



Monticello Bird Club

February 2009

Volume 23, Number 6

February Meeting Topic: Through The Camera's Lens

Join us this month for a program filled with spectacular photographs of Virginia native species from the coastal region to the mountains; from the deep wilderness to backyard birds. Enjoy beautiful bird photography by nature photographer, Bob Schamerhorn. Bob will present avian photography along with his experience pertaining to nature photography. Bob's life-long passion for ornithology is apparent in each amazing image.

Bob's fascination and admiration of natural history has been with him since the beginning. From the spring-fed creeks in the woods behind his childhood stomping grounds, to the slopes of the Blue Ridge Mountains, the wonder of nature has always captivated him. Bob credits Myriam Moore and her daughter Gene, members of the Lynchburg bird club, as early influences in his life. They inspired and supported his keen interest in the natural world. His first exposure to nature photography was Myriam Moore's dental camera that was used for close-up shots only, like a macro lens. Then an 8th grade photography class at Linkhorne Jr. High School in Lynchburg, Virginia taught

him the fundamentals of composition and developing film.

Bob started as a biology major at Virginia Tech, and then switched to art and design by the start of the second semester. He is currently serving as the Education Chairperson for The Richmond Audubon Society and works as a graphic artist.

Bob's web site can be found at <http://iphotobirds.com/>

Please join MBC members and our speaker for dinner at Wild Greens Restaurant in the North Wing of Barracks Road Shopping Center on February 12th at 5:45 pm prior to the meeting.

Upcoming Meeting Topics

March 12th: Jim Nix will present a program on birding in Ecuador.

April 9th: Dr. Marshall Faintich will present "Birding Wintergreen."



Comments From the President

It is my unpleasant task to have to report that a car was broken into during the January bird club meeting at Ivy Creek. Ron Kingston tells me the car was parked on the far side of the parking lot, near the woods. Apparently, this is the most poorly lit and therefore most vulnerable portion of the parking lot. I have spoken to Ivy Creek staff person Karen Joyner about this, and she is contacting the county officials. This is the second such incident in the past thirteen months. Take precautions when parking to get all valuables out of sight. I will try to keep you updated on what Karen learns.

Moving to another item, treasurer Henry Konat made a strong plea at

our last meeting for payment of dues. While our club does not have a lot of expenses, we do have some, such as paying for speakers and, at the moment, sponsorship of two very worthy bluebird trail projects. Dues are pretty much our sole source of revenue. If you haven't paid, get to it.

Now for a little bird talk. Maureen and Bill Minor, who live out Ivy way, don't mind admitting that while they have nothing against "dicky birds," their favorites in the avian world are the raptors. In this connection, Bill and Paul Saunier carried out studies of nestings of Red-shouldered Hawks in Charlottesville between the years 1992 and 1995. Courting began in February.

(Continued on page 2)

Inside February 2009

<i>Field Trips</i>	3
<i>MBC Minutes</i>	4
<i>Cville CBC Results</i>	5
<i>Rusty Blackbird Blitz</i>	6

Monticello Bird Club

(Comments from the president continued from page 1)

Part of the courtship ritual of these birds is a great deal of raucous calling, from perches in trees and from aloft just over treetop level. The calling is loud—something to be listened for in a month which otherwise doesn't distinguish itself much with avian activity. Bill and Paul identified about twelve nest sites. I have a map with those sites if anyone is interested.

Smaller than the Red-shouldered Hawk is another raptor, the Merlin, which winters in this area in very low numbers. While birding along Glendower Road on the recent Warren Christmas Count, Jenny Gaden and I ran into some local people who told us that not one but two Merlins perched periodically at certain trees on their farm. Although Jenny and I didn't see the Merlin, or Merlins, that day, this is information which seems worth heeding. If any of you get out to the area of Glendower and Blenheim, central Albemarle County, you may want to look for these birds. I can provide further information. The

landowner is quite amenable to visits from birders.

Past bird clubs to which I have belonged have done, usually the last week of January, a winter raptor count of an entire county. I am wondering if there might be interest in doing such a count here, in Albemarle perhaps. Its mostly a matter of organization, that is finding eight or so people who would be willing to take a one-eighth pie-shaped sector of the county and count the raptors therein. At the end of the day, we could gather together and add up the total. If this sounds like something you might enjoy, let me know. No need to get up early for this one, unless you like owling.

As the winter moves along, and not so much as one flake of snow falls, I begin to feel something I thought perhaps I would never say, that I am being cheated out of winter. Anyone else feel that way? Snow dance anybody? See you next meeting.

- Stauffer Miller

Dues Update

As of January 15 only 2/3 of MBC members have paid their dues for 2008-2009. Our fiscal and dues year runs from July 1, 2008 through June 30, 2009. Our annual income is derived from dues and the birdseed sale. This income enables us to fund local birding projects and organizations, and to support national organizations who are dedicated to bird conservation and preserving the environment.

Currently, income from dues is about \$1000.00 less than the same period last year. Dues can be sent to Monticello Bird Club, P.O. Box 4362, Charlottesville, VA 22905. If you are not sure whether you owe dues, call or E-mail either Jim Nix at 434.973.7366 or jim-nix@comcast.net, or Henry Konat, at 540.948.4771 or henryk54@verizon.net.

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 March issue is February 20.** Please email information to Amy Gilmer at akgilmer@comcast.net or send to 2341 Highland Avenue, Charlottesville, VA 22903.

Monticello Bird Club

P.O. Box 4362

Charlottesville, Virginia 22905

Please visit our website at

www.monticellobirdclub.org

Monticello Bird Club Board Members

President	Stauffer Miller	stauffer@secpub.com	296-5505
Vice President	Jim Hill	jimcarhill@comcast.net	975-6523
Secretary	Peggy Cornett	pcornett@monticello.org	984-9816
Treasurer	Henry Konat	henryk54@verizon.net	540-948-4771
Field Trips	John Zimmerman	jozimmva@embarqmail.com	974-9293
Speakers	Pat Wilczek	pat.wilczek@comcast.net	985-4444
Publicity	Ellen Dudley	emdudley@nexet.net	244-2688
Hospitality	Priscilla Kingston	kingston@cstone.net	293-5173
Newsletter	Amy Gilmer	akgilmer@comcast.net	825-2170
Membership	Jim Nix	jim-nix@comcast.net	973-7366
Birdseed Sale	Jim Hill	jimcarhill@comcast.net	975-6523

Upcoming Field Trips

Highland County Excursion Saturday, February 7

Join Cricket Barlow to look for Golden Eagles, Rough-legged Hawks, and other winter visitors. Dress warmly for cold, windy conditions, and bring a lunch and something to drink. We will be passing through Monterey where food and facilities are available, but we may not be in Monterey at lunchtime. We will want to travel in four-wheel drive vehicles, so if you have one, please inform Cricket if you would be willing to drive. Kindly let Cricket know if you are interested in going on this trip at (434) 823-5272 or gwbarlow3@earthlink.net.

Meet at 6:00 a.m. in the Giant parking lot at Seminole Square. We will return in the late afternoon. If the weather is dubious, the trip will be rescheduled. If you are curious about the weather in Highland County, go to <http://www.erh.noaa.gov/er/lwx/>

Ivy Creek Natural Area Saturday, February 21

Visit areas of the Ivy Creek Natural Area that you never get to on the first Saturday bird walks. **Meet in the parking lot at Ivy Creek at 7:30 a.m.** Leader: John Zimmerman, (434) 974-9293 or joszimmva@embarqmail.com.

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. Mark Adams will lead the February 7, 2009 walk.

Big Thanks to Ivy Creek Walk Volunteers!

Leigh Surdukowski would like to recognize and thank all of the folks who have led and will lead First Saturday Bird Walks at Ivy Creek Natural Area each month. This year's volunteers include:

- 1/3 Leigh Surdukowski
- 2/7 Mark Adams
- 3/7 John Zimmerman
- 4/4 Stauffer Miller
- 5/2 Jim Nix
- 6/6 Jenny Gaden
- 7/4 Peter Brask
- 8/1 Ron Kingston
- 9/5 John Zimmerman
- 10/3 Dave Hogg
- 11/7 Lou Tanner
- 12/5 Teresa Shaner



VSO Winter Field Trip NC Outer Banks February 20-22, 2009

As in past years the VSO is heading south of the (Virginia) border to enjoy the hopefully milder climate of the outer banks of North Carolina. Note the exciting new addition of an optional Friday pelagic trip out of Hatteras!

Lodging: The Clarion Inn at Nags Head Beach will be our headquarters. Special VSO room rates are \$62 for oceanfront and \$57 for streetside plus tax (currently 12%). Oceanfront rooms are available on a first come, first serve basis. Contact information for the hotel is: P.O. Box 308, Kill Devil Hills, North Carolina, 27948; (252)441-6333. Make reservations by Jan. 20 to get the special rate. Remember to say that you are with the VSO.

Meals are on your own. A 7:00 am Saturday and Sunday buffet breakfast will be available at the Clarion Inn.

Program: When you check in at the hotel, pick up a program of events and announcements at the front desk.

Friday: VSO Pelagic Trip

Friday Night: An evening orientation and slide program will be presented. Check your program for the time and room location.

Saturday: We will have all day to visit the impoundments of Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge and the beaches of Cape Hatteras National Seashore. The generally milder climate and the proximity of the Gulf Stream make for an interesting combination of wintering waterfowl, shorebirds, ocean birds and sometimes whales. There will be a tally at 6:00 pm in the VSO conference room at the hotel.

Sunday Morning: New this year— trip to Alligator River NWR. We will depart from the hotel at 8:30 am giving those wishing to continue straight home from the field trip time to check-out of their rooms.

Be prepared for variable weather, lots of birds and a good time. If you have any questions, contact Bill Akers at (540)951-7692 or bill.akersj@comcast.net or Peggy Opengari at (540)921-4340 or gramby@pemtel.net.

MBC Minutes for January 8, 2009

MBC President Stauffer Miller wished everyone a Happy New Year and welcomed several new visitors. There were 62 individuals attending the meeting.

Treasurer's Report: Henry Konat reported that the net income for the period was \$9,542 and expenses were \$10,043, with a deficit of \$541. He said that membership is still down 40% and asked that we check with him if uncertain about current status.

Field Trips: John Zimmerman reported the upcoming trees as announced in the newsletter. The February 7th trip to Highland County is still on. He reminded members that the Ivy Creek Foundation publication on the birds of Ivy Creek Natural Area is still available.

Bluebird Trail: MBC will provide funds for the replacement and repair as needed of the bluebird boxes for Bob Hammond's Trail and for the bluebird trail in Greene County.

Birding for the Blind: Jenny Gaden proposes that the club begin offering bird walks for the blind and for people with impaired vision such as macular degeneration. She asked for volunteers to help lead these walks.

ICNA First Saturday Walks: Leigh Surdukowski thanked all those "regular" leaders who have participated in this MBC activity and only needs one more volunteer this year to lead the February walk.

Bird Count Reports: This year's Christmas Bird Count Volunteers who were birding on Blenheim Road reported 2 Merlins in a large Southern Red Oak. Alan Hale asked that MBC pay the fees for the Warren County Bird Count, which will come to

around \$60. This was approved by the members.

Recent Bird Sightings: Pine Siskins, Purple Finches, House Finches were reported eating Sweet Gum seed. Ron Kingston and Stauffer's friend Gretchen have seen Brown Creepers and Fox Sparrows at feeders. Carol Hill reported a Great Blue Heron in a pond stocked with goldfish. Stauffer reported that Tim Hodge, from Nelson County, had seen Red Crossbills on the Appalachian Trail between Saw Mill and Turk's Gap overlook. A Red Start was seen in West Virginia. Members were reminded that the new "Checklist for Birds of Albemarle County" is now available.

-Peggy Cornett, Secretary



Bird and nature fans throughout North America are invited to join tens of thousands of bird watchers for the 12th annual Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC), February 13-16, 2009.

A joint project of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society, this free event is an opportunity for families, students, and people of all ages to discover the wonders of nature in backyards, schoolyards, and local parks, and, at the same time, make an important contribution to conservation.

Volunteers take part by counting birds for at least 15 minutes on one or more days of the event and reporting their sightings online at www.birdcount.org. The data help researchers understand bird population trends across the continent, information that is critical for effective conservation.

Participants submit thousands of digital images for the GBBC photo contest each year. Last year's winners have been chosen and are now posted on the web site. Participants are also invited to upload their bird videos to YouTube tagged "GBBC." Some of them will also be featured on the GBBC web site. All participants will be entered in a drawing to win dozens of birding items, including stuffed birds, clocks, books, feeders, and more.

Businesses, schools, nature clubs, Scout troops, and other community organizations interested in the GBBC can contact the Cornell Lab of Ornithology at (800) 843-2473 (outside the U.S., call (607) 254-2473), or Audubon at citizen-science@audubon.org or (215) 355-9588, Ext 16.

Field Ornithology Course

Learn to identify the birds of Central Virginia and the Blue Ridge Mountains by sight and sound. Piedmont Virginia Community College is offering a three credit course in Field Ornithology this semester, February 14 through May 30.

Classes meet early Saturday mornings and are all field trips to various sites in Albemarle County (except for the first class which meets indoors at Ivy Creek, 8:30 am, February 14). Register in person at the college, or online:

www.pvcc.edu

Questions/info: Contact Dan Bieker, (434) 971-9618

Unofficial Results of the 2008 Charlottesville CBC December 14, 2008

55 participants

Pied-billed Grebe 7
 Great-blue Heron 16
 Black Vulture 248
 Turkey Vulture 359
 Canada Goose 800
 American Black Duck 1
 Mallard 259
 Hooded Merganser 4
 Bald Eagle 4
 Northern Harrier 1
 Sharp-shinned Hawk 9
 Cooper's Hawk 4
 Red-shouldered Hawk 23
 Red-tailed Hawk 30
 American Kestrel 10
 Wild Turkey 8
 Rock Pigeon 225
 Mourning Dove 177
 Eastern Screech Owl 2
 Great-horned Owl 4
 Barred Owl 3
 Belted Kingfisher 19
 Red-bellied Woodpecker 122
 Yellow-bellied Sapsucker 54
 Downy Woodpecker 99
 Hairy Woodpecker 11
 Northern Flicker 114
 Pileated Woodpecker 51
 Eastern Phoebe 25
 Blue Jay 248
 American Crow 658
 Fish Crow 30
 Common Raven 1
 Carolina Chickadee 264
 Tufted Titmouse 225
 White-breasted Nuthatch 106
 Brown Creeper 7
 Winter Wren 3
 Carolina Wren 195
 Golden-crowned Kinglet 44
 Ruby-crowned Kinglet 51
 Eastern Bluebird 371
 Hermit Thrush 48
 American Robin 641
 Northern Mockingbird 103

Brown Thrasher 1
 American Pipit 1
 European Starling 1423
 Cedar Waxwing 803
 Yellow-rumped Warbler 235
 Eastern Towhee 27
 Chipping Sparrow 39
 Field Sparrow 106
 Savannah Sparrow 11
 Fox Sparrow 3
 Song Sparrow 345
 Swamp Sparrow 8
 White-throated Sparrow 814
 White-crowned Sparrow 33
 Dark-eyed Junco 428
 Northern Cardinal 299
 Red-winged Blackbird 6
 Eastern Meadowlark 7
 Purple Finch 52
 House Finch 121
 Pine Siskin 8
 American Goldfinch 442
 House Sparrow 8

**68 species
10,905 individuals**

To see the final online results on the Audubon website later in the year go to:

http://cbc.audubon.org/cbccurrent/current_table.html

Type in the count code (VACA) in Option C and click on "find circle". The count name and code will show up on the right-hand side of the page – highlight it and click on "Make a Table" and our results will be on display.

Dead-On

To protest habitat destruction the neighbor girl collects dead birds in a plastic sack then boils their heads until the skulls fit snugly on her fingertips.

With a sheet and lamp she makes shadow puppets for fifth grade show-and-tell, clicks bony beaks and groans in hoarse Igor tones:
 COM - POST
 REEEE - CYCLE
 FEEEEED MEEEEEEEE

dan bieber

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

We have had several new individual and family members recently join the Monticello Bird Club. We welcome them all and wish them good birding and good fellowship at our meetings. New members are:

Alice Gore and Wick Hunt
 Hiawatha Green
 Richard and Margaret Haupt
 Dean Joyner
 Karen Joyner
 Brian Morse
 Jon and Yvonne Rockett
 Robert and Dolores Wack
 Nancy Weiss
 Carol Woodhouse-Hansen
 Suzan McKay
 Gretchen Gehrett
 Laura Phillips & Matt Zuefle
 Content Hagen

Rusty Blackbird Winter Hot Spot Blitz February 7-15, 2009

The Rusty Blackbird is one of the fastest declining North American passerines. Based on data from the North American Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) and the Audubon Christmas Bird Count (CBC), the bird has suffered an estimated loss of between 85 and 97% of its population over the past 40 years. In Virginia the Rusty Blackbird was identified as a Species of Greatest Conservation Need in the state's Wildlife Action Plan, published in 2005 by the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (DGIF). Despite the species' critical status, our knowledge of many aspects of its distribution and ecology are rudimentary. Like the BBS and CCB, the Rusty Blackbird Winter Hot Spot Blitz aims to harness the power of the birding community to collect baseline information as a starting point for future monitoring and conservation activities.



Rusty Blackbird. © Hofmann-photography.de

The Rusty Blackbird is a breeder in boreal forested wetlands of northern New England, Alaska and the Canadian Provinces and winters largely in the southeastern United States, including Virginia. Through Virginia CBC surveys we know that the bird is widely distributed across the state, although it is documented more consistently in some circles than in others. Much of what we know about Rusty Blackbird ecology in Virginia is based on Brooke Meanley's studies of the species in the Great Dismal Swamp. During the winter the birds are omnivorous, foraging on a variety of agricultural crops (including peanut fields), acorn mast, pine and other seeds, fruits of various trees and shrubs, as well as aquatic and terrestrial invertebrates and small aquatic vertebrates. Wintering Rusties are associated not only with wetlands, including swamps and open marshes, but with a variety of upland habitats, including upland woods, agricultural fields, and cattle and hog feed lots. Rusty Blackbirds may forage and roost in single-species flocks, but are often encountered in mixed flocks with other blackbirds, notably grackles, cowbirds and red-winged blackbirds.

The Rusty Blackbird Blitz will take place February 7-15 in twenty-four states across the bird's wintering range. It is during this time of year that the wintering population is more sedentary and that males are more vocal, making these elusive birds easier to find. We are asking volunteer birders such as yourselves to look for Rusty Blackbirds in any locations and habitats that you feel are potentially suitable, including known locations, and particularly for flocks or concentrations. You may look for Rusty Blackbirds wherever you like, whenever you like, and as often as you like anytime during the Blitz period. You will be collecting basic information on areas of occurrence (and, equally important, non-occurrence) and flock sizes. These observations will be submitted through Virginia eBird, so that they may be analyzed together with eBird Blitz observations from other states. Protocols and data forms can be found at http://nationalzoo.si.edu/ConservationAndScience/MigratoryBirds/Research/Rusty_Blackbird/protocol.cfm.

The Rusty Blackbird Blitz is a project of the [International Rusty Blackbird Technical Working Group](#), a consortium of partners led by the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Research Center. In Virginia the Blitz is being coordinated as a project of the Virginia Bird Conservation Initiative by DGIF in partnership with the Virginia Society of Ornithology, Coastal Virginia Wildlife Observatory, Virginia eBird and the College of William and Mary.

By participating in the Rusty Blackbird Blitz you will help to improve our understanding of Rusty Blackbird distribution and ecology here in Virginia and across its broader wintering range. You will be contributing valuable information even if you do not find Rusty Blackbirds. Please consider participating in this important event. If you have any questions regarding the Blitz, please contact Sergio Harding.

Sergio Harding
Nongame Bird Conservation Biologist
Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries
(804)367-0143
sergio.harding@dgif.virginia.gov