



Monticello Bird Club

February 2014 Newsletter

Website: www.monticellobirdclub.org

Volume 28

Issue 6

Facebook: [Monticello Bird Club](#)

MBC Monthly Meeting—Thursday, February 13th at 7:00pm

Comments from the President

Doug Rogers

How is bird ID like using a keyboard on your computer? Let's talk about it.

To take your birding to the next level, you have to engage all of your senses plus some "higher order" mental processes as well. I am not referring to learning more spring and fall plumage colors or more calls and songs. I am referring to a way of thinking about birding called the GISS system, which engages all of your knowledge, all of your senses and your intuitive processes as well.

I am just now beginning to learn to bird by a variation of the "GISS" system. This is an acronym that stands for **G**eneral **I**mpression **S**hape and **S**ize. It is a different way of thinking about identification; you use all of your knowledge about plumage and calls; in addition you pay attention to where the bird is (it's not a swamp sparrow if it's in dry, upland woods); what season of the year it is (a tern in VA Beach in winter is probably a Forster's); what is its shape and size – big as a crow, small as a kinglet, shaped like a robin; is it actively feeding or just perched; how does it fly – level, flapping, undulating, etc? Your brain will synthesize all of this information and subconsciously reach a conclusion about the ID.

Remember when you first started to use a keyboard? You consciously thought "The letter 'J' is under my right index finger." Do you consciously think that now? Do you know where any of the letters are now or do you just type using that "higher order" part of your brain? My guess is that you are not even aware of where any given letter on the keyboard is any more – and your fingers just fly over the keys. I have seen experienced birders move into birding by the GISS system; when they did, their ID became spontaneous, fast and (to me) amazing.

I am working on it – success with it will only come with much more experience in the field. I'm looking forward to moving to that level where I can do bird ID as fast (and as accurately) as I do keyboarding.

Good birding!



Speaker of the Month: Julie Maillon - "Vultures"

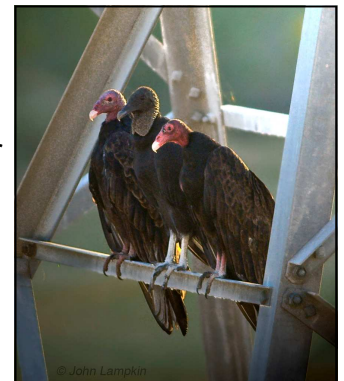
Stauffer Miller

Julie Mallon will be with us February 13th to present a program on vultures. A native of Pennsylvania and graduate of Boston University, Julie is presently a graduate student at West Virginia University.

Our speaker has had a long-held interest in raptors, an interest now extended to another soaring group, the vultures. She is especially interested in how vultures soar on cloudy days when thermals are absent. She will also talk about the features of vulture body and wing structure that enable these birds to soar. We often see vultures flying overhead. What is the purpose of their flight and how do they do it? Come find out February 13th.

For our March 13th program, John Lampkin will be with us. John's interest is in macro photography of butterflies and other insects. He is also a musical composer for his woodwind quartet. Another of his diverse interests is the construction of crossword puzzles for the *New York Times*. John comes to us through the recommendation of Doug Rogers and Joanne Bricker, who met him on a natural history trip.

As usual, we take our speakers to dinner before they present their programs. Come to the Brick Oven Restaurant at 5:30 pm on February 13th to dine and converse with Julie Mallon. Hope to see you there.



Three Politicos
© John Lampkin (our March Speaker of the Month)

First Saturday Bird Walk

February 1, 7:30am

On the first Saturday of each month (for twenty years!), the Monticello Bird Club offers a bird walk, led by a Club member, at Ivy Creek Natural Area. Participants gather in the parking lot at 7:30am. Birders of all levels are welcome.

Walk Leaders Winter-Spring 2014

Feb. 1...Teresa Shaner

Jan. 4 Jim Nix
Mar. 1 Peter Dutnell
Apr. 5 Janet Paisley
May 3 ... Stauffer Miller
June 7 ... David White

Birding Tidbits

...about a bird you might find on the Bird Walk at Ivy Creek in February
by Jenny Gaden

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker

The Yellow-bellied Sapsucker is another bird that resides here only in the winter. It is not a bird that draws a lot of attention to itself as it forages quietly on tree trunks, probing the bark for insects. The sapsucker is larger than the Downy Woodpecker but smaller than the Red-bellied Woodpecker. When it is foraging it is easy to spot with the white stripe on the side of its body, seen in flight as a white bar on its wing. The red crown and chin of the male are diagnostic; the female's chin is white. You have to look pretty hard to see the yellow on its belly. In the spring when the sap begins to run the sapsucker drills holes called sap wells in spiral rings around tree trunks. When the sap oozes out, the woodpecker eats it as well as the insects that are trapped in the sticky nutrient. Listen for a nasal mewing call to find the bird as it visits a variety of trees at Ivy Creek.



Yellow-bellied Sapsucker
Photo by Dick Daniels
Wikimedia Commons

Field Trips

Organized by John Davis

Shenandoah Valley

Saturday, February 8, 8:00am
Led by Gabriel Mapel



Gabriel will lead us on a trip to his home area, the Shenandoah Valley, in pursuit of various ducks and perhaps Snow Geese and Tundra Swans. We will tour around Augusta and perhaps southern Rockingham or northern Rockbridge Counties and stop at lakes in pursuit of these waterfowl.

Directions: Meet at 8:00am at the Inn at Afton Parking Lot (top of Afton Mountain, the site of the Rockfish Gap Hawk Watch). We will carpool from there. Please note that this is expected to be an all-day trip, until approximately 3 or 4pm. Those who would like a shorter day may carpool together and head back earlier. There will not be a lunch stop except perhaps briefly at a sandwich shop, so packing a bag lunch is advised.

Dutch Gap

Saturday, February 15 7:30am
Led by
Peter Dutnell and John Holden



Peter and John will lead us on a trip to Dutch Gap Conservation Area in Chester, VA. Dutch Gap is known to be an excellent place for waterfowl.

Directions: Meet at 7:30 am at Starbucks in the Giant Food parking lot on Pantops and carpool. It would be advisable to bring spotting scopes if available. A bag lunch or snack might also be a good idea, since this trip will last much of the day. If the weather is looking questionable, contact John Davis at jbtdavis@gmail.com.

Photo Credits

Snow Geese by Doug Rogers (top left)

Redhead by Eve Gaige (bottom left) Eve's photo is currently featured on the home page of our website: www.monticellobirdclub.org

Membership Notes

by Lesslie Crowell

To date, membership data are as follows:

Individual	74
Contributing	14
Family	29
Sponsor	12
Lifetime	5
<hr/>	
Total	134



This total includes 30 new members. And, speaking of new members, MBC extends a warm welcome to the newest of those members.

Eleanor Butner
Steve Plog
John Wilkinson

Finally, congratulations to our newest Lifetime Member, Jim Hill, for his thirteen years of outstanding service as Chair of our Birdseed Sale.

Treasurer's Notes

by Maynard K. Davis

We now know the results of our birdseed sale (profit of \$436 over budget) and of our membership drive (134 members, two more than our goal).

These positive results, plus some generous donations and newsletter savings, will allow us to beat budget for the year. Thanks for everyone's support! The Board is meeting in late January to consider possible new projects for the budget surplus.



MBC Minutes, January 9, 2014

Submitted by Peggy Cornett, Secretary

President Doug Rogers welcomed the gathering of 56 members, guests, and two newcomers and asked for interesting bird sighting reports. Gabriel Mapel saw the Snowy Owl in Rockingham County. He also reported seeing a Trumpeter Swan and Greater White-fronted Goose. Carol Hill shared that experts are saying northern bird species are migrating six weeks early this year. Nancy Newman reported that the Snowy Owl has moved to a construction site and was seen perched atop a building. A Red-shouldered Hawk was observed behind the Giant at Pantops Shopping Center digging a snake out of the ground and eating it. A Ruby-crowned Kinglet, which had flown into a window and died, was passed around. On the January "First Saturday Bird Walk" at Ivy Creek, 17 Tundra Swans were observed.

Newsletter editor Joanne Bricker recommended a new, free bird identification App from Cornell called "Merlin." She also asked for more articles from members on their personal birding experiences.



Maynard Davis reported that our finances were in good shape. The club now has an excess of funds for programs and donations, thanks to the birdseed sale profits.

Lesslie Crowell reported that, to date, the club has surpassed the budget for memberships with 132 current members, including 28 new memberships. She brought some flyers for Buteo Books to share.

Birdseed Sale chair Jim Hill has decided to step down as coordinator after a very successful run. On behalf of the entire Monticello Bird Club, Doug Rogers presented Jim with a certificate awarding him lifetime membership "in recognition for his thirteen years of service as chair of the Birdseed Sale, with sincere gratitude from all our club members." Before taking on the Birdseed Sale program, Jim also served as vice-president under Jennifer Gaden, John Zimmerman, and Stauffer Miller.

John Davis gave the field trip report. Leigh Surdokowski's excursion to western Albemarle County on December 21 recorded 36 species. The January 11 trip to Highland County was contingent on the weather. Teresa Shaner's trip to Louisa County on the 18th promises Short-eared Owls and Northern Harriers. Gabriel Mapel has an all-day trip to the Shenandoah Valley on February 8 and Peter Dutnell is leading a field trip to Dutch Gap on February 15th. Gabriel Mapel reported that the Blue Ridge Young Birders Club field trip to Dutch Gap will be on January 11. The 2014 calendars designed by the BRYBC club members are being sold for \$10 each as a fund raiser to support their trips and programs.



The Joy of Birding ... a personal sharing of stories  **and photos**  **by MBC members**

Dear Readers,

As no one has submitted a personal **narrative** this month, let's widen horizons for the future. They say a picture's worth a thousand words, so how about making this your column to share a personal narrative **or** a treasured **photo** (and caption), as a **visual record** of a **special birding moment**? Please send your narrative or photo submission(s) to me (mbcnlediitor@gmail.com) by the 20th of the month. Don't be shy; be generous! We look forward to vicariously enjoying your special visual and verbal birding moments. Thanks so much.

Many MBCer's have been in hot pursuit of this winter's irruptive Snowy Owls. Here are a few shots taken by some successful pursuers with lenses. (The whimsical, fictitious captions are mine; the credited photographers are completely blameless.)



On cornfield post near Route 11 and I81, Mt. Crawford
By Doug Rogers Jan 2014



Checking out some lighting, high above the many roaring tractor trailers
By Nancy Newman Jan 2014



Had enough of this alien habitat. Time for a nap!
© Marshall Faintich Dec 2013
For a treasure trove of wildlife photos & more, here's a link to Marshall's website.
www.symbolicmessengers.com



Bodie Island Lighthouse and obliging Tri-colored Heron (left)
Outer Banks, NC
By Doug Rogers Dec 2013

ALC Copies Inc.
1170 Emmet St.
295-2679
[A Local Choice](http://www.alccopies.com)
alccopies3@embarqmail.com



ALC Copies Inc., a locally owned small business, generously supports our MBC Bird Club by printing our newsletters at no cost to us.
For your personal printing needs, please choose ALC!



Monticello Bird Club
P.O. Box 4362
Charlottesville, Virginia 22905

Visit our website at
www.monticellobirdclub.org
for club and membership information.

The **Club meets** on the **second Thursday** of each month, September through June, at the **Education Building of the Ivy Creek Natural Area** on Earlysville Rd, 1/2 mile north of Hydraulic Rd.

The editor of the **MBC Newsletter** welcome submissions, including articles, photographs and notices. **DEADLINE** for each issue is **9:00AM on the 20th** of the month.

President	Doug Rogers	doug5996@gmail.com	434-409-8156
Vice President	Kathy Sudduth	kas3m2@embarqmail.com	434-973-0690
Secretary	Peggy Cornett	pcornett@monticello.org	434-984-9816
Treasurer	Maynard K. Davis	davismk@sbcglobal.net	434-205-4268
Field Trips	John Davis	jdmath1@gmail.com	434-296-7613
Speakers	Stauffer Miller	stauffer@seepub.com	434-296-5505
Publicity	Gabriel Mapel	birdmangabriel@yahoo.com	540-363-5035
Hospitality	Priscilla Kingston	kingston@cstone.net	434-293-5173
Newsletter	Joanne Bricker	mbcnlediitor@gmail.com	434-825-2676
Membership	Lesslie Crowell	lessliecrowell@aol.com	434-295-1395
Birdseed Sale	Jim Hill	jimcarhill@comcast.net	434-975-6523