



# Monticello Bird Club

December 2011

Volume 26 Issue 4

## Comments from The President

Lou Tanner

Stauffer's slides from Guatemala last May reminded me of a trip a friend and I took there many, many years ago and for reasons other than birds though the macaws and toucans we encountered proved to be impossible to ignore. While preparing for it, we had independently stumbled on a book called River of Ruins by one Louis Halle. It chronicled a trip he and a fellow student had taken in search of adventure and Mayan ruins in the late 1930s. I knew the name but from another quarter, that of foreign relations and US-Soviet ones in particular, and was intrigued to find that the two

authors were one and the same. Even more appealing was a used bookstore discovery a decade or so later of a little gem called Spring in Washington. Yet again, the author was Louis Halle.

I am always thrilled to find authors with multiple interests but am especially biased in favor of those with a keen interest in birds, and Halle was nothing if not enthusiastic about this finest of pastimes. First published over sixty years ago, his book is far more than just a gentle guide to the birds of the nation's capital. It is also not only a charming ramble around a

city that only a fraction of its visitors would ever associate with beaks and feathers with the exception of those belonging to the ever-present pigeons. It is a philosophical journey with a guide who must have been great company. Halle wrote about King Arthur, the Cold War, and Mayan temples but also—and with perhaps greater delight—about Cape May warblers, wood thrushes, and vultures. He also modestly offered his opinion that “all life, I suspect, is one.” I suspect Louis Halle is right.

## Speaker's Dinner: Brick Oven Restaurant

Stauffer Miller

For those who missed it, our first dinner with the speaker at The Brick Oven Restaurant went quite well. The food was good and not overly expensive, and service was excellent. What's not to like! Ellie complimented the restaurant's manager as we were leaving.

The Brick Oven is in Rio Hill Shopping Center, Charlottesville, and is located between the Kroger Supermarket and Dick's Sporting Goods. Come join us at 5:30 PM December 8th to talk to and hear from our speaker John Spahr. Hope to see you then.

## Celebrate Holiday Cheer

Following the December 8th meeting, enjoy a bit of food and time with friends.

Please bring a holiday treat or a bird-related door prize.

## John Spahr: The Mystery and Majesty of Owls Thursday, December 8, 2011 at 7:00pm

Emblem of wisdom, object of mysticism, bearer of bad omens, owls have symbolized much to humankind over the millennia. Exploring this will be the December 8th speaker at the bird club, John Spahr of Staunton, in his talk entitled The Mystery and Majesty of Owls. John will also discuss some of the owl's unique anatomic and



physiologic features. Finally, he will review all the species that commonly occur in Virginia.

John, a native of Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, lives in Staunton with his wife Nancy. He has served as president of the Virginia Society of Ornithology. Most recently he accompanied his good friend Bob Ake during much of Bob's 2010 big year of birding.

If you haven't attended bird club meetings this fall, you have really missed out. So far we have had three dynamite programs, by Ken Klotz, Bob Ake and Peter Nebel. Peter's

program on Qatar was not only informative and also humorous, due to his deadpan delivery and choice phrasings of the English language. John Spahr's talk will be just another of these “must hear” presentations.

As a preview to 2012, our January speaker will be Pete Myers of Crozet. Pete is fluent with all the latest gadgetry of birding, from the use of GPS denotation of bird sightings to listing with E-bird. He is also an outstanding birder, having recently found several rarities in Albemarle County. His actual topic is yet to be determined.

Club Activities

First Saturday

Saturday, December 3, 7:30am

On the first Saturday of each month, the Monticello Bird Club offers a bird walk at Ivy Creek Natural Area at 7:30 am. Some of the walks stay near the main building and parking lot, others go out on the peninsula. Some outstanding birds have been seen on these walks.

Please join Teresa Shaner on December 3 for the last outing here of 2011 to check out the wintering birds.

Walnut Creek

Saturday, December 10, 8:00am—noon

Jerry Therrien will lead this trip to look and listen for different species of birds, as well as to look at several species of native herbaceous and woody plants.

**Directions:** Take either Route 29 south or Route 20 south from Charlottesville.

—On Route 29 south from Charlottesville, turn left on Red Hill Road (Route 708), turn right on Route 631 and look for signs for Walnut Creek Park.

—On Route 20 south from Charlottesville, turn right on Route 708, turn left on Route 631 and look for signs for Walnut Creek Park.

**Where to park:** Enter Walnut Creek Park, turn right into the first parking area near the pond.

**Contact:** Gerard Therrien at 434-984-0366 (home) or 207-557-3958 (cell)

FINAL RESULTS OF BIRD SEED SALE

2011 MBC Bird Seed Sale:

Total Sales	\$7,727.50
Gross Profit (before donations)	\$1,835.29
Donations	\$ 354.00
Net Profit	\$1,481.29

A large thank you to everyone who ordered seed or otherwise helped with the sale and distribution -- especially to Jim Nix.

Northern Albemarle County Lakes Tour

Saturday, December 17, 7:00am

The lake tour starts at 7:30 am at the Ivy Creek Nature Area. We will carpool to nearby lakes looking for ducks and other water birds. The cold weather last December brought in the ducks and we saw 8 different duck species. Contact trip leader, Leigh Surdukowski (434-295-8241) for additional information.

Meeting Minutes, November 10, 2011

Submitted by Peggy Cornett, Secretary, from notes taken by Jerry Therrien

Lou Tanner opened the meeting by welcoming newcomers. There were 42 in attendance. Lou announced that Jim Nix has decided to step-down as membership coordinator.

Jim Hill gave a preliminary report about the seed sales. There were 54 orders (down 18 from 2010) for an income of \$7,699.50. Gross profit came to \$1,754.29. The club is donating \$354 to fund bird feeding stations at two elementary schools. Donations will also be made to the Ivy Creek Foundation (\$500) and The Nature Conservancy (\$150). A donation will also be made to the Department of Forestry.

Doug Rogers gave the treasurer's report. Receipts for the period were \$8,389.50; Disbursements were \$1,002.88; balance in bank: \$19,012.95. We have an unpaid invoice for bird seed of almost \$6,200. Receipts to date represent 98% of all receipts that are expected for the year. Our receipts and

expenses to date are on-budget. Doug is continuing to provide fees and documents to the IRS and the Virginia Department of Taxation for the club's application for non-profit status.

Dave Hogg reported on field trips. He is trying to combine some old favorites. There's a walk at Riverview Park (Woolen Mills area) this Saturday and later in the month is the Eastern Shore trip. In December, Lee Surdukowski will lead a duck walk and Jerry will lead a walk at Walnut Creek Park. There's a trip to Augusta County planned and Dave is working on a February excursion to Highland County.

Lee Surdukowski is recruiting volunteers to lead the First Saturday at Ivy Creek walks and passed around a sign-up sheet.

Jenny Gaden reported on the upcoming Christmas Bird Count. The Charlottesville count is December 18.

She announced that there will be a presentation on Forests & Global Warming at Ivy Creek, Tuesday, Nov 15, at 7:30 p.m.

Ruth Douglas announced that the VA Native Plant Society meeting will be about the water quality of the Rivanna River Basin. The meeting takes place at Ivy Creek Natural Area on Dec 14 at 7:30 p.m.

Interesting bird sightings during the past month were shared. Bill Leaning noted 30 Cedar Waxwings in some Tulip Poplars. A Connecticut Warbler was seen at Rockfish Trail in Nellysford on Oct. 23. Three Wood Ducks were observed (2 female and 1 male). A Barred Owl was seen in a beech tree in the Dunlora neighborhood. A Golden-crowned Kinglet was observed flying toward and window and hovering but not hitting the window.

## Charlottesville Christmas Bird Count

The 2011 Charlottesville Christmas Bird Count (CBC) will take place on Sunday, December 18. We will join tens of thousands of other volunteers around the country who, over a three-week period, will head out before dawn on a winter day to count the winter birds.

All levels of birders, from beginners to professional scientists, participate in the count.

These Citizen Scientists are taking action for conservation. By participating in the National Audubon Society's CBC they help scientists understand how birds are faring amid unprecedented environmental challenges. The data they collect

informs the world about the State of Birds, and provides the information we need to shape their future and ours. This is the 112th Christmas Bird Count.

Each count occurs in a designated circle, 15 miles in diameter, and is organized by a designated "compiler" -- Jenny Gaden for the Charlottesville CBC. The Monticello Bird Club sponsors the Charlottesville CBC by paying the \$5 fee for all members of the club who participate. Non-members pay their own way.

Those interested in participating in the count should let Jenny know (434 293-6275; jengaden@gmail.com). If you are an inexperienced birder you

will be able to join a more experienced person or group. If you are an experienced birder maybe you would consider starting a new route in a part of the county which is currently not covered. Be prepared: bring hand and foot warmers if it's cold; bring snacks, lunch and water or a hot drink if you expect to get hungry and thirsty; bring a camera to support your case when you spot a rare bird. And bring enthusiasm and a spirit of adventure.

A potluck supper will follow the count at the home of Nancy O'Brien and Francis Fife. Directions will be available through the group leaders.

## Warren Christmas Bird Count

The Warren, Virginia Christmas Bird Count (112th CBC) will be conducted on Sunday, January 1, 2012. The center of the 15-mile diameter of the Warren CBC circle is at Keene in southern Albemarle County and includes portions of Buckingham and Fluvanna Counties.

This count was first conducted by C.E. (Mo) Stevens, Jr. during the 48th

CBC (1947/1948). Compiler Allen Hale remembers vividly his first participation on this count with Mo on December 31, 1967 when a Great Blue Heron flew past in falling snow.

Please contact Allen Hale at 434-263-8671 or super@buteobooks.com if you're interested in participating. Members of the Monticello Bird Club

will have their \$5 fee paid by the club, others please remit \$5 per participant.

In an effort to get together and have a tally of the count, Barbara and Allen Hale will host a luncheon at Noon on Monday, January 2, 2012, at their residence in Nelson County which is also the Headquarters of Buteo Books. Directions will be provided.

**Bird Words Cross Word Puzzle:** Complete the crossword puzzle below with words used everyday that are also the names of birds. Only 1 Across and 16 and 23 Down are not the names of a bird.

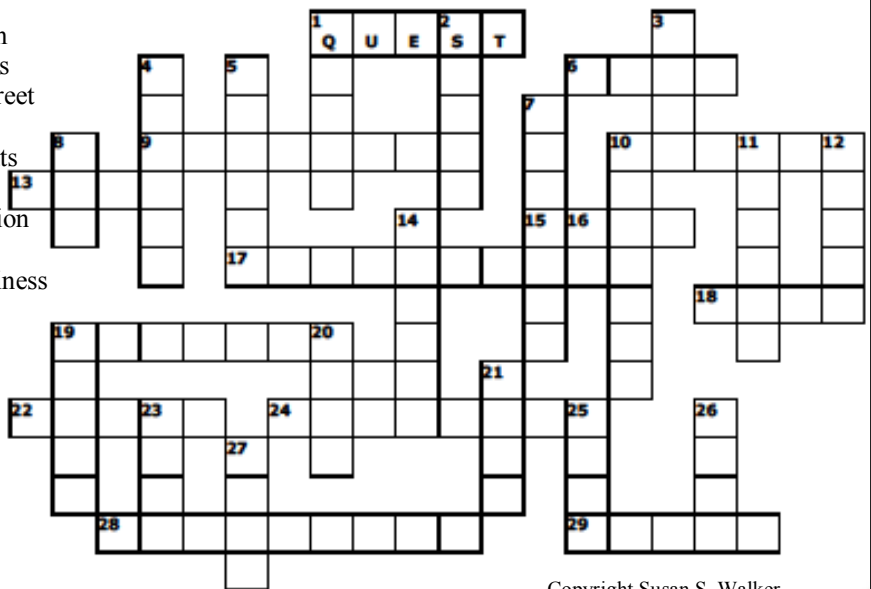
### DOWN

1. Shrink Back; cringe
2. Walking pole
3. \_\_\_\_\_ ey Tunes
4. Nutty
5. Wizard
7. shine unsteadily
8. 10TH letter
10. Even the least of us
11. repeat back
12. Speedy
14. Grumble and complain
16. Not she
19. unwanted prize
20. To trick or deceive
21. Windborne toy
23. Soil
25. Bath soap brand
26. Blue-green color
27. flinch out of way

### ACROSS

1. search; mission
6. Tie securely
9. Catholic holy man
10. Gets at; criticizes
13. To sell on the street
15. Talk online
17. Tool to crack nuts
18. Old grouch
19. Garland decoration
22. silly person
24. Symbol of happiness
28. Military plane
29. USA symbol

Answers are on page 4.



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## Chimney Swifts

Allen Hale

Chimney Swift numbers have declined over much of their range in North America and, while specific reasons for declines are largely unknown, it is likely that the loss of suitable nesting habitat may be having long-term consequences. The increase in the numbers of chimneys in the 19th and early 20th century provided suitable nest sites and the species flourished, but with fewer chimneys and new ones either capped or unsuitable, their numbers have fallen. A few years ago, I discovered a book Chimney Swift Towers: New Habitat for America's Mysterious Birds, A Construction Guide by Paul & Georgan Kyle and it inspired me to pursue the construction of a 12-foot, free standing Chimney Swift tower.

I had a stack of yellow poplar lumber and early this year I retained the services of Dirk Walliser of Dutch Creek Carpentry to construct the tower and erect it near my warehouse in Shipman. On March 1, 2011 the tower was in place awaiting the arrival of swifts from South America. A few swifts were seen in the vicinity of the tower in April and an occasional bird during the nesting season. The literature on nesting advises against peering into the tower as such activity might cause the birds to leave, so I kept my distance through summer and fall.

To my surprise, I learned that Chimney Swifts are not colonial nesters and only one pair utilizes a chimney for nesting. So when November rolled around, I was beginning to fear my project was a failure. But then, on November 15th, I climbed a ladder and peered down the chimney, and, yes, there was a half cup attached to the wall. Needless to say, I was thrilled with the outcome. I trust swifts will use the tower for many years to come. I've been telling family and friends that I have Nelson County's most expensive housing in terms of cost per ounce per occupants.

Some time ago, Jenny Gaden and I talked about the MBC erecting a Chimney Swift tower. At \$900 plus materials, it's a significant investment, but a benefit to a wonderful species and a legacy we can leave for the future. If you're interested in more information on building a tower, feel free to contact me.



### Answers for Bird Words Cross Word Puzzle

DOWN: 1. quail, 2. stilt, 3. loon, 4. cuckoo, 5. merlin, 7. flicker, 8. jay, 10. sparrow, 11. parrot, 12. swift, 14. Grouse, 16. he, 19. booby, 20. gull, 21. kite, 23. soil, 25. dove, 26. teal, 27. duck

ACROSS: 1. quest, 6. knot, 9. cardinal, 10. snipes, 13. hawk, 15. chat, 17. nutcracker, 18. coot, 19. bunting, 22. goose, 24. bluebird, 28. Blackhawk, 29. eagle

The Monticello Bird Club meets 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. Membership is \$15 per year for individuals, \$25 for a family. Membership year is July 1—June 30. The editor of the MBC Newsletter welcomes submissions including articles, photographs and notices. **DEADLINE for each issue is 9:00AM on the 4th Thursday of the month.**



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