



Monticello Bird Club

October 2006

Volume 21, Number 2

October Meeting Topic:

Create a Bird-Friendly Backyard

Our October 12 program will focus on how to improve backyard habitat for our native Virginia wildlife species. Lou Verner, Coordinator of the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries' Wildlife Mapping Program will review the critical components of habitat required by all species and discuss simple but effective ways you can provide or improve habitat for songbirds, butterflies, and other wildlife in your own backyard.

Mr. Verner received advanced degrees from Michigan State University and the University of Illinois. Prior to coming Virginia, Mr. Verner was an Urban Wildlife Biologist for Texas Parks and Wildlife in the Dallas area.

In addition to his work as coordinator of the Wildlife Mapping Program. Mr. Verner is also involved with the Virginia Birding and Wildlife Trail, the nation's first state wide program

linking wildlife-viewing sites throughout the Commonwealth. He is especially concerned with the effects of urbanization on wildlife. Please join MBC members and our speaker for dinner at Wild Greens Restaurant in the North Wing of Barracks Road Shopping Center at 5:30 pm prior to the meeting.

Future Meetings Preview

November 9: Sandra Breil will speak about volunteering on birding projects around the globe.

December 14: Faren Wolter, Piedmont Environmental Council.

January 11: Aimee Weldon will speak on the Important Bird Area program through Audubon.

Comments From the President

Bird conservation, as much in life, has its good news and its bad news. The bad news first. The American Bird Conservancy recently sent out a notice saying that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) relegated the rufa Red Knot – a rare migratory shorebird – to the “waiting room” of the candidate list under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). Therefore, this subspecies of the Red Knot will get no protection under the ESA, a move that will likely doom the species to extinction, according to a coalition of environmental groups seeking protection for the rufa Red Knot.

This Red Knot feasts upon the eggs of the horseshoe crab during spring stopovers along the Delaware Bay shore. This resource enables the bird to complete its journey from Argentina to the Canadian Arctic. There has been a dramatic increase in harvesting of horseshoe crab eggs by commercial fishers since the 1990s and the birds are not getting

enough fuel to arrive in their nesting areas in condition to breed successfully. Recent scientific data warns that unless immediate steps are taken to halt the rapid decline of the rufa Red Knot, the bird faces extinction as soon as 2010. The FWS slowpoke approach could be its death knell.

On the other hand, there is some good news. The House of Representatives just passed a revised Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Improvement Act of 2006 (NMBCA, H.R. 518). Assuming that the Senate passes its version, the act will authorize 6.5 million per year through 2010 for matching grants supporting conservation projects for migratory birds. These funds could help preserve habitat for birds we know including the Cerulean Warbler, Golden-winged Warbler, Bobolink, Bicknell's Thrush and, yes, the Red Knot.

-Jennifer Gaden, president

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Successful Holiday for Hawks!

by Brenda Tekin

As we traveled west on Interstate 64 toward the mountain early September 23, the van loaded with equipment for the all-day Holiday for Hawks event, we could not help but note the low, thin veil of clouds passing over the distant Blue Ridge Mountains. By now we should have become accustomed to the ever changing weather patterns inconsistent with the latest weather forecasts. Our hopes for a sunnier day dimmed. All we could do was hope the low clouds would lift and any threat of rain would be kept at bay.

Quite a few folks had arrived early and had noted a few migrating birds. As the morning progressed, the flow of observers and visitors increased to fill the patio and walkways. At approximately 10:15 a.m. (EDST) I was in the midst of setting up the equipment for the 10:30 start of the basic hawks in flight ID workshop when I was summoned outside. Birds were coming! (The in-class portion of the basic hawks in flight workshop was postponed until early afternoon.)

After it was all said and done, we reviewed, discussed and speculated on the morning's event. For nearly 1.5 hours, there was sheer excitement and organized

pandemonium as approximately 75-100 individuals witnessed an extraordinary and spectacular flight of Broad-winged Hawk.

First, to set the record straight, no one associated with the Rockfish Gap Hawk Watch was responsible with the events that unfolded. This was solely at the hands of Mother Nature!

There is no way to adequately describe the event. There was a thick haze carpeting the valleys to the east and west with a light S to SSE wind blowing. With the high dome of cloud cover with few breaks, the birds would be dependent on updrafts to get them up and over and down the ridges. The first groups of birds were spotted out over Waynesboro to the west, coming in low and at times becoming lost in the thick haze. Then another loose kettle was spotted a short distance above the first one. In between the kettles, more birds were streaming through, flapping hard, and then funneling into another forming kettle. There were kettles over kettles, with streaming birds in between and more nearby kettles, and birds rising up from the valley floor below. This remained consistent for most of the flight with some streaming along on the east side



Adult Broad-winged hawk.
Photo by Brenda Tekin.

of the gap and several small kettles. Counters were positioned to keep separate counts - the birds going to the left and those going directly overhead and to the right.

Adults and young children alike were caught up in the excitement. Although many of the birds were distant and lost in bright light and haze, there were sufficient numbers of birds coming in close to the delight of all, including the Cooper's Hawk flying in low, putting on quite a show as she herded up a flock of pigeons, coming in close for lots of oooohs and ahhhhs.

I can only surmise the bulk of the Broad-wing were in the pipeline and had settled down Friday night not far to the north of Rockfish Gap, and we witnessed their not-so-early morning lift off.

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 November issue is October 23.** Please email information to Amy Gilmer at akgilmer@adelphia.net or send to 3166 Welsh Run Road, Ruckersville, VA 22968.

Monticello Bird Club

P.O. Box 4362

Charlottesville, Virginia 22905

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

Monticello Bird Club Board Members

President	Jennifer Gaden	jgaden@earthlink.net	293-6275
Vice President	Jim Hill	jimcarhill@adelphia.net	975-6523
Secretary	Peggy Cornett	pcornett@monticello.org	984-9816
Treasurer	Henry Konat	henryk54@verizon.net	540-948-4771
Field Trips	John Zimmerman	jozimmva@earthlink.net	974-9293
Speakers	Pat Wilczek	patwilczek@earthlink.net	985-4444
Publicity	Ellen Dudley	emdudley@nexet.net	244-2688
Hospitality	Priscilla Kingston	kingston@cstone.net	293-5173
Newsletter	Amy Gilmer	akgilmer@adelphia.net	825-2170
Membership	Robyn Kells	rkells@ntelos.net	970-1044
Birdseed Sale	Howard Davis	howardsuedavis@juno.com	964-1242

Fall Field Trips

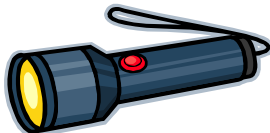
West Virginia Marsh October 13-14

Enjoy this overnight trip to a marsh owned by trip leader Stauffer Miller near Shanghai, WV. Headquarters for the trip will be the Comfort Inn at Exit 307 off I-81 at Stephens City, just south of Winchester, VA. Reservations for the night of the 13th can be made by calling 1-800-424-6423. Those not choosing to come the night before can meet the group at 7 am on October 14th at the motel. We will depart at 7:30 am, traveling north through Frederick County, VA and reaching the marsh about 8:30 am. We will leave the marsh about noon. It could be wet so boots are suggested. Questions? Contact Stauffer Miller at 296-5505 or e-mail: stauffer@seepub.com

Sparrow Road Saturday, October 21

John Zimmerman will lead this trip along Sparrow Road and will include stops at Beaver Creek Reservoir and Mint Spring Valley Park. **Meet at Seminole Square in the Giant parking lot at 7:00 am.** Questions? Contact John at 974-9293 or jozimmva@earthlink.net

FLASHLIGHTS: Don't forget to bring a flashlight to our monthly meetings to light your way from the Education Building to the parking lot!



Chincoteague NWR & Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel November 17-19

Join field trip leader, John Zimmerman on a visit to this birding hotspot. The visit to CBBT islands is limited to 15 with prior submission of an information sheet for security clearance. Security information forms will be available from John Zimmerman at the October meeting or call 974-9293 (e-mail jozimmva@earthlink.net). Forms due to John Zimmerman by October 31st at 1046 Blackburn Bluff, Charlottesville, VA, 22901 or bring to the October meeting. There is a \$10/person fee, payable at time of the trip to the CBBT. You must also present a picture ID (e.g. driver's license) to the security officer. If we have less than 10 sign-up for the CBBT, we will cancel that part of the trip.

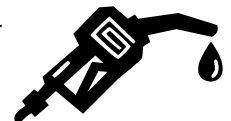
We plan to meet at the south end of the CBBT in the administration building parking lot at 9:45 am on November 17th. If you do not choose to do the CBBT, meet at the Visitors Center, Eastern Shore National Wildlife Refuge at 1 pm, but give your name/phone number/e-mail to John Zimmerman so that you can be contacted if we cancel the CBBT visit. If we cancel the CBBT, we will all meet in the parking lot at the south end of the CBBT at 9:45 am. Reservations for Chincoteague can be made at the Island Motor Inn (757-336-3141). Mention you are with the Monticello Bird Club for the group rate of \$88/ night. There is a 7-day prior cancellation limit.

Itinerary:

We gather at 9:45 am and meet our security escort at 10 am on Friday in the parking lot at the south end of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel and proceed to islands 2, 3, and 4. Target species are gannets, sea ducks like scoters, long-tailed ducks, and harlequins, as well as loons, purple sandpipers and turnstones, and a variety of gulls. We will then continue north to enter the Eastern Shore NWR just beyond the exit to the CBBT. We expect to identify a variety of passerines, raptors, and probably a Wilson's snipe in the marshy area adjacent to the visitors' center while we eat our lunch. Then we will travel north on Seaside Road, stopping at Townsend to hopefully find the Eurasian collared-doves. We will reach Oyster about mid-tide and walk along the margins of the bay to find willets, oystercatchers, maybe godwits, as well as a variety of peep sandpipers. Then we will be off to Chincoteague to check into the motel and meet for dinner.

Saturday morning we meet at 8 am to walk the marsh trail (about 1.5 miles) to watch the morning flight of snow geese and tundra swans. There will be a variety of puddle ducks, herons, and terns in addition to possible savannah and swamp sparrows. After stopping at the visitors' center we will walk the woodland trail (about 2 miles). Target species are the brown-headed nuthatch as well as a variety of forest birds. Then on to the ocean beach for possible horned grebes and red-throated loons, stopping on the way to check ponds for diving ducks. We will reconvene at 3 pm at the entrance to the wildlife loop and then drive this route. Sunday you are own to revisit any of the sites of the previous day, returning to Charlottesville on your own schedule.

If you carpool on a field trip, please consider sharing gasoline costs with the driver.



Gardening for Wildlife: Black Cherry *Prunus serotina*

We have some sizeable Black Cherry trees in our mixed hardwood "forest" at Omanu and we have enjoyed watching the birds (and other critters) feast on the black fruit. Since establishing our wild garden in the spring of 1998, I have nurtured a number of self-sown seedling Black Cherries, including two potted seedlings I brought from New Jersey. The parent tree was a very prolific fruiter. Just as well because high winds have taken down a few of our oldest trees. Black Cherry is the largest of the native cherries and the only one of commercial value. It is found throughout the Eastern United States; also known as "Wild Black Cherry", "Rum Cherry" and "Mountain Black Cherry".

The Black Cherry is a deciduous tree and under ideal conditions can reach 90 feet in height. Most often, we see smaller, scattered trees of low commercial value but are very important to wildlife for their fruit. They can be seen just about anywhere because they grow in almost any soil and can tolerate shade. In Virginia, Black Cherries are, commonly, found as under-story trees under taller oaks and hickories.

Black Cherry flowers found in mid to late spring are small but very obvious because they are clustered in columns. Small ½



Prunus serotina or Black Cherry.
Photo: William Justice at plants.usda.gov

inch fruits turn from green through orange/red and when ripe are black. Good fruit crops seem to occur at intervals of 1-5 years. Our trees seem to have heavy crops, every other year. This fruit is very popular with many birds and mammals. Birds observed eating Black Cherries include American Robin, Northern Mockingbird, Eastern Bluebird, Brown Thrasher, Gray Catbird, Blue Jay, Woodpeckers, Northern Bobwhite and Wild Turkey. Critters seen at Omanu consuming Black Cherries include Red Fox, Eastern Cottontail, Virginia Opossum, Raccoon and, of course, the Eastern Gray Squirrel. Caterpillars of many moths and butterflies, also, enjoy Black Cherry leaves, including Eastern Tiger Swallowtail, Viceroy, Red-spotted Purple and Painted Lady.

We have found that the most important defoliating pest is the Eastern Tent Caterpillar, *Malacosoma americanum*. It is, primarily, an aesthetic problem and, normally, has little adverse effect on healthy host trees. All species of the genus *Prunus* are preferred hosts with Black Cherry being the primary, uncultivated host. Control is not, normally, necessary as defoliated trees, usually, re-leaf after being attacked. Several consecutive years of heavy infestation can kill the tree. However, tent caterpillar infestations vary in severity from year to year. Soon after establishing our garden we sprayed with "Conserve", a non-persistent (2 to 3 weeks) caterpillar specific insecticide during two years of heavy infestation. We have not resorted to a major spray since. I have used insecticidal soap on my seedlings and Winterberry Hollies whenever I see a "tent". It is very effective. Black Cherry can be a wonderful landscape plant if you have the room and wish to attract birds and other wildlife. Seedlings have to be protected from white-tailed deer, eastern cottontail, mice and meadow voles until they reach a size of about 6 to 8 feet when they can withstand the occasional nibble.

-Bill Leaning

MBC Minutes for September 14, 2006

President Jenny Gaden presided and invited visitors to introduce themselves. There were a total of 45 in attendance.

Treasurer's Report: Treasurer Henry Konat reminded members that the 2006-07 dues are due. The club's net worth is \$13,895.

Field Trips: John Zimmerman reviewed the recent trip to Scogo Lake where 25-50 Ruby-throated Hummingbirds were seen feeding on the Jewel Weed. A Pine Warbler was also identified. Also mentioned was the Anderson Farm visit on Wednesday, September 13th, led by Stauffer Miller, where they saw a Kestrel. John noted the upcoming trips that are described in the September Newsletter,

including the trip to Calf Mountain on September 23rd, led by Peter Brask; the West Virginia March on October 13-14 weekend; and the Chincoteague NWR and Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel trip November 17-19.

Bird Seed Sale: Theresa Shaner gave an update on the seed sale, which takes place Saturday, November 4th, at the Virginia Department of Forestry Warehouse. This year includes seed, blue bird boxes, and bird feeders. Theresa passed around sign-up sheets for callers, people to unload seed on Thursday or Friday, and Saturday morning greeters and loaders.

Newsletter: Amy Gilmer reported that members will have an option of having the newsletter sent electronically and that members can choose to have either the paper or electronic versions or both.

Hawk Watch: Brenda Tekin is coordi-

nating this year's 30th Anniversary Celebration of the Rockfish Gap Hawk Watch, September 22-24, at The Inn at Afton Mountain. Details are in the newsletter. The hawks seem to be migrating early this year and there was a recent count of 1,500 at Afton.

Miscellaneous Announcements: Jenny Gaden noted that there is a new, more extensive VSO Field Check List available, which can be ordered from the VSO web site: www.virginiabird.net.

Bird Sightings: A Warbling Vireo was observed in Fran Boninti's back yard. Bill Leaning has seen a lot of Hummingbirds this year and a Wood Thrush nesting. Hundreds of Swifts were seen circling at Albemarle High School as well as Night Hawks, Starlings, Grackles, and a Hawk feeding on a Starling.

-Peggy Cornett, secretary