



Monticello Bird Club

January 2010

Volume 26, Number 5

January Meeting Topic: An appreciation of bird song

This month's topic, "An Appreciation of Bird Song," is a seasonal journey through the cycle of bird song in our area. It features an in-depth look at the complexity of the songs of certain species, detailing all of the rich information that these birds are conveying to one another.

Our presenter, Wil Hershberger, has been an avid naturalist most of his life. His photography has become an extension of this passion. Wil has served in leadership roles in the Potomac Valley Audubon Society, the Frederick chapter of the Maryland Ornithological Society and the Shenandoah Photographic Society. He is a co-founder of the Potomac Valley Nature Photographers.

He has thousands of sound recordings archived at the Cornell's Laboratory of Ornithology's Macaulay Library of Natural Sounds ranging from birds to bugs and has taught Bird Identification classes for the Potomac Valley Audubon Society for over 20 years.

Wil also works for the USDA as a molecular biologist studying the underlying genetics of fruit tree diseases.

Wil's photography has been published in the following:

- Calendars by Gladstone Media
- Books by Stackpole and Houghton-Mifflin Co.
- Oasis Magazine of Italy
- Nature Photographers Magazine
- Adirondack Explorer
- National Parks Magazine
- Appalachian Trail Conference Magazine
- Various books and CD's produced by the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology

Wil was awarded the honor of "Highly Commended" for one of his insect photos by the BBC Wildlife Magazine in the 2006 Photographer of

the Year competition and "Highly Honored" in the 2008 Nature's Best Magazine Windland Rice International Photography Competition.

"I strive to achieve an image that conveys the true essence and splendor of the subject. I use the camera as my net to capture that essence. I use the computer only to translate the captured image into a reflection of the reality that I experienced with the subject. Over manipulating the gossamer of the captured image will only detract from the splendor that was originally there."

Wil Hershberger

Upcoming Meeting Topics

January 14th: An Appreciation of Bird Song

February 11th: Who Needs Pollination?

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Comments From the President

When you read this, 2009 will be nearly over and 2010 closely approaching. I wish all of you a splendid New Year. One of my wishes for 2010 is to compile a year's master list of all bird sightings on our club's field trips. I think this will add interest to our trips as the year moves along. I will try to keep you apprised from time to time of how many species have been recorded. No matter if you do only the Ivy Creek walks, or others with the Club, help me stay on top of this. What do you think might be possible? Two hundred species? Two hundred and fifty? Remember, we will be going to the Richmond area, Highland County and who knows where else in 2010, thanks in large part to the initiative of Doug Rogers. If I can manage it, I will post the list on E-bird.

Our January 14th program will bring to Charlottesville an old friend of mine, Wil Hershberger. I first met Wil about 1985 when we were both living in Frederick County, Maryland. I remember a Sunday afternoon phone call of around that time, to the effect that he had found

a Northern Shrike in Frederick County. Ellie and I left a family dinner to look for the shrike, and found both it and Wil. It was an exciting moment. Wil was a good birder then, but became a superb one in the next few years. During the 1990's he and several other birders of our county did a series of big days. Wil had just the right personality to make these events compelling. I loved being part of those foursomes.

Wil, who has a great ear for bird song, began doing sound recordings of birds and insects some years ago. He used his equipment to make a CD of the nocturnal calls of Wood Ducks at my marsh in West Virginia and gave it to me. He also collaborated with Lang Elliott of Cornell University to produce a book about insect sound, published by Houghton-Mifflin. You won't want to miss hearing his adventures in recording, as well as his thoughts on bird song in general. Wil's wife Donna has assisted him in all this, in addition to holding down an important position as manager of automated ser-

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Monticello Bird Club

(Comments from the president continued from page 1)

vices at Washington Hospital Center, enduring the daily grind of commuting from West Virginia.

Back in September I visited a farm pond in the south part of Albemarle County and found a small flock of Blue-winged Teal. As I approached them, they sprang into the air and I was able to photograph their take-off. This action photo became my Christmas card for this year. The last written line on that card is one I would like to extend to all members of the bird club and anyone else who may read this:

"May your 2010 take off like the teal!"
Stauffer Miller

From the Editor:

As many of you know, I have purchased some books by Jerry Uhlman of Richmond regarding good places to go birding. In addition to that, I have some of my own favorite sites. In the coming months we will visit some of these sites on MBC Field Trips.

Anyone who has favorite sites to go birding, please e-mail them to me.

Dutch Gap is a great place. Plan to come along in January!

Doug Rogers, Editor

Bird Club Information

The Monticello Bird Club meets at **7:00 pm** 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 February issue is January 23.** Please email information to Doug Rogers at MBCNEWS@embarqmail.com or send to 1065 Weybridge Ct. # 304, Charlottesville, VA 22911.

Monticello Bird Club
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Please visit our website at
www.monticellobirdclub.org

BIG YEAR, 2010 for Bob Ake & John Spahr

On **January 1, 2010** Norfolk resident and birder extraordinaire, Bob Ake, and I will begin our "ABA Big Year." This will be an attempt to count as many bird species as possible within the 2010 calendar year. The ABA part refers to the American Birding Association geographic area, defined as the 49 states in the continental US, including Alaska, as well as Canada. Oceanic trips within 200 miles of the coast are included, except for the Bahamas and Antilles.

Within these geographic confines a total of 957 species have been recorded. Of this astounding number, 484 are recorded as "common" birds. We hope to find nearly all of these common birds. Another 178 are listed as "uncommon" due to limited ranges -- for example, Aleutian Tern (Alaska), or Buff-breasted Flycatcher (southeast Arizona). Most of these are possible if we target trips to the right places at the right time of the year. Then there are 80 "rare" species that are either non-breeding visitors from Europe, Asia or Central America, or are very local breeders, such as Hook-billed Kite (southern tip of Texas), White Wagtail (western Alaska), or Brambling

(sporadic northern US and Canada). With the right strategy and a little luck we hope to see some of these. Another 100 species are considered "casual," that is reported less than annually, such as Streak-backed Oriole (sporadic SW US). We'll be thrilled to luck into one or two in this category. Then there are another 107 birds that have been reported less than 3 times in 30 years, so called "accidentals" like the Cuban Martin or Eurasian Siskin. Finding one of these would be the equivalent of a lottery win.

The current record for an ABA Big Year is 745 species. We do not expect to challenge this number, or even come close. We would like to tally at least 650 species and hopefully approach 700. Whether we get 700, 650, or even only 600 species matters little to me. My ABA list currently stands at a meager 534, so any number above that would be a success for me.

I've been intrigued with this idea ever since reading *The Big Year: A Tale of Man, Nature, and a Fowl Obsession*, by Mark Obmascik. This adventure will entail two

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Monticello Bird Club Board Members

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|-----------------------|--------------------|--|--------------|
| President | Stauffer Miller | stauffer@seepub.com | 296-5505 |
| Vice President | Jim Hill | jimcarhill@comcast.net | 975-6523 |
| Secretary | Peggy Cornett | pcornett@monticello.org | 984-9816 |
| Treasurer | Henry Konat | henryk54@verizon.net | 540-948-4771 |
| Field Trips | Stauffer Miller | stauffer@seepub.com | 296-5505 |
| Speakers | Pat Wilczek | pat.wilczek@comcast.net | 985-4444 |
| Publicity | Ellen Dudley | emdudley@nexet.net | 244-2688 |
| Hospitality | Priscilla Kingston | kingston@cstone.net | 293-5173 |
| Newsletter | Doug Rogers | mbcnews@embarqmail.com | 409-8156 |
| Membership | Jim Nix | jim-nix@comcast.net | 973-7366 |
| Birdseed Sale | Jim Hill | jimcarhill@comcast.net | 975-6523 |

Field Trips & Counts

Introducing new member:

Helen DesTrempe



New member Helen DesTrempe is a native of Silver Spring, MD. She has lived locally for the past thirty years, and now resides in Barboursville. A retired social worker, she enjoys painting birds with watercolors, and emphasizes she has no favorite bird for her paintings.

From the Editor:

New members, please send me some info on yourselves - items of interest that will introduce you to your fellow club members.

Doug Rogers, Editor

First Saturday Bird Walks at Ivy Creek Natural Area

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. Each month has a different leader. Some outstanding birds have been seen on the walks.

The walk for this month will be on January 2nd. See you there!

Dutch Gap Conservation Area south of Richmond

Saturday, January 16th—Dutch Gap Conservation Area south of Richmond. This day trip will be led by Doug Rogers.

Meet at Starbucks Restaurant in Pantops beside the Giant Food at 7:00 AM. There should be an assortment of waterfowl on the James River and its lagoons. Also we should see a variety of wintering migrants.

Birding in the Crozet area

Wednesday, January 6th—Start the New Year right! Birding in Crozet area.

Meet at Beaver Creek Lake Parking Lot at 9:00 AM. We'll walk in several areas near Crozet, ending about noon. Leader Stauffer Miller. 296-5505 or stauffer@seepub.com.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

We have had several new individual and family members join the Monticello Bird Club. We welcome them all and wish them good birding and good fellowship at our meetings.

New members for 2009 are:

- Catherine Bub
- Karen Burkhardt
- Ruth Carmines
- Tana Herndon
- Judy LaChappelle
- Ken & Gay Loftin
- Bill & Sherri Martin
- Chris Murray
- Kathy Sudduth
- Paul & Sharon Wilcox
- Diane LaSauce
- Helen DesTrempe

Warren Christmas Bird Count

The Warren Christmas Bird Count will be held on Sunday, January 3, 2010.

Please contact Allen Hale, compiler at [434-263-8671](tel:434-263-8671) if you wish to participate. In the past, a supper tally has been hosted by Tom and Toots Klipstein at Springtree Farm in Fluvanna County.

Highland County, Virginia's "Little Switzerland"

Saturday, February 6th—Highland County.

Meet in front of the Food Lion in Seminole Square Shopping Center. We will car-pool from there. **Dress warmly.**

Target birds will be Golden Eagles, Bald Eagles, Rough Legged Hawks, Red Crossbills and Horned Larks.

Trip Leader will be Doug Rogers.

Minutes of the MBC Meeting on December 10, 2009

President Stauffer Miller opened the meeting, and welcomed the visitors Steve Foster, Mary Wright and Donna Watkins. In the absence of Henry Konat, Stauffer reported that the Club had a balance of approximately \$13,000, and that the bird seed sale had netted \$1478. He thanked the many members who contributed much effort to this successful project. Stauffer then reported that only 56% of the current membership had renewed their membership for the coming year. This is a very disappointing number, and he encouraged the tardy members to send in their renewals.

Stauffer told the members that the Chair of the Speakers group, Pat Wilczek, is laid up as a result of a nasty fall, and he encouraged the members to send cards to her.

Stauffer reminded the members that the next meeting, in January, will begin at 7:00 pm. This change was discussed and approved at the November meeting.

Field Trips:

Birding in December will focus on the Christmas Bird Count. Jenny Gaden welcomed everyone who is interested in the count to participate, whether experienced or not. She has organized the counting areas with the assistance of a fine new map created by Jon Rockett; this map was on display at the meeting. Persons who want to participate but who do not as yet have an assigned area are encouraged to contact Jenny, and she will help put them in touch with one of the established groups.

The Warren CBC will take place on January 3, with the results compiled by Alan Hale. Interested persons should call Stauffer for more details.

Doug Rogers described a number of possible field trips to promising sites in the Richmond area. There was sufficient interest expressed by members that Doug will pursue this, with a view to arranging some day trips after the new year.

Bird Sightings:

Bill Leaning reported that his faithful Brown Creeper had returned for yet another winter. John Spahr was impressed by a display of advanced aerobatics given by a Cooper's Hawk which pursued its prey through vehicle traffic in Waynesboro. Peter Dutnell reported on a Sharp-shinned Hawk which has become quite comfortable at one of Peter's seed feeders.

The meeting continued with an extremely interesting presentation by John Spahr which described his two trips to New Guinea. Emphasis was on the Bird of Paradise species, and featured some remarkable photographs. Then followed the traditional December party featuring a wide assortment of food and door prizes. As always, the hospitality arrangements of Priscilla and Ron Kingston were of the first rank.

Dave Hogg

(Big Year 2010 continued from page 2)

trips each to Arizona, Texas, California and Alaska, as well as at least one trip to Florida, Colorado, Minnesota and New England. Shorter trips to adjacent states will happen as well, especially if there is an unusual bird nearby that we can easily "chase." The year will also include multiple pelagic trips off both the east and west coast.

Bob has been to almost all of the birding "hot spots" that we will visit in this quest. He knows where to go and when. He has much of the calendar year scheduled, putting us at the best locations during the ideal time to optimize our effort. This includes places like Duluth, Minnesota in early **February** for northern owls. Also, South Florida -- including the Dry Tortugas -- in **April**. Then there is Nome, Gamble and the Pribilof Islands in Alaska in early **July** for breeding murrelets, auklets and kittiwakes, plus limited breeders like Bluethroat, Northern Wheatear and Arctic Warbler. Our first big trip is to Texas in mid **January** where we hope to score lots of common birds along with specialties like Black-bellied Whistling Duck, Muscovy Duck, Plain Chachalaca, Least Grebe, Whooping Crane, Red-crowned Parrot, Long-billed Thrasher, and Altamira Oriole, perhaps lucking into a Clay-colored Thrush enroute.

We will begin our quest right here in Virginia, starting at the coast and including at least one CBC. Then it's off to Texas. Between most trips we will be returning to our respective homes, and loving wives who have given us their encouragement and blessing. In fact, Joyce and Nancy will be joining us on several of these ventures.

I hope to write a short update of our travels and bird totals and send it to the editor of this newsletter each month. Anyone who wants a near real-time chronicle, check out Bob's blog <http://bobsbirds.blogspot.com/> next year. Bob hopes to write a few sentences each day listing the highlights, or "lowlights," of our adventure. Bob also intends to post a few photos each day on his Flickr site: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/bobsbirds/>.

John Spahr Staunton, VA

