



Monticello Bird Club

October 2015 Newsletter

Website: www.monticellobirdclub.org

Volume 30

Issue 2

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

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

at Ivy Creek Natural Area—Education Building

Comments from the President

Doug Rogers



Our new birding season is well underway – moving about as fast as a sparrow that has spotted a sharpshinned in his rear-view mirror. At the Board Meeting and in last month's newsletter, we asked for a Club project that reflected the Club's values and mission. We wanted to involve the community and our young people, and we wanted to make a difference for birds, birding and bird conservation – an ambitious goal.

Maynard Davis hatched the idea of a poster contest for kids. The posters would reflect conservation issues and the threats that birds face. We reached out to Mary Mapel to lead this effort. Mary took the challenge and ran with it. The theme of the contest is *Bird Conservation: Understanding the Threats; Finding the Solutions*. It is open to youth (K-8th grade) from Charlottesville, Albemarle and Nelson counties. There will be two age groups. Six classrooms will win prizes of complete bird-feeder stations, including field guides and birdseed. There will also be individual prizes of binoculars for six winners. The Monticello Bird Club and Blue Ridge Young Birders Club will jointly sponsor the contest.

To pay for this, we need to have a successful Bird Seed Sale. With John Holden at the helm, all of the parts are coming rapidly together. We have set an ambitious goal of \$12,000 in sales for this year. We reach out to *you* to help make this happen. You know what to do – contact friends and neighbors, place your own orders (It can all be done on-line now), and get the word out!



It's going to be a great year and a significant milestone in the history of our Club.

Good birding!

Programs

Lou Tanner



Topic: *The National Audubon Society's Hog Island Camp*

Speaker: *Andrew Rapp*

The speaker for October's meeting will be Andrew Rapp. Vice President of the Blue Ridge Young Birders' Club and for five years an avid birder, Andrew spent a week this past summer at the National Audubon Society's Hog Island Camp and is grateful for the MBC's help in making this possible. He is going to repay us with a lively photographic record of his time there, complete with irresistible puffins, of course, but much else besides about the natural history in general of the island. Andrew is a student at Covenant School and—if his email address is any indication—an enthusiastic lacrosse player and cross country runner. By my count, that leaves almost no time whatsoever for anything else. We should be in for a treat as we head back north and view things through the eyes of a budding expert. "Avid" is an understatement.



Hog Island Camp
Photo by Doug Rogers

Please join us at the Brick Oven at 5:30 on Thursday October 8 to "dine" and Meet the Speaker. This time around, reservations are planned.

For November we have a twofer. Continuing the cold, wet, northern climes theme, U.Va. Biology Professor Henry Wilbur and equally distinguished and botanically inclined wife Becky will show slides and talk about their trip of last summer to Newfoundland. Versatile experts on amphibians, insects, trees, shrubs, and flowers as well as birds –and that does not begin to tell their story, they will wax enthusiastic about gannets, puffins, icebergs, and obscure small plants of rocky northern shores. More in next month's newsletter. Do come.

First Saturday Bird Walk

October 3rd 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 Fall 2015

Oct. 3 Leigh Surdukowski

Sept 5....Tom Jones
Nov. 7 ... Peter Brask
Dec. 5 ... Dave Hogg

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

Birding Tidbits...about a bird you might find on the Bird Walk at Ivy Creek this month

Jenny Gaden

Sharp-shinned Hawk

In October many of us set up our bird feeders after a summer hiatus, while others just continue their year round feeding. Whichever way you do it, expect the unexpected... such as raptors. The Sharp-shinned Hawk, *Accipiter striatus* (and the very similar but larger Cooper's Hawk, *Accipiter cooperii*) belong to a genus of bird predators, designed to pursue rapidly moving avian prey. With short wings that enable them to cruise between closely-spaced forest trees and a long tail that acts as a rudder for rapid maneuverability, they have historically had a very bad reputation as vicious killers of small birds. Today, for the most part, we are more enlightened and recognize their value in the ecological communities they inhabit. Bird feeding stations, however, serve as raptor restaurants. In a flash the Sharp-shinned Hawk swoops in, and departs with a fistful of Junco or Mourning Dove or any other delicacy on the menu that day. "Sharpies" themselves are about the size of a Blue Jay, although the "sexual dimorphism" (difference in size between male and female) is the greatest of all the North American raptors. The body mass of the male averages 57% of that of the female. That is no comfort whatsoever to the chickadee.



Sharp-shinned Hawk
Photo by Eric Ellingson
Wikimedia Commons

Editor's Note: Jenny will be taking a three month hiatus from her "Birding Tidbits" column. Please contact me, if you would enjoy writing your own "Tidbit" for any one (or all three!) of these months. And, good luck with your moving adventure, Jenny.

Field Trips

Gabriel Mapel



Rockfish Valley Trail

Date: Saturday, October 17th

Meeting Place & Time: 7:30am, Rockfish Valley trailhead parking lot (with kiosk) Highway 151, south of Nellysford

Leader: Janet Paisley
janetpaisley@comcast.net
434-989-3857

Join Janet on this morning excursion to the Rockfish Valley Trail, a fall migration hotspot in Nelson County. Previous fall trips to this location have turned up exciting warblers and sparrows, such as Connecticut Warbler and Lincoln's Sparrow, as well as their more "common" cousins. You never know what may be found on a walk at this spot. It will be a fun morning.

Directions: Take Rte 250 West to 151 South (Critzler Shop Road). Go 14 miles and pass through Nellysford. The trailhead is on the right, just beyond a small bridge over a creek.

Local Fields along RTF Trails

Date: Saturday, October 31st

Meeting Place & Time: 7:30am in the Greenbrier Elementary School parking lot

Leader: Leigh Surdukowski
lsurdukowski@gmail.com
434-295-8241

Leigh will lead a walk looking for sparrows and other migrants in several of the local fields around town on the Rivanna Trails Foundation trails.



Treasurer's Notes

Maynard K. Davis

Now is the time to pay dues! (...unless you joined March 1 or later) Electronic payment and directions for check/postal payment may be found at our website, www.monticellobirdclub.org.

Also, please do your part to help us reach our lofty Bird Seed Sale / Fundraiser goal of \$12,000 by purchasing seed and spreading word of our Sale to fellow nature lovers.

Maynard



Membership Notes

Lesslie Crowell

Many thanks to all who have renewed their MBC membership—particularly those who have upgraded, our many Contributors, and the following Sponsors:

Joanne Bricker & Doug Rogers
Maynard Davis
Ann Dunn
Carol & Dave Hogg
Jeannie & John Holden
Thomas A. Jones

Janet Paisley
Marilyn & Gene Phillippi
Myrlene Staten & Richard Teig
Kathy & Frank Sudduth
Sandra Williams

And...one final thanks to Nancy-Elizabeth Nimmich for her help with the MBC table at the Heritage Harvest Festival.

Lesslie



MBC Board Meeting Minutes, September 9, 2015

Peggy Cornett



-Doug Rogers welcomed all **40 wet attendees** on a dark and rainy night. **Newcomers** included Ross Galardi and spouse, Mr. and Mrs. Eugene Shatkin, and Amy Neale.

-**Unusual bird sightings** were reported. Lou Tanner saw a Sharp-shinned Hawk on the Downtown Mall, trying unsuccessfully to get at a flock of sparrows inside an impenetrable holly. Carol Hill saw a Red-tailed Hawk on a swing. Amy Neal reported eleven Turkeys. John Holden saw a Northern Harrier at Big Meadows. Doug Rogers saw two Northern Goshawks during his travels to the Adirondacks.

-**Bird Seed Sale report** was given by John Holden. Nov. 7th is Pick Up Day. This year we will have better peanut butter suet and improved sunflower chips. The goal is increased from \$10,000 to \$12,000 in sales. To meet this goal, everyone needs to order 20% more than in 2014! John has ten volunteers so far and needs members to help promote the sale among friends & family, and place fliers in public places. The link for ordering seed is already online.

-**Upcoming events** on September 12—the Afton Mountain Hawk Watch (10 AM-3 PM) and the Monticello Heritage Harvest Festival (9 AM – 6 PM). Lesslie Crowell will be promoting MBC at the Harvest Festival. Lesslie noted that, in addition to Amy Neale, new members include Elizabeth Wilson and Mike McQueen and family. She thanked those who upgraded their memberships. We now have about seventy paid renewals.

-Doug reported on a **new club initiative** to reach out to community schools through a Bird Conservation Poster Contest. The project, led by Mary Mapel and supported by MBC and the Blue Ridge Young Birders Club, will encourage students to submit posters depicting bird conservation threats and solutions and will likely include curriculum lessons about mapping migrations, habitat loss, and other environmental issues. Prizes are being determined by a subcommittee who will be judging the contest, and may include feeding stations, a membership to the Cornell Feeder Watch, bluebird nesting boxes, binoculars, and other items. (A link to contest details is now on our website.)

-Maynard Davis gave the **treasurer's report**. Income is up \$524 so far this year. We have a goal of 175 members. We have received a \$950 refund from the VSO for last spring's annual meeting.

-Gabriel Mapel had Doug read his report on **recent and upcoming field trips**. Four Nighthawks were seen at Ivy Creek during the first gathering in late August and six were seen on the second. Stauffer Miller will lead the September 12 trip to Scogo Lake and Blandemar. The September 19 trip to Old Mills Trail (Rivanna Greenway) will be with Doug Rogers. The September 26 trip to Lickinghole Creek will be led by Peter Brask.

-Joanne Bricker thanked recent contributors to the newsletter and asked for **links to interesting articles** that can be included. She has flyers for the bird seed sale.

-Susan Babineau announced she and husband Guy hope to generate more members to the **Monticello Facebook group**, which is private and is monitored. Facebook is a good way to announce upcoming fieldtrip reminders and other club events.

-**Jenny Gaden** offered a notebook of excellent bird slides for anyone who is interested.

-**Carol Hill** reported that Dr. Robert C. (Bob) Hammond died September 1. The Daily Progress acknowledged his many contributions to our community in his obituary (See Dan Bieker's remembrance article followed by a link to Bob Hammond's obituary on page 5 of this Newsletter.)



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Remembrance for Bob Hammond 1922 - 2015

by Dan Bieker

So many folks in the community, and especially the MBC, had the pleasure of knowing Bob Hammond. Bob passed away recently, but not without leaving a legacy of jokes, hard work, and bluebird boxes just about everywhere.

At 6'4" and 225 lbs., Bob was one big fellow, with a heart and smile even bigger. I first met him almost 30 years ago, when trespassing on his land at Mallard Lake. Out scouting birding sites, I was sneaking around when suddenly confronted by this huge hulk of a man rumbling down the hillside. A desperate plea for mercy ensued, but with one mention of birds, he broke into that big grin of his, and an ongoing friendship was born.

Bob grew up on a farm in PA and became a veterinarian, treating everything from canaries to draft horses. He was a WWII Army veteran, and later helped establish the Virginia-Maryland Regional College of Veterinary Medicine, serving on the faculty in MD. Retirement brought him to Albemarle County, where he took up the hobby of building bird houses. Many a bluebird, chickadee, titmouse, and tree swallow now owe their existence to him, and he's been an inspiration for the cadre of volunteers that have taken up the cause.

Ivy Creek, Master Gardeners, and Boy Scouts are just a few beneficiaries of the many supported by his volunteer efforts. His gentle nature and infectious laughter will be missed. Bob possessed three qualities in particular that affected so many around him — humor, impeccable integrity, and a passion for all things wild and free...

Editor's Note: At our September meeting, Carol Hill announced the sad news of Bob's passing on Sept 1st, and directed us to [his obituary that appeared in the Daily Progress on Sept. 4th.](#)

Discover the James — Bald Eagle Tour

by Doug Rogers

Want an exciting and unusual birding and boating adventure? One that you can share with no more than five other people? One that combines Bald Eagles and Osprey grabbing fish from the water — right in front of you? Have I whetted your appetite? If so, check out this web site:

<http://www.discoverthejames.com/?q=Eagle-Tour>

I have been on James River Bald Eagle Tour three times now. My goal was to hone my skills at shooting photos of these birds of prey grabbing fish from the river. This is one photo that I particularly like.

Even if you aren't a newbie (or seasoned) photographer, you will enjoy this tour. The drive is only about 1½ hours from Pantops Mountain. The tour operator, Captain Mike Ostrander, is a very congenial and man; he loves his resident raptors and knows their territories. He welcomes and bids farewell to the many migrants that use and pass through his stretch of river, and he is well-versed in the cultural history of the James, as well. He goes the proverbial "extra mile" for his customers.

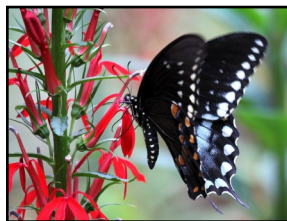
Captain Mike's tours run throughout the year and change with the seasons. While the Osprey may have just left town for the winter, there is much to recommend this delightful adventure in any season.

Do check it out!



SPICEBUSH and SASSAFRAS: A Great Pair

I was watching a grand and beautiful butterfly. It was a Spicebush Swallowtail, taking nectar from the Joe-Pye Weed and the neighboring Jewelweed, both growing on the bank of our small stream at the entrance to our Omanu property. Over the last few years, I have encouraged two favorite larval food plants of this same handsome butterfly, namely, Spicebush (*Lindera benzoin*) and Common Sassafras (*Sassafras albidum*). Both are native to the eastern US and are rarely, if ever, seen in commercial nurseries.



Spicebush is appropriately named because its bruised leaves and stems have a spicy-sweet odor. It is also a splendid harbinger of spring with branches studded with small, greenish-yellow flowers in early April. It will grow into a dense, large (6 to 12 feet high and wide) rounded shrub in full sun, but it is somewhat open in appearance in the shade. The species is dioecious and the female spicebush has bright, red fruit that ripen in September and October. The fruits remind one of the fruits of the Cornelian Cherry (*Cornus mas*). It has been reported that up to 30 species of birds enjoy spicebush berries. The regular harvesters of our bushes are Mocking Birds and Cardinals. We have had nesting Catbirds and Brown Thrashers in this location so perhaps they enjoyed the fruit also.

In the fall, Spicebush contribute their brilliant yellow color to the wider autumn spectacle. Spicebush does best in acid, moist soils in full sun to partial shade. It is a wonderful wildlife habitat plant and should be more widely used in the landscape. Spicebush is difficult to transplant because of a coarsely, fibrous root system.



Bob Eubank, a member of the Lynchburg Bird Club and a noted expert in gardening with native plants, has a simple method of starting spicebush from seed. He collects the berries as they ripen and removes the fleshy seed coat by hand. Then, he rinses the seeds under running water in a sieve. The fruit can stain the hands, so latex gloves are a good idea. Dry the seeds on paper towels; plant two or three seeds in a 4-inch pot for germination; put the pots in flats and place screens over them to prevent rodents from eating the seeds; over-winter the planted seeds outdoors, preferably, in an area with moist shade and filtered light. After germination move the plants to increasingly larger containers as a good root system develops. Plants in a 1

to 1½ gallon pot, usually, have established root systems and can be planted out. You can also tell the male from the female at this time. Plant the females in full sun for the best berry production.

Common Sassafras

Like the Spicebush, the Sassafras Tree is a member of the Laurel family. It was one of the first trees our children were able to identify when we went on family walks in the woods. The leaves are entire ovoid, three-lobed and/or mitten-shaped. The "mittens", even, come in left and right-hand versions. The bright, green foliage turns brilliant shades of yellow, orange and red in the autumn. There is no more inspiring sight than a Sassafras thicket in full, flaming autumn color. Next to Black Tupelo or Black Gum (*Nyssa sylvatica*), this may be the best native tree for fall color.

Small, yellow flowers (male and female flowers on separate trees) appear in April just before the leaves. Female trees produce ½ inch long blue fruit which attract birds in the fall. Unfortunately, Common Sassafras is almost impossible to transplant from the wild because of the deep, tap root and few spreading, lateral roots. If grown from seed, use a similar method to that described for Spicebush. I have trained my self-sown seedlings into single-trunked trees by removing the suckers that develop and also have pruned away the lower branches. You do need to remember that Sassafras Tree is a fast grower to 20-25 feet, with slower growth to an eventual height of 30 to 60 feet.



Another great native tree to attract birds and butterflies. Excellent in naturalized plantings, roadsides and home landscaping. *Bill*

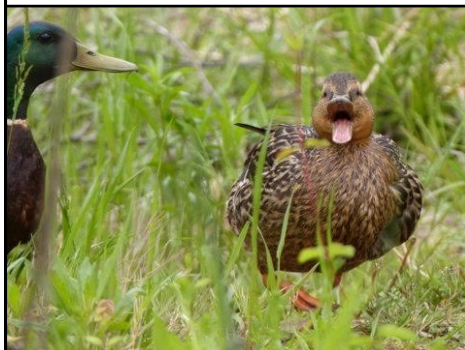


Eve Gaige kindly shared two more of her beautiful photos, **American Goldfinch** (above) and **Red-headed Woodpecker** (below).



Nancy Newman shared three of her fine photos ...

She wrote that the beautiful male **Eastern Bluebird** in the photo on the right succeeded in raising two broods. He still looks in very fine feather, despite all his parenting duties!



This female **Mallard** seems to have lots to quack about. Hmmm...wonder what the male is thinking.



Unidentified Bird!



So much information, so little time...

Follow these links to articles that your fellow birding enthusiasts recommend.

From **Mary Mapel** — You may read details about the Bird Conservation Poster Contest: “*Understanding the Threats: Finding the Solutions*” as well as instructional readings and videos about the issues birds are facing at the [Blue Ridge Young Birders website](#).

From **Joanne Bricker** — an outline of eBird capabilities, (if you didn't catch Pete Myers' informative presentation at our Sept. meeting;) or a quick refresher list of same can be found at the [Vermont Ecostudies Website](#). If you scroll down to the section entitled “*Big Media*,” be sure to click on the word “*here*” to get a glimpse of the capabilities of soon-to-be-available technology— enabling you to attach photos and audio to your eBird checklists. Wow!



Monticello Bird Club
P.O. Box 4362
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Visit our website at
www.monticellobirdclub.org
for club and membership information.

The **Club meets** on the **second Thursday** of each month, September through May, 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.

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