a great year as Membership Chair and will continue but, due to her other obligations, would like to give someone else the opportunity. I have a written job description for this position.

Other Board members who were already busy enough have absorbed the two vacant positions — Birdseed Sale and Publicity — for this year, but we would like to add the energy and ideas of two additional people to fill these vacancies for the 2015-16 fiscal year. Again, I can provide written job descriptions; I will be a resource person for you and do all I can to make you successful.

Getting involved with the Club at this level has been good fun and very rewarding for me. I have served on the board for six years — as Newsletter Editor, Treasurer and now President. I have met more of you on a personal basis; I love being involved in the Club's inner workings on an month-to-month basis. So, now I appeal to you. Please come forward and add your talents and ideas to making this Club even better for the coming fiscal year. Contact me by phone or email (434-973-7634; doug5996@gmail.com), and I will submit your name in nomination. Do it today!

## Birding Guides Sought by Doug Rogers

Y ou have led a lot of bird walks, and everyone said "Thanks", "Good job," and all such at the end. Would you like to lead a bird walk



and get a check in addition?

The Trump Winery is in the process of building an upscale B&B on their property. They would like to offer bird walks as an amenity to their guests for a fee. The Winery is very much looking to share the proceeds of those fees with someone who is willing to lead the walks. If you are interested, please email me (address at bottom left) and I will put you in touch with the proper contact person at the Winery.

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#### Treasurer's Notes by Maynard K. Davis

There's nothing unusual to report about our finances. With just over \$12,000 in the bank, we currently show a budget surplus of \$1000+ so far this year. By the time the year is over, we'll have spent most of the current surplus, leaving us break-even for the year.

Maynard





by Lesslie Crowell

M BC extends a warm welcome to our newest members, Betsy Caudill and Kipperly Tidball. Also, we once again welcome new Sponsor Martha Garland and apologize for incorrectly naming you in our February newsletter.



I am looking for volunteers to help spread the word about birding and MBC. The club has been invited to take a publicity table at two events this spring.

- Sunday, 4/19, 11am to 5pm & Monday, 4/20, 9am to 5pm inside a restored barn at Veralum Farm with other non-profits during Historic Garden Week.
- 2. Sunday, 4/25, 10-am to 2pm. Thomas Jefferson Center for Historic Plants Open House at Tufton Farm.

MBC Minutes, February 12, 2015 Submitted by Peggy Cornett, Secretary



If you can spare an hour or two at either of these events, please contact me.(*lessliecrowell@aol.com*; 295-1395) *Thanks, Lesslie* 

-President Doug Rogers welcomed 33 members and visitors attending the meeting and asked for unusual recent bird sightings. Bill Leaning reported an immature Bald Eagle walking on the icy reservoir. John Holden recently visited Huntington Beach State Park in South Carolina where he saw many waterfowl, including Hooded Mergansers, Scoters, and Long-tailed Ducks. Jim Nix' recent field trip to Totier Creek Park was not remarkable, but Dan Bieker led the group to another location nearby where they observed a Red-headed Woodpecker, a Merlin catching a Goldfinch, Gadwalls, and other ducks. Stauffer Miller saw a Bald Eagle nesting at the confluence of the North and South Rivanna River. Other Eagle sightings were mentioned at Lickinghole Creek pond. Stephanie Tanner recommended the Cornell Lab bird cam of a Great Horned Owl nest with chicks.

-Doug announced details for **the annual VSO meeting**, May 8-10, taking place at Wintergreen Resort. Internationally known author, naturalist, and conservationist Scott Weidensaul is the featured speaker. For more information, visit: <u>http://www.virginiabirds.net/VSO-Annual-Meeting.html</u>

-Doug is currently **soliciting board members** (new and returning) for the upcoming term. He also mentioned that **Trump Winery** is seeking individuals who are interested in **leading bird walks** on the estate property for guests at their bed and breakfast in. Contact Doug, who will put you in touch with the Winery's liason.

-Jenny Gaden reported on **the Christmas Bird Count**, held December 14, 2014, during which 75 species were counted. There were a total of 18 parties and 47 participants. The count registered two rare sightings and one new bird and included a Cackling Goose, Yellow-breasted Chat, Gadwall, Rudy Duck, Red-headed Woodpecker, Pine Siskins, and a return of Blue Jays.

-Maynard Davis gave **the treasurer's report**. He recently renewed memberships to various non-profit organizations: American Bird Conservancy, Ivy Creek Natural Area, the Hawk Watch, and VSO. We have a surplus of \$1,100 in the bank and are on target to have about \$50 surplus at the end of the fiscal year.

-Lesslie Crowell welcomed new members Anne Nelson and Betsy Caudill. She announced that MBC has been invited to participate for two days during Garden Week with a table at Verulam Farm, April 19-20. Lesslie will also set up an MBC table at the Thomas Jefferson Center for Historic Plants Open House at Tufton Farm, Saturday, April 25. She is asking for volunteers to help with both of these events.

-**Gabriel Mapel's field trip report** was given by Doug Rogers. He recapped trips in January. Two Golden Eagles were seen on the trip Highland County. February features a trip to Dutch Gap and the Heron Rookery with John Holden on the 14<sup>th</sup> and Leigh Surdukowski's trip to Albemarle County to see Ducks and other waterfowl. Plans for March include trips to Lickinghole Creek and to White Hall for the Woodcocks. The "Birding before Work" field trips will take place in early May.



**Gardening for Wildlife:** *Wisdom, musings, and photographs from Omanu by Bill Leaning* 

# **Evergreen Hollies**

One of my longtime favorites for wildlife gardening are the evergreen hollies. They have it all as far as birds are concerned. Their berries provide an important food source in the fall and winter. At least, 29 species of birds have been observed feeding on hollies. Prickly hollies offer birds protection from climbing cats and other predators, and the dense foliage hides nests and sheds rain and snow.





The evergreen hollies offer a protected nesting place

during that period in spring when deciduous trees are bare or not yet fully in leaf. Some birds, like robins, have been known to choose an evergreen for their first nest and a nonevergreen for subsequent nests. Other birds that nest in hollies include the Northern Mockingbird, the Veery and the Red-winged Blackbird. Evergreen hollies are generally hardy, easy-care trees and shrubs that add four-season interest to a garden with their attractive dark, glossy foliage.

Most hollies grow well in Zone 7. They set fruit in full sun to light shade but do best when grown in deep, moist, well-drained acid soil. Hollies are dioecious, which means that the male and female flowers are borne on separate plants. For the best berry crops, the consensus is to plant one male pollinator for every three to five females.

This is by no means, an exhaustive monograph on evergreen hollies, but I hope to share my experiences with hollies in our "wild garden" at "Omanu," our property in Earlysville. We started our landscaping in the spring of 1998 and, to date, we have planted some 52 evergreen hollies with variable success with regard to growth and fruiting. I will deal with each holly species and garden cultivar, separately.

#### American Holly Ilex opaca

Considered by many gardeners to be the finest tree-type evergreen holly with a mature height of 40 to 50 feet. More than 1,000 cultivars have been named over the years.

We planted six American hollies in 1998 in the dry shade of existing hardwood trees. We had not planned on four years of drought-like weather and these particular specimens have not thrived. The deep shade has spoiled their overall shape and decreased their fruiting ability. Unfortunately, American holly is slow growing but, under the right conditions, this handsome holly has a dense pyramidal growth habitat, dark green and abundant red fruit.



#### Meserve Hybrid Hollies

Also known as the Blue Series cultivars. The original crosses were between the cold-hardy *llex rugosa*, Prostrate holly and *l. aquifolium*, English holly.

These wonderful hollies are shrubby in habitat with lustrous dark green, almost blue-green leaves with excellent red fruit on the female forms. They can be pruned to maintain any height. They can be planted as single specimens or in a shrub border. At Omanu, we are delighted with the performance of "Blue Princess", a female and "Blue Prince" as the pollinator. Another good pair of Blue Series hollies are "Blue Girl" and "Blue Stallion". Still considered meserve hybrid hollies, subsequent introductions involved crosses between the Chi-



nese holly, *llex cornuta* with *l. rugosa*. These hybrids are more cold-hardy and also more heat tolerant when compared to the "Blue Series".

I chose to plant individual specimens. I now regret not having planted a holly hedgerow similar to the Idea Garden at Longwood Gardens in Pennsylvania, where "China Girl" was interspersed with "China Boy" for pollination. The foliage and fruiting effects are an autumn and winter spectacle. Another meserve hybrid holly I have tried is "Dragon Lady". Nice pyramidal shape but has not thrived in the dry shade situation. I have used "Blue Prince" as the male and have, subsequently, found out that "Blue Stallion" is a faster growing male and a better pollinator as it flowers over a longer time frame in the spring.

#### Red Hybrid Hollies

These hollies were introduced in the mid-1990's. I chose "Cardinal" as one of five hybrids developed. I was fascinated because "Cardinal" was reported to be a parthenocarpic female. At last, I could get berries without the need of a male pollinator! Starting in 2000, I now have a total of 14 specimens and, in spite of the drought years, and deer grazing, they have thrived. They are upright-pyramidal growers with glossy dark green foliage. The "red" comes from the new growth which emerges reddish purple. Mature height is 14 feet and about half as wide.



At the nursery, I deliberately chose specimens that already had berries. However, subsequent seasons (up to three with the earliest plantings) produced good growth but no fruit. Supposedly being parthenocarpic, no male is listed as a pollinator. I later planted two Chinese holly males, "Burford," nearby. Subsequently, I had several "Cardinal" hollies with heavy fruit crops. I will never know whether it was the newly introduced males or the first spring with adequate rainfall since the female hollies were planted! The "Cardinal" hollies have settled into a routine of alternate fruiting years!

#### Nellie R. Stevens

This holly is a putative hybrid between the Chinese Holly, *I. cornuta* and the English holly, *I. aquifolum*. A



nice pyramidal tree to 15 to 25 feet high. Very vigorous and relatively fast-growing. Supposedly, one of the best hollies for the Southern States. We planted four specimens, and the growth has been extraordinary. The literature is confusing, however, because "Nellie R. Stevens" is described as "heavily fruitful and fruit develops parthenocarpically". There is, also, a reference to "effectively pollinated by male *llex cornuta* and "Edward J. Stevens" is a large male clone that is useful for pollinating". The deer damage was a problem until I made 4 foot cages with 2' x 3' inch mesh "rabbit netting". After the hollies reached 5 to 6 feet, I removed the cages. The hollies, now, handle some deer browse.

#### Dwarf Burford Holly

*Ilex cornuta* "Burfordii Nana". We have three female dwarf Burford hollies that will have a mature height of only six feet. An excellent choice for the smaller garden or as a foundation planting, low hedge or mass planting on a slope.

#### Inkberry

*Ilex glabra*.. A most aesthetic native species. When conditions are too wet for most evergreens, you can rely on native inkberry holly. It is one of the great plants for massing in wet or drier soils under acid or higher pH conditions in full sun to moderate shade. Invaluable as an evergreen screen, its female plants produce black fruits, especially invaluable to birds because they persist throughout the winter. We have eight specimens at Omanu, growing reasonably well. My problem is that all my inkberry hollies are females, and local nurseries have been no help in locating a male polinator.



Inconspicuous male and female flowers occur on separate plants. Female flowers are solitary. Male flowers are clustered on long stalks. Inkberry is extremely hardy and grows slowly. It can be pruned to improve shape and density. When it gets lots of sun, it will become dense without pruning. It has a looser structure in light shade (my current situation). Whatever you do, don't plant inkberry under a dense forest canopy, it will just dwindle away and die.

Native inkberry grows to eight feet tall and wide. Cultivars include 'Compacta", the one we have in our garden. It only grows four to six feet but tends to drop its lower foliage and becomes leggy at the base. I am searching for 'Nigra' which only grows to three feet. It is a female producing lustrous black fruit and leaves are retained on the lower branches.

#### Japanese Holly



*llex crenata*, at its best, is an evergreen shrub widely used for massing and for hedges. If not clipped too severely, it will provide winter food for birds. Most cultivars are densely shrubby and the blackish fruit occur under the foliage, hidden to all but the most observant. Birds are, obviously, in that category. As with most hollies full sun is ideal, but Japanese holly performs quite well in bright shade. Cultivars include "Helleri", a dwarf, compact form, which grows to four feet high and wide. This is the easiest cultivar to obtain and is the one we have. However, I am searching for "Convexa," an old Japanese holly standby, a female form that produces abundant



black fruit. It is, also, one of the more cold hardy cultivars. So far no luck with local nurseries.

#### Longstalk Holly Ilex pedunculosa

I have several nurseries searching for me for a source of this evergreen holly. Who wouldn't want a specimen or two of a holly that looks like mountain laurel, with long-stalked, bright red fruit and excellent cold hardiness? Should be a sure thing in commerce, right? Wrong! Develops into a small tree about 25 feet tall and is more tolerant of adverse conditions, particularly, wind and cold, than any other holly.

We intend to add more bird-friendly evergreen hollies to our landscape over the years, keeping in mind more sun, moisture and compost.

Bill Leaning

### **CBC Results**

Submitted by Jenny Gaden

The 2014 Charlottesville Christmas Bird Count took place on December 14. Fortyseven people participated with 18 teams. Seventy-five species were reported. The Cackling Goose and the Yellow-brested Chat required the submission of rare bird forms. The final tally is listed below.



Pied-billed Grebe Great Blue Heron Black Vulture Turkey Vulture Canada Goose Cackling Goose Wood Duck American Black Duck Mallard Gadwall Green-winged Teal Hooded Merganser Ruddy Duck Bald Eagle Sharp-shinned Hawk Cooper's Hawk

Red-shouldered Hawk Red-tailed Hawk American Kestrel Wilson's Snipe American Woodcock Wild Turkey Killdeer Rock Pigeon Mourning Dove Great Horned Owl **Belted Kingfisher** Red-headed Woodpecker Red-bellied Woodpecker Yellow-bellied Woodpecker Downy Woodpecker Hairy Woodpecker

Northern Flicker Pileated Woodpecker Eastern Phoebe Blue Jay American Crow Fish Crow Common Raven Horned Lark Carolina Chickadee Tufted Titmouse White-breasted Nuthatch Brown Creeper Winter Wren Carolina Wren

# The Joy of Birding... a personal sharing of stories,





# by MBC members

## **MBCers Assist in Florida Rookery Surveys**

While on their annual early January getaway to Sanibel, Florida, MBC members, **Bob and Carolyn McGrath** (*on left of photo*), donated some of their vacation time as volunteers counting nests on the mangrove islands of Estero Bay, near Fort Meyers, Florida.

Carolyn writes, "We spent almost five hours on the water, looking for nests, eggs, injured birds, leg bands and snarls of fish line and hooks. The young people we were with climbed around in the mangroves removing the hardto-spot filament lines. Our old eyes were not so good at spotting those, but we helped remove them. We are credited with sighting a Brown Pelican with a red pouch, very rare for the East Coast. And, we were amazed to see two Great Blue Heron morphs, pure white."



# The Joy of Birding cont'd...

Editor's note — Our yards have seen a frenzy of avian activity with this crazy weather. Ann and Leo Mallek (MBC Bird Seed Sale supporters Extraordinaire) do a formidable job of feeding the bird population of western Albemarle County. Ann sent me a video of the birds literally **swarming** her feeding station during one of our heavy snows. Bet many of us have witnessed similar frenetic feeding behavior in our local habitats. Hope all of our efforts will boost the birds' survival rate as they battle through such harsh conditions.

Below are some wonderful photos of backyard visitors from **Eve Gaige** and **Janet Paisley**. Also included are incredible action shots from talented photographer **Jeannie Holden** taken on recent birding excursions to South Carolina & Dutch Gap. Thanks, Everyone! *Jeanne* 

