



Monticello Bird Club

February 2012

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Comments from The President

Lou Tanner

Winter does not always bring discontent as last weekend's trip to Highland County made plain. For all the bitter cold, it also brought a magnificent golden eagle in a spectacularly beautiful setting on the WV border, a rough-legged hawk, nice looks at Black-Capped Chickadees, perhaps twenty-five redtails, several kestrels, good company, cold toes and fingers, and nary a mosquito or tick. That is a trade worth making any day of the week.

This non-photographer will just have to store it in the fading memory bank but the ice on the trees on the distant mountains was likewise breathtaking. There is no greater cliché than to say it looked like a postcard. But it did.

Last month's talk by Pete Myers about the newest applications of technology to the gentle art of birding brought to mind that old song in Oklahoma, the one about everything being up to date in Kansas City and how they had gone about as far as they could go. I believe I would bet on their being at least a few more surprises down the road, perhaps some of them even being pleasant ones. It would be hard to improve on last weekend's relatively low-tech excursion in my opinion. Still, when one looks at the tempting new toys out there, it might be hard indefinitely to say no.

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Ron Louque to speak Thursday, February 9th, 2012 at 7:00pm

Stauffer Miller, Programs

"To portray with paint and canvas our God given environment and our wildlife is a privilege I do not take lightly," paraphrases somewhat Ron Louque's motto when it comes to his painting, but nonetheless encapsulates what he feels when he takes a brush into his hand. Ron, a masterful painter, will be the speaker for the Monticello Bird Club meeting on February 9th.

Ron was born and grew up in Louisiana. At LSU he met and worked with noted artist-ornithologists John O'Neill and Douglas Pratt. German-Russian artist Adolf Sehring taught him techniques of working with light and composition. In 1973 Ron spent three months in Peru with O'Neill on an ornithological field research trip, a trip that found a tanager new to science.

Ron moved to Charlottesville in 1974. His paintings have appeared on 28 state

conservation stamps and in 2003 he won the federal duck stamp art contest, the most prestigious wildlife art competition in the country, for his shimmering painting of Snow Geese in flight at Chincoteague. Ron's painting of a Redhead pair graced the 2011-2012 Virginia duck stamp. His paintings have also been published in many magazines.



In his talk to the bird club, Ron will talk about what went into his paintings of Canada Geese, Wood Ducks and Gadwalls. The latter depicts a pair of Gadwall flying over a salt marsh as low sunlight gilds their wings. Come hear Ron tell the creation of an award winning waterfowl painting. If you would like to meet him beforehand, we have dinner with the speaker as usual at the Brick Oven Restaurant in Rio Hill Shopping Center at 5:30pm. Hope to see you there February 9th.

Coming up on March 8th will be a talk by Charlottesvilleian David Shoch. His main topic will be pelagic birds and birding off North Carolina. He will also speak briefly about the Belmont hawk watch. Belmont, as most of you know, is an area within the city of Charlottesville. What features of Belmont make it attractive to hawks, and perhaps other birds????

Club Activities

First Saturday Bird Walk

Saturday, February 4, 7:30am

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

Birds sing even in the coldest months of the year. Teresa Shaner will lead the walk on February 4, and will help identify the calls of some of the birds who are wintering at Ivy Creek.

Western Albemarle County Birding Trip

Saturday, February 11, 7:30am

Meet Leigh Surdukowski at 7:30am at Seminole Square in front of Giant or join the group at the Beaver Creek pull off on the dam at 8:00am. We will tour the western part of the county looking for ducks, sparrows and other winter birds.

Southern Albemarle Totier Creek Park

Saturday, February 18, 7:30am

Totier Creek Park is a park of 200 acres, about one third water, and has 3 miles of trails. It is visited during the Warren Christmas Count. To reach it, drive south from Charlottesville on Route 20 and, just north of Scottsville turn right on route 726 (James River Road). Follow this past the shopping center, and the intersections with Route 6 and with Route 737. After about a mile turn left onto Route 845 (Totier Creek Road) into the Park. We will meet at 7:30am in the parking lot to the right as you enter the park. For more information, contact Jim Nix at 434-987-3321.

Meeting Minutes, January 12, 2012

Submitted by Peggy Cornett, Secretary

President Lou Tanner welcomed a crowd of 62 members, newcomers, and guests. Newcomers included Jennifer and Karl Ackerman and John and Jeanine Holden (owner of Blue Ridge Mountain Sports). Henry Konat thanked everyone for the outpouring of sympathy he has received upon the recent death of Barbara, his wife of 51 years. Our continued support is helping him get through this particularly difficult time.

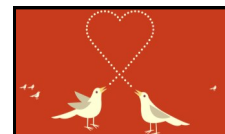
Doug Rogers gave the treasurer's report. Year to date income was \$10,615.50; expenses were \$9,507.02, leaving a balance of around \$1,000. We have exceeded our goal for membership. We now have 109 renewing and 14 new members. Dave Hogg reported on upcoming field trips. Stauffer Miller will lead the Bedford trip on Saturday and the following week will be the trip to Highland County, led by Patti Reum and Brenda Tekin. The Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel trip is slated for the first week of February. Registrations must be submitted to the CBBT authorities by January 16.

Victoria Dye, president of the Ivy Creek Foundation board, has asked MBC to sponsor an exhibit on birds for the opening of the newly renovated Ivy Creek barn in late April. A prototype panel, designed by Gropen Design, was on display in the Education building. Members were generally enthusiastic about the project.

Dan Bieker reported on the potential impact upon wildlife, especially birds, when work begins on the construction of the new dam at the Ragged Mountain Natural Area. Prior to construction, a large area of the forest will be clear cut. Dan asked MBC members to write city council urging them to delay the felling of trees until after nesting season, which runs from February to late July. There is a special concern for Prothonotary Warblers and Wood Thrush.

MBC publicity chair Gabriel Mapel announced that he completed his 2011 Junior Big Year with 436 species. Congratulations Gabriel!

Notable bird sightings were reported. Bill Leaning saw about 100 Fish Crows at his pond in Earlysville, and also a Red-breasted Nuthatch. Three Swans were seen at Green Mountain Lake but the exact identity was unknown. Henry Konat saw about 150 Black Vultures in Madison. A Lark Sparrow was reported near Stuart's Draft. Many members have been watching Northern Harriers and Short-eared Owls in Louisa County, including Dave Hogg, who also reported seeing a half dozen Pine Siskins. The Bald Eagles at Tufton Farm are on their nest, according to Peggy Cornett. A member has noticed a decline in Goldfinches at their feeders this year and wondered if others have experienced the same phenomenon. Some have while others not. Peggy Cornett has had a healthy population of Goldfinch at her feeders in Belmont, however, and wonders if perhaps they prefer the finch blend that she uses as opposed to pure thistle?



My 2011 Junior Big Year

By Gabriel Mapel, age 12

Gyr Falcon, Black-vented Oriole, King Eider, Brown Shrike, Garganey and 432 others!

It all began in early January in the Florida Everglades, where I added 24 life birds. Some common, some not. The color and majesty of the Roseate Spoonbill and the rareness of the Gray Kingbird. The Alligators that swam, the Short-tailed Hawks that flew high above. And this was only the beginning of a year that would be filled with this kind of magic the whole time.

Next up was Northern California, an adventure west. Finding Burrowing Owl at the Sacramento Airport was awesome. The chase after an ABA code -4 Brown Shrike that had found its way from Asia to a beach in northern California was one of the most exciting things of the trip. As soon as we landed in Arcata, "the shrike" was the first stop. This mega-vagrant gave great looks. The whole trip was amazing, but that was the highlight. I left with 27 more life birds.

February was more or less a "cleanup" and local chasing (Virginia) month. I ventured to Highland County and got some new birds: Pine Siskin, Golden Eagle, etc. I ventured east twice, once to Lake Anna for the Red-necked Grebe and once to Chester for the Allen's Hummingbird. I added Trumpeter Swan in Augusta County.

In early March I was in the air once again, headed for Texas. What a trip that was! We visited the coast in the Corpus Christi area and the legendary Rio Grande Valley. Here I added some 60+ life birds. A few of the most amazing highlights: Whooping Crane, Black-vented Oriole (ABA Code 5), Yellow-faced Grassquit (ABA code 4) Crimson-collared Grosbeak (ABA code 4), and Altamira Oriole.

Just the day after my dad and I got back from Texas, my mom and I went down to Roanoke to get the Western Tanager.

The rest of March and April were spent birding locally and adding quite a few migrants and hard to find winter birds.

In May I headed out on my warbler trip to Magee Marsh, Ohio. It was an awesome trip, adding not only about fifteen life warblers for me but also Philadelphia Vireo and several others. We came home via Cincinnati, Ohio in order to add the Garganey, an ABA-code 4 bird. The rare duck gave great views.

Shortly after my Ohio trip I added bird number 300, a Least Flycatcher at Pocosin Cabin in Shenandoah National Park.

In late June I headed off to Ontario. The main reason for this trip was to visit family. It was also amazing for birds, from the colorful Evening Grosbeak to the reclusive Clay-colored Sparrow and the endangered Piping Plover.

"Due to a flight delay in Los Angeles on the way home, I was able to spend a few hours birding, adding 2 more lifers"



August was the Alaska month, spending 3 weeks birding and wildlife watching there. The trip was the most incredible one of the year. We flew out on a float plane to watch the Brown Bears, we saw Caribou and other wildlife in Denali, and we saw a Golden Eagle, Merlin, Gyr Falcon, and Raven in the same binocular view! We went out birding on a boat adding life Horned and Tufted Puffins and 6 other lifers. I

added 38 new birds for the year. It was amazing.

The fall was spent more "locally". I spent hours and hours at the Rockfish Gap Hawk Watch but still added a number of year and life birds. I found a Baird's Sandpiper and a White-rumped Sandpiper at a local pond near my house in New Hope. I saw a Northern Goshawk fly over my own house. I made trips to North Carolina for Franklin's Gull, Maryland for Le Conte's Sparrow and Calliope Hummingbird, and New Jersey for Snowy Owl.

In November I traveled with the Monticello and Augusta Bird Clubs to Chincoteague Virginia and the restricted Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel Islands. Here I added 4 life birds, including: Purple Sandpiper, Great Cormorant, and Clapper Rail.

The last "big" trip of the year was to Southeastern Arizona, in early December. In AZ I added a total of 48 (!) new birds for my year, all of which but 2 were lifers. An ABA-code 4 Rufous-capped Warbler was the rarest bird. Other amazing birds: Prairie Falcon, Painted Redstart, Costa's Hummingbird, to name just a few. I added my 400th bird in Arizona. Number 400 was Brewer's Blackbird. Due to a flight delay in Los Angeles on the way home, I was able to spend a few hours birding, adding 2 more lifers: Herrmann's Gull and Clark's Grebe.

To end out the year, I returned to Maryland for Black-headed Gull and Black-headed Grosbeak. I spent the very last days of the year at Cape May, New Jersey adding 5 new birds including my life King Eider, a majestically wondrous adult male!

My final total on this amazing year was 437 species.

2011 Charlottesville Christmas Bird Count

By Jenny Gaden

The 2011 Charlottesville Christmas Bird Count took place on Sunday, December 18, a mild day with temperatures rising into the high 40s. The pleasant weather may partly explain why many people found that their counts were relatively low in comparison to other years. We had 43 people in the field in 19 parties and our total species count was 75 (that's not official until the National Audubon Society affirms the data). By way of comparison, the 2010 count yielded 79 species with 47 people in the field and a high temperature of 39% F. As usual Nancy O'Brien and Francis Fife generously opened their house to us for a potluck gathering at the end of the day.

A list of the species recorded follows. You will notice that we have a new species for our count, the *Selasphorus* sp. Hummingbird (pending acceptance of the Rare Bird Form submission). This bird has been coming regularly to backyard feeders since November 11, 2011. The owners of the property have asked that I not reveal the location because they do not wish to deal with hordes of visitors.

Pied-billed Grebe	Great Horned Owl	Carolina Wren	Red-winged Blackbird
Great Blue Heron	Barred Owl	Golden-crowned Kinglet	Eastern Meadowlark
Black Vulture	<i>Selasphorus</i> (sp.)	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	Common Grackle
Turkey Vulture	Hummingbird	Eastern Bluebird	Brown-headed Cowbird
Canada Goose	Belted Kingfisher	Hermit Thrush	Purple Finch
Wood Duck	Red-headed Woodpecker	American Robin	House Finch
Gadwall	Red-bellied Woodpecker	Gray Catbird	Pine Siskin
Mallard	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	Northern Mockingbird	
Hooded Merganser	Downy Woodpecker	Brown Thrasher	
Bald Eagle	Hairy Woodpecker	European Starling	
Sharp-shinned Hawk	Northern Flicker	Cedar Waxwing	
Cooper's Hawk	Pileated Woodpecker	Yellow-rumped Warbler	
Red-shouldered Hawk	Eastern Phoebe	Eastern Towhee	
Red-tailed Hawk	Blue Jay	Field Sparrow	
American Kestrel	American Crow	Savannah Sparrow	
Wilson's Snipe	Fish Crow	Fox Sparrow	
American Woodcock	Common Raven	Song Sparrow	
Wild Turkey	Carolina Chickadee	Swamp Sparrow	
Killdeer	Tufted Titmouse	White-throated Sparrow	
Ring-billed Gull	White-breasted Nuthatch	White-crowned Sparrow	
Rock Pigeon	Brown Creeper	Dark-eyed Junco	
Mourning Dove	Winter Wren	Northern Cardinal	
Eastern Screech-Owl			



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. Membership is \$15 per year for individuals, \$25 for a family. Membership year is July 1—June 30. The editor of the MBC Newsletter welcomes submissions including articles, photographs and notices. **DEADLINE for each issue is 9:00AM on the 4th Thursday of the month.**



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