



Monticello Bird Club

January 2013

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Comments from The President

Lou Tanner

Winter birding, though it offers no brilliant specimens heading north to fulfill a genetic mission and raise a family, is much to my taste. Cold weather and the more predictable array of winter residents make for an experience that is less adventurous and colorful to be sure but also one that is refreshingly free of the unholy trinity of ticks, mosquitoes, and high humidity. The stop for coffee afterwards is likewise more appreciated as the warmth is much needed after tramping around in ill-fitting boots and wet socks. Juncos, kinglets, cardinals, a few good sparrows, a duck or two, and the occasional raptor offer a timely reminder that the world is, after all, not an altogether crazy place. It is the kind of reassurance one sometimes needs.

Some have long sought similar satisfaction from the natural world. If an 1898 book I found some years ago is

to be believed, a resident of the New York metropolitan area sighted a Magnolia Warbler in Plainfield, New Jersey on Oct. 14, 1899 and followed that with sightings days later of a Golden Crowned Kinglet and Myrtle Warblers. At least one Yellow Throated Vireo appeared in Plainfield in June 1903 while Central Park in the Big Apple itself yielded a Redstart the following May. There is nothing in the least remarkable about these sightings except that they demonstrate that someone—a little old lady in the 19th century equivalent of tennis shoes no doubt or some stodgy bewhiskered old gent—was out galloping around the countryside and peering into fields and shrubbery in those days before Gore-Tex, Swarovski, and Sibley. Probably too they were thinking pretty much the same sort of thoughts and deriving the same sort of pleasure from watching

birds that others now do. Finding a kindred spirit from another century is always a magical experience. When it is someone with the same good taste (bias alert), the sort of person who tucks wildflowers or feathers in between the pages of a book or notes the sighting of a kinglet, it is even more special. We should all already be preparing such time capsules for the birders of the twenty-second century.

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Bill Leaning to Present January 10th Program

Stauffer Miller

Well-known Monticello Bird Club member will present the January 10th program of the bird club. His talk is entitled “New Zealand, the Living Land.”

Bill, a native New Zealander, is a retired veterinarian and enthusiastic nature photographer. He and his wife Clare have been avidly interested in birds since 1989. Their seventeen-acre property in Earlsyville is named Omanu, meaning in the Maori language “place of birds.” And indeed it is. Many birds are attracted to the extensive cover and natural food provided by the Leanings through their plantings of native flora.

Prior to human settlement around 1300 AD the New Zealand islands were truly primeval, harboring around 250 bird species. However, within a hundred years of the arrival of man,



nearly one third of these species disappeared. Although the impact of human settlement on the islands has been great, much beauty and diversity

still exists. Come hear and enjoy Bill’s talk about kiwi land.

Our speaker on February 14th will be Marshall Faintich. He will be speaking about birding along the Rockfish Valley trail in Nelson County. Marshall has seen and photographed a remarkable number of birds along the trail. His photographs of songbirds such as vireos and warblers border on astonishing.

As usual, we take our speakers to dinner. Come dine with Bill and Clare January 10th at 5:30 pm at the Brick Oven Restaurant, in the Rio Hill Shopping Center. Hope to see you there.

Club Activities

First Saturday Bird Walk

Saturday, January 5, 7:30am

Join Gabriel Maple, on January 5 at 7:30 am in the Ivy Creek parking lot for the 1st Saturday Bird Walk. Gabriel is an outstanding young birder and is eager to share his birding knowledge. Despite the cold weather, birding in January can be rewarding because the birds are much easier to see. Views of Cardinals, Bluebirds, and Red-bellied Woodpeckers can be stunning against the blue skies and bare branches of winter trees. Walks are generally 1-2 miles long and last 1-2 hours depending upon the weather.



Shenandoah Field Trip

Saturday, January 12, 8:00am

Gabriel Mapel will lead us on a trip to his home area, the Shenandoah Valley, in pursuit of various ducks and perhaps Snow Geese and Tundra Swans. We will tour around Augusta and perhaps southern Rockingham or northern Rockbridge Counties and stop at various lakes in pursuit of these waterfowl.

Meeting place and time: 8:00am at the Inn at Afton Parking Lot (top of Afton Mountain, the site of the Rockfish Gap Hawk Watch).

Highland County Field Trip

Saturday, January 19, 7:15am

We will meet in the Barracks Road parking lot in front of Bed Bath and Beyond at 7:15am to carpool. We will depart promptly at 7:30am for the ninety minute drive to Monterey. We will get on the bypass and proceed to I-64 West. On I-64 we will proceed to I-81 and take the exit South. Exit I-81 at the next exit (I think it is exit 220) onto Route 262. Follow Route 262 until it intersects Route 250 West. We will stay on Route 250 West until we reach the Confederate Breastworks, where we will make a "pit stop." The restrooms are simply outhouses, but they work well.



It is possible (though not probable) that we might see Crossbills here. We will pass through the town of McDowell and then on to Monterey. We will bird in the beautiful Blue Grass Valley to the West of Monterey, looking for Golden Eagles, Horned Larks, Rough-Legged Hawks, various sparrows and other such winter birds.

Plan on having lunch in a local restaurant in Monterey and then, if the group is up to it, we can proceed South on Route 220 to a pond that frequently has several species of water fowl. We might see Bald Eagles on the way. Dress warmly in layers. Bring spotting scopes. Bring walkie-talkies. Plan on having a good day!!

Thank You to First Saturday Trip Leaders

January 2013 marks the 19th year of the popular MBC 1st Saturday walks at Ivy Creek. These walks are open to the public and beginner bird watchers are welcomed. Binoculars are provided if needed. Typically, a dozen or more folks show up for the walks, which start at 7:30 in the Ivy Creek parking lot. This past year we had a number of young people and family groups join our walks.

Thanks to all the club members who attend these walks and help the new bird watchers. The following MBC members will be trip leaders for 2013 walks: Gabriel Mapel, Teresa Shaner, Lou Tanner, Janet Paisley, Stauffer Miller, Jim Nix, Leigh Surdukowski, Jenny Gaden, Tom Jones, Peter Brask, Peter Dutnell, and Dave Hogg. Tom and Gabriel are new trip leaders for 2013. A special thanks goes to the returning leaders. A number of these leaders have participated in this program for over 15 years.

If you have questions, contact Leigh Surdukowski at 295-8241.

Monticello Bird Club Meeting Minutes December 13

Submitted by Peggy Cornett

Lou Tanner opened the meeting with a reminder that the MBC Christmas party, organized by Ron and Priscilla Kingston, will follow the meeting. Newcomer Bill Hines introduced himself. He has just moved back to Charlottesville after two tours in Iraq and the Kandahar region of Afghanistan, and he mentioned that he was able to do some birding during his tour of duty. There were forty-four members and visitors in attendance.

Jenny Gaden announced that the annual Charlottesville Christmas Bird Count will be held December 16. There are currently 20 groups participating. Thanks to an article by Laura Ingles in the C'ville Weekly, four new participants responded. The count takes place rain or shine, and there will be a pot-luck supper at the end of the day.

Gabriel Mapel and Eve Gaige gave an update on the newly formed Blue Ridge Young Birders Club (BRYBC). They thanked MBC for agreeing to their request to affiliate with our club. The first page of their Web site is up and they are planning field trips to Lake Anna in January and Pea Island, NC (February). They plan to link their Web site with MBC. They already have

business cards printed with art work by BRYBC member Max Nootbaar. Donations of books on birding are appreciated and Jenny Gaden donated a telescope. Saturday, December 9, BRYBC made a presentation to a 4H club, and they saw an Osprey.

In Doug Rogers' absence, Lou Tanner gave the treasurer's report. Receipts for the prior month were \$275; disbursements, \$6,912.37; with a balance in the checking account of \$12,017.71. Anticipated expenses to the fiscal year end of 30 June 2013 will be approximately \$2,000. We currently have 102 paid members.

John Davis reported on field trips. Several recent locations included River View Park, where about 30 species were sighted, and the trip to Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel, led by Dave Hogg. Leigh Surdukowski led a walk along Lickinghole Creek, Old Trail, and King Family Vineyard where they recorded 45 species. Upcoming trips include January 12 to Shenandoah Valley (led by Gabriel Mapel); January 19 to Highland County (Doug Rogers, leading), and in February Peter Duttell will lead a trip to Dutch Gap.

Ruth Douglas announced that the long anticipated Flora of Virginia is available and she brought order forms. The flora was just featured at the December meeting of the Monticello Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society.

Recent bird sightings were shared. Jenny Gaden had a Northern Harrier on Garth Road and John Holden saw three Northern Harriers at Dunlora. He watched one Harrier catch a mouse and mentioned that they seem almost tame; flying very close overhead. Bill Leaning watched three Pileated Woodpeckers together on a log. Gabriel Mapel saw a juvenile Northern Harrier at his house and at Lake Anna, where he also saw a Western Grebe, a Common Loon, and a Rough-legged Hawk. A Great Blue Heron was seen by Charlottesville High School and a Bald Eagle was spotted in Earlysville. A juvenile Rufous Hummingbird is still at a member's feeder and another reported a banded Ruby-throated Hummingbird still visiting their feeder.



Albemarle Bluebirds 2012

Submitted by Ann Dunn

This past year, 2380 native cavity nesters (1787 bluebirds, 415 tree swallows and an assortment of chickadees, titmice and house wrens) fledged from 419 man-made nest boxes throughout the Charlottesville/ Albemarle area. Boxes were located in city and county parks, schools, golf courses, cemeteries, hospitals, farms and roadsides many sites dating back to bluebird trails established 20-25 years ago. In a program sponsored by the MBC and the Virginia Bluebird Society (VBS), each box was carefully monitored by a volunteer, who recorded nesting activity, mended any box that was broken and installed predator

guards when needed. Data gathered from these efforts have been reported to the VBS and will ultimately be passed on to the North American Bluebird Society.

Every season presents its own surprises and challenges. The season started off with a bang, thanks to an early spring after an almost nonexistent winter. Many first eggs were reported in early/mid March with hatchlings appearing the first of April. The extreme heat of the summer, however, impacted on productivity with unusually high numbers of infertile / abandoned eggs

and chick deaths. Nevertheless, thanks in large part to the addition of four new trails this year, the number of fledglings in 2012 is the highest recorded to date.

We thank all of our conscientious volunteers who carefully monitored and protected our treasured nest boxes. A special thanks to Mary Janet Fowler who after playing a key role in transitioning the coordination of the Hammond trail on Bob's retirement and spending 12 years overseeing the 22 boxes at Chris Greene, will take a break next year as she temporarily moves out of our area.

Birding Trail Project

Submitted by Doug Rogers

At the beginning of this season, I asked all Club members to be creative and come forward with new ideas for our Club. Stauffer Miller did; Stauffer knew of an interesting piece of property that he has birded, from outside its perimeters, and proposed that the Club try to find a way to gain access to it either through purchase or other means. Following that, Lou Tanner, Jenny Gaden, Stauffer and I spent a morning looking at the property.

From our vantage point, outside the property, we noted few invasive species, a small stream with evidence of beavers, a wetland and good habitat for migrating warblers and other species. While there, we got "busted" by a law enforcement official for trespassing on the railroad tracks that border the property; but that had a happy ending: we found out the name of the owner of the property.

I contacted the owner and Stauffer and I met with him. He is a gracious and affable man who owns other parcels of land that is either being developed or will be developed in the future. However, he does not intend to develop the property we looked at. He wants some of his property to remain in its natural state. While he does not want to

sell this property, he was willing to give us access to it and allow us to "chop a trail" into it for birding. From our side, the Club must protect him from any liability for our use of his land. (We will do that with a General Liability policy.)

This is an exciting project and the Club will go forward with it in 2013. For now, please note that this is PRIVATE PROPERTY and is not to be entered without written permission. (Note that I haven't given its

location.) It is carefully watched by a Game Warden who lives in that area and by the law enforcement official mentioned above. Very shortly, we will have written permission for six Club members - each of whom will be able to take three guests with them. That number will be expanded next year. When spring migration starts, we should have a trail in place and some activities planned. I will provide more details, as to its location, etc., in coming Newsletters.



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 or for printed newsletters. 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 20th of the month.**



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