



April 2007

# Monticello Bird Club

Volume 21, Number 8

## April Meeting Topic: Birding on Cape Cod, Massachusetts

Stauffer Miller will speak at the Monticello Bird Club on April 12th at 7:30 pm on Birds and Birding on Cape Cod, Massachusetts. Stauffer and his wife Elinor lived on Cape Cod from 1994 to 2005. During this time they managed their yard in Yarmouthport to attract birds. Stauffer led a number of birding trips on Cape Cod. In his presentation, Stauffer will discuss the more important birding spots on Cape Cod, and cover birds of the various seasons on the Cape, with special emphasis on the sea ducks, large numbers of which winter there.



Africa. Stauffer is especially proud of his bird list for Mexico, now well over 800 species. He and Elinor moved to Charlottesville in 2005. He is looking forward to seeing what avian surprises await him in Albemarle County

Please join MBC members and our speaker for dinner at Wild Greens Restaurant in the North Wing of Barracks Road Shopping Center on March 8th at 5:45 pm prior to the meeting.

Stauffer Miller is a native of Berkeley County, West Virginia and a graduate of Oklahoma State University College of Veterinary Medicine. He has been a birder for over thirty years. While living in Frederick County, Maryland, he wrote a birding guide to that county. He and his wife have traveled extensively to see birds, especially in South America and

## Upcoming Meeting Topics

**May 10: Member's Night.** MBC members share their favorite slides and photographs.



*Pileated Woodpecker in the Mosby Mountain area photographed by Kai Hui.*

## Comments From the President

A red sun inches steadily toward the western horizon as thousands upon thousands of Sandhill Cranes lift up from the corn fields adjacent to the Platte River. They take to the Nebraska air in massive clouds of wings and sound. From upstream to our left and downstream to our right, from behind us and in front of us the cranes come, gathering over the long river to roost in its shallow waters. Silent in our blind at the river's edge, we hear the wings like distant drum rolls even as the birds' urgent cries fill the air. Group by group they drop, wings bowed, legs straight down – like Disney's Mary Poppins with her umbrella, floating down to the rooftops of London. When darkness comes they have settled on the sandbars in a string of restless forms that stretches as far as the eye can perceive. Then at dawn they leave the river to feed in the corn fields throughout the day - refueling to complete the trip to their

breeding grounds in the Arctic tundra.

This phenomenon is like no other in the bird world. Considering the distances that many of us travel to see new species in exotic habitats, we are remiss to ignore something this spectacular that takes place every March, almost next door. The power of the experience is more than what is seen and heard from the blinds. Sandhill Cranes have been living on earth longer than any other avian species – 50 million years. Eight million year old fossils of Sandhill Cranes have been found in Nebraska; this is older than the river itself, much older than your and my progenitors.

Plan your future to include a March visit to Nebraska to witness the ancient migration of the Sandhill Cranes. You will be a changed birder.

*- Jennifer Gaden, president*

### Inside April 2007

<i>Backyard Bird Photography</i>	2
<i>Field Trips</i>	3
<i>VSO Annual Meeting</i>	3
<i>Minutes</i>	4

## Backyard Bird Photography By Victoria Dye

So how do you capture those fleeting wings in an image? Last month I talked about setting up your bird studio. Now let's learn a few basics about your camera. You can shoot on automatic mode and you will capture one or two good shots, but if you want to increase your odds of getting good images you need to learn a little more about your camera.

Cameras use two settings to make an exposure, shutter speed and aperture. Shutter speed is how fast the shutter opens and closes to let light expose the sensor or film. The faster your shutter the more likely you are to stop action, 1/250 second or faster. Slower shutter speeds are for things that don't move 1/15 second and slower. The in-between speeds are for things that don't move too much, people, sitting dogs and such.

The aperture is the other setting. This is how wide open the lens gets to let light in. Think of the pupil of your eye. It opens and closes in size based on how much light there is. Indoors our pupils are wide open and in the bright sunlight



American Goldfinch.. Photo by Victoria Dye.

they are pinpoints. This is how the camera aperture works. The aperture also determines how much of the image will be in focus from nearest point to farthest point or the depth of focus. The more wide open the aperture the less depth of focus you will obtain. The

smaller the aperture the more depth of focus you obtain.

So, "Now what?" you ask. I set my camera to aperture priority mode, AV. Some point and shoot cameras won't have this setting, in which case you are stuck with automatic. This mode lets me set the aperture and the camera decides what the shutter speed will be. This way I make sure I get enough depth of focus to keep my bird sharp and the camera gives me the fastest speed for the available light. Start with F5.6 and experiment upwards from there to F8 to see what keeps your bird in focus.

I, then, set my ISO speed. ISO numbers are left over from the film world. The higher the number the faster the film and hence the faster the shutter speed. "Crank it all the way up!" you say? Well, there is a trade off of course. The higher the ISO number the grainier the image will be. For SLR cameras you are pretty safe up to ISO 400, on the point and shoots you might get some noticeable grain at this setting, but you may have to use it.

(Continued on page 4)

### Bird Club Information

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 editor of the MBC Newsletter welcomes submissions including articles, photographs and notices. **DEADLINE for the May issue is April 25.** Please email information to Amy Gilmer at [akgilmer@comcast.net](mailto:akgilmer@comcast.net) or send to 3166 Welsh Run Road, Ruckersville, VA 22968.

Monticello Bird Club  
P.O. Box 4362  
Charlottesville, Virginia 22905  
Please visit our website at  
[www.monticellobirdclub.org](http://www.monticellobirdclub.org)

### Monticello Bird Club Board Members

<b>President</b>	Jennifer Gaden	<a href="mailto:jgaden@earthlink.net">jgaden@earthlink.net</a>	293-6275
<b>Vice President</b>	Jim Hill	<a href="mailto:jimcarhill@adelphia.net">jimcarhill@adelphia.net</a>	975-6523
<b>Secretary</b>	Peggy Cornett	<a href="mailto:pcornett@monticello.org">pcornett@monticello.org</a>	984-9816
<b>Treasurer</b>	Henry Konat	<a href="mailto:henryk54@verizon.net">henryk54@verizon.net</a>	540-948-4771
<b>Field Trips</b>	John Zimmerman	<a href="mailto:jozimmva@earthlink.net">jozimmva@earthlink.net</a>	974-9293
<b>Speakers</b>	Pat Wilczek	<a href="mailto:patwilczek@earthlink.net">patwilczek@earthlink.net</a>	985-4444
<b>Publicity</b>	Ellen Dudley	<a href="mailto:emdudley@nexet.net">emdudley@nexet.net</a>	244-2688
<b>Hospitality</b>	Priscilla Kingston	<a href="mailto:kingston@cstone.net">kingston@cstone.net</a>	293-5173
<b>Newsletter</b>	Amy Gilmer	<a href="mailto:akgilmer@comcast.net">akgilmer@comcast.net</a>	825-2170
<b>Membership</b>	Robyn Kells	<a href="mailto:rkells@ntelos.net">rkells@ntelos.net</a>	970-1044

## Upcoming Field Trips

### Culpeper County Monday, April 16

Join field trip leader Stauffer Miller on an exploratory excursion to Culpeper County. **Meet at the Golden Corral restaurant (Business US 29 exit, west of Culpeper) at 8:30 am.** We'll decide when we meet as to where we will go (fields east of town, Mountain Run Park or several other large ponds west of the restaurant). Target species include Common Loon, American Bittern, Sora, and Virginia Rail. Lunch in Culpeper is a possibility. Questions and carpooling coordination, contact Stauffer Miller at 434-296-5505 or [stauffer@seepub.com](mailto:stauffer@seepub.com)

### Beaver Creek Reservoir Mint Springs Valley Park Saturday, April 21

Join John Zimmerman on this search for early Spring migrants at Beaver Creek Reservoir, "Sparrow Road", and Mint Springs Valley Park. **Meet at Seminole Square in the Giant parking lot at 7:00 am.** Questions? Contact John at 434-974-9293 or [jozim-mva@earthlink.net](mailto:jozim-mva@earthlink.net)

### First Saturday Bird Walks At Ivy Creek Natural Area

On the first Saturday of each month the Monticello Bird Club hosts a bird walk at Ivy Creek Natural Area (ICNA) at 7:30 am. The walks start in the parking lot of ICNA. Join Stauffer Miller on the April 7 walk and Peter Brask on the May 5 walk.

### Huntley Meadows Park Fairfax County, Virginia Saturday, April 28

Jenny Gaden will **meet people at Giant in Seminole Square to leave promptly at 5:30 am** for a visit to Huntley Meadows Park in Fairfax County. It will take approximately 2.25 hours to get there so arrive before 5:30 to arrange carpooling. Huntley Meadows' 1425 acres harbor majestic forests, wildflower-speckled meadows and vast wetlands. It is one of the best birding areas in Northern Virginia. Sandy Farkas and Gary Meyers, who have birded the area for years, will be our guides. We should arrive at the park by 8:00 am and expect the trip to last till about 10:30 or 11:00 am. Bring food and sun and insect protection. The trails could be muddy, so wear appropriate footwear. Call Jenny at 434-293-6275 if you have questions.

### Birding Before Work Ivy Creek Natural Area April 30 - May 4

Enjoy the Spring migrants each morning before work on a bird walk at Ivy Creek Natural Area 7-8 am. **Meet in the ICNA parking lot at 7 am.** Leaders include April 30 - Lou Tanner, May 1 - Jenny Gaden, May 2 - Dave Hogg, May 3 - Teresa Shaner, and May 4 - John Zimmerman. Questions? Contact John at 434-974-9293 or [jozim-mva@earthlink.net](mailto:jozim-mva@earthlink.net)

### South River Falls Shenandoah National Park Saturday, May 5

John Zimmerman will lead this trip along the beautiful South River Falls trail in Shenandoah National Park. Expect to see a variety of warblers on this moderately to difficult hike through lush woods. **Meet at Seminole Square in the Giant parking lot at 6:15 am.** We will be at the trail head in the South River Falls picnic area about 7 am, if you would like to meet us there. Questions? Contact John at 434-974-9293 or [jozim-mva@earthlink.net](mailto:jozim-mva@earthlink.net)

### Annual VSO Meeting Virginia's Northern Neck May 4-6, 2007

A great weekend is planned for the VSO Annual Meeting to be held May 4-6, 2007 on Virginia's Northern Neck. The first part of May is usually the peak season for migrants on the "Neck" and outings to Voorhees Natural Preserve, the Wilna tract on the Rappahannock Wildlife Refuge, Dameron Marsh, the deep forest trails of Stratford Hall and the shoreline of the Potomac will put participants in touch with an incredible variety of species. The theme of the meeting is bird conservation in Virginia.

Dr. Bryan Watts of the Center for Conservation Biology in Williamsburg, will be our guest speaker at the Saturday night banquet. In his presentation A century of avifaunal change in the mid-Atlantic: Using the past to clarify the conservation challenges of today, he will describe the extensive work that he and his colleagues have done to protect birds and promote conservation in the Northern Neck area, as well as the rest of Virginia and beyond. Additional details can be obtained from the VSO website: <http://www.virginiabirds.net/>

## MBC Minutes for March 8, 2007

President Jenny Gaden presided over the meeting. Thirty-three people were present. Newcomers included Shelly Thompson, a new Master Naturalist student.

**Treasurer's Report:** Henry Konat was not present and no report was given.

**Field Trips:** John Zimmerman announced that 35 people attended his March "First Saturday Walk" at Ivy Creek Natural Area. He asked for input on the recent Highland County trip and Amy Gilmer reported that the highlights included seeing an immature Golden Eagle and a Screech Owl in a tree hole. Jenny Gaden went to the same area the following week and saw Golden and Bald Eagles. John reminded members of the upcoming trips, including the March 10 evening trip to Humpback Rocks, led by Jenny Gaden, to see Woodcocks, and the Wednesday morning trip (March 14) led by Stauffer Miller, which will return to the Scottsville area to see water birds. On March 17 John will lead a walk at Pen Park and the Dunlora bottoms.

**Blue Bird Trail:** Mary Janet Fowler reported that volunteers are still needed to help monitor the 350 boxes on the Blue Bird Trail.

### General Announcements:

- The annual VSO meeting will be held in the Northern Neck on the first weekend of May.
- Aimee Weldon, who spoke for the December 2006 meeting, is involved with a National Audubon Society project to monitor invasive alien plants in the Shenandoah National Park. Two dates have been scheduled for volunteers to help remove these plants, March 10 and April 7, from 9:00 a.m. until Noon.
- MBC is encouraged to participate in the Earth Day Festival at McIntire Park, Saturday, April 28, 10:00 a.m.-5:30 p.m. ICF is hosting the annual Natural History Day, April 29, from 1:00-3:00 p.m.
- A petition was made available urging the Albemarle Board of Supervisors to do an environmental impact study on the land slated to become the Biscuit Run development.
- The American Bird Conservancy is offering shade-grown coffee to protect the Cerulean Warblers' habitat in the Andes Mountains of S. America. To order the Cerulean Warbler Conservation Coffee, visit their Web site at [www.abcbirds.org](http://www.abcbirds.org) or call 1-800-648-6491.
- Bill Leaning reported that the Augusta Bird Club has available a new, consolidated version of

the birding guides for Virginia's three regions (coastal, piedmont, and mountain) produced by the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries. The cost of the 400-page volume is \$8.50.

- The MBC is no longer allowed to use the ICF coffee cups. The club will begin providing disposable cups, and members are encouraged to bring their own cups for beverage refreshments at future meetings.

**Bird Sightings:** A Sharp-shinned Hawk with a Starling in its claws was sighted in Belmont. The bird landed on the ground with its prey and then flew away. A Merlin was seen in the Fry Springs area. Nancy Newman saw an adult Bald Eagle flying on East Rio Road, going toward Pantops. Mary Fowler saw a Red-bellied Woodpecker on Proffit Road. Jim Hill watched squirrels licking the sap from holes made by Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers. Pam Howie saw Cedar Waxwings and Chickadees drinking sap from a Silver Maple. David Hogg saw a large Hawk, which might have been a Merlin. He also saw Woodcocks on the Blue Ridge Parkway. Bob Hammond noted that he's had Blue Birds flying into the side view mirrors of his car. Ron Kingston saw two Fox Sparrows, a Hermit Thrush, and Carolina Wrens nesting.

- Peggy Cornett, secretary

### Photographing birds...

(Continued from page 2)

The best time to photograph your birds is the early morning or late evening light, about 1-2 hours pre sunset or post sunrise. This light is pretty and flattering but not as bright as midday light. So set your camera to aperture priority, set the aperture to F5.6 to start and the ISO to 200 and take a picture of a perch, no bird necessary. Check the reading on your screen to see what your shutter speed is.

If it's below 1/125 then move the ISO up to 400. Now experiment from there. These settings work well for perched birds. If you want to catch one flying you will need at least a shutter speed of 1/2000 second and lightning reflexes. They are so fast!

I know this all sounds rather complicated but the rewards are well worth it. Images are cheap to take, so fire away! Use the settings I suggest as a starting

point and experiment. After shooting make sure to review your images for the day on your computer to see how you did. It's a learning experience, I know. So get out there and have some fun!

Next month I'll discuss trouble shooting and reviewing the images in camera.