



Monticello Bird Club

February 2011

Volume 27, Number 6

Comments From the President

A recent birding and general nature trip to the Outer Banks with friends resulted in some wonderful sightings and equally wondrous non-sightings: a Virginia Rail, no Titmice, a Sora, 1 Cardinal, 4 Merlins, no bluejays, 8 Harriers, no American crows, a Brown-headed Nuthatch, Pelicans white and brown, Ibises, Herons, loads of ducks, and 1 Bluebird. Also, lots of other things quite thrilling to see but too numerous to mention. A pattern seemed to be emerging and though the experience left me buzzing with excitement, it also left me with the goal of seeing at least once more one of the old familiars from central Virginia. As I am planning to join Stauffer et al. on the trip to southern Albemarle a few hours from now, my guess is that the pining might just end pretty soon.

It also left me sprinting back to another old reliable, my trusty Birds of America, plucked from the shelves of Thalhimers in Richmond ca. 1966 and treasured ever since. For those who don't know it, it is a dinosaur of a book. My copy was published in 1936 but it first appeared in 1917 apparently. The photos predate Noah's flood it would seem and it is certainly not something to lug off while hunting warblers. Nevertheless, the stories it contains by some pioneering old ornithologists trudging through the wilds of Wisconsin or the muck of the Chesapeake conjure up for me a time when things were less frantic and the population of the U.S. probably a third of what it now is. It warms the evening to join them on these jaunts. Nothing against Sibley or Kaufman or the others who have made our lives easier to be sure. Just a gentle plea for an older way of looking. If anyone out there is interested and doesn't already have a copy, it can doubtless be picked up at the Gordon Avenue Friends of the Library Booksale each April for about \$2. Good value.

Lou Tanner

February Meeting Program

Bluebirds: a love story

When the first pair of bluebirds moved into the nest box outside Gretchen Gehrett's kitchen window, there was magic in the air. Napoleon and Josephine, with their magnificent blue feathers, engaging personalities, and abundant offspring, were not just any birds. By carefully watching them throughout the years, Gretchen learned they were unique individuals with distinct personalities, and fascinating family dramas. Hundreds of thousands of mealworms and 5 years later, Napoleon II moved into the spot left open by his father's death. With his insatiable curiosity and ease around humans, Napoleon II became a part of the family by sitting on windowsills and watching the action inside for hours on end.

Come and hear Gretchen's story of love, laughter, and interspecies communication with her feathered friends. Learn about the seasons of the Bluebird, and how you too can attract and develop an enduring relationship with a beautiful pair of Bluebirds.

Upcoming Meeting Topics

February 10th, 2011 at 7:00 p.m.

Bluebirds, a love story

March 11th, 2011 at 7:00 p.m.

Spiders

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Field Ornithology at Piedmont VA Community College

Become more proficient at identifying birds in the wild while exploring the farms, lakes and forests of Albemarle and the Blue Ridge Mountains. PVCC is offering a course in Field Ornithology (NAS 160) this semester, on Saturday mornings 19 Feb. thru 4 June. All classes are held outdoors. The course can be taken for 3 credits (qualifies for teacher recertification points), or no credit. To register, go online: www.pvcc.edu, or call 434-971-9618 for more details.

Monticello Bird Club

Monticello Bird Club Meeting Minutes-13 January 2011

Jenny Gaden began the meeting early with a report on the Charlottesville Christmas Bird Count. They counted many Red-headed Woodpeckers (15), three Horned Grebes, several rare birds for our area such as the Eared Grebe, and eight Bald Eagles, which was a historical high. The official results will be available in February. Lou Tanner welcomed one of the largest gatherings of members and guest with 72 attending.

Henry Konat gave the treasurer's report. The club's income for the period was \$10,315.10; expenses were \$10,954.28, with a net of (\$639.18). He mentioned that we are still behind in membership renewals compared to previous years.

Dave Hogg reported on upcoming field trips; including a trip to Stuart's Draft. He would like to organize a trip to Highland County and would like to know if there is interest.

Miscellaneous announcements were made, including: The Piedmont Landscape Association Seminar on February 10th, which features well-known woody plant guru Michael Dirr, associate curator of JC Raulston Arboretum Mark Weathington, and University of Delaware professor Doug Tallamy, who is speaking about planting natives for wild-life in "Bringing Nature Home." There was also mention of an interesting Web site charting the actual migrations of North American birds; and a member gave a description of the aviaries in the San Diego Zoo.

The business meeting ended with reports on recent bird sightings. Bill Leaning had 12 Pine Siskins and a regular Red-breasted Nuthatch at his feeder. There was a Junco spotted at a feeder with much of its tail feathers ripped out. Jim Nix saw three Bald Eagles during the Warren County Bird Count (one juvenile and two adults) as well as Swamp Sparrows, and a Downy and Hairy Woodpecker side-by-side. Nancy Newman saw four Red-headed Woodpeckers in Batesville, a Bald Eagle in Ruckersville, and one on 29 North at Polo Grounds Road. Lou Tanner spotted a Red-headed Woodpecker in the Fernbrook Natural Area at Stony Point. Henry Konat saw approximately 2-3,000 Snow Geese during a trip to the Northern Neck near Tappahannock, VA. Finally, Stauffer Miller saw a Ruffed Grouse. Teresa Shaner reminded members to continue documenting their bird sightings to add to her ongoing lists of the birds of Charlottesville and Albemarle County.

Minutes submitted by Peggy Cornett, secretary

Bird Club Information

The Monticello Bird Club meets 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 26.** Please email information to Doug Rogers at MBCNEWS@embarqmail.com or send to 1065 Weybridge Ct. # 304, Charlottesville, VA 22911.

Monticello Bird Club
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Graemont West Nest Box Trail

Several months ago, I accepted an invitation to give a presentation on "Gardening is for the Birds" at Lake Monticello. Unfortunately, the date has been moved to February 10, clashing with the MBC monthly meeting. Clare and I are disappointed to be missing a talk about one of our favorite birds, the Bluebirds.

As background to this note on our twelve years of monitoring the "Graemont West Nest Box Trail" in Earlysville, I need to mention the circumstances leading up to our love of Bluebirds. Our house on Sherwood Lane in New Jersey bordered the 7,800 acre Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge. When we moved there in 1983, a wonderful weekend routine began. With binoculars in hand, we would hike the refuge trails. An early discovery was the program to increase the Eastern Bluebird and Wood Duck populations by the use of nest boxes.

We moved into our house in Earlysville in 1998 and joined the Monticello Bird Club. One of the first people to greet us was Ron Kingston who, finding out I was a retired veterinarian, said, "I must introduce you to Dr. Bob Hammond a near neighbor of yours, also a retired veterinarian, who has put up more than 360 nest boxes in and

around Charlottesville." Our 17 acre property is one of seven lots designated as "Graemont West". We were the first to build a house in the subdivision.

Bob Hammond inspired me to start a nest box trail on our property. He walked with me, suggesting six suitable nest box sites. I also traveled with him on several occasions to learn monitoring procedures. That first year, 1999, we fledged 27 Bluebirds and 5 Tree Swallows. As each of our new neighbors moved in, we asked if they would like to be part of a Bluebird trail. Everyone has said yes and, as of 2010, we, now, have 28 nest boxes. Our twelve year fledgling totals are 703 Eastern Bluebirds, 308 Tree Swallows, 123 Carolina Chickadees and 38 Tufted Titmice.

We named our property, "Omanu" which means "The place of birds" in the New Zealand Maori language. All our landscaping has been aimed at attracting more birds. We were thrilled to receive a Wildlife Habitat Certificate from the National Wildlife Federation.

The included images show the Bluebirds feeding on "Winter King" Hawthorn Berries, a favorite winter food.

Finally, I am reminded of another Bob Hammond quote "One house makes a difference". He erected his first Bluebird

nest box in 1986 and twelve years later had fledged a total of 200 Bluebirds from this one box. Clare and I hope we have made a difference in the number of Bluebirds in the area and added hours of enjoyment for both ourselves and our neighbors.

Bill Leaning



First Saturday Bird Walks at Ivy Creek Natural Area

Saturday February 5 and Saturday March 5, 2011

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.

Beginning birders are especially encouraged to come to enjoy and learn, but Club members are also most welcome at these outings. The ICNA is one of the area's finest birding spots and some outstanding birds have been seen on these walks.

Leigh Surdukowski will lead the trip on February 5, and Lou Tanner will lead the trip on March 5.

A special thank you to Joanne Bricker and Karen Anderson who helped with this Newsletter!

Highland County Trip

Highland County Excursion
Saturday, February 12

Join Dave Hogg 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 may need to travel in four-wheel drive vehicles, so if you have one, please inform Dave if you would be willing to drive. Kindly let Dave know if you are interested in going on this trip at (434)-974-7592 or at dehogg@mindspring.com

Meet at 6:00am 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/](http://www.erh.noaa.gov/er/lwx/)

CBC Report for 2010 by Jenny Gaden

Fifty people took part in the 2010 Charlottesville Christmas Bird Count on December 19. 79 species were observed. We broke one record with an historical high of 8 Bald Eagles. Rare bird reports were submitted for the Redhead, Horned Grebe, American Coot and Red-headed Woodpecker. (A rare bird form is not required, but preferred, for the woodpecker.) A report was also submitted for a Selasphorus Hummingbird, but it will not be counted because it was observed just outside the circle. Teta Kain, regional editor, will, however, probably mention it in her report for the state.

Francis Fife and Nancy O'Brien, once again, hosted the potluck-tally at their house after the count. We are very fortunate to be able to meet in such a wonderful place for these gatherings. Many thanks to Francis and Nancy.

You may see the official report sometime in March (most likely) at <http://birds.audubon.org/american-birds-annual-summary-christmas-bird-count>

Here is the unofficial count of species observed:

Canada Goose Wood Duck American Black Duck Mallard Redhead Bufflehead Hooded Merganser Ruddy Duck Pied-billed Grebe Horned Grebe Great Blue Heron Black Vulture Turkey Vulture Bald Eagle Sharp-shinned Hawk Cooper's Hawk Red-shouldered Hawk Red-tailed Hawk American Kestrel Merlin American Coot Killdeer American Woodcock Rock Pigeon Mourning Dove	Eastern Screech-Owl Great Horned Owl Barred Owl Belted Kingfisher Red-headed Woodpecker Red-bellied Woodpecker Yellow-bellied Sapsucker Downy Woodpecker Hairy Woodpecker Northern Flicker Pileated Woodpecker Eastern Phoebe Blue Jay American Crow Fish Crow Common Raven Carolina Chickadee Tufted Titmouse Red-breasted Nuthatch White-breasted Nuthatch Brown Creeper Carolina Wren Winter Wren Golden-crowned Kinglet Ruby-crowned Kinglet	Eastern Bluebird Hermit Thrush American Robin Gray Catbird Northern Mockingbird Brown Thrasher European Starling American Pipit Cedar Waxwing Yellow-rumped Warbler Eastern Towhee Chipping Sparrow Field Sparrow Savannah Sparrow Fox Sparrow Song Sparrow Swamp Sparrow White-throated Sparrow White-crowned Sparrow Dark-eyed Junco Northern Cardinal Red-winged Blackbird Eastern Meadowlark Brown-headed Cowbird Purple Finch House Finch Pine Siskin American Goldfinch House Sparrow
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<p><u>Barn Owls and Other Program Notes</u></p> <p>It was standing room only at Ivy Creek January 13th to hear raptor biologists Lance and Jill Morrow give a gripping presentation on Barn Owls. They reported sizeable numbers of the birds in the Harrisonburg area (at least until last winter's deep snow greatly reduced the population).</p> <p>Since Barn Owls rely on sounds emitted by their prey, small rodents, to hunt</p>	<p>successfully, the owls cannot exist close to Interstate 81 since its traffic noise drowns out the sounds of the rodents.</p> <p>The Morrows have found a small population of Barn Owls near Ruckersville. Most Barn Owls in this area nest in silos. The ideal one is fifteen feet in diameter and has a four-sided hip or gable roof. If you know of a silo fitting this description, it would be worth checking. Many farmers refuse to believe they have Barn Owls, but once shown they do, become</p>	<p>quite protective of them.</p> <p>Be sure to hear our own Gretchen Gehrett speak February 10. Gretchen develops interesting relationships with the Bluebirds and other creatures that frequent the environs of her beautiful home in Ivy. That relationship will be the topic of her talk. In March, Teta Kain will speak on spiders while in April club member Jim Nix will describe his birding trip of 2010 to Colombia.</p> <p>Stauffer Miller</p>
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