



Monticello Bird Club

April 2009

Volume 23, Number 8

April Meeting Topic: Birding Wintergreen

Our April speaker, Dr. Marshall Faintich, is an astronomer by training, a cartographer by trade, and a student of ornithology, numismatics, archaeology, and history. He is currently working on a local wildlife guide for Wintergreen and the Rockfish Valley, and he teaches a short course in digital photography. In addition, he is the senior birding editor for the Rockfish Valley Trail web site:

http://www.rockfishvalley.org/birds/RVTrail_birding.htm

Dr. Faintich has taken more than 35,000 wildlife photos since December 2006, and has photographed 126 species of birds in the Wintergreen area, as well as other species of birds outside of the area. Many of his photos can be seen on his web site:

http://www.symbolicmessengers.com/Wildlife_thumbnails.htm

Dr. Faintich will share a PowerPoint presentation of many of these beautiful photographs.

He received his BS in Applied Mathematics from the University of Missouri at Rolla, and his MS and PhD in

Astronomy from the University of Illinois. His work history includes satellite system studies, astrodynamics, remote sensing, digital cartography, and digital information analysis, and he is a past National Director of the American Cartographic Association.

Please join MBC members and our speaker for dinner at Ragazzi's Restaurant in the Shoppers World Shopping Center near Whole Foods Market on April 9th at 5:45 pm prior to the meeting.

Upcoming Meeting Topics

May 14th: Member's Night.
MBC members share their favorite slides and photographs.



Golden-crowned Kinglet photographed by Rob Capon in Nelson County.

Comments From the President

During the monthly bird walk at Ivy Creek this past March 7th, Eileen Rowan told me about a large antique auction taking place that day at Orange. She said the auction included bird art. Dean Joyner, also on the walk, was interested. I went home, told Ellie about it, and she was interested as well. Thus, the four of us met later in the morning under the large tent north of Orange where the auction was under way. Just about the time we arrived, several pieces of the bird art were sold. It doesn't pay to arrive late at such affairs. However, after selling those pieces, the auctioneer moved to other objects, leaving us some time to examine the remaining pieces of bird art.

I was drawn to three nicely framed and matted prints depicting bird species of western North America. At the top of each were the initials U. S. P. R.R. Exp. and Surveys. At first this

meant nothing to me. Suddenly, it came to me—U. S. Pacific Railroad Expedition and Surveys. Now I had a little more idea of what these were. Some wildlife illustrator had accompanied surveyors prospecting for the best route over which to take the transcontinental railroad, better known at the time as the Pacific Railroad, ultimately built just after the Civil War. Here was a convergence of two of my bigger interests, birding and American history.

Presently, the three prints came up for sale. While Ellie bid, I watched the bidders. We got the three pieces, paying a little more than we had hoped. Afterward, we approached the woman who had bid against us, offered her one of the prints and sold it, thus defraying a bit of our outlay. Having obtained the objects of most interest to us, we left. Eileen and Dean stayed till the close of the sale. Just what they

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bought, I'm not sure. I understand this was one of the first auctions Eileen had attended, and that she really got into it.

Our two prints depict three bird species, two on one and one on the other. The print with two has a nicely sketched, easily recognizable Yellow-breasted Chat on one half. On the other half is a woodpecker, species uncertain. After close study, I felt it might be a Williamson's Sapsucker, a bird of high coniferous forests of the West. I soon found this very print on the internet, which confirmed it indeed as a Williamsons. The single bird in the other print was harder to identify than the woodpecker. It was a passerine, perhaps a jay, but beyond that I just didn't know. Again, the internet saved me. This print was an Abert's Towhee, a rather drab little ground bird of the American southwest.

The internet gave me much more information. Way back in 1855, Presi-

dent Franklin Pierce sent teams of surveyors into the western United States to look at potential southern, central and northern railroad routes to the Pacific. Two members of one of the teams were Lieutenant R. S. Williamson, hence the name for the sapsucker, and John Cassin, one of America's foremost ornithologist, as in Cassin's Kingbird and several other western birds bearing his name. Just why the sapsucker and towhee, while beautifully drawn, are so ornithologically incorrect as to be unidentifiable, I do not know. For one thing, the bill on the towhee is totally wrong, being much too rounded. Despite all that, I like the prints quite a lot, and when I look at them, I am reminded of a nice day at the auction.

Moving on to other matters, John Zimmerman has "hung up the cleats," to borrow a football term, as the club's field trips co-ordinator. He has done a great job. That means we need a replacement. Field trip co-ordinator is a very important post. If you think you could do this,

let me hear from you. Essentially it consists of receiving field trips ideas from the leaders and forwarding those ideas on a monthly basis to the newsletter editor. So, not too difficult.

After the walk at Ivy Creek on April 4 is completed, perhaps about 9:00 AM, there will be a binocular show and tell at the education building. I have spoken to the staffs of Wild Bird Crossing and Wild Birds Unlimited about this event, so we may see them there. John at Wild Birds Unlimited showed me a very nice binocular which he may bring. It is compact, lightweight, had reasonable optics and is in the lower price range. I think it would be excellent for the person who is not sure of how much to expend on his or her birding interest. Please bring binoculars if you already own them, so others can examine them.

April is a great month for birds and birding. I would call this one of our most musical months. All sorts of species are singing. All you have to do

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Bird Club Information

The Monticello Bird Club meets at 7:30 pm on the second Thursday of each month, September through June, at the Education Building of the Ivy Creek Natural Area on Earlysville Road, 1/2 mile north of Hydraulic Road.

The editor of the MBC Newsletter welcomes submissions including articles, photographs and notices. **DEADLINE for the May issue is April 20.** Please email information to Amy Gilmer at akgilmer@comcast.net or send to 2341 Highland Avenue, Charlottesville, VA 22903.

Monticello Bird Club

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Please visit our website at

www.monticellobirdclub.org

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Upcoming Field Trips

Ponds at Bell Lane Augusta County Saturday, April 4

Join field trip leader Peter Brask on a visit to these ponds with great duck habitat in Augusta County. A Barn Owl might be another possibility. **Meet at Henley School on U.S. 250 west of Crozet at 8:30 am.** Some walking and fence crossing will be involved. Questions? Contact Peter at 434-823-2363.

Tufton Farm Saturday, April 25

Dave Hogg, Jim Nix, and Peggy Cornett are offering an excellent opportunity to see a variety of warblers and other migrants. The hike is easy to moderate in difficulty and will last about 2 hours. **We will meet at 7:00 am in the parking lot for Secluded Farm; the entrance is off Rt. 20 north, just north of the intersection with Rt. 53.** Since parking is limited at Tufton Farm, we will car-pool from the Secluded Farm parking lot to Tufton Farm. Questions? Contact Jim at 434-973-7366 or jim-nix@comcast.net

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is get out and listen a little. From the trill of Pine Warbler to the "bouncing ball" of Field Sparrow, there is great exuberance. Lots of old friends, such as hummingbirds, orioles and Chimney Swifts, will soon be here. It's a splendid time to be a birder.

-Stauffer Miller

First Saturday Bird Walks At Ivy Creek Natural Area

On the first Saturday of each month the Monticello Bird Club hosts a bird walk at Ivy Creek Natural Area (ICNA) at 7:30 am. Each month a different walk leader takes groups on the trails to see the birds of ICNA. The walks start in the parking lot of ICNA.

Hike for Habitat Birds of the Rivanna Trail Hike Saturday, April 25

The 3rd Annual Women Build Hike for Habitat will take place on April 25, 2009. This year "Birds of the Rivanna Trail" on the Rivanna River North trail will be a featured hike. For a donation, the volunteers at Women Build will provide breakfast, lunch, expert guides, and prizes. More information can be found at www.cvillechabitat.org/womenBuild.shtml

Birdwatching Binocular Show-and-Tell Saturday, April 9, 9 AM

After the bird walk, join members of the Monticello Bird Club in the Education Building to see and share in binocular "show and tell." Individuals are encouraged to show their own binoculars and to learn about various models currently available. Open to the public.

VSO Annual Meeting Fredericksburg, VA May 1-3, 2009

Hosted jointly by the Fredericksburg Birding Club and the University of Mary Washington, the Virginia Society of Ornithology's Annual Meeting will be held May 1-3 in Fredericksburg. Headquarters and staging location for all meeting activities will be Gari Melchers Home and Studio (GMHS).

Registration and exhibitor setup will begin at 4:00 PM on Friday, May 1. The official meeting hotel will be the Comfort Suites located at the intersection of I-95 and U.S. Route 17, a 5-min drive from meeting headquarters.

Friday night's business meeting will feature a short program by James Comiskey, Ph.D., Inventory and Monitoring Coordinator for the National Park Service Mid-Atlantic Network. Saturday morning's field trips will include such destinations as Crow's Nest, a pristine and biologically rich peninsula located on the Potomac River, Spotsylvania National Military Park, and Ferry Farm. For an extra fee, you may also register for a canoe trip on a gentle and scenic section of the Rapidan River which runs through high quality riparian habitat.

In keeping with Mary Washington's liberal arts tradition, the theme for Saturday night's banquet program will be "Birds as Inspiration for the Arts". It will showcase artistic works/performances by three distinguished UMW faculty who feature birds prominently in their creative works: Carole Garmon, MFA, Dept of Art and Art History, Craig Naylor, Ph.D., Dept of Music, and Claudia Emerson, Ph.D., Dept. of English, Linguistics, and Communication. All three are previous recipients of UMW's prestigious Outstanding Young Faculty Award, and Dr. Emerson was the winner of the 2006 Pulitzer Prize for poetry and was recently name Virginia's Poet Laureate by Gov. Tim Kaine.

For more information visit <http://virginiabirdsnet.umwblogs.org/>

MBC Minutes for March 12, 2009

MBC President Stauffer Miller called the meeting to order. The meeting began with a presentation by Mrs. Lohrer's fourth grade class at Stone-Robinson Elementary. The class received the bird club's bird-feeding kit last fall. Six students representing the class read diary accounts and presented a slide show set to the song "Birds Outside Our Window," by Lyrics Alive, Inc. The regular bird club meeting followed.

Stauffer welcomed several visitors, including Helen from Barboursville, Kathy B. from Scottsville, and Mike Thompson. There were 63 people in attendance.

Treasurer's Report: Henry Konat reported that income for the month was \$10,698.49; expenses were \$11,530.98; with a deficit of \$832.49. The club has \$13,036.13 in the checking account. [Note: there was an error in the February 12th minutes reporting the status of the checking account, which should be corrected to \$12,921.58.] Henry mentioned that there are still 38 regular members who have not renewed.

Bluebird Trail Update: Bob Hammond and Ann Dunn reported that there are around 300 active boxes now. The Virginia Bluebird Society helped fund snake guards for the boxes. They thanked MBC for funding 25 new boxes with baffles and poles. Several volunteers are still needed to monitor boxes in Mint Springs, Meadow Creek golf course, and Bill Minor's trail near Ivy. Bill Leaning paid tribute to Bob Hammond's great work and shared his personal experiences since the day Bob supplied him with his first Bluebird box 25 years ago. This year the Leanings will fledge their 1,000th Bluebird at their home in Earlysville,

thanks to Bob.

Binocular "Show & Tell":

Stauffer encouraged members to attend the April 4 workshop at Ivy Creek Natural Area where people can bring their binoculars and share the pros and cons of different brands. The workshop will follow the First Saturday Bird Walk at Ivy Creek.

The Virginia Festival of the Book

will feature nature writer Jonathan Alder at Blue Ridge Mountain Sports on March 23 at 2 pm.

Field Trips: John Zimmerman reported on the three upcoming March trips, which will include Woodcock watching on the Blue

Ridge Parkway, canoeing on Beaver Creek Reservoir, and a walk at Pen Park. April 25th is scheduled for the bird walk at Tufton Farm.

Recent Bird Sightings: A Bald Eagle was seen at Rockfish Gap and Allen Hale encountered a Raven nest with 4 eggs. The perennial "Mockingbirds flying into windows" activity was mentioned. Tree Swallows were seen at Mallard Lake in Earlysville. Bill Leaning had over 85 birds at his feeders during the snow of the previous week. Bears are terrorizing feeders again. Henry Konat reported his Backyard Bird Count, which included 300 Pine Siskins.

--Peggy Cornett, Secretary

Stone Robinson Thank You Notes

The following are some excerpts from notes sent to MBC by the Stone Robinson fourth graders thanking us for sponsoring their bird feeding project.

"We graciously thank you for buying bird seed on which our birds now feed..."
Adam

"We have thousands of birds come to our feeders. Here are some...purple finches, golden finches, cardinals, regular finches, and mourning doves. Well they don't really come to the feeders but they just hang out on top of the school building." Chassity

"I love to feed the birds. I have learned so much. You guys bring all kinds of birds with the food." Chandler

"Everyone always freezes and stops talking whenever a cool bird comes up to the window. Someone takes a picture of the bird with Mrs. Lohrer's camera. I love to watch the birds." Chandler

"It's funny to see really fat birds try to fly. When it's my turn to feed the birds they stand on the roof waiting to get fed. Thank you for supplying us (and the birds) with food so we can learn about birds and how great they are."
Maya

"Many thanks for the window bird feeder, bird seed, and bird bath. We got to see cardinals, chickadees, blue jay, red-bellied woodpeckers and no squirrels. All because of you the beauty came to our window and bird bath... We love the Monticello Bird Club." Karagan

