

Monticello Bird Club

January 2006

Volume 20, Number 5

January Meeting Topic

Birding Peru: A World Class Adventure

Having taught art for 31 years Randy Thrasher is known for his songbird carvings, but in the past few years he has developed a passion for videotaping birds and other animals. He particularly enjoys the challenge of catching elusive small songbirds.

At the January 12 MBC meeting, Randy will take us on a virtual tour of Peru that features many close looks at some of Peru's most colorful birds, including tanagers and hummingbirds, accompanied by bright Peruvian music. But that is only part of the story! Experience this video tour of a Third World country including an 8-hour drive over the Andes, a Pacific Ocean boat trip in a motorboat whose sparkplug is attached with a bread "twistum," a boat ride on the Amazon River during a monsoon flood, and much more.



Emerald Hummingbird. Photo Randy Thrasher

Randy has made videos of the Eastern United States, the Galapagos Islands, Madagascar, South Africa, the Grand Canyon & Las Vegas, and Peru. He is currently working on a nature video about Ecuador, based on a trip he & his wife, Sue, took last summer. He is going to Brazil next summer.

Please join our speaker for dinner

at Wild Greens Restaurant in Bar-racks Road North Shopping Center at 5:30 pm, prior to the meeting.

Future Meetings To Feature Painter, Backyard Habitats

February 9: Ron Louque

Mr. Louque is an accomplished wildlife artist who designed the 2003-2004 Federal Duck Stamp. It featured a pair of Snow Geese flying over the Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge.

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.

Comments From the President

I remember the first time I ever saw a Northern Cardinal. It was in the late forties in Southern Connecticut where I grew up. A light snow had fallen on Thanksgiving morning when my mother filled the bird feeder in front of our house. While the family was enjoying dinner later in the day someone noticed a strange bird feeding at the base of the feeder. We all jumped up from the table and crowded around the windows to see a magnificent red bird feeding peacefully in the snow. My mother knew what it was, but it was very exciting for us because it was most unusual for the Northern Cardinal to be that far north. In fact, I wonder how long it has been called the *Northern* Cardinal. Since then the bird has become familiar in New England; we saw them regularly

when my husband, children and I lived in Vermont in the seventies. Today it's all-year range spreads from Maine to Mexico.

A few days ago I looked out the kitchen window and there was a plump male cardinal sitting in a holly bush, fluffed up for protection from the cold – the prototypical Christmas card picture. He sat for quite a while and I realized what a lovely color red he was. It's not the brilliant red of a Scarlet Tanager nor the flashy color of the gorget of the male Ruby-throated Hummingbird, but a bright, warm red, a gratifying red for a winter day. The female too is splendid in her more
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President (continued)

mutated plumage and her pink/red beak. These birds are so common we tend to take them for granted, but every once in a while it's nice to look with fresh eyes on the commonplace. Just about every evening a pair of cardinals are the last birds to come to the feeder. The sun has set and it's too dark to make out the color but the silhouette is distinctive. Side by side they quietly work the sunflower seeds and suggest a state of peaceful contentment. A nice way to end the day, wouldn't you say?

—Jennifer Gaden, president

Bird Notes & News...Notes & News

NATURE WRITER SPEAKS

Nature writer David Gessner will read from his work on Sunday February 19 at 2:00 pm at the Ivy Creek Natural Area. One critic wrote that Gessner was the "Woody Allen of environmental writers" after reviewing *Sick of Nature*. Another called the irreverent book "more like a gulp of laughing gas than the standard breath of fresh air."

CONDOLENCES:

The Monticello Bird Club wishes to extend its deepest sympathy to longtime member Jim Nix (and his family) on the death of his daughter, Cat.

NEW MEMBERS:

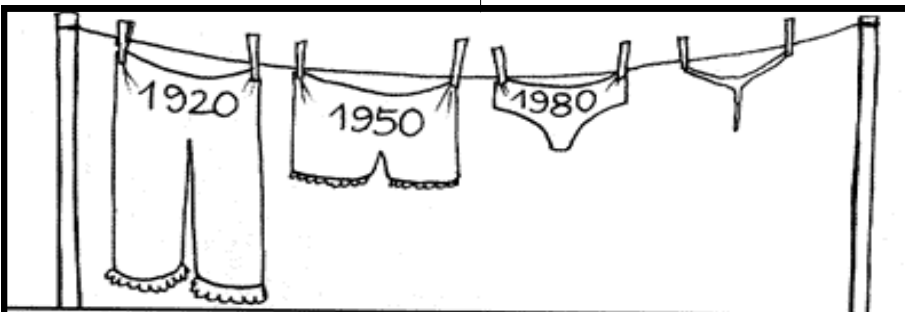
Say hello to new club members:
Mark Adams (Charlottesville)
Anne Benham (Charlottesville)
Tom Leback (Charlottesville)
Elizabeth Margutti (Charlottesville)

IVY CREEK BIRD WALKS:

Hone your own skills or introduce a friend to the wonders of birding at Ivy Creek Natural Area on the first Saturday of every month. Meet us at 7:30am in the parking lot. Leigh Surdukowski will lead the walk on January 7 and Jim Nix will lend his expertise on February 4.

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

Charlottesville's official CBC will be January 1, 2006. Call Mo Stevens at 434-293-8658 for more information



If we ever need evidence of global warming, we now have it.

This cartoon has been circulating among the environmental community. I'd love to give the artist credit. Anyone know who did it? —Editor

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 MBC Newsletter welcomes submissions including articles, photographs and notices. **DEADLINE for the February issue is January 25.** Please send information to Nancy King at P.O. Box 22, Ivy, VA 22945 or turnermtn@mindspring.com

Monticello Bird Club
P.O. Box 4362
Charlottesville, Virginia 22905
Please visit our website at
www.ecoventures-travel.com/mbc

Monticello Bird Club Board Members

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| Birdseed Sale | Howard Davis | howardsuedavis@juno.com | 964-1242 |

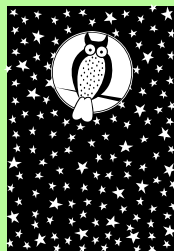
Upcoming Field Trips for Winter Birding

CBBT, Eastern Shore Saturday January 21

A January trip to this winter oasis can produce a wide variety of waterfowl. Because of new rules, it will be necessary to provide security information for every member who plans to bird the CBBT, and pay a fee to cover the cost of a mandatory security guard to accompany us. Get your necessary forms to fill out from Brenda Tekin at the December meeting or contact her at brenda@birdsofvirginia.com or 962-4936. Forms are due January 4. Fee: \$10. **There is a limit of 15 participants for the CBBT islands.** If we have less than 10 sign-up for the CBBT, we will cancel the trip. **We will carpool from Hardees on Pantops on Rt. 250 East. Arrive in time to leave promptly at 6:45 am.**

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 thermals and woolies and plan on a warm lunch in a Monterey diner. Bring along a snack and beverage. **We will meet in the Giant Grocery parking lot, Seminole Square to leave promptly at 7:15am.** Questions? Contact Brenda Tekin at 434-962-4936 or brenda@birdsofvirginia.com



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 6:15am to carpool. We should arrive at the park by 8:00am. 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.

MBC Minutes for December 8, 2005

President Jenny Gaden presided and welcomed newcomers.

Treasurer's Report: Bob Gilges reported on the bird seed sale figures. Expenses were around \$4,300; income totaled over \$5,600, giving us over \$1,300. Membership renewals are still lagging. To date there are 51 memberships outstanding, which translates to about \$1,000. Income for the fiscal year-to-date is \$7,378 and expenses total around \$6,400, giving the club a net gain of \$971. Bob encouraged all MBC members to join the Ivy Creek Foundation and to support the many programs of this organization.

Bird Seed Sale: Howard Davis was pleased with the success of this year's sale and thanked the volunteers.

Field Trips: John Zimmerman gave a preview of the Christmas Bird Count Warm-Up set for December 10 and ID'd the various sector leaders. Members are welcome to meet at ICNA at 4:00pm Saturday to help compile the lists. Brenda Tekin reminded those interested in attending the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel trip to provide their registration information 10 days prior to the trip.

Miscellaneous: Jenny Gaden provided handouts and brochures that she has received in the mail describing birding events and trips in Mexico, Arizona, and other places. She also has a brochure for ordering an Ivory-billed Woodpecker hat.

Bird Sightings: Bill Leaning had an impressive variety of birds consuming the berries of his dogwood tree in Earlsyville, including sapsuckers, robins, bluebirds,

woodpeckers, etc. He also saw a Cooper's Hawk attack its reflection. Jim Hill mentioned that he had a spate of birds flying into windows at his home. Paul Blair recorded an immature Ruby-throated Hummingbird every day at his nectar feeder in Ruckersville. He has been bringing in the feeder each night and has even warmed it during the day on cold days. Barb Fehse attested that the Monticello Bird Club seed has been very desirable to many birds and squirrels on her property, but that a Red-tailed Hawk has taken advantage of the easy dining. Bob Gilges sighted a Brown Creeper on his walnut tree.

Holiday Festivities: After the formal program, members gathered for the club's annual Christmas party. Many brought refreshments and Jim and Carol Hill provided cider and drinks. Priscilla Kingston reported that 50 people signed the registration list and 29 door prizes were awarded.

—Peggy Cornett, secretary

Gardening for Wildlife: Pleasing Pawpaws

(Part One of a Two-Part Series)

Other common names for *Asimina triloba* include, Indian Banana, Poor Man's Banana and Hoosier Banana. It is the largest edible fruit native to America. I had read that the caterpillars of the Zebra Swallowtail butterfly feed exclusively on young pawpaw foliage. I also had high hopes that if I planted some Pawpaw trees, they would attract fruit-eating birds. My real hope was that this member of the Custard Apple Family would be an oriole magnet.

In the spring of 1998, I purchased two container grown Select Pawpaw seedlings from Edible Landscaping in Afton. The Select Pawpaw seedlings are from superior varieties from the Pawpaw Foundation at the University of Maryland. A year later, I purchased two more hoping that I was obtaining two different clones to encourage better fruiting. The pawpaw is a tree of temperate, humid woodlands of the Eastern U.S. with fossil proof that it is truly indigenous to North America. The American Indian is credited with spreading it from Southern Michigan to the Gulf Coastal Plain and westward as far as Texas and Eastern Kansas.



Asimina triloba or pawpaw fruit.
Photo: Larry Allain @ plants.usda.gov.

Although the pawpaw is capable of fruiting in the shade, optimum yields are obtained in all-day filtered sun. However, protection from wind is essential. Slightly acid, fertile and well-drained soil is preferred. The pawpaw is a small tree seldom taller than 25-feet with attractive large, dangling leaves. It is an excellent edible landscape addition to any wildlife garden. Pollination is a major limitation to pawpaw fruit set. Maroon, upside-down flowers 1 to 2 inches across (depending on the variety) develop in the axils of the previous years' leaves. The bloom period extends over several weeks

in the spring. To make things difficult, the flowers have a, decidedly, unpleasant, even, fetid odor, making them unattractive to bees. Pawpaw flowers are pollinated by flies and certain beetles. To complicate matters even more the flowers are protogynous, meaning that the female stigma is receptive to pollen before pollen is released from the male anthers of the same flowers. If your flies and beetles are undependable, hand pollination can be well worth the effort. (Contact Bill Leaning for explicit instruction how to do this.)

—Bill Leaning



A Rufous/Allen's Hummingbird first made an appearance back in October at a local farm and, as of 12/20/05, it continues to actively feed throughout the day. Photo: B. Tekin



~TIME'S UP~

If you have not renewed your MBC membership for 2005-2006, this will be your last newsletter.

We would hate to lose you as a member!

Do it now while you're still thinking about it. Write us a check (Individual/\$15, Family/\$25, Sponsor/ \$50) and mail to:

Monticello Bird Club, P.O. Box 4362
Charlottesville, VA 22905

You will NOT want to miss the upcoming issue when travel writer and author Mel White (National Geographic's *Guide to Birdwatching Sites*, ABA's *A Birder's Guide to Arkansas*) describes his Top Five Birding Destinations in the U.S.



CBC Warm-Up Off To a Hot Start

Twenty members of the Monticello Bird Club participated in the first annual Christmas Bird Count warm-up on December 10 and identified 64 species in the count circle. The most abundant species was the Dark-eyed Junco with 435 individuals, followed by the White-throated Sparrow at 386. Other species with numbers above 100 individuals were Turkey Vulture, Canada Goose, Mourning Dove, Blue Jay, American Crow, European Starling, Cedar Waxwing, Yellow-rumped Warbler, and Northern Cardinal. Expected species that were not seen included Cooper's Hawk, Great Horned Owl, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Swamp Sparrow, and Pine Siskin. .

—John Zimmerman