



Monticello Bird Club

June 2006

Volume 20, Number 10

Travel Writer's Top Five Hotspots

I asked my friend Mel White to select his favorite birding spots. Mel writes for 'National Geographic Traveler' and has authored several books, including 'The National Geographic Guide to Birdwatching Sites.'

-editor

I, as much as anybody, enjoy visiting the Top Two Hotspots of American birding—the Texas coast and southeastern Arizona—and if asked to rank my favorite destinations, I'd put them at the head of the list. That's a given. But variety is the crushed red pepper on the pizza of life, and I (again, just like everybody else) have my own personal favorite birding areas. The following places bring back great memories of birding trips. When people ask about destinations, I say, "Have you considered ...?" and I give a quick description of why I like them. Something like this:
1. **Big Bend National Park.** A huge, remote park, geologically fascinating and visually striking, encompassing vast expanses of desert, the 7,000-foot-plus Chi-

sos Mountains, and riparian woods along the Rio Grande River. Birding highlights here range from Gray and

Zone-tailed hawks to Elf Owls to Black-capped and Gray Vireos to Colima Warblers to many rare strays from Mexico. Better be prepared to drive long distances and hike to see it all—but a trip here in late April will be something you will



Elf Owl. Photo: www.enature.com

never forget.

Meet June 8th for Potluck Supper

Please join us for the last meeting of the season...it's our 20th Annual Potluck Supper. Members are urged to bring a favorite dish to share on June 8 at the Ivy Creek Natural Area's Education Building. This year, in an effort to save the trees and landfills, please bring your own plate, utensils, and a glass. MBC will provide lemonade.

WE'LL START AT 6:30 PM

The next meeting of the Monticello Bird Club will be September 14. The newsletter editor "retires" with this issue but new editor, Amy Gilmer, will provide a fresh perspective and boundless energy when she debuts with the September issue.

Comments From the President

As we come to the end of our 2005-06 season it is appropriate to thank the many people who brought us the Monticello Bird Club this year. Bob Gilges is stepping down after seven years as treasurer. He maintained the financial books staying on top of every penny earned and spent. With his good work Henry Konat will take over from him with relative ease. This newsletter is the work of Nancy King. Never frazzled as the deadlines loomed, she has put out a lively and informative publication for three years. She got help from Brenda Tekin, bird photographer magnifica, and Bill Leaning, garden guru grandissimo. It is also Brenda who brought you the e-version the newsletter. We are grateful to Amy Gilmer that

she is willing to carry the newsletter forward. Peggy Cornett kept detailed records of all our meetings, and Ken Klotz kept our website up to date. Howard Davis once again organized our successful birdseed sale, and all the publicity for our many events was in the capable hands of Ellen Dudley. Dede Austin took on the chair of the nominating committee for a second year in a row. Robyn Kells and Bob Gilges together kept the membership list up to date, and Robyn sent out the newsletters, getting them to you the weekend before the monthly meeting. John Zimmerman and Lois Gebhardt arranged our many and interesting field trips, and

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Migration: A Gallery Opens

Inspired by the movie *Winged Migration*, Laura Jones and her husband have opened an art gallery just off Charlottesville's Downtown Mall on the corner of 5th & Water Streets. The name is *Migration: A Gallery*, because they love and admire birds. In their first exhibition, they featured several artists who create beautiful images of birds, both realistic and more abstract.

Starting June 2, *Migration* will feature painter Suzanne Howes-Stevens' ethereal works in oil on maps for the first time in Charlottesville. (See photo.) They will also be exhibiting the work of master metal artist Jim Martin. The gallery's mission, say Jones, is "to discover, promote and place art which transforms the viewer through the work's exploration of our changing and evolving relationships with nature, each other and our own souls." She adds, "Figuratively, living with a piece of art you love can take your soul on a journey away from the hectic pace of modern life each time you see it and leave you with a pleasant memory even when you are away from home, or in a different home." You can learn more about *Migration: A Gallery* at www.migrationgallery.com.

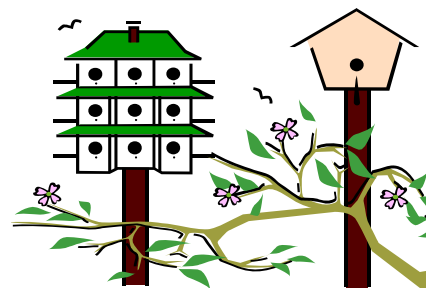


Comments...

(continued)

Pat and Frank Wilczek and Ron Kingston brought us the great speakers that have entertained and educated us each month. Ron and Pricilla Kingston, with help from Jim and Carol Hill, set up the name tag table, oversaw refreshments and helped clean up and close down the education building after each meeting. A hearty "hip, hip hooray!" and many thanks to these good folks. Without them – no Monticello Bird Club. See you at the Potluck Supper, otherwise enjoy the birds of summer and see you in September!

—Jennifer Gaden, president



Bird Club Key Info

The Monticello Bird Club normally meets at 7:30 p.m. 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 September issue is August 25.** Please email information to Nancy King at turnermtn@mindspring.com or send to P.O. Box 22, Ivy, VA 22945.

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Please visit our website at
www.ecoventures-travel.com/mbc

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Consider a Field Trip for Fun and Fitness

Southeastern Albemarle Thursday, June 1

Stauffer Miller will be our fearless leader on this mid-week foray into Southeastern Albemarle County. We'll meet at 8:00am at Woodbridge Market Grocery Store at the intersection of Rte 620 (Rolling Road) and Rte 618 (Jefferson Mill Road) for roadside birding. This loop has a nice variety of fields, scrub and woodlands. There are no restroom facilities but coffee and snacks are available at the grocery store. Stauffer can transport three people from Charlottesville. Contact: Stauffer Miller at 296-5505 or stauffer@seepub.com.

Ivy Creek Natural Area Saturday, July 1

Join Leigh Surdukowski at 7:30 am for the First Saturday Bird Walk. Meet in the parking lot of the Ivy Creek Natural Area for a leisurely stroll around the grounds. We have some extra binoculars for beginners.



Veery by James Coe from website www.birds.cornell.edu

John Zimmerman Reports South River Falls & Cowbane Prairie

The South River Falls bird hike on May 13 provided good looks at yellow lady-slippers and trilliums, and some birds too. We all got a good view of the Cerulean Warbler, the target species, even before we started down the fire road. But probably the best bird of the day was a Veery preening in the sun after taking a bath in the stream while a Winter Wren and Louisiana Waterthrush sang nearby. The May 20th trip, along the Blue Ridge down to Cowbane Pasture, resulted in a dozen species of warblers - including a Yellow-breasted Chat at our first stop across from the golf course, a cerulean and blackpoll along the crest of the mountain, and a Yellow Warbler at Cowbane. Also we got an excellent view of the White-eyed Vireo at Cowbane as well as singing Willow Flycatchers. And the weather on both trips was delightful!

MBC Minutes for May 11, 2006

President Jenny Gaden presided; 33 people attended. The meeting began with a presentation by the Stone Robinson Elementary School's 4th grade class that received a bird feeding kit from the Monticello Bird Club in the fall of 2005. Seven students, with their teacher Mrs. Merritt, gave a PowerPoint presentation of photographs taken over the season as the students read excerpts from their diary of observations.

Treasurer's report: Bob Gilges reported that, to date, the club's net profit is \$782. Bob introduced Henry Konat, who is being nominated to replace Bob as treasurer.

Field Trips: John Zimmerman reported the "Birding Before Work" walks at Observatory Hill during the first week of May were a good experience, with six to twelve showing up for each. John reviewed the upcoming trips to South River Falls and River View Park and

noted that Leigh Surdukowski would be leading the "First Saturday Bird Walk" at Ivy Creek in June. The field trip committee will meet in mid-July to make plans for the 2006-07 season.

Nominating Committee: Dede Austin proposed the following slate of officers for 2006-2007: Jenny Gaden for President, Jim Hill for Vice President, Henry Konat for Treasurer, Peggy Cornett for Secretary, and Amy Gilmer for Newsletter Editor. A vote was taken and the slate was elected.

Announcements: Jenny announced a binoculars workshop on May 27th, to be held at Ivy Creek Natural Area, where members are invited to bring their binoculars and have the opportunity to share and discuss the pros and cons of a various brands and models. Jenny discussed **Virginia's Roving Ravens** group, which will participate in the World Series of Birding. The event, sponsored by the New Jersey Audubon

Society, is a 24-hour birding marathon, which raises money for conservation efforts. The Roving Ravens represent the Virginia Society of Ornithology and the money raised is used to fund the organizations publications. Jenny passed around a pledge sheet asking for donations.

Peggy Cornett invited everyone to the **Thomas Jefferson Center for Historic Plants' Annual Open House** at its Tufton Farm headquarters and nursery facility on May 27 from noon until 4:00 p.m. See www.monticello.org, for more information.

The **June meeting of the bird club** will be a picnic at Ivy Creek Natural Area for the final meeting of the season. Jenny asked that members bring their own plates, cups, and utensils. The **May meeting is "Members Night"** and the evening's presentations featured PowerPoint and slide images taken by bird club members.

—Peggy Cornett, secretary

Gardening for Wildlife: Virginia Creeper

Virginia creeper, *Parthenocissus quinquefolia*, is a climbing vine which can grow up to 50 feet on a suitable tree trunk or wall. It can also stand alone, sending out runners, and quickly provide ground cover. Virginia creeper is very fast growing and needs to be planted in an area where it will not choke out other desirable shrubs. It can be confused with Poison Ivy but, unlike the “leaves of three, let it be!” the Virginia creeper has five elliptical leaflets per leaf.

In the summer, Virginia creeper has insignificant clusters of small yellowish-green flowers borne on long stems. The fruit clusters are blue-black berries about ¼ inch in diameter maturing in late summer. The berries are a favorite food of many birds, including Eastern Bluebird, Northern Cardinal, Carolina Chickadee, Downy Woodpecker, Pileated Woodpecker, Gray Catbird, Great Crested Flycatcher, Northern Mockingbird, American Robin and Tufted Titmouse.

When mature, Virginia creeper can produce a dense tangle providing wonderful shelter. We have observed chicka-

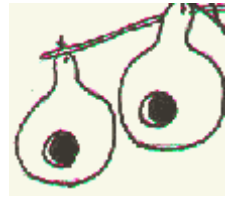


Virginia Creeper. Photo: agriculture.purdue.edu

dees, mockingbirds and warblers, all using the vines as shelter. Virginia creeper also provides a wonderful display of deep red leaves in the fall to add to our enjoyment of this season. Be careful as Virginia creeper can become a pest because it spreads rapidly. It will grow easily in shade where most other plants won't thrive so it is worth a try. The birds will thank you!

—Bill Leaning

Purple Martin Field Day



The 12th Annual Purple Martin Field Day is set for Saturday June 24 this year at the farm of Merle & Lance Wood in Louisa County. From 9:30am until noon you can learn how to establish a colony of Purple Martins, including information on housing requirements and protection devices. There will also be a short nesting box trail tour, featuring nest boxes for different species of birds.

Directions: From Charlottesville, take I-64 East to Exit 136 (Boswell's Tavern). Travel north on US 15 for 3.5 miles until it intersects with Rte 640. The farm is located near the intersection of US 15 and Rte 640 and you will see signs directing you to the Purple Martin Field Day.

For more information, contact Ron & Priscilla Kingston at 434-293-5173 or kingston@cstone.net.

Hotspots (cont.)

2. North-central Colorado. Rocky Mountain National Park is my favorite place on earth, period. Birds are part of the reason—I could take you to the exact spot I saw my first White-tailed Ptarmigan or American Three-toed Woodpecker or Brown-capped Rosy Finch—plus I've never seen anyplace more gorgeous. And it's just a quick trip to the Pawnee National Grassland for Ferruginous Hawk, Mountain Plover, Brewer's/Cassin's sparrows, and McCown's/Chestnut-collared Longspurs.

3. Northwestern Minnesota and North Dakota. I made my first trip here on assignment and, frankly, I wasn't too thrilled beforehand. As soon as I'd spent some time in the area, though, I started making plans to return. You can begin in the boreal forest of Minnesota, looking for Spruce

Grouse, Great Gray Owl, Black-backed Woodpecker, Gray Jay, and Connecticut Warbler. Move to the prairies on the western edge of the state for Greater Prairie-Chicken, Sandhill Crane, Upland Sandpiper, and Marbled Godwit. Continue westward into North Dakota, where several national wildlife refuges offer the chance to see Sharp-tailed Grouse, Gray Partridge, Ferruginous Hawk, Piping Plover, Sprague's Pipit, Grasshopper/Baird's/Le Conte's sparrows, and Chestnut-collared Longspur.

4. Southwestern Louisiana. They don't call this “Louisiana's outback” for nothing. Cameron Parish is the state's largest “county” and has one stoplight. The Peveto Woods Sanctuary, just yards from the Gulf of Mexico, can teem with migrants during a spring fallout. Three big national wildlife refuges—Sabine, Cameron Prairie, and Lacassine—all offer ways to see wetland birds, from Roseate Spoonbill and Black-bellied Whistling-Duck to rails and Marsh

Wren. The recent establishment of the America's Wetland Birding Trail means that good brochures are available to guide newcomers to the best birding locations.

5. The Texas Hill Country. There's something really appealing about the landscape of the rugged country west of Austin and San Antonio. Many western birds are at the limit of their range here, including Scaled Quail, Ladder-backed Woodpecker, Black Phoebe, Western Scrub-Jay, Verdin, Canyon Wren, Curve-billed Thrasher, Black-throated Sparrow, Scott's Oriole, and Lesser Goldfinch. Green Kingfisher is regular along some of the clear streams. The two specialties of the region, Black-capped Vireo and Golden-cheeked Warbler, can be found in breeding season, the latter fairly easily, the former less so. Several excellent state parks and natural areas provide plenty of chances to get out and look for birds. Among my favorites: Lost Maples and Pedernales Falls state parks and Hill Country State Natural Area.

—Mel White