

Monticello Bird Club

February 2005

Volume 19, Number 6

February Meeting Topic

Ruth Burch Shares Butterfly Basics

At the February 10 MBC meeting, we will explore the quiet but colorful world of butterflies with Ruth Burch. Drawing from an extensive slide library, Ruth will present a program to inform and entertain her audience.

The program will touch on several different aspects of butterflying, including: a basic introduction to butterflies and moths; gardening to attract butterflies and moths, plant selection and garden design; life cycles of butterflies and moths; raising caterpillars and cage construction ideas; butterfly and moth identification techniques; and butterfly and moth predators.

Ruth is an avid butterfly enthusiast and dedicated butterfly gardener. She and her family have raised and released numerous species of butterflies and moths, providing the opportunities to study and photograph their many stages and changes.

Ruth Burch is a charter member of the Butterfly Society of Virginia, which began in

1992. She currently serves as vice president of the Society (again), having just finished two terms as president, and she is co-editor of the Society's newsletter, *The Virginia Butterfly Bulletin*. She also is the recording secretary for the South Hampton



American Snout. Actual color is sable brown with splashes of orange and white. Photo: Ruth Burch.

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ter, *The Virginia Butterfly Bulletin*. She also is the re-
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Spring Meetings Whet Appetites for Warblers, Flowers

March 10: Thelma Dalmas

Dubbed "Warbler Road" in a 1978 article for the VSO newsletter, this forest service road in Botetourt County is the topic of Thelma's slide presentation. She will discuss "Spring on Warbler Road" and explore both birdlife and wildflowers.

April 14: George Fenwick

George Fenwick is president of the American Bird Conservancy and will discuss some of ABC's programming and the Bird Conservation Alliance.

Comments From the President... Brrrrr

You never know what will turn up at your feeder in the middle of January. Two club members had visitors in their yards in early 2005 that by all rights should have been in the tropics.

Bill Minor reported a first year male Baltimore Oriole at his home in Albemarle County. The youngster was enjoying peanuts from a hanging feeder as well as the fruit of an orange. Normally Baltimore Orioles have left the area by October heading for Mexico, Central America and northern South America. There they eat the kinds of foods they eat in North America: fruits, nectar and insects, although in the tropics they feed in noisy flocks whereas here they are more solitary. Scott Weidensaul in his book *Living on the Wind* describes an afternoon he spent in Northern Belize floating in the water under a bribri tree. Hummingbirds and toucans were feeding on the large white

nectar-laden flowers. Suddenly a clattering flock of six male Baltimore Orioles descended upon the tree, dispelling the native birds. They too were attracted by the flowers. They twisted and pulled at the base of the trumpet-shaped blossoms to withdraw the sweet liquid from within. Sounds better than peanuts.

While the oriole was dining at the Minors', a Summer Tanager found hospitality at Jim Nix's suet feeder in Charlottesville. Usually they eat fruit, berries and a large assortment of insects, specializing in bees and wasps which they kill by whacking against a branch. If this bird had kept up with its family members in the fall it would have flown south on nightly journeys over the Gulf of Mexico into the same geographical areas as the Baltimore Oriole, some getting as far as Bolivia and Brazil.

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Monticello Bird Club

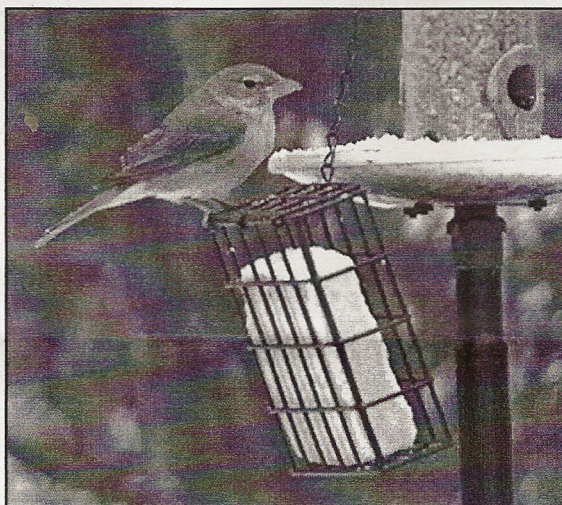
Summer Tanager Visits Winter

Jim Nix, longtime member of the Monticello Bird Club, returned from a trip to sunny Mexico on February 20 only to find snow and frigid temperatures at his home in Charlottesville. He continues the story.....

"Late in the morning on Saturday I looked out the window and saw a Summer Tanager feeding on suet in our back yard. I had heard from Mo Stevens on Friday that a neighbor of ours, who is an old friend of Mo's, had phoned him to say he had seen a Summer Tanager a week ago but it had not returned and he had been unable to photograph it. I quickly got out the digital camera and took several passable photos including this one.

The bird returned frequently to the suet feeder and fed occasionally from the no-hull sunflowers in the tube feeder all day Saturday and continues to show up. I checked the Blue Book and

found only one other winter record for this species; in Roanoke in December 1982, so this is a very rare bird for this



Female or young adult Summer Tanager.

time of year. I hope it sticks around for a while so other people can see it."

—Jim Nix

Editor's Note: As of press-time, the Summer Tanager was still visiting Jim's feeder on Kerry Lane in Charlottesville.

Local Rare Bird Alert Makes Timely Debut

In an effort to communicate rare or unusual bird sightings in Albemarle County, including the city of Charlottesville, an email rare bird alert has been created. To join, contact either Alex Merritt or Brenda Tekin and provide them with your email address. Email addresses will not be distributed outside the Rare Bird Alert group.

If you have a rare or unusual sighting to share with the birding community, please contact Alex or Brenda. If the rare or unusual bird is on private property, they will first obtain permission of property owners before releasing details to the e-mail hot line.

Rare Bird Alert Contacts:

Alex Merritt: 703-927-8468 or cerulean182@hotmail.com

Brenda Tekin : 434-962-4936 or brenda@birdsofvirginia.com,

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 March issue is February 23.** Please email information to Nancy King at turnermtn@mindspring.com or send to P.O. Box 22, Ivy, VA 22945.

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

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	Teresa Shaner	twshaner@adelphia.net	964-9420

Upcoming Field Trips Roam Near and Far

Highland County Saturday, February 12

North country -- land of Golden Eagle and wintering Rough-legged Hawk. Put on your thermals and woolies and join us on this driving tour of Virginia's "Little Switzerland." We will meet in Giant Grocery parking lot, Seminole Square Shopping Center to leave promptly at 7:15am.. Bring along snack and beverage and plan on a warm lunch at a Monterey diner.

For information contact Brenda Tekin 434-962-4936, 434-977-4209 or brenda@birdsofvirginia.com.

Rain/Snow date:
Sunday, February 13



On the winter trip to the **Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel & Eastern Shore** last year, Brenda Tekin caught sight of this pair of Common Eider, large bulky diving ducks well-suited to cold northern seas. Virginia is usually the tip of the Common Eider's southern range.

First Saturday Bird Walks Ivy Creek Natural Area

On the first Saturday of every month, MBC sponsors a bird walk at the Ivy Creek Natural Area. The walks last from one to two hours, depending on the birds. While the walks are generally geared towards novice birders, all are welcome.

Meet: parking lot at 7:30 am.

February 5: Jim Nix

March 5: John Zimmerman

Many thanks to those who volunteer to lead these walks every year. If you are interested in being a leader—you don't have to be an expert; just be willing to share your enthusiasm—please contact Leigh Surdukowski at 434-295-8241.

MBC Minutes for January 13, 2005

The meeting began at 7:35 pm, presided by club president Jenny Gaden. There were 60 present. Newcomers included: Charles and Molly O'Brian from Reston; Jeff and Beth Cobham, who recently moved to Charlottesville from North Carolina and joined the club after attending a First Saturday at Ivy Creek bird walk; and Ellen Turner, who was turned-on to birding after her trip to Costa Rica.

Treasurer's Report: Bob Gilges noted that 22 previous members were eliminated from the roster and our membership now stands at 162. Bob detailed the club's fiscal year activity: income at \$8,653 and expenses at \$6,018, for a year-to-date balance of \$2,623. The club has \$15,698 in its checking account.

Field Trips: Jenny G. reviewed the upcoming trips: Chesapeake Bay Bridge on January 22, the First Saturday Bird Walk at Ivy Creek on February 5, and the Highland Country trip

set for February 12. The Highland Co. trip promises sightings of young Golden Eagles, Bald Eagles, and Rough-legged Hawks.

Bird Lists: Brenda Tekin emphasized the importance of documenting "first sightings" and rarities with the VSO, which is trying to organize Virginia bird clubs to keep accurate records. Alex Merit will be coordinating a comprehensive list for Charlottesville and Albemarle County (see page 2). Brenda also distributed a sign-up sheet for those wanting to be included on an email hot line for our area.

Environmental Action: Phyllis White announced that Monday January 17, is Environmental Day on Capital Hill and she encouraged members to go to Washington and lobby for clean water and other issues. More information is available on the Chesapeake Bay and Nature Conservancy websites.

Miscellaneous: Jenny was giving away 10-year-old back issues of *Wild Bird* magazine, which she discovered as they were clearing out the storage areas of the Virginia Museum of Natural History.

Bird Sightings: Bill Leaning happily reported his Earlysville property was finally visited by about 50 Cedar Waxwings, which wiped out his winterberries. He's also watching a Brown Creeper. Peter Brask took a walk on "Sparrow Road" and saw 50-60 White-crowned, Savannah, and Field Sparrows. Dede Austin's son reported two wild Turkeys near I-95 outside New York City. Bob Gilges has a Kingfisher working his pond. Nancy Newman observed a Red-shouldered Hawk in a dogwood tree about two feet from Greenbrier Road, oblivious to traffic and intently watching her bird feeder. Brenda Tekin saw a Great Blue Heron and a small flock of Canada Geese on the new pond next to the UVA parking garage on Emmett Street. She also mentioned that a Snow Goose was seen with some Canada Geese between Charlottesville and Scottsville. Peggy Cornett noted that the aggressive white swan is no longer at the PVCC pond and that native birds are now able to return.

Bill Leaning introduced the speaker, Erwin Bohmfalk.

—Peggy Cornett, Secretary

Gardening for Wildlife

Wonderful, Versatile Juniper: One Tough Evergreen

Junipers are the most ubiquitous and toughest of all the needle evergreens used in the general landscape. They can play a vital role in the wildlife garden, providing year-round evergreen shelter and nesting sites. Many species also provide food in the form of cones. Junipers inhabit the most adverse cultural niches in nature, which makes them easy-care trees and shrubs for the wildlife garden.

Juniperus is a highly variable genus, existing as 60-foot-tall trees, all the way down to 2 or 3-inch spreading ground cover. All junipers have small needle or scale-like foliage. Young plants are always needle-like; older plants have both forms. They are read-

ily transplanted and will thrive in almost any soil, except those that are constantly wet. They prefer full sun for maximum growth but will do quite well in "bright shade" or a minimum of 5 hours of sun daily. Junipers are extremely versatile and can be used in hedge-rows, group plantings, or as single specimens. They can also be used as ground covers and, heaven forbid (in a wildlife garden), topiary.

There are 13 species of juniper native to the United States, and up to 70 species throughout the temperate and subtropical regions of the Northern Hemisphere and south of the equator in Africa. The majority of landscape junipers come from only ten species. In recent years, growers have become more regionally selective and, instead of in-

creasing their number of cultivars, they are paring down their selections to the best and easier growing forms.

Growth habit varies from low-growing ground cover types to mounded shrub-like cultivars to conical and pyramidal trees, both dwarf and full size. Foliage color varies from lustrous dark green to light green, bluish, silver-blue, gold, yellow and shades in between. There is an excellent grouping of dwarf conifers including several species of junipers in the Gotelli Collection at the National Arboretum. Another collection of evergreens, including junipers, is at the Lewis

Ginter Botanical Gardens in Richmond, a wonderful place for landscaping ideas.

Next: Four species of juniper that do well in Central Virginia.

—Bill Leaning



Juniperus chinensis, cones and foliage.
Photo from Michael Dirr.

Bird News & Notes... News & Notes...New

ELLEN DUDLEY JOINS BOARD
Author Ellen Dudley will serve as MBC's new Publicity Chair. Thanks to Catherine Wray for a job well-done.

BIRDING BABYLON
Mary Dykes recommends this unusual website. Maintained by a soldier in Iran, it's a running account of the birds he's seeing during the war.
<http://birdingbabylon.blogspot.com>.

2005 COMPOSITE LIST
Alex Merritt will be keeping a composite list of the bird species observed in Albemarle County and the City of Charlottesville for 2005. Local birders from other counties will be keeping lists as well, with the goal of refining our knowledge of bird distribution across the state. The lists can be viewed on Sue Heath's website at www.virginiabirding.org. If you have records of any species not listed for Albemarle or Charlottesville, please email Alex Merritt; include the date and location of the observation. Alex can be reached at cerulean182@hotmail.com.

Articles Continued From Page One...

RUTH BURCH...

Roads chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society. Ruth graduated from American University in Washington, DC, with a BA in print communication and presently works at-home, as mom to 15-year-old Temma and wife to husband Glenn.

Please join Ruth and other MBC members on February 10 at 5:30 pm at Wild Greens Restaurant in the North Wing of the Barracks Road Shopping Center for an informal dinner prior to the meeting.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE...

In their tropical home they, like the orioles, travel in flocks looking for the same kind of foods they eat in the summer — including bees. Bananas and plantains are among the fruits of choice in the tropics.

Who knows why these birds were here in the bitter cold of January? But thanks to Bill and Jim and all those who feed the birds in the winter, we are giving our avian friends a leg up and possibly a chance to see another summer — either here or there.

—Jenny Gaden, President