



Monticello Bird Club

May 2009

Volume 23, Number 9

May Meeting Topic: Members' Night



Great Egrets photographed by Gregg O'Donnell at King Family Vineyard.

Our May 14th meeting is the traditional Members' Night. Anyone who would like to share pictures of birds or birding experiences is welcome to do so. There will be a slide projector and a digital projector and laptop for PowerPoint presentations.

Upcoming Meeting Topics

June 11th: Annual Potluck

Mark your calendars and join us for the MBC annual potluck supper at the Ivy Creek Natural Area's Education Building. Please bring a dish to share. More details to follow in next month's newsletter.



Comments From the President



Tree Swallow photographed by Lindsey Gilmer.

In a sense, a bird list of any given area is two lists—those you have seen, and those you haven't seen. While I find of much interest my list of "seen" birds of Mexico, a country I have visited many times, of much greater interest to me is my list of "unseen" ones. With every trip, that list diminishes a little. On that list are a hodgepodge of birds in scattered locations of the country that are hard to find, and thus missed when I was there, others I missed while off taking a rest stop in the bushes, ocean birds, and various other nocturnal, shy or just plain scarce birds. Therefore, when I plan a trip to Mexico nowadays, I look for a spot which offers me the greatest chance at several of these "unseen" birds.

Since I knew I had a chance for a few such birds at a place called Tecolutla

on the mid-gulf coast of Mexico, state of Vera Cruz, I contacted my friend and expert guide Rich Hoyer of the WINGS bird tour company and asked him to set up a trip there. Tecolutla has one of the best fresh water marshes of Mexico, and my target species pretty much all related to that type of habitat. Rich felt that two days there would suffice. He went to Tecolutla two days before I arrived to scout the area. During scouting, he found a nice-looking piece of marsh, and thus on the morning of April 18 I found myself there. Despite a great deal of trying, we could not find the hoped for King Rail or Yellow-breasted Crake, the former a large rail, the latter a small one. We did find a Swamp Sparrow, seemingly the only one in the whole marsh, and a bird surprisingly difficult to find in Mexico. Thus, it was a thrill to see it

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Monticello Bird Club

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and move it over to the “seen” column.

The next bird we attacked was the Altamira Yellowthroat, one found only in cattail marshes of a small area of this part of Gulf Coast Mexico. Unfortunately, its cousin the Common Yellowthroat is extremely numerous, at least when we were there, so we looked at perhaps a hundred of them before finally finding one Altamira. And that was the only one we saw of the entire trip! So, I think we were lucky. I know I would not have seen it without Rich’s help.

During scouting, Rich located a few Sedge Wrens, another one I was eager to see. Thus, for our second morning, we ducked under or over three barbed wire fences and began a long arduous trek across a cattle pasture, the heat and humidity already way beyond oppressive—and you thought travel to Mexico was glamorous! As we approached the wren area, a Barn Owl flew up, and we watched

it hunt, quartering this way and that. This is normally a nocturnal bird, so an opportunity to see one in daylight was wonderful. Our attention was soon directed to the wrens, which were chattering away. Several perched on tips of waving grass blades and were easy to study. Since they were about to migrate north, our timing was good. Later that day we had excellent looks at scarce Mexican birds such as Least Bittern, Upland Sandpiper and American Golden Plover. So, in a four-day trip, two for going and returning, and two for being there, I managed to transfer a few more species off that “unseen” list. The big question is, where to go next. That will take some thought.

At our April meeting, Nancy Newman brought up the subject of finch disease. This occasioned Ron Kingston to mention Salmonella in Pine Siskins. Thus, it would appear that the House Finches, Pine Siskins and perhaps a few other feeder species have suffered this winter and spring from not one but two diseases, Sal-

monella and the “finch” disease, which is a Mycoplasma infection of the eyes, thought to have moved into wild birds from poultry. I hope you are not seeing either of these conditions in your birds. The only remedy seems to be close attention to sanitation of feeding equipment.

As birders, we approach the month of May with a sense of excitement, since migration is fully upon us. I hope all of you will find a few warblers, vireos, thrushes, orioles and others of the migrant songbirds which so enhance this month. The “birding-before-work” walks at Ivy Creek can be great experiences. Don’t let foul weather stop you. Last year, the greatest number of warblers at one these Ivy Creeks walks was on a rainy morning. I hope to see you at our member’s night on May 14th. Bring about ten of your best slides. Good May birding to all.

-Stauffer Miller

Bird Club Information

The Monticello Bird Club meets at 7:30 pm 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 June issue is May 20.** Please email information to Amy Gilmer at akgilmer@comcast.net or send to 2341 Highland Avenue, Charlottesville, VA 22903.

Monticello Bird Club

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Please visit our website at

www.monticellobirdclub.org

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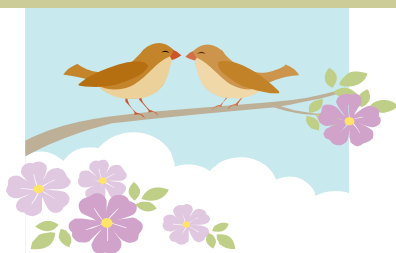
Upcoming Field Trips

Fortune's Cove Preserve (TNC) Saturday, May 2

Enjoy a wonderful 3.7 mile hike with a moderate 800 foot elevation change for warblers and other spring migrants. **Meet near Greenberry's in Barracks Road Shopping Center at 7 am to convoy for the 45 minute drive south on US29 to the turnoff to Fortune's Cove.** If you so choose, bring a bag lunch to eat at the Mountain Cove Vineyards and Winegarden adjacent to the site. Leader: Eileen Rowan ([Eileen rowan@earthlink.net](mailto:Eileen.rowan@earthlink.net)) or contact Alison Mazie of the The Nature Conservancy (434-951-0537) for more information.

Secluded Farm Saturday, May 9

Dave Hogg and Jim Nix will lead this moderate to easy two hour stroll at the height of the warbler migration through largely forest edge habitat. **Meet in the parking lot for the Secluded Farm trail at 7 am.** The entrance to the parking lot is off Rt. 20 north, just north of the intersection with Rt. 53. Of course, Rose-breasted Grosbeaks and Scarlet Tanagers will not be overlooked. Questions? Contact Jim at 434-973-7366 or jim-nix@comcast.net



First Saturday Bird Walks At Ivy Creek Natural Area

On the first Saturday of each month the Monticello Bird Club hosts a bird walk at Ivy Creek Natural Area (ICNA) at 7:30 am. Each month a different walk leader takes groups on the trails to see the birds of ICNA. The walks start in the parking lot of ICNA.

Birding Before Work Ivy Creek Natural Area May 4 - 8

Enjoy the Spring migrants each morning before work on a bird walk at Ivy Creek Natural Area 7-8 am. **Meet in the ICNA parking lot at 7 am.** Leaders include May 4 - Jim Nix, May 5 - Stauffer Miller, May 6 - Dave Hogg, May 7 - Teresa Shaner, and May 8 - Jenny Gaden. Questions? Contact John at 434-974-9293 or jozimmva@embarqmail.com

Rockfish Valley Saturday, May 16

Tim Hodge will lead a trip to the Rockfish Valley. Experience the Rockfish River, Rockfish Valley Trails and the adjacent Spruce Creek Park for meadowlarks, sparrows, warblers, both orioles, and Blue Grosbeak. Easy walk of one to two miles over flat terrain. It will take about two to three hours. **Meet at 7:30 am at the former Spruce Creek Gallery on Rt. 151, about 15 minutes south of the intersection of 151 with Rt. 250, just past Nellysford.** Questions? Contact Tim at tim@hodgeproductsinc.com

VSO Foray —in search of Bachman's Sparrow

Time and Location: June 12-17, 2009, covering Greenville and Sussex Counties plus portions of surrounding counties as time permits. **Mission:** Survey of breeding birds of the area with a special focus on Bachman's Sparrow.

How to participate: Prior to April 24 and after May 10, please contact Wendy Ealding at WEalding_AT_aol.com, phone (804) 598-9243). Between April 24 and May 10, please contact Adam D'Onofrio at BIGAD-FROMLB_AT_comcast.net, phone (804) 861-2390. Please indicate which dates you will be available to participate, whether you have any preference as to which locations you would want to cover (see Foray Sites [36Kb MS Word® file] for more information) and whether you have any experience with Bachman's Sparrow.

For more information visit http://www.virginiabirds.net/2009_foray.html

Pine Knot Bird Walk Keene Saturday, May 16

Pine Knot is the historic retreat of Teddy and Edith Roosevelt. Join Amy Gilmer on an easy walk through the Pine Knot property. Meet in the parking lot at Pine Knot at 8 am. Take Rt. 20 south from Charlottesville to Keene (~12 miles). Turn left on Coles Rolling Road (SR 712) and go 1.5 miles. Turn left on Glendower/ Coles Rolling Road for 0.1 mile, then take an immediate right staying on Coles Rolling Road. Go 0.5 mi, then turn right at the entrance to Pine Knot. Questions? Contact Amy at akgilmer@comcast.net

MBC Minutes for April 9, 2009

MBC President Stauffer Miller called the meeting to order. May is the month in which we elect new club officers and Stauffer announced that the individuals currently serving in the four elected offices (President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer) have all offered to serve for another term. He added, however, that this is not meant to discourage others who would like to fill one of the elected positions and he would welcome other nominations for the election to take place at the next meeting.

Stauffer also announced that the all-important position of Newsletter Editor had been filled. Doug Rogers has offered to take over this position from Amy Gilmer who has done a magnificent job as editor since 2006. But there will soon be another important vacancy to be filled. John Zimmerman is retiring as Field Trip Organizer and Stauffer asked for someone to step forward as a replacement. He urged anyone considering this position to contact him as soon as possible.

Treasurer's Report: Henry Konat reported the following figures concerning club finances:

Income this year as of 4/9 \$10,788.49
Expenses as of 4/9 \$11,789.41
Net income as of 4/9 -\$1,010.92

Bank balance as of 4/9 \$12,969.19

He noted that the excess of expenses over income for this period resulted from some rather large one-time expenditures. Specifically, the club purchased a lap top computer and established two new bluebird trails.

Field Trips: Dave Hogg announced details of the upcoming Tufton Farm field trip and thanked Peggy Cornett

for making it possible for us to visit this excellent birding area that is normally not open to the public. He predicted sightings of nesting Grasshopper Sparrows, Blue Grosbeaks and Yellow-throated Warblers plus a variety of spring migrants.

Recent Bird Sightings: Several members expressed concern about recent evidence of illness among feeder birds. A number of dead birds have been found near feeders but these did not appear to be afflicted with the eye disease that caused great loss of House Finches a few years ago. The casualties this time seem to be mostly Pine Siskins and American Goldfinches.

Stauffer Miller led the April first Saturday bird walk at the Ivy Creek

Natural Area and reported the sighting of three scarce species. The group identified four Red-breasted Mergansers, one Blue-winged Teal and two Rusty Blackbirds. The Red-breasted Mergansers were an especially good find since this species is a rare winter visitor and spring transient in this area.

Although not a bird sighting, Lou Tanner reported a notable abundance of Trout Lilies during the first week in April blooming near the trail beside the Rivanna River. These were along the portion of the trail near the Rivanna River rapids that is accessible from the end of Market Street.

-- Submitted by Jim Nix for Peggy Cornett

Please Welcome Our Newest Members

Please welcome our newest members and wish them good birding and good fellowship at our meetings. New members are



Jim Boardman
Peter Fink and Beverly Maresca
Charles and Helen Oliver
Dudley and Lois Rochester
Barbara Stitt
Nevada and Maggie Thompson
Peg Watson

Purple Martin Field Day

The 15th Annual Purple Martin Field Day is set for Saturday June 27 this year at the farm of Merle & Lance Wood in Louisa County. From 9:30 am 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 I36 (Zion Crossroads). Travel north on US 15 for 3.5 miles until it intersects with Route 640 (east). The farm is located near the intersection of US 15 and Route 640 and you will see signs directing you to the Purple Martin Field Day.

For more information, see <http://www.purplemartin.org/meetings/> and contact Ron & Priscilla Kingston at 434-293-5173 or kingston@cstone.net