



# Monticello Bird Club

March 2012

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## Comments from The President

Lou Tanner

It has often occurred to me to wonder just what went through the minds of Civil War soldiers as they were tramping around the countryside of Virginia back in the 1860s. The excitement and fear that would have been forever present must have been matched as well by sheer boredom and a desire to find other forms of amusement. Though most undoubtedly thought little about mockingbirds and woodpeckers, apparently a few actually did. One of these was a Charles (formerly Karl) Bendire, a German-born Union soldier who was promoted for gallant service at the massive cavalry engagement of Trevilian's Station in June 1864, just a few miles east of Charlottesville.

Whether his interest in birds was piqued by the sight of some gliding meadowlark during his time in Louisa County or whether it was the flying bullets that occupied his mind is impossible to say for sure although the latter seems likely. At any rate, by 1872 he was stationed out in Arizona Territory and noting the glorious birds of the Southwest. One, the earthly remains of which he sent back to the Smithsonian, was a thrasher that now bears his name. Bendire's Thrasher will never get to appreciate Virginia in June but somehow there is a family connection. Save for the terminology of hawks and doves, one doesn't generally speak of war and birds in the same breath but something turned Charles Bendire into a birder.



Bendire's Thrasher

## Inside This Issue

Club Activities	2
◆ First Saturday Bird Walk	
◆ Woodcock Walk	
◆ Licking Hole Creek	
Meeting Minutes	2
Eastern Shore Report	3
Western Albemarle Field Trip Report	4
Monticello Bird Club Information	4

**Dinner With The Speaker**  
**March 8th at 5:30pm**  
**Brick Oven Restaurant**  
**Everyone Welcome**  
**(Pay Your Own Tab)**

## David Shoch to speak Thursday, March 8th, 2012 at 7:00pm

Stauffer Miller, Programs

David Shoch of Charlottesville went on his first sea-birding (pelagic) trip in January 1988. That trip, out of Virginia Beach, hooked him on that type of birding and since then he has explored waters off Tasmania, Peru, Indonesia and the east and west coasts of North America in quest of ocean birds. His co-authored article on the Band-rumped Storm Petrel complex off North Carolina was published in American Birds magazine in 2010. A frequent leader on Brian Patteson's pelagic birding trips out of Hatteras, North Carolina, his program will focus on birds seen on those trips. Come take a trip out to sea on March 8th without leaving the comforts of Charlottesville.

David will also speak briefly during his talk about raptor movements east of the Blue Ridge. Find out what migrating raptors fly right over Charlottesville.

For our April 12th meeting, Ann Harmon of Sperryville and the Virginia Beekeeper's Association will discuss the Birds and the Bees, but not in the usual sense! Rather, she will be talking about how birds benefit from bees, and what non-beekeepers can do to help bees. Bumble bees, carpenter bees, wasps, yellow jackets and other relatives of honey bees will be part of her talk as well.

Don't forget Members Night May 10th. This is your chance to show a few of your own images of trips you have done using power point, old-fashioned slides or whatever format.



Band-rumped Storm Petrel

## Monticello Bird Club

### Club Activities

#### First Saturday Bird Walk

**Saturday, March 3, 7:30am**

On the first Saturday of each month, the Monticello Bird Club offers a bird walk at Ivy Creek Natural Area at 7:30am. 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 found here. Jim Nix, a birder with extensive experience at the Natural Area, will lead this walk on March 3.



#### Woodcock Walk, Western Albemarle County

**Saturday, March 10, 6:00pm**

Join field trip leader Jenny Gaden as we look for American Woodcocks putting on their aerial display. We had good luck at this site last year. Bring a flashlight to help you since it will be dusk. Meet at the parking area across from the Piedmont Store on Route 810, just after Garth Road (Route 614) joins it in White Hall. We will meet there at 6:00 pm and carpool the short distance to the woodcock fields on Clark Road. PLEASE contact Jenny if you plan to attend. jengaden@gmail.com or 434-293-6275

#### Licking Hole Creek

**Saturday, March 24, 7:30am**

Licking Hole Creek is an interesting birding area, with the trail beside the pond offering a rich variety of habitat. The trip last year at this time, led by Peter Brask, was very rewarding. Peter will again guide us this year, on Saturday, March 24. Meet Peter in the parking lot of the Mudhouse on the Square in Crozet, at 7:30am. Please call Peter at 434-823-2363 for additional information.

### Monticello Bird Club Meeting Minutes, February 9, 2012

Submitted by Peggy Cornett, Secretary

President Lou Tanner opened the meeting by welcoming newcomers. Thea Donaldson, Debbie Donley, and Janice Edwards were introduced. There were 32 members and visitors at the meeting.

Carol Hill reminded us that members are welcome to join the speaker's dinner at 5:30pm at the Brick Oven prior to the meeting.

Doug Rogers gave the treasurer's report. Check book balance on 1 July 2011 was \$10,609.79. Receipts to date: + \$10,758.50; disbursements to date: (- \$10,872.18); check book balance on 9 Feb. 2012: \$10,496.11. Anticipated disbursements to the end of the fiscal year (6/30/12) are approximately \$600.00. Anticipated receipts to the end of the fiscal year will be minimal. We are still essentially on budget for the year. However, we have just made a \$1,000 disbursement to the Ivy Creek Foundation to sponsor a display in Natural Area's Barn Restoration Project. This disbursement was not in our budget, but was approved by our Board. The Board deemed it a worthy cause that may pay some dividends for the club in terms of membership and as an educational tool. By the end of our fiscal year we will have an excess of disbursements over receipts of approximately \$700.

Jim Nix gave the field trips report for Dave Hogg. Leah Surdukowski is leading a trip to western parts of Albemarle County to see waterfowl and possibly eagles. Peter Brask saw an immature Bald Eagle and a Hooded Merganser at Lickinghole Creek. Jim Nix and Dave Hogg will lead a trip to Tottier Creek Park in Southern Albemarle County. There is a large lake on the site where Jim has seen Black Ducks, Mallards, etc. He thinks he also saw a Warbling Vireo this week. Lou reported that a Red-headed Woodpecker was seen at a Louisa County bird feeder.

Other sightings during this past month were reported. Nancy Newman saw nine Northern Harriers in Louisa County but did not see the Short-eared Owls that have been reported by others recently. Jim Hill noticed that some logs had been debarked by two Pileated Woodpeckers and two Downy Woodpeckers. Bill Leaning reported a Pileated Woodpecker and about 100 Robins that stayed around their house for about five days. During the field trip to Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel last Saturday many birds were observed, including 1,000s of Gannets flying to the Southeast. They also saw a Red-breasted Merganser; about 15 Harbor Seals and a Gray Seal at Island 2, and they watched four Humpback Wales. Carol Hill talked about having Juncos at a window sill feeder and wondered if that was unusual. Apparently, they are not necessarily ground feeders; they just like to feed on a flat surface. Joanne Bricker went on the VSO field trip to the NC Outer Banks and saw American Bittern, Virginia Rail, and a Razorbill. Mary Janet Fowler saw several Oriole nests at Chris Green Lake made of fishing line. According to Jerry Via, who spoke on climate change, the wintering ranges have moved north 200-400 miles. More about birds and climate can be found at [www.audubon.org](http://www.audubon.org)

## Seals, Whales, and Birds, Oh MY! - February 4 CBBT/Eastern Shore Report

By Brenda Tekin

By 9am our group of eleven were headed north on the CBBT under Police escort, encouraged by the good weather and hopeful for good birding from the restricted islands 2, 3, and 4. What a spectacular day it turned out to be! Although waterfowl species were low, what we experienced will not soon be forgotten! First stop was on island 2 and as we emerged from our vehicles we were immediately treated to thousands upon thousands of Northern Gannet flying in and feeding, dive-bombing to disappear below the surface. There were massive swarms, circling and nose diving into the channel like swirling clouds of chimney swifts dropping down into a chimney. As the gannets hit the water, we could see the water splashing upwards and with hundreds hitting the water at same time it made for a truly remarkable sight. On several visits to Virginia Beach in mid-March I have observed thousands of Northern Gannet feeding offshore. However, this was by far the most incredible display of Northern Gannet and to be right there among them, all close and personal like...

Just when we thought we could tear ourselves away, we observed a Nimitz-class aircraft carrier heading out to sea, escorted by military helicopters and US Coastguard. As you might image, our group of 11 standing out there on the island with binoculars, cameras in hand, and spotting scopes drew the attention of the heavily armed helicopters! After a distant pass by one, the second copter came down the bay heading straight toward us and we knew we were being scoped out. The copter swung in low around the end of the island where we were standing and the pilot tilted the copter to acknowledge our presence. A few photographed the close-in copter, some of us waved and went back to observing and photographing the USS George H.W. Bush (CVN-77) as it continued through the channel!

Next stop -- island 3 -- and it is here where we were treated to at least 25 Harbor Seals, many of them stretched out on the rocks basking in the warming sunshine. One behemoth seal emerged out of the water, at least twice the size of the Harbors. Although they have been observed in Virginia waters, the Gray Seal, an adult female, was a first Virginia sighting for the folks in our group. In addition to the seals, we observed several birds including Red-breasted Merganser, Red-throated Loon, White-winged Scoter, flyby female Harlequin Duck, and more gannets.

As we were loading vehicles to head to island 4 someone hollered "whale!" That got folks scrambling and several got to see very distant split second glimpses. We were hopeful we would have a better observation from island #4.



Photo of Seals by Brenda Tekin

[www.birdsofvirginia.com](http://www.birdsofvirginia.com)

And, indeed there be whales! This winter there has been an unprecedented showing of Humpback Whales off the coastal waters of Virginia close to Virginia Beach and we were very fortunate to observe at least one as it actively fed close to the surface. It was fun tracking the "whale's spouts" as the whale remained close to the surface, moving toward the channel heading into the Bay. The Humpback surfaced just enough to expose the back extending past the dorsal fin and the fluke (tail) would completely come up and flip before slipping below the surface. Other highlights included Long-tailed Duck, Purple Sandpiper, and Sanderling.

From the island most of the group continued northward for a visit at Eastern Shore NWR where an Orange-crowned Warbler was observed and photographed by one individual. The rest of the group tried but were unsuccessful in relocating this winter visitor. Along SR 600 at the backside of the Oyster dump we were able to locate a nice collection of waterfowl including Black Duck, Gadwall, Redhead, American Wigeon, Hooded Merganser, American Coot, and one Snow Goose. Continuing on to Willis Wharf, exposed mudflats yielded good numbers of Marbled Godwit, Short-billed Dowitcher and Willet. Also noted were Hooded Merganser, Bufflehead, Dunlin and an early (or very late) Spotted Sandpiper.

This is where the report ends as the participants parted ways, some turning back to return home and others continuing on to Chincoteague. Thanks to Mike Iwanik and Dave Hogg for coordinating and leading a memorable trip.



Western Albemarle Field Trip Report

By Stauffer Miller

Four of us, Leigh Surdukowski, Eve Schwartz, Lou Tanner and I, met at Seminole Square Shopping Center for Leigh's outing of the bird club to sites in western Albemarle County. At our first stop we were pleased to see two Wood Ducks mixed with Canada Geese at a farm pond. From there, we met Peter Brask and the five of us birded at Lickinghole Creek Pond. Stand out birds there were a pair of adult Bald Eagles in a nest. We wondered if they might have eggs. Some checking on the internet revealed they do often lay first eggs in February. We also saw some Green-winged Teal there.

Next we walked beside a large field off of Miller School Road. We heard a Winter Wren there but could not see it. We had good looks at Swamp Sparrows that perched on the tips of briars in the field. As we returned to the cars, a Pine Warbler began to sing. Leigh and Peter had visited this site February 7th and heard the Pine Warbler then. This is extremely early for Pine Warblers of this area to begin singing. We must have seen around 30 species in the outings, without a lot of hard work. Leigh was concerned that wind would jeopardize the outing, but the wind never materialized. All in all, it was an excellent trip and we were all appreciative of Leigh for leading it.



Northern Gannet photos by Brenda Tekin www.birdsofvirginia.com

The Conservation and Beautification Committee of  
**THE DOLLEY MADISON GARDEN CLUB**  
*presents free to the public*

**BRINGING NATURE HOME**

with Doug Tallamy

Tuesday, March 13, 2012, 2:00pm

At Stonefire Station

5361 Spotswood Trail, Barboursville, VA

Dr. Tallamy will discuss the important ecological roles of the native plants in our landscapes, emphasize the benefits of designing gardens with these roles in mind, and explore the consequences of failing to do so.

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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Please visit our website at  
[www.monticellobirdclub.org](http://www.monticellobirdclub.org)

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