



# Monticello Bird Club

January 2015 Newsletter

Website: [www.monticellobirdclub.org](http://www.monticellobirdclub.org)

Volume 28

Issue 6

Facebook: [Monticello Bird Club](https://www.facebook.com/MonticelloBirdClub)

*MBC Monthly Meeting—Thursday, January 8th at 7:00pm*

## Comments from the President

Doug Rogers

The Virginia Society of Ornithology (VSO) has established an American Kestrel nest box initiative. It's a statewide project, and basically involves erecting kestrel nest boxes in suitable habitat, mostly on private land. The American Kestrel is North America's smallest falcon and a handsome bird of prey. This species is rapidly disappearing over much of its range due to loss of habitat, loss of nesting cavities – abandoned woodpecker holes and holes in dead trees – and competition with European Starlings.

MBC Club member, Dan Bieker along with team members Patti Reum and David White, is spearheading this VSO project. So far they've erected boxes in Albemarle, Highland, Amelia, Powhatan and Nottoway Counties. They are looking for more landowners who will allow them to install an American Kestrel box on their property. There is no cost to the landowner and no maintenance. The team does encourage the landowner to report any activity within or near the box, especially nesting activity. For more information, contact Dan at <mailto:danbieker@gmail.com>.



American Kestrel  
Photos by Doug Rogers

Good Birding!

## Speaker of the Month: Suzanne Shoemaker

Stauffer Miller

**Suzanne Shoemaker** will be with us **January 8th** to talk about **Screech and other owls** of the mid-Atlantic region. Suzanne is a licensed wildlife rehabilitator who in 2002 established Owl Moon Raptor Center, a state and federally licensed rehabilitation center that specializes in birds of prey. The center is located at Suzanne's home in Boyds, Maryland. Suzanne and her husband share their home with two Siberian Huskies and whatever birds of prey currently find themselves under their care.

Suzanne will talk about the biology of Screech and other owls through the calendar year, beginning with courtship and pairing in December-January, nest building, egg laying and incubation in February-March and the development of the young in April and May. She will also discuss the decline of the Barn Owl and installation of nest boxes for them. As summer progresses to fall, she will introduce into her talk Short-eared, Long-eared and the northern migrants, Northern Saw-whet and Snowy. This should be an exciting talk about a group of rather mysterious birds.

As in the past, we will take our speaker to dinner. The restaurant for this is the Brick Oven, in the Rio Hill Shopping Plaza. Hope to see you there at 5:30 pm on the 8th. Our speaker for February 12th will be our own Jim Nix, who will talk about birds and birding in the home of the Khmer people, Cambodia.



Eastern Screech Owl  
Photo by Wolfgang Wander  
Wikimedia Commons

**BirdingTidbits** about a bird you might find on the Bird Walk at Ivy Creek in January  
by Jenny Gaden

## First Saturday Bird Walk January 3 at 7:30am

On the first Saturday of each month, the Monticello Bird Club offers a bird walk, led by a Club member, at Ivy Creek Natural Area. Participants gather in the parking lot at 7:30am. Birders of all levels are welcome.

Walk Leaders  
Winter-Spring 2014

**Jan. 3 .... David White**

Feb. 7... Teresa Shaner

Mar. 7 .... Stauffer Miller

Apr. 4.... Gabriel Mapel

For information about opportunities and events at Ivy Creek Natural Area, follow this link to the [Ivy Creek Foundation Public Program Calendar](#).

What is the first bird that you will see or hear in 2015? For many of us I bet it will be the Carolina Wren, ringing in the new year with its joyous and bubbly song. One of the nice things about this small brown bird with a white stripe over its eye is its desire to sing throughout the year. In the winter too many birds give us nothing but a brief “chip” (Cardinal), “kip-kip” (Winter Wren), “chuck” (Hermit Thrush), or “tick” (Junco). Now how merry is that? In contrast the male Carolina Wren throws out a rollicking “tea kettle, tea kettle, tea kettle”, or several variations on the theme at different speeds. Another celebratory thing that the wren does is dance. By dancing I mean bouncing up and down as it stands and looks about. I’m not sure why the wren does this. Surely it is not because he’s always in a jolly mood. I think it may have to do with vision. It reminds me of owls when they move their heads forward and back, and side to side, to focus on subjects near and far. Carolina Wrens may turn up at your feeder for a New Year’s treat or, if you go for a walk in a wilder place, you may see one hopping over the ground, poised on a stump or scrambling around the shrubbery as it forages for insects and spiders. May your new year open with a ringing song.



Carolina Wren  
Photo by Doug Rogers

## Field Trips

Organized by Gabriel Mapel



## Shenandoah Valley

**Date:** Saturday, January 10th

**Meeting Place & Time:** 8am, Inn at Afton Parking Lot  
(Top of Afton Mountain, at the site of the Rock  
fish Gap Hawk Watch)

**Leader:** Gabriel Mapel  
[birdmangabriel@yahoo.com](mailto:birdmangabriel@yahoo.com)  
540-363-5035

Gabriel will lead us on a trip to his home area, the Shenandoah Valley, in pursuit of various ducks and perhaps Snow Geese and Tundra Swans. We will tour around Augusta and perhaps southern Rockingham or northern Rockbridge Counties and stop at local lakes hoping to spot visiting waterfowl.

Please note that this is expected to be an all-day trip, until approximately 3 or 4pm. Those who would like a shorter day may carpool and head back earlier. There will be no formal lunch stop, so packing a bag lunch is advised. This trip will be held rain or shine, but may be cancelled for dangerous weather (snow, ice, etc.)

## Highland County

**Date:** Saturday, January 24th

**Meeting Place & Time:** 7am at Bed Bath & Beyond  
parking lot in Barracks Road Shopping Center  
or meet us en route (7:45-8am) at the shopping  
center at the intersection of routes 42 and 250  
in Churchville.

**Leader:** Doug Rogers  
[doug5996@gmail.com](mailto:doug5996@gmail.com)  
434-973-7634

Our target bird on this annual trek is the Golden Eagle; other possibilities include Rough-legged Hawks, Horned Larks, various sparrows and winter birds. After a brief pit stop at the Confederate Breastworks, we will pass through McDowell and on to Monterey, where we will bird the beautiful Blue Grass Valley. Plan on having lunch in a local Monterey restaurant. After eating, we may visit a pond on Route 220 that frequently has several species of waterfowl. Dress warmly in layers. Bring spotting scopes and walkie-talkies. Plan on having a great day.

## Totier Creek Park

**Date:** Saturday, January 31st

**Meeting Place & Time:** 7am at the Dairy Barn Road  
Parking Lot off Rte 20 (across from PVCC)  
for carpooling or 7:30 at Totier Creek Park

**Leader:** Jim Nix  
434-987-3321

Totier Creek Park is a park of 200 acres, about one third water, and has 3 miles of trails. It is visited during the Warren Christmas Count.

**Directions:** Drive south from Charlottesville on Route 20 and, just north of Scottsville, turn right on Route 726 (James River Road). Follow this past the shopping center and the intersections with Routes 6 & 737. After about a mile, turn left onto Route 845 (Totier Creek Road) into the Park.

## Charlottesville/Albemarle Bluebird Trails 2014

by Ann Dunn, County Coordinator, Virginia Bluebird Society

Forty sites within the extended Hammond, Kingston, Minor and Leaning bluebird trails were monitored this year. From 492 boxes, 2462 native cavity nesters fledged — of which 72% were Eastern Bluebirds, 23% Tree Swallows, 4% Carolina Chickadees, and the remainder a mix of House Wrens and Tufted Titmice. The species distribution represents a slight shift toward Tree Swallows at the expense of bluebirds compared to past seasons.

This was not an easy year for our cavity nesters. We witnessed an abbreviated season with nestings beginning very late, presumably related to the harsh winter and delayed spring. The average date of first eggs reported was April 16, more than two weeks later than that of the last 3 years, and late enough that in many sites Tree Swallows beat out bluebirds for first nestings. Surprisingly, nesting ended earlier than usual, with little activity reported after the beginning of August. Breeding activity as measured by nesting attempts per box was at 1.5 down from a figure of 1.7 for the past two years. In addition to the shortened season, an unusually high number of boxes were reported unused this season, contributing to the decline.

Seventy-eight percent of eggs in our nesting boxes developed into fledging birds, representing a decline from a high of 85% last year. The difference can be attributed mainly to an unusually high mortality rate of chicks in the nest. Many nestling deaths appear to have been caused by invertebrate pests (blowfly larvae and mites) but others were for undetermined reasons.

We thank all of our very dedicated volunteers who maintain and monitor these now historic nest box trails. Data from our area will be combined with that from more than 40 other Virginia Counties to produce a completed report of nesting activity in the state to the Virginia Bluebird Society. We will wish for a more agreeable weather pattern for our native cavity nesters in 2015 and with it a return to normal productivity.



Photo by Doug Rogers

## BRYBC's January Birding Challenge

by Mary Mapel

Blue Ridge Young Birders

photo by Mary Mapel

Gabriel and I spend much of our time hiking in Shenandoah National Park, and as we walk through the tall oak woods in hopes of seeing a bear, it is humbling to think that these mighty trees once grew from such tiny acorns. The December meeting of the Blue Ridge Young Birders elicited a similar feeling of awe and inspiration as twenty young birders gathered to celebrate the second anniversary of our club's formation. Two years ago Eve Gaige was birding with Gabriel when she asked the simple question, "Do you have any other kids your age to bird with, or do you just have us old coots?". Gabriel's lack of same-aged peers to bird with inspired Eve's vision of a young birders club. The Blue Ridge Young Birders Club boasted four founding members whose excitement about birds and the joy of meeting other teen birders paved the path for this club that is now growing by leaps and bounds. As Eve and I stood at the recent meeting, looking out at the crowd of young birders and their families, we were moved deeply to see how this club has blossomed from the first kernel of inspiration to this exuberant crowd of excited and passionate young birders.



One of the founding premises of the club is that the youth provide the direct leadership and decision-making for the club activities. While Eve and I serve as the adult coordinators, mentoring the youth in their leadership roles and handling some of the more time-consuming administrative tasks, the young birders have done a remarkable job of organizing field trips and creating and delivering the presentations offered at the meetings. While the club was first open to youth age 12-18, it soon became apparent that there was a whole younger age set of interested kids who wanted to learn about birds. Andrew, Carson and Gabriel, the oldest club members, felt excited to step into the mentorship role, and have so beautifully shared their knowledge with a new generation of young birders. The club is now open to kids as young as age seven who demonstrate an ability to participate without disturbing the birding experience of the other members. The club offers kids the opportunity to not only learn about birds while making new friends but also to develop as leaders and mentors. They truly are the hope for the future of our ecological survival!

Our main fundraiser for the club is our annual January Birding Challenge where the young birders collect pledges from friends and family, based on the total number of birds seen by all club members in the month of January. We invite you to consider sponsoring our young birders by making a pledge. (Here's a link to [BRYBC's website](#) where you will find pledge details.) You can make a flat sum donation to the club or sponsor a specific number of cents per species seen. To give you some idea, last year there were a total of 139 species seen by BRYBC members in the month of January. So, if a sponsor pledged 10¢ a species, then the total collected was \$13.90. The monies raised by the Challenge helps cover such costs as website, bluebird trail manuals, photo exhibits, special field trips, and it will also go towards the Chimney Swift Tower should we gain final approval as anticipated. We would very much appreciate it if you would consider contributing towards our fundraising goals.

We want to give a special thank you to MBC for their wonderful support of our club to date. The Club's annual donation goes a long way towards meeting our basic budgetary needs. Of equal importance is the wonderful support MBC members give in terms of mentorship each time the two clubs meet together at First Saturday Bird walks or joint field trips. Thank you so much for embracing our newly fledged birders with patience and enthusiasm. We look forward to what the future holds for our club and the young birders as they continue to pave the way as conservation leaders of the future!



## Winter King Green Hawthorn: *Crataegus viridis*



I knew I was taking a risk when I planted nine specimens of “Winter King” Green Hawthorn to flank our entrance to Omanu. The risk was cedar rust from the scores of American Red Cedars further up the driveway to the house. We planted the two inch diameter trees in the fall of 1998 and provided tender loving care through four consecutive years of drought.



I chose Winter King because, although not completely resistant, it is less susceptible to rust than other Hawthorns. Very little rust was obvious for the first three years but the cumulative effect of drought stress took its toll in 2002 with obvious signs of rust on the leaves and the fruit in particular. I consulted with Michael Abbott, an arborist with Bartlett Tree Experts, who suggested a targeted integrated pest management program using a systemic fungicide “Banner” in the spring of 2003. Three spray treatments were applied at two week intervals commencing on April 23 when the flowers were starting to open.



Mid-February, 2007 was extraordinary. Over a period of three days, about 200 Cedar Waxwings, 30+ American Robins, 12 Eastern Blue Birds and 2 Northern Mockingbirds feasted on the Hawthorn Berries. The trees were stripped bare of fruit by the end of Day 3. We used our car as a photography and observation blind. What memories!



No other Hawthorn selection has received as much attention as Winter King. With the almost vase-shaped branching structure and distinct gray-green stems, it is an excellent choice as a small ornamental tree or for use with the contrasting red berries against an evergreen background. Our Green Hawthorns are, now, about 15 feet high and wide.

Winter King is one of my favorites because it is spectacular in three ways: in the spring, white flowers against lustrous green foliage, persistent orange/red fruit in the fall and winter and, last but not least, the bark on older stems exfoliates and exposes wonderful grays, greens and orangish browns.

A truly wonderful addition to our “wild garden.”





## Treasurer's Notes

by Maynard K. Davis

As we reach the halfway point of our fiscal year, the club is in good financial shape. There are small budget shortfalls in membership fees and birdseed sale profits, but they are offset by budget savings in a planned data project. We should break even for the year.



Maynard

## Membership Notes

by Lesslie Crowell

Please give a warm welcome to our newest members Graham and Jane Fallon; Myrlene Staten and Richard Teig; and Diana Foster. MBC to date has 141 paid members, 29 of which are new since March 1, 2014. Thanks to all renewed members for your continuing support of MBC, and all best wishes for a good year of birding in 2015!

Lesslie



## MBC Minutes, December 11, 2014

Submitted by Peggy Cornett, Secretary



-President Doug Rogers presided at the meeting with forty present.

-Two **bird sightings** were reported: a Yellow-breasted Chat has been observed in Belmont and a Painted Bunting in the Rio Road West area of Charlottesville. Doug welcomed first timers including Frances Taylor of Crozet and Diana Bower, a friend of the speaker.

-**Membership** coordinator Lesslie Crowell welcomed new members Jane and Graham Fallon, Myrlene Staten and Rich Teig.

-Gabriel Mapel reported on **field trips**. Gabriel led the recent walk at Riverview Park with twenty-four birders (including nine members of the Blue Ridge Young Birders Club), and they saw thirty-six species, including a King Fisher. Upcoming field trips: December 20 with Leigh Surdokowski to western Albemarle County to see sparrows and ducks; January 10 to the Shenandoah Valley with Gabriel; January 24 Doug Rogers will lead the Highland County trip; and January 31 with Jim Nix to Totter Creek Reservoir near Scottsville.

-Maynard Davis gave the **treasurer's report**. The Bird Seed Sale was a success and, while membership is slightly down to date, the club has made up for the short-fall by underspending on other items and thus should be on budget. MBC will fund a member of the BRYBC to Hog Island next summer.

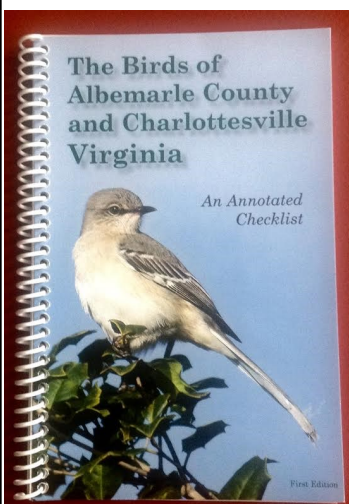
-Jenny Gaden reported on the **Charlottesville Christmas Bird Count**, Sunday, December 14. Newcomers and novice birders are always welcome. A pot-luck supper will be held at the home of Francis Fife and Nancy O'Brien.

-Leigh Surdokowski, coordinator of the **First Saturday Bird Walk** at Ivy Creek Natural Area, reported that there are openings for leaders for the June and October 2015 dates. Also, because these walks have become so popular, with as many as 25-30 people attending, she is looking to schedule two leaders so that the large groups can be divided. She therefore needs a lot of secondary leaders for the upcoming year.

-Stauffer Miller introduced the **speaker, Elizabeth Evans** of Loudon County, who gave a program on the Monarch Butterfly.

-The club's **annual Holiday Party** followed the presentation, with door prizes, pot-luck dishes, and hot cider, organized and orchestrated by Ron and Priscilla Kingston.

## Annotated Checklist Going Online



Future revised editions of The Birds of Albemarle County and Charlottesville Virginia: An Annotated Checklist, published in 2010, will be found online. The MBC Board has just approved a proposal to support a future digital checklist. Details of the project are yet to be worked out, but stay tuned. We will certainly appreciate the ability to revise and update as needed without the huge cost of a "reprinting." However, we hope that we can manage to preserve a good part of the beauty and feel of the print experience.

## Having trouble hearing birdsong??



Used SongFinder© device available for \$50 donation to MBC.



Contact Ann Dunn  
add7k@virginia.edu  
434-296-3496

## ALC Copies Inc.

1170 Emmet St.  
295-2679

[A Local Choice](http://www.alccopies.com)

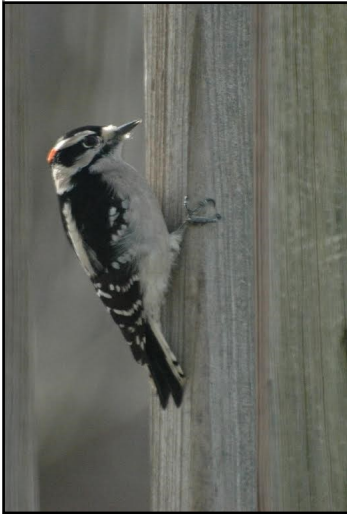
orders@alccopies.com



ALC Copies Inc., a locally owned small business, generously supports our MBC Bird Club by printing our newsletters at no cost to us.  
**For your personal printing needs, please choose ALC!**



## Local Sightings



Guy Babineau photographed this **Downy Woodpecker**, (at left) an expected winter resident, posing in his yard.

Doug Rogers went to Belmont to document the reported and most unexpected **Yellow-breasted Chat** (above) still hanging around the area and enjoying the fruit feast provided by his gracious neighborhood host.

## Links to Articles of Interest

Intrepid birder and citizen scientist Janet Paisley submitted links to two fascinating articles discussing scientific discoveries in **avian vocal and auditory capabilities**. Both articles appeared in December—the former about [birdsong and human speech](#) is from the Washington Post and the latter about [warblers' ability to "hear tornadoes"](#) was from BBC News. Read them and be awed anew by our feathered friends.



And, if you're looking for some positive news about the state of the birds in the New Year, amidst the usual gloom and doom reports, Audubon has published [this article](#) citing its **top ten conservation victories in 2014**.

## Some Notes from the Local Christmas Bird Count

Several years ago Jenny Gaden, compiler of the Charlottesville Christmas Count, assigned to me the sector known to her as "Mo's Old Count Area." This sector paralleled the east side of the South Rivanna River from the dam to the railroad track. Mo Stephens walked this stretch of riverbank for many years until age and infirmity disabled him, and Jenny passed it on to me.

Since the time Mo monitored this area, large parcels have become unreachable due to "no trespassing" signs. Nevertheless, I do the best I can with what is still reachable. I began the December 14th count at the dam and soon found one of my better birds, a soaring adult **Bald Eagle**. Further downstream, I encountered a large flock of **Red-winged Blackbirds**. Leaving the river, I ventured north to an area Mo never covered, at least in its present form, the Hollymead shopping area.

You might think a shopping area is an odd place for birding, but all areas are to be covered in the count. For some time, **Horned Larks** have been seen periodically uphill from the Target store. When I didn't see any from the car, I did an extensive walk over the barren areas there, apparently produced some years ago by bulldozers. Just as I was ready to give up, two of the larks flew up and I had great looks at them. From there, I moved downhill to a small retention pond below the Kohl's store. To my surprise, a handsome male **Hooded Merganser** was swimming and diving in the pond. I think Mo would be pleased, and perhaps surprised, to know that despite mankind's manipulations of his former territory, birds still manage to find and use it. *Stauffer Miller*

## CBC Notes continued...

Our CBC group, led by Peter Mehring, visited the area of Blandemar Farms. Our find for the day was a **Cackling Goose**, first seen on the larger lake at Blandemar, then later in the morning we found it again on a smaller pond. During our first sighting, it was swimming in a row of eight Canada Geese; we initially thought it must be a duck due to its small size.

The Cackling Goose was a life bird for at least a couple of team members.



**Cackling Geese** (smaller size and foreshortened bill) & **Canada Geese**  
*Dominic Sherony*  
Wikimedia Commons

*Jon Nafziger*

**Monticello Bird Club**  
P.O. Box 4362  
Charlottesville, Virginia 22905



Visit our website at  
[www.monticellobirdclub.org](http://www.monticellobirdclub.org)  
for club and membership information.

The **Club meets** on the **second Thursday** of each month, September through June, at the **Education Building of the Ivy Creek Natural Area** on Earlsville Rd, 1/2 mile north of Hydraulic Rd.

The editor of the **MBC Newsletter** welcome submissions, including articles, photographs and notices. **DEADLINE** for each issue is **9:00AM on the 20th** of the month.

|                |                               |  |                              |
|----------------|-------------------------------|--|------------------------------|
| President      | Doug Rogers                   | doug5996@gmail.com                           | 434-409-8156                 |
| Vice President | Kathy Sudduth                 | kas3m2@embarqmail.com                        | 434-973-0690                 |
| Secretary      | Peggy Cornett                 | pcornett@monticello.org                      | 434-984-9816                 |
| Treasurer      | Maynard K. Davis              | davismk@sbcglobal.net                        | 434-205-4268                 |
| Field Trips    | Gabriel Mapel                 | birdmangabriel@yahoo.com                     | 540-363-5035                 |
| Speakers       | Stauffer Miller<br>Lou Tanner | stauffer@seepub.com<br>lmtannerxiv@gmail.com | 434-296-5505<br>434-979-1722 |
| Publicity      | VACANT                        |  |                              |
| Hospitality    | Priscilla Kingston            | kingston@cstone.net                          | 434-293-5173                 |
| Newsletter     | Joanne Bricker                | mbcnleditor@gmail.com                        | 434-825-2676                 |
| Membership     | Lesslie Crowell               | lessliecrowell@aol.com                       | 434-295-1395                 |
| Birdseed Sale  | VACANT                        |  |                              |