



Monticello Bird Club

February 2010

Volume 26, Number 6

February Meeting Topic: Who needs pollination?

This month's topic, "**Who needs pollination,**" is a very timely one. Much of our everyday food and all of our flowering plants rely on pollination. Wind is one effective pollinator but our world is filled with others: bats, birds, bees of all sizes and descriptions, even ants, beetles, and wasps. The flowering plants have developed ways to attract pollinators, and the pollinators have developed their strategies to accomplish what the plant needs.

Today we recognize that pollinators are in trouble. That trouble comes not only from us and our actions on this planet but also from the vagaries of Mother Nature. Pollinators now need our help and we can easily provide that help.

Our presenter, Ann Harman, had a career as a research chemist. This was followed by being Head of the Science Department at a private school. However, due to her lifelong interest in honey bees she now serves as a volunteer teaching beekeeping skills and modern management techniques in Third-World Countries. To date she has worked in 29 countries on five continents for a total of 51 assignments. She has received the President's Volunteer Service Award three times.

She has served in several international volunteer organizations helping to increase the incomes of some of the poorest people on earth and also to those countries that had been denied access to developing technologies.

She is a member of national, regional, state and local beekeeping associations and hold offices in several of these. She is an Eastern Apicultural Society Certified Master Beekeeper. She actively teaches beekeeping in the USA in numerous courses and lectures at beekeeping association meetings.

She is an active member of the Na-

tional Honey Board, an agricultural marketing board. She is a contributing author for *Bee Culture*, a national beekeeping magazine, and for two international beekeeping journals. She is coeditor of *Bee Craft America*.

She has her own hives of honey bees. These hives are part of a teaching apiary used to teach youth about the value of honey bees as pollinators of our Virginia crops.

Honey bees serve to enhance gardens and wildlife forage here in the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia.

Upcoming Meeting Topics

February 11th at 7:00 p.m.:

Who Needs Pollination?

March 11th at 7:00 p.m.

Informative talk on the VSO

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Comments From the President

My 2010 birding year got started on a brutally cold Sunday, January 3rd, at the Holiday Inn on Fifth Street in Charlottesville, where I met Lois Gebhardt and Jenny Gaden at 6:30 AM for the Warren Christmas Count. I took quite a bit of needling from them about the early start time I had chosen, since it was still quite dark—and unbearably cold—when we got to Walnut Creek Park.

I felt a little vindicated, however, when we got to enjoy the glow of the nearly full moon gleaming on the waters of the lake. Equally as impressive was Jupiter, just above the moon. At this point in our count, we had recorded more planets than birds. In fact, the only bird we noted at the park was a crow cawing well in the distance.

From the park we drove over to Via Creek Road, the access to a small development. In dim light, as we stood in front of a blackberry patch, Jenny said, "I see a bird with a red cap in

that thicket." What she had found was perhaps our best bird of the day, a Tree Sparrow. So we were off to a good start.

After a few hours, mostly birding from the car, my companions expressed a need for a rest stop. Since we were in a totally rural area, without amenities such as McDonalds, and the snowy, icy bushes and woods were not enticing for an *au naturel* break, I was wondering what I might pull out of my bag of tricks when miraculously a little country store appeared along Rolling Road, and it was **open**. We made good use of its rather primitive facilities.

Because Jenny had to quit at noon, I turned onto a stretch of highway I would not ordinarily have traveled, the west end of Coles Rolling, so as to get her to her car. This took us past some short grass and in it we spotted a flock of American Pipits. Nothing less than serendipity brought us those.

Lois and I roamed about southern Albemarle the next few hours, finding as our best bird a striking Northern Har-

Monticello Bird Club

rier perched atop a board fence. We quit with forty-six species, a nice start on the birding year. My last word from Lois was that she was going to go home and have a cup of tea.

Peggy Cornett has reminded me to remind everyone that our meetings now begin at **7:00 PM!** At the January meeting, our first with the new time, I informally polled the group and all seemed favorable to the change. I also want to remind that our dinners at the Ruby Tuesday before the programs are open to all. We meet there at 5:30 PM. Hope to see you there.

Leigh Surdukowski, who has coordinated our first Saturday walks at Ivy Creek the past few years, was short a few leaders so she passed around a clipboard requesting volunteers at the January meeting. She was very pleased to get commitments she needed. In fact, several people who agreed to lead had never before signed up. In many cases, these walks are the first exposure of fledgling birders to group birding and our bird club. I really appreciate Leigh's efforts in keeping up this valuable outreach and also those who signed on as leaders. Knowledge of birds is not so important as enthusiasm and a friendly demeanor when it comes to leading

these walks.

Finally, February is the best month all year in our area to hope to find such rarities as Northern Shoveller, Redhead, Bufflehead and Common Goldeneye. Keep an eye on those ponds and rivers.

Stauffer Miller

Dutch Gap Trip

We met at the appointed hour and drove to Dutch Gap in three vehicles. The weather was perfect January weather with cool temperatures and good sunshine.

We had 13 participants and our efforts were rewarded with 53 species of birds. We enjoyed good birding and good camaraderie. We got to meet and get to know other members of our club. A good time was had by all.

I have included some photos of the trip. Please note that I am behind the camera in the group photo below.



Peter Ducnell, Lou Tanner, Art Petty, Becky Minor, Ann Dunn, Betty Mooney, Janet Paisley, Robert & James McLeMore, Leslie Crowell, Joanne Bricker, Howard Davis

Bird Club Information

The Monticello Bird Club meets at **7:00 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 8:00 a.m. February 27.** Please email information to Doug Rogers at MBCNEWS@embarqmail.com or send to 1065 Weybridge Ct. # 304, Charlottesville, VA 22911.

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@seepub.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	Stauffer Miller	stauffer@seepub.com	296-5505
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	Doug Rogers	mbcnews@embarqmail.com	409-8156
Membership	Jim Nix	jim-nix@comcast.net	973-7366
Birdseed Sale	Jim Hill	jimcarhill@comcast.net	975-6523

Field Trips & Counts

First Saturday Bird Walks at Ivy Creek Natural Area

On the first Saturday of each month, the Monticello Bird Club offers a bird walk at Ivy Creek Natural Area at 7:30 a.m. Some of the walks stay near the main building and parking lot, others go out on the peninsula. Each month has a different leader. Some outstanding birds have been seen on the walks.

The walk for this month will be on February 6th. See you there!

Highland County, Virginia's "Little Switzerland"

Saturday, February 6th—Highland County.

Meet in front of the Giant Store at 7:00 a.m. in Seminole Square Shopping Center. We will car-pool from there. **Dress warmly.**

Target birds will be Golden Eagles, Bald Eagles, Rough Legged Hawks, Red Crossbills and Horned Larks.

Trip Leader will be Doug Rogers.

Results of the 2009 Christmas Bird Count

The 2009 Christmas Bird Count was rescheduled to December 27 from December 20 because of the winter storm that hit us the 19th and 20th. In addition, participation this year was smaller than usual. But the 26 people on 15 teams who ventured forth on the 27th saw 67 species, two of which were unusual – Blue-headed Vireo and Brant (hrota). Each required submission of a rare bird form. We await review and hope for approval by Teta Kain, the regional editor.

The final count will be on line at the CBC home page: <http://www.audubon.org/bird/cbc/index.html>

Click on the left-hand navigation link that says "Current Year" under "Results". On the next page enter the count code, VACA, to see the data. The 2009 information will probably not be available till sometime in March.

The unofficial count follows.

- Pied-billed Grebe 5
- Great-blue Heron 9
- Black Vulture 103
- Turkey Vulture 167
- Canada Goose 415
- American Black Duck 5
- Mallard 43
- Green-winged Teal 2
- Hooded Merganser 5
- Sharp-shinned Hawk 6
- Cooper's Hawk 5
- Red-shouldered Hawk 17
- Red-tailed Hawk 27
- American Kestrel 1
- Wild Turkey 1
- Rock Pigeon 75
- Mourning Dove 131
- Eastern Screech Owl 1
- Belted Kingfisher 5
- Red-bellied Woodpecker 84
- Yellow-bellied Sapsucker 47
- Downy Woodpecker 46
- Hairy Woodpecker 16
- Northern Flicker 68
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Birding on the shores of Lake Hollymead

Wednesday, February 17th. Meet at Starbucks at Hollymead Town Center at 9:00 a.m. If we can lift ourselves out of the comfortable chairs and get outdoors, we'll walk along the shores of Lake Hollymead, and visit a few other nearby places in quest of whatever might be around. Leader, Stauffer Miller, 296-5505 or stauffer@seepub.com.

Birding at Tufton Farm Nursery

Saturday, March 6th at 7:30 a.m. Meet at Tufton Farm Nursery. The address is 1293 Tufton Farm for those with GPS.

Target birds will be Pine Siskins, Winter Wrens, Hermit Thrush, Bald Eagle and Meadowlark.

Trip Leader will be Doug Rogers.



Double Crested Cormorants and Great Blue Herons in a Heron rookery at Dutch Gap
Photo by Doug Rogers



Birding at Dutch Gap on January 16th

Minutes of the MBC Meeting on January 14, 2010

The meeting opened at its *new time*, 7:00 p.m. President Stauffer Miller took an informal poll of the 62 people present and had a favorable response to the new start time. He welcomed visitors to the meeting. There were no new members this past month.

Field trips: Doug Rogers detailed the upcoming Highland County field trip. For those who may want to stay overnight, the Highland Inn is an option as well as local B&Bs.

Announcements:

Leigh Surdukowski announced that there is a need for additional volunteers to lead the First Saturday bird walks at Ivy Creek. She passed around a sign-up sheet.

Jenny Gaden announced the donation of binoculars from Mary Hall of Wild Bird Crossing, for the club's use.

Peggy Cornett mentioned a birding opportunity at Shirley Plantation on March 13, led by Tom McCary and Randy Carter. Shirley Plantation is 35 miles west of Williamsburg. More information is available at www.shirleyplantation.com

The PBS series *Nature* recently aired a show on hummingbirds, and NPR had a program on problem crows in Japan.

Bird Sightings:

Stauffer saw Tree Sparrows flying over the Blue Ridge to Piedmont. Doug Rogers has had a female Baltimore Oriole at his feeder for over a week. Nancy Newman talked about an unfortunate hawk that was apparently buried under the ice in the Carrsbrook neighborhood. Betty Mooney saw a pair of Red-shouldered Hawks preparing for nesting season. Gretchen saw a Cooper's hawk at her bird feeder, catching other birds. Blue Birds are plentiful. Northern Harriers have been spotted near Scottsville. Peter Dutnell saw seven Northern Harriers on the James River. Ron Kingston has had three Fox Sparrows at his feeder and Jenny has also enjoyed Fox Sparrows this month. A Barn Owl was seen living in a barn near a construction site in southern Albemarle County.

Peggy Cornett

Items of Interest - Virginia Festival of the Book

Marshall Faintich (/A Photographic Guide to the Birds of Wintergreen/) will show images and discuss his book on birds of Central Virginia at 8:00 pm at Blue Ridge Mountain Sports on 3/17/10.

Jonathan Alderfer /(Illustrated Birds of North America)/, a bird artist and consultant for National Geographic, will show his art and discuss birds at Blue Ridge Mountain Sports on 3/20/10.

2009 Christmas Bird Count (continued)

Pileated Woodpecker 44
Eastern Phoebe 10
Blue Jay 226
American Crow 591
Fish Crow 19
Common Raven 11
Carolina Chickadee 170
Tufted Titmouse 150
White-breasted Nuthatch 59
Brown Creeper 3
Winter Wren 6
Carolina Wren 172
Golden-crowned Kinglet 34
Ruby-crowned Kinglet 32
Eastern Bluebird 223
Hermit Thrush 25
American Robin 496
Northern Mockingbird 69
Brown Thrasher 1
European Starling 504
Cedar Waxwing 227
Yellow-rumped Warbler 174
Eastern Towhee 20
Chipping Sparrow 1
Field Sparrow 44
Savanna Sparrow 5
Fox Sparrow 6
Song Sparrow 127
Swamp Sparrow 2
White-throated Sparrow 462
White-crowned Sparrow 30
Dark-eyed Junco 310
Northern Cardinal 259
Red-winged Blackbird 4
Eastern Meadowlark 1
Common Grackle 18
Brown-headed Cowbird 2
Purple Finch 1
House Finch 64
American Goldfinch 154
House Sparrow 35

Additional Species

Blue-headed Vireo 1
Brant (hrota) 1

Note: the designation (hrota) with Brant is the way it is officially listed now because it is under review for splitting into two species.

Jenny Gaden

Albemarle/Charlottesville Bluebirds

2009 was a busy bluebirding year in the Albemarle/Charlottesville area. Last winter, thanks to grants from both the MBC and the Virginia Bluebird Society (VBS), we were able to refurbish eight of the 24 sites within the Bob Hammond Bluebird Trail. During the breeding season twenty five plus volunteers monitored 334 nest boxes located on both the Hammond Trail as well as those established by Ron Kingston and the late Bill Minor. A total of 1413 songbirds fledged from these boxes including 1080 bluebirds, 289 tree swallows and an assortment of chickadees, titmice and house wrens.

The 2010 breeding season will soon begin. We invite anyone to join us who would like to help in our continuing effort to maintain, expand and monitor our area bluebird trails. All information is sent to the VBS and ultimately to the North America Bluebird Society. Please contact:

Ann Dunn: add7k@virginia.edu or
Janet Paisley: janetaislet@comcast.net