

Monticello Bird Club

February 2006

Volume 20, Number 6

February Meeting Topic

Artist Ron Louque Paints Winners

Our program on February 9 will combine art and science when artist Ron Louque (*pronounced Luke*) discusses his award-winning duck stamp paintings. The 54-year-old New Orleans native will show slides and talk about how he approached doing the painting that eventually went on to become the 2003 Federal Duck Stamp.

Ron Louque has been painting birds for 32 years, beginning modestly enough with a taxidermy correspondence course at the age of nine. He began his college career at Louisiana State University as a biology major, but soon switched to zoology and ornithology which were more specific to his interest...birds.

Painting professionally since 1974, Louque's work "combines anatomical accuracy as well as sheer beauty" helping him to become one of the top five duck and conservation stamp artists in

the nation. He moved to Virginia in 1983 to paint landscapes and wildlife habitats of the Mid-Atlantic and Blue Ridge Mountains. Besides winning the top prize for the *Federal Duck Stamp*, Louque's paintings have won 27 *state* conservation stamp contests.



Ron Louque and Emma.
Photo: www.duckstamp03.com

Please join our speaker for dinner at Wild Greens Restaurant in Barracks Road North Shopping Center at 5:30 pm prior to the meeting.

Look Forward to Spring Meetings

March 9: Lou Verner

We will get some practical tips from Mr. Verner about how to improve habitat for songbirds, butterflies and wildlife...starting in our very own backyards.

April 13: Teta Kain

Need we say more? The dynamic Ms. Kain will entertain and inform us with wit and enthusiasm.

May 11: Members Night

On Members' Night we ask YOU to share some of your favorite nature slides or display photographs. Don't be shy...we guarantee oohs and aahs from everyone. We'll also hear a special report from Stone Robinson fourth-graders. Stay tuned!

Comments From the President

On Feb. 19, 1986, the Monticello Bird Club held its first meeting at the Stonehenge Club House on Rio Road. If the founders could have looked ahead 20 years and seen the thriving organization that exists today I am sure they would have been pleased. The reason that the club is still in existence and doing so well is that year after year people have come forward and volunteered to give their time to do those things that are necessary for the club to function.

We are now in the process of looking for people to take over some of the responsibilities for the 2006-07 season which begins after the June meeting, 2006. We will need a treasurer, a newsletter editor, an additional person to serve on the program

(guest speakers) committee, and another to help with field trips. It is essential to fill these posts if the club is going to serve the membership as it has for 20 years. If you are at all inclined to help, please feel free to speak to those who currently hold the positions. I think that you will find it is easier, and more fun, than you might imagine. A volunteer organization is a fragile entity. It is an interconnected web, not unlike our physical environment, where if one piece is missing the whole thing can fall apart. I know our good membership will not let that happen. As the old Army poster says, "Monticello Bird Club wants YOU!"

—Jennifer Gaden, president

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Red Knots Face Dramatic Decline

The Red Knot is in trouble. This is a shorebird that makes an 18,000-mile migratory voyage annually from its nesting grounds in the Arctic to the tip of South America in the winter. For thousands of years the Red Knot has stopped in the Delaware Bay area on its trip north to feed almost exclusively on the eggs of the horseshoe crab. This food is essential to fuel the rest of the journey home. In recent years, however, the horseshoe crab has been harvested for bait for the eel and conch fisheries, with the inevitable decline of horseshoe crab eggs available to the birds. A dramatic decline of the Red Knot has followed.

I remember seeing swarms of Red Knots in the spring at Cape May about 15 years ago. In recent years I've seen only groups of small numbers. The decline is painfully obvious. The statistics support my experience: Red Knots on the Delaware Bay declined from 100,000 in 1990 to 15,000 in 2005. At this rate the bird is expected to be near extinction by 2010.

Legislation has been introduced by Delegate H. Morgan Griffith to declare a moratorium on "landings" (harvesting) of horseshoe crabs in Virginia until the Red Knot has recovered to a viable population level (240,000 birds). There has been an encouraging grass roots response to this issue. Please contact your delegate and senator and urge them to support this important conservation measure. For more information: American Bird Conservancy at www.abcbirds.org.

—Jennifer Gaden



This is NOT a Red Knot but it's a Red-shouldered Hawk visiting Bill Leaning's Earlsville property. Photo: Bill Leaning.

Bird Notes & News...

NEWEST MEMBERS

Please say hello to these folks:
David & Judy Bonnett, North Garden
Thaddeus Kelly, Charlottesville
Betty Mooney, Charlottesville

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO US!

The Monticello Bird Club is twenty years old on February 19. And we plan to celebrate in style (i.e. with food!) Join our celebration by attending the February 9 meeting to hear Ron Lorque talk about crafting the duck stamp. Afterwards we'll haul out the birthday cake and indulge...

IVORY-BILLED WOODPECKER

Bobby Harrison, who was one of the first three people to spot the Ivory-billed Woodpecker in Arkansas, will speak about his experience February 24 at the Tyson's Corner Marriott. He will be the keynote speaker at the Meadowlark Nature Photography Expo. Check the website for details and costs. It is www.MeadowlarkPhotoExpo.com or contact Corey Hilz at 703-473-4618 or corey@coreyhilz.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 Earlsville 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 20.** Please email information to Nancy King at turnermtn@mindspring.com or send to P.O. Box 22, Ivy, VA 22945.

Monticello Bird Club
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Please visit our website at
www.ecoventures-travel.com/mbc

Monticello Bird Club Board Members

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Membership	Robyn Kells	rkells@ntelos.net	970-1044
Birdseed Sale	Howard Davis	howardsuedavis@juno.com	964-1242

Future Field Trips Forage Far and Near

Highland County Saturday, February 11

Be prepared for an all-day adventure to the north county as we drive around in search of wintering specialties that include Rough-legged Hawk, finches and crossbills. Put on your woolies and plan on a warm lunch in a Monterey diner. Bring a snack and beverage. **We will meet in the Giant Grocery parking lot, Seminole Square to leave promptly at 7:15 am.** Contact Brenda Tekin at 434-962-4936 or brenda@birdsofvirginia.com



Northern Gannet seen on January 21st CBBT field trip. Photo: Brenda Tekin.

Henricus Park, Richmond Saturday, February 18

Join Jenny Gaden for a trip to Henricus Park (Henricus Historical Citie and Dutch Gap Conservation Area) located south of Richmond off I-95. Paul Bedell of the Richmond Audubon Society will be our leader as we view waterfowl from platforms that overlook a marsh and follow a boardwalk through riparian woods. The Dutch Gap Conservation Area has a 4-mile trail that offers forest, meadow, and views of old river channels and the tidal lagoon. We will walk part of this trail. The walking is easy and there is a restroom at the Henricus Visitors Center. **We will leave Hardee's on Pantops promptly at 6:30 am.** Get there by 6:15 am to carpool. We should arrive at the park by 8:00 m. Bring a snack. More information about the park can be found on the web. Questions? Contact Jenny Gaden at 434-293-6275 or jgaden@earthlink.net.

North of Charlottesville Wednesday, March 8

Take a mid-week break for a little birding just north of Charlottesville. Stauffer Miller will lead an early Spring foray along some back roads for a few hours of roadside birding. This will be an easy trip. **Meet at McDonalds across from Hollymead Town Center, Route 29 North in Charlottesville at 8:00 am.** Questions? Contact Stauffer Miller at 964-1365 or stauffer@seepub.com.

Lake Anna Saturday, March 18

Mark Adams will lead this trip to Lake Anna to check out waterfowl and more. More details forthcoming in the March newsletter. Contact Mark at mtadams@nrao.edu.

MBC Minutes for January 12, 2006

President Jenny Gaden presided and welcomed newcomers to a very well attended meeting of 80+ people.

Treasurer's Report: Bob Gilges reported that the year-to-date income was \$7,600; expenses \$6,500; net income \$1,100. Birdseed sales gave us almost \$1500 in profit. We have approximately \$14,300 in the bank.

Field Trips: The Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel trip is organized for January 21. Check the newsletter for details on for Brenda Tekin's February 11 trip to Highland County and Jenny Gaden's February 18 trip to Henricus Park.

Nominating Committee: Dede Austin is looking for two members to take over

the positions of Newsletter Editor and Treasurer as the current incumbents wish to move on.

Miscellaneous: Carol Hill gave information on NJ Birding and Wildlife Trail book. Jeff Trollinger of the VA Birding and Wildlife Trail booklet commented that NJ's is superior to the VA edition.

Jenny Gaden pointed out the "waterfowl extravaganza" reported in Virginia Birds as seen by Mike Boatwright at the North Anna Power Station on Lake Anna, Louisa County in March 2005. Jenny suggested a field trip to the area for March of this year. (See page 3)

Jenny encouraged members to join the foremost organization for bird conservation in the Americas, the American Birding Conservancy. The December issue of their magazine is devoted to the "Alliance for Zero Extinction" or AZE. For information write to PO Box 249, The Plains, VA 20198 or www.abcbirds.org.

Legislation will be introduced in early January to declare a moratorium on landings of horseshoe crabs in Virginia. The Chief Patron or sponsor of the bill is Delegate H. Morgan Griffith, the Majority Leader of the House of Delegates. The purpose of the legislation is to prevent the extinction of the Red Knot rufa subspecies. (See page 2)

An interview on NPR regarding the danger of birds crashing into clear glass windows was discussed. Many of these birds can be saved by placing the stunned bird in a cardboard box with airholes in a warm, dark place. After about 30 minutes, if the bird is moving around, it can be safely released outdoors.

The Nature Conservancy in Virginia is seeking a summer volunteer to assist the staff ecologist. Scott Boven at sboven@tnc.org or call 434-951-0585

Dan Bieker spoke on the two courses offered by PVCC at Ivy Creek. Natural

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Gardening for Wildlife: Praise for Pawpaws

(Part Two of a Two-Part Series)

Commercial pawpaw growers officially list larvae of *Eurytides marcel-lus*, the Zebra Swallowtail, as a pest. The damage is minimal, however, as the caterpillars are never in great numbers. The adult butterfly (we have only seen two or three a year, recently) is of such great beauty that this should be thought of, not as a pest but, as a blessing. Another blessing is that neither deer nor rabbits will eat the leaves, twigs or fruit of the pawpaw – Hallelujah! Foxes, opossums, squirrels and raccoons will eat the fruit. Pawpaw fruit ripens during a 4-week period (depending on the individual tree) between mid-August and into Octo-

ber. A ripe pawpaw is soft and yields easily to a gentle squeeze (how romantic!). The skin of the green fruit will lighten in color as it ripens and often develops blackish splotches. The first time I saw this, I thought I had some unknown fungal disease but it does not af-



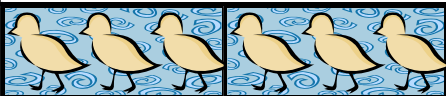
Pawpaw cluster. Photo: William Chow.

derway. Seventeen regional trial sites are scattered throughout the Eastern U.S.

Plant selection for the home garden is much easier since I purchased my first pawpaws. There are a number of mail-order sources of both seedling and grafted cultivars. The grafted cultivars are preferred and, if I was starting over, that would be my choice with a definite emphasis on at least three unrelated varieties to help the pollination process. Over 60 pawpaw cultivars have been listed but most are not yet in the nursery trade. The most current list of desirable cultivars is from Kentucky State. I have selected five good candidates from this list. Incidentally, the first two are available here, in Virginia from Edible Landscaping. My choices are 'Wells Delight,' 'Davis,' 'Sunflower,' 'Mitchell' and 'Taytoo.' Three's a crowd except when you are a pawpaw.

Give this extraordinary bird, butterfly, mammal and environmentally-friendly tree a try in your wild garden. I have a list of references for further reading, a list of sources of commercial named varieties and, yes, even a list of recipes from the Pawpaw Foundation from pies to custards, cakes, muffins and ice cream.

—Bill Leaning



Christmas Count Spots Two "Rarities"

On January 1, a lovely mild winter day, 19 parties of 39 individuals participated in the Charlottesville Christmas Bird Count (CBC). We saw 71 species and 10,740 individual birds. This information will be sent to the National Audubon Society to become part of a national database that has been accumulating since 1900. It is now an important resource for bird researchers and conservationists. Those who participate in the count can take pride that they are contributing to this worthwhile endeavor. We didn't see any birds that would knock your socks off, but there were two birds that required a rare bird form to be submitted in order for the sighting to be accepted. They are the Osprey and the Gray Catbird. Rare bird you say? In the winter in this area, yes. I encourage you to attend the April MBC meeting when Teta will give a talk about the CBC. You will learn a great deal more then, and next year I expect you all will jump right in and join the 2006 Charlottesville Bird Count.

—Jennifer Gaden

fect the flavor or edibility of the fruit. The primary use for pawpaws is fresh eating. (I haven't given up on my orioles quite yet.) The yellow flesh is custard-like and highly nutritious. It has a complex, tropical flavor unlike any other temperate-zone fruit. The ripe fruit is very perishable with a room temperature shelf life of only 2-3 days. They will, however, keep up to 3 weeks in the refrigerator. Although pawpaw fruit is not yet a commercially viable commodity, the "domestication" process is well un-

MBC Minutes (continued from Page 3)

History of Virginia, first class Jan 23 and Field Ornithology, 15 consecutive Saturdays, first class Feb 18. For more information call Dan Bieker at 434-971-9618

Bird Sightings: Lou Tanner reported on his visit to the Kerr Reservoir (Bugg Island Lake) in Mecklenburg County where he saw Bald Eagles, waterfowl, including coots, and loons, and all the woodpeckers except Hairy WP. Information on this area can be found in the Birding and Wildlife Trail booklet, Piedmont. Sue Thrasher reported the Lynchburg Bird Club will be making its biennial field trip to the Kerr Reservoir

in February. Helen Priest saw a Broad-winged Hawk. Paul Blair followed up on the hummingbird reported at our last meeting. The immature hummingbird has been identified as either a Rufous or Allen's Hummingbird and was scheduled to be banded on January 16. The Stauffer Millers saw a Long-wattled Umbrella Bird in Ecuador. Short-eared Owls were seen at Zion Cross Roads. Ten to twelve guinea fowl were seen. A Barred Owl was seen and heard on Sunset Avenue when the family was awakened by their dog barking. The Leanings also saw a Barred Owl at Mechum River Bridge on Free Union Road.

—Clare Leaning, for Peggy Cornett