



Monticello Bird Club

March 2007

Volume 21, Number 7

March Meeting Topic: Bird Banding Program at Blandy Experimental Farm

Our speaker this month, Greg Sours, will present, a brief historical account of bird banding and will outline the primary goals and significance of banding. Mr. Sours will also discuss recent population trends of a few avian species obtained from data collected at two MAPS stations in the Shenandoah Valley. He will provide information regarding how one can become involved with a bird banding operation, and he will have tools of the craft on hand for all to see.

Greg Sours attended Lord Fairfax Community College, where he received his Associates degree in Natural Resource Management and the Graduate of the Year Award. While in attendance, he began learning the craft of bird banding, and now has over 15,000 hrs of banding experience. He has used this craft to study avian population dynamics for the National Park Service, the National Science Foundation, and for other federal, state, and local agencies. In

2003, he moved to Asheville, NC and obtained B.S. degrees in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology from the University of North Carolina. Today, he continues honing his bird banding skills and will be operating a Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship (MAPS) station at Blandy Experimental Farm at the State Arboretum of Virginia in Boyce during the summer of 2007.

Please join MBC members and our speaker for dinner at Wild Greens Restaurant in the North Wing of Barracks Road Shopping Center on March 8th at 5:45 pm prior to the meeting.

Upcoming Meeting Topics

April 12: Stauffer Miller will speak on Birds and Birding on Cape Cod, Massachusetts.



Loggerhead Shrike photographed north of Scottsville by Robert Capon.

Comments From the President

There is so much discouraging environmental news these days that I like sharing good news when there is some – and there is. Millions of birds that would otherwise have spent their lives in cages adorning European living rooms, or died on their way to that destination, are saved from such a fate. In January the European Union announced a ban on the import of wild birds. They did so out of fear of introducing infectious diseases including avian influenza. The European market constituted 90% of the trade in wild birds so, as a result, as many as four million birds a year will remain in the wild.

Many of these birds were parrots such as the African gray parrot and the scarlet macaw. Those of you who have been to Peru's Amazon river basin to see the

macaws fly into the clay licks just as the sun is rising know what freedom and splendor their wild existence speaks of. To capture and cage such creatures is unconscionable. To make matters worse, roughly half of all the birds that are collected for market die during capture and transport. But the good thing is that most of that practice will now come to a halt. Some North American birds such as the Painted Bunting and Lawrence's Goldfinch will profit from the ban.

Now, let's work towards a ban of the wild bird trade within the Americas. The indigo bunting is apparently a favorite in Mexican pet shops. For me, there isn't a parrot, a parakeet, a cockatoo or a bunting that looks better in a cage than in the treetops.

- Jennifer Gaden, president

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Photographing Birds in Your Backyard

By Victoria Dye

Spring approaches and the birds are gearing up to look their best. Shiny new feathers and vibrant colors explode as courtship reaches its peak, so why not take advantage and get great bird shots.

All you need are a few feeders, clean natural looking perches and a camera. Watch and see the birds pose for you.

Setting up your bird studio

Photography is all about light. Your best light is in the morning and evening. Orient feeders and perches so the early morning or late evening light bathes your birds in a warm glow. Avoid backlit or severely side lit birds. Go outside and see what the light does. Remember the track of the sun will move as the days get longer.

Pictures of birds on feeders are ok, but an image of a bird on a natural perch looks much better. Find a couple of tree branches of a height to photograph at eye level and remove the leaves. I like long branches with just 1-2 smaller branches for birds to perch on. Look for good

bark that doesn't look dead. Now dig a hole in the ground or use a portable hole to set the branches upright near the feeders. Birds like to perch near the feeder before they commit.

Position the perch so you have a nice clean background. You want the background to be blurred out and a pleasing color. Don't place it against the ugly white sky or your neighbor's home. Find some bushes or grass for the background. The further the background is from your perch the more blurred it will be.

You will need a blind to hide yourself and your camera in. This can be your home or a blind you set up or build in your yard. I have a hunting blind from Wal-Mart that cost \$50. It has ample zipper access to allow me to sit or stand while manning my camera. You can shoot out a window of your home as well, but will need to open the window and remove any screens to get a clean shot.

Before doing final placement of your perches or blind get out there with your camera setup and see if it works. Have

someone hold the perch for you and focus your camera on it. Make sure the background is nice and simple and that you're close enough to have the bird fill your frame. Remember the angle you



White-breasted Nuthatch. Photo by Victoria Dye.

shoot from changes your background. Focus on the same perch while standing and sitting to see if there is a difference.

Camera equipment

Birds are small and will tolerate you to be pretty close, but they have limits. Some

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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 April issue is March 25.** Please email information to Amy Gilmer at akgilmer@comcast.net or send to 3166 Welsh Run Road, Ruckersville, VA 22968.

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Please visit our website at
www.monticellobirdclub.org

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Upcoming Field Trips

Humpback Rocks Visitor Center Blue Ridge Parkway Saturday, March 10

Join field trip leader Jenny Gaden as we look for American Woodcocks putting on their aerial display. Bring a strong flashlight to spot the woodcocks. **Meet at the Humpback Rocks Visitor Center on the Blue Ridge Parkway at 6 pm.** Questions? Contact Jenny Gaden at 434-293-6275 or jgaden@earthlink.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. Join John Zimmerman on the March 3rd walk and Stauffer Miller on the April 7 walk.

Membership Update Final Notice to Pay 2007 Dues

We have 193 members in the Membership Database. Of that number 152 members have paid their 2007 dues (79%). Those 41 members who have not paid are encouraged to submit dues so that you will not be removed from the membership list. If you think you have paid, but are not sure, please Email either Robyn Kells at rkells@ntelos.net, or Henry Konat at henryk54@verizon.net to verify your membership status.

We are pleased to report that we have added 26 new memberships since July 1, 2006.

Scottsville Area Wednesday, March 14

Stauffer Miller will lead this trip along the rural roads near Scottsville, checking ponds for waterfowl. We will stop in Scottsville for coffee and snacks. **Meet at the Green Mountain Country Store in Keene (along Route 20 in southern Albemarle County) at 8 am.** Stauffer can transport several people from Charlottesville to the meeting spot. Questions? Contact Stauffer Miller at 434-296-5505 or stauffer@seepub.com

Pen Park Nature Trail Saturday, March 17

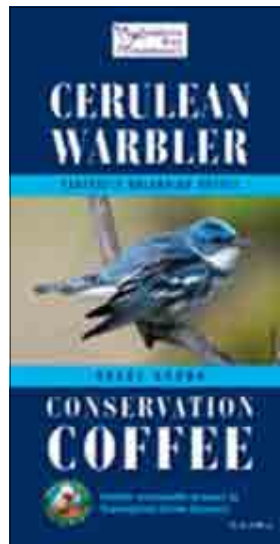
Join John Zimmerman on this easy hike on the Pen Park Nature Trail and the Dunlora bottoms. **Meet at 7:00 am at the head of the nature trail by Shelter #2 in the Pen Park picnic area.** Questions? Contact John at 974-9293 or jozim-mva@earthlink.net

American Bird Conservancy Launches Shade Grown Coffee to Protect Cerulean Warblers

The Cerulean Warbler is North America's fastest declining neotropical songbird. The primary reason for this decline is loss and fragmentation of its wintering habitat in the Andes Mountains of South America. Studies indicate that the species has experienced a decline of close to 80% since 1966. As a result, the American Bird Conservancy has begun a campaign to save the Cerulean Warbler.

In order to help fund this effort, the American Bird Conservancy is partnering with Thanksgiving Coffee to produce a shade-grown Colum-

bian coffee called, Cerulean Warbler Conservation Coffee. Shade grown coffee plantations are at risk of being converted to sun coffee and other cash crops, resulting in a loss of forest cover and bird habitat. This coffee is grown alongside the Cerulean Warbler Reserve in Columbia. A \$1.50 from each package of coffee sales goes to supporting the habitat of the Cerulean Warbler and other migratory song birds.



Cerulean Warbler Conservation Coffee can be ordered from www.abcbirds.org or by calling 1-800-648-6491.

MBC Minutes for February 8, 2007

President Jenny Gaden presided over the meeting. There were 64 present, including three newcomers.

Treasurer's Report: Henry Konat was not present. The club's income for the period was \$9,950.75 and expenses were \$8,991.27 .

Field Trips: John Zimmerman discussed the upcoming Highland County trip. The March trip to Lake Anna may need a leader if Mark Adams is unavailable. Stauffer Miller reported on his recent mid-week walk to a pond near Scottsville, which he did by himself, and saw five species of water fowl, including two American Coots, two Pied-billed Grebes, American Black Ducks, and 8 Red-head Ducks.

Bird Club Web Site: Thanks to Ken Klotz's leadership, the bird club now has a new domain address: www.monticellobirdclub.org. Members are encouraged to visit the site often. Members were also invited to submit any digital photos to Ken for consideration as "picture of the month" on the web site.

American Birding Association: Jenny Gaden noted that the American Birding Association has published a map showing lands designated by the

Department of Defense for bird conservation. The map details significant birding regions, including the short and tall grass prairies. The ABC is also making available a new brand of shade-grown coffee from central Columbia to raise money to conserve important winter habitats, especially for the Cerulean Warblers. For more information, visit the Web site at: www.abcbirds.org; or call 1-800-648-6491.

Blue Bird Trail: Bob Hammond, with the help of a dozen volunteers, has been maintaining 340 Bluebird houses and he reported that, in 2006, 1,174 Bluebirds fledged. Bob is asking for someone to take over his responsibilities in managing and coordinating this project.

Charlottesville/Albemarle Bird Lists: Teresa Shaner and Leah Surdukowski provided check lists for those interested in participating in their bird list project.

General Announcements: Dede Austin was concerned about a recent article in Newsweek magazine about a woman who shot a Cardinal because it was flying into her windows. Dede recommended playing a tape recording of a male bird of the same species to discourage this territorial behavior. There was discussion about ways to keep water from freezing in bird baths. Suggestions included using a heated pet water

bowl and trying a regular heating element.

Bird Sightings: A Bald Eagle was spotted flying over 5th Street as well as a huge kettle of Black and Turkey Vultures. A Red-shouldered Hawk was monitoring a bird feeder in a downtown Charlottesville courtyard and got a bird. Teresa Shaner reported that Leigh Surdukowski visited Chris Greene Lake and saw 5 species of water fowl, including Mallards, Ruddy, American Black, and Ring-necked Ducks, a Lesser Scaup, and a pair of adult Bald Eagles. There was a lot of discussion about Bluebird activity. Lou Tanner saw three Bluebirds in Belmont. Jim Nix has had them coming to his bird feeder and eating the no-hull sunflower seed. (It was suggested the seed might have worms that attracted the Bluebirds). Jenny Gaden has had Bluebirds eating the berries of her Ilex verticillata (Winterberry Holly). Nancy Newman has seen Bluebirds spending the night in their bird houses. For a number of years Nancy has observed Short-eared Owls in the fields on Route 617 in Louisa County during the winter. They have shared the fields with a Harrier, which hunts by day while the owls patrol the territory by night. Nancy has still not seen the owls this season, but she has heard of an alleged sighting, which has not been confirmed.

- Peggy Cornett, secretary

Photographing birds...

(Continued from page 2)

birds are shyer than others, so you may get a better variety the further away you are. You will need at least 300mm of lens, but 400-500 is more realistic *and more is better*. I shoot with a 300-800mm Sigma lens. This is beyond most hobbyists, but Sigma has a nice affordable 50-500mm that should fit an amateur's budget. Canon and Nikon also have a variety of zoom lens to choose from. If

you can afford IS or VR lens get them. These help you take sharper images at lower shutter speeds, but more on that next time.

For those of you with digital point and shoot cameras get the longest optical zoom you can, 10x or more. Avoid digital zoom as it will give you poor results. Digiscoping is another option to give you a better working range. This is where you attach the camera to a

spotting scope.

Now fill your feeders with a variety of foods and the birds will flock to you! Have fun with different perches. Try smearing peanut butter paste into small holes on a thick branch for woodpeckers. Water features offer the opportunity to create a unique backdrop for your birds; the more natural the better. Join me next month for tips on getting that great shot!