



# Monticello Bird Club

October 2005

Volume 20, Number 2

## October Meeting Topic

### The Many Faces of the Eastern Cougar

Chris Bolgiano has assembled a wide array of historic and contemporary images to illustrate the story of the fabled eastern cougar. With a motto of "Humor is Nature's Preferred Survival Technique," Bolgiano tells that story through anecdotal narration and short readings from her books. She has been reporting from the eastern cougar front for more than twenty years, including two books, *Mountain Lion: An Unnatural History of Pumas and People* (1995), and (just published) *The Eastern Cougar: Historic Accounts, Scientific Investigations, New Evidence*. She's also a founding Board member of the Eastern Cougar Foundation, a science-based non-profit that advocates cougar recovery through education and research. The eastern cougar ranks as a world-class wildlife mystery along with Nessie of Scotland and the Yeti of Nepal. Top predators in the eastern woods when Europeans arrived,



Chris Bolgiano, "mildly-amusing nature writer."

cougars were believed persecuted into extirpation by 1900 east of the Mississippi River. Until recently, state and federal wildlife officials simply dismissed reports of cougars in the east as deception, delusion, or drink. Not any more. Dozens of cougars have been scientifically confirmed as living wild between Maine and Missouri. Is nature offering us a second chance at stewardship? Please join our speaker for dinner at Wild Greens Restaurant in the North

Wing of Barracks Road Shopping Center at 5:30pm prior to the meeting.

## Upcoming Meetings: VA Beach Nesters, Bird Trail, and Peru

### November 10: Bill Williams

Dr. Williams will discuss the biology and breeding population status of colonial and beach-nesting water birds on the Virginia barrier islands.

### December 8: Jeff Trollinger

Mr. Trollinger is a wildlife biologist who helped coordinate the recently-completed Virginia Birding and Wildlife Trail. He'll provide an update of that project.

### January 12: Randy Thrasher

Get ready for a South American journey with "Birding Peru - A World Class Adventure."

## Comments From the President...

Buntings, cardinals, orioles and tanagers as caged birds? Yes, indeed. By the thousands these, and other wild-caught American birds, are sold in pet shops throughout Europe. How can this be? Our migratory birds are protected by the US Migratory Bird Treaty Act while they are within our borders, but that is not the case when they arrive in the tropics. They are sold in markets in Jamaica, Honduras, Belize, Nicaragua, Ecuador, Mexico and other countries to eager buyers across the sea.

I learned of this in a communication to the Monticello Bird Club from the American Bird Conservancy, Defenders of Wildlife, National Audubon Society and the World Parrot Trust. It included a copy of a letter sent to the European Commissioner for the Environment

requesting their cooperation in helping to conserve our valued species. The writers acknowledge that the numbers of exported birds is uncertain because many of the exporting countries do not report trade statistics for songbirds, but the evidence is convincing that the numbers are staggering. They cite one example where some numbers are available. 23,000 Painted Buntings left five Mexican states in the 1984-85 season and at least 12,000 estimated in 2001-2002. In 1995, a single Dutch importer ordered a shipment of 4,000 Painted Buntings from one Mexican dealer.

The US has a law, the Wild Bird Conservation Act, which allows the importation of wild-caught birds only for species subject to a scientifically-based management (continued on page 6)

## Inside October 2005

<i>Nesting Kites</i>	2
<i>Birdseed Order Form</i>	3-4
<i>Field Trips</i>	5
<i>New Members</i>	6
<i>Gardening: Sassafras</i>	6

# Mississippi Kites Nesting in Virginia, Oh My!

*A first-person adventure by Brenda Tekin  
-First of Two Parts-*

For years, Mississippi Kite (MIKI) *Ictinia mississippiensis* have been observed in good numbers in Southside Virginia during late spring and early summer. So it seems surprising the only two nesting records in Virginia prior to this year have been from Northern Virginia and not Southside! But, if you've ever been to this area, there is a lot of excellent MIKI habitat and finding nesting birds can become the proverbial needle in a haystack.

On June 18 my husband and I drove to the area in search of MIKI. Traveling through the remote lowlands, I periodically stopped to scan the horizon in search of soaring kites at the same time on the alert for the several species of swarming, biting flies that seemed to be waiting in the shadows for the unsuspecting. In an area just south of Branchville and only a few miles from North Carolina, I spotted two distant adult MIKI in perfect MIKI habitat—small track of tall, old-growth mixed deciduous / coniferous trees in swampy lowland adjacent to a pond with nearby crop fields. The area was teeming with dragonfly, one of the kites' mainstays.

By July 16, I had spent over 40 hours monitoring the adult pair. During this time I witnessed them chasing crows that ventured too close to the suspected nesting site, one of which was whacked by



Juvenile Mississippi Kite on nest.  
Photo: Brenda Tekin

the adult male kite; I was dive-bombed several times by the same adult male kite; there were close encounters with a few snakes, and yet somehow I came away with only a few ticks. But weeks later I still had not located a nest.

On the morning of July 26, four weeks after my first visit, I observed the adult MIKI alternating between resting on open snags and gathering food, quickly disappearing over top of the trees. At times they would call out to each other. By sheer determination and a whole lot of luck, I managed to follow one of the adults as it flew low over the treetops, catching brief glimpses through the small openings between the leaves and branches in the upper canopy. Quickly taking a few steps along the road to try and keep up with the adult kite as it flew low over the trees further back from the road, I saw it fly into the upper branches of a very tall tree set back approximately 60 feet from the road. Putting my binoculars up I immediately saw a juvenile bird with the adult in a nest! At long last, the first nesting record for Mississippi Kite in Southside Virginia was confirmed and documented!

**More from Brenda's determined story to document Mississippi Kites nesting in Virginia next month.**

## 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 editor of the MBC Newsletter welcomes submissions including articles, photographs and notices. **DEADLINE for the November issue is October 17.** Please email information to Nancy King at [turnermtn@mindspring.com](mailto:turnermtn@mindspring.com) or send to P.O. Box 22, Ivy, VA 22945.

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

## Monticello Bird Club Board Members

<b>President</b>	Jennifer Gaden	<a href="mailto:jg3p@cstone.net">jg3p@cstone.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>	Bob Gilges	<a href="mailto:rgilges@msn.com">rgilges@msn.com</a>	823-7638
<b>Field Trips</b>	Lois Gebhardt John Zimmerman	<a href="mailto:cvillebirder@earthlink.net">cvillebirder@earthlink.net</a> <a href="mailto:jozimmva@aol.com">jozimmva@aol.com</a>	972-2446 974-9293
<b>Programs</b>	Ron Kingston	<a href="mailto:kingston@cstone.net">kingston@cstone.net</a>	293-5173
<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>	Nancy King	<a href="mailto:turnermtn@mindspring.com">turnermtn@mindspring.com</a>	293-7201
<b>Membership</b>	Robyn Kells	<a href="mailto:rkells@ntelos.net">rkells@ntelos.net</a>	970-1044
<b>Birdseed Sale</b>	Howard Davis	<a href="mailto:howardsuedavis@juno.com">howardsuedavis@juno.com</a>	964-1242

# The Monticello Bird Club Annual Birdseed Sale

**Order Due Date: Friday October 28, 2005**  
**Pick Up Order: Saturday November 12, 2005**

**NEW LOCATION!!** Virginia Department of Forestry **NEW LOCATION!!**  
**8:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.**

**Directions:** The Virginia Department of Forestry is located at 900 Natural Resources Drive. Take Rte 29 South. Exit Fontaine Avenue. Turn left onto Fontaine Avenue toward UVa. At the first light, turn right into the Fontaine Business Park. At the stop sign, turn right toward 900 Natural Resources Drive and continue about 1/2 mile to the Virginia Department of Forestry. Follow signs to "Warehouse Deliveries."

If unable to pick up your order, please make arrangements to have a friend pick it up for you. Free wooden Pallets (4'x4' or cut in half) are available while they last.

**For More Information call:** 434-964-1242  
**Or E-mail:** [howardsuedavis@juno.com](mailto:howardsuedavis@juno.com)

## MBC Birdseed Order Form

**Note: This year's higher prices reflect current market rates. Our modest profit remains the same.**

Size	Product	Quantity	Unit Price	Total Price	Customer Information
40#	Black Oil Sunflower		\$17.25		Name:
25#	Black Oil Sunflower		\$11.25		
25#	Striped Sunflower		\$16.25		Address:
40#	Ultimate Mixed Seed		\$21.00		
20#	Ultimate Mixed Seed		\$11.00		
25#	Sunflower Chips		\$25.50		Phone #
25#	White Millet		\$ 9.25		
25#	Safflower seed		\$17.50		E-mail
5#	Finch Blend		\$ 5.25		
5#	Peanut Hearts		\$ 6.75		Is a Friend Picking Up Your Order?
8#	Niger (Thistle) Seed		\$ 8.25		Their name:
#####	Blue Bird Boxes		\$15.00		Their phone #
12 oz	Energy Suet Cake		\$ 1.00		
12 oz	Energy Suet Cake	12	\$10.00		
<b>TOTALS</b>					

**Make check payable to : Monticello Bird Club. Thank you for your support of our Club!**

# The Monticello Bird Club Annual Birdseed Sale

It's that time of year again! Order now to keep your birds happy this winter. And in the process help support the Monticello Bird Club in its only money-making event of the year. We use this money to support nature-related educational and conservation projects such as the Ivy Creek Natural Area and the Afton Mountain Hawk Watch. We also pay our monthly speakers a modest honorarium.

- Our Birdseed Sale is based on a convenient pre-order system. Complete the order form on the back and mail in by 10/28/05. Then come to the VA Department of Forestry on 11/12/05 to pick up your order.
- We offer a wide variety of high quality seed to meet every bird feeding need. See our Wild Bird Feed Guide below for suggestions.
- This year we will again be offering Blue Bird Nesting Boxes (Houses). This might be perfect for a very special holiday gift.
- Spread the word. If you know of someone who might be interested make copies of this Order Form or have them contact us at 434-964-1242 or howardsuedavis@juno.com

**Interested in Birds?** Check out our Club! We conduct frequent field trips and hold monthly meetings featuring interesting programs on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday of each month from September through June. For more information contact Robyn Kells at 434-970-1044 or rkells@ntelos.net.

---

## WILD BIRD FEED GUIDE

### FOOD TYPE

### DESCRIPTION

- Black Oil Sunflower Seed**..... Most birds love sunflower seeds: cardinals, doves, juncos, Red-bellied Woodpeckers, finches, and titmice. Black oil is a smaller seed which may be easier for small birds to eat. Its high oil content means high energy for birds. The birds' #1 choice is sunflower seed!
- Striped Sunflower Seed**..... Striped sunflower seeds are larger than the black oil-type.
- Ultimate Mixed Seed**..... A super blend for those who desire the very best. Contains black oil sunflower seeds, white proso millet, split peanuts, safflower seed, sunflower chips, and red proso millet.
- Sunflower Chips**..... Hulled sunflower seeds are attractive to virtually all birds. Birds whose beaks are incapable of cracking the shells of sunflower seeds readily eat the chips. Although chips are more expensive per pound, you are paying only for edible food and not the shell. Chips are highly recommended for feeding areas where shell litter under the feeder is undesirable.
- Finch Blend**..... Contains niger, sunflower, German millet, and canary seed. Will attract a wide variety of finches.
- Peanut Hearts**..... Loved by titmice, Carolina Wrens, Blue Jays, and woodpeckers.
- White Proso Millet**..... Ground-feeding birds, such as juncos, cardinals, White-throated Sparrows, Indigo Buntings, Rufous-sided Towhees love white millet. It can be offered on the ground or on a tray.
- Niger (Thistle) Seed**..... This is extremely attractive to goldfinches. Think of niger as a special treat for those colorful little birds!
- Safflower Seed**..... Attracts cardinals. Squirrels do not like this seed.
- High Energy Suet Cakes**..... Made of rendered beef suet, sunflower seeds, millet and corn. Woodpeckers will swoon.

## Upcoming Field Trips

### *Sparrow Road Saturday, October 15*

John Zimmerman will lead this popular trip in search of sparrows as well as any other migrant passerines we happen upon. Besides the aptly-named Sparrow Road, the trip will include stops at Beaver Creek Reservoir and Mint Spring Valley Park. This is easy roadside bird-watching.

Meet at Seminole Square in the Giant parking lot at 7:00 am and expect to return about noon. Questions? Contact John Zimmerman at 974-9293 or jozimmva@aol.com.

### *Scheier Natural Area Fluvanna County Saturday, October 22*

This should be a pleasant, easy walk in an area new to most folks. Leader John Zimmerman expects to see later migrants and early wintering birds plus the usual contingent of woodpeckers, sparrows and titmice.

Meet in the Kemper Park parking lot (just east of Rte. 20 on Rte. 53, at beginning of the Monticello Trail) at 7:00 am. Should be back by noon. Questions? Contact John Zimmerman at 974-9293 or jozimmva@aol.com.

### *Ivy Creek Natural Area Saturday, November 5*

Teresa Shaner will lead the First Saturday Bird Walk. Meet in the Ivy Creek parking lot at 7:30 am. Beginners are always welcome. Questions? Contact Teresa Shaner at 964-9420 or twshaner@adelphia.net.

### *Pine Knot Saturday, November 5*

We will continue our bird survey of Teddy Roosevelt's retreat in southern Albemarle County to commemorate Pine Knot's 100th birthday.

Meet Mark Adams at 7:30 am in the Kemper Park parking lot (just east of Rte. 20 on Rte. 53, at beginning of the Monticello Trail). Questions? Contact Mark at 245-2250.

### *Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel & Eastern Shore Weekend, November 18-20*

While it's a bit more complicated to visit this birding hotspot with the new security rules, it's still a very rewarding trip. John Zimmerman will lead our group, so contact him for details and clarifications.

Because of new rules, it will be necessary to provide security information for every member who plans to bird the CBBT, as well as a fee to cover the cost of a mandatory security guard to accompany us. Get your necessary forms to fill out from John Zimmerman at the October meeting or contact him at 974-9293 or jozimmva@aol.com. Forms are due October 13. 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 *that part of the trip*.

**We plan to meet** at south end CBBT in the administration building parking lot at 9:45 am Saturday. If you do not choose to do the CBBT, meet at the Visitor Center of the Eastern Shore National Wildlife Refuge at 1:00 pm, but give your name/ phone number/e-mail to John Zimmerman so he can reach you if we cancel the CBBT. If we cancel the CBBT, we will *all* meet in the parking lot at the south end of the CBBT at 9:45 am Saturday.

**Reservations for Chincoteague** can be made at the Island Motor Inn (757-336-3141). Mention you are with the Monticello Bird Club for the group rate of \$92/night. There is a 7-day prior cancellation limit.

## Who's Watching Whom?



The Hawk Watch at Rockfish Gap is in full swing. We're actively recruiting counters who can identify migrating raptors. All that is required are good binoculars and a strong willingness to learn raptor identification and volunteer alongside more qualified counters. If interested in devoting time at the Hawk Watch to assist in the daily counts, contact Gordy Adamski at 434- 989-2590 or Brenda Tekin 434-962-4936. The Hawk Watch is held on the grounds of The Inn at Afton atop Afton Mountain at Exit 99 off I-64.

**REMINDER: MBC DUES ARE DUE!**

## Member Notes

**NEW MEMBERS:** Please welcome our newest members:  
 Melanie Fredericks (Charlottesville)  
 Amy Gilmer (Ruckersville)  
 Debbie Howe (Palmyra)  
 Frank Wilczek (Stanardsville)  
 Karen Anderson (Charlottesville)  
 Jon Nafzinger & Carol Hurst (Crozet).

**FLASHLIGHTS:** As the daylight shortens, please bring a flashlight to monthly meetings to help light your way between the Education Building and parking lot.

### President (continued)

plan. But there is no such international law or agreement. We can't force other nations to abide by our legislation. The Europeans have taken measures to protect the diversity of their own avian populations. It is our hope that they will help conserve our birds by exerting control over the importation of American species.

—Jenny Gaden, president

## MBC Minutes for September 8, 2005

President Jenny Gaden presided. There was a record turn-out of 67 in attendance including a number of newcomers.

**Treasurer's Report:** Bob Gilges noted that it has been a slow summer but that a number of renewals have just arrived. He has ordered new, pre-stamped envelopes and has paid for the P.O. Box.

**Field Trips:** John Zimmerman detailed the upcoming trips. On October 15<sup>th</sup> John Z. is leading the "Sparrow Road" walk and on the 22<sup>nd</sup> there is a trip to Pine Knot. The Eastern Shore/Chincoteague Island trip takes place November 18-20. A maximum of 15 are allowed to take the private tour of natu-

### Gardening for Wildlife

## Plant Sassafras for Great Fall Color

I was watching a grand and beautiful butterfly. It was a Spicebush Swallowtail, taking nectar from the Joe-Pye Weed and the neighboring Jewelweed, both growing on the bank of our small stream on our "Omanu" property. Over the last few years, I have encouraged two favorite larval food plants of this same handsome butterfly, namely, Common Sassafras (*Sassafras albidum*)

and Spicebush (*Lindera benzoin*). Both are native to the eastern US and are rarely seen in commercial nurseries.

### Common Sassafras

The sassafras tree is a member of the Laurel family. The leaves are entire ovoid, three-lobed and/or mitten-shaped. The "mittens" even come in left and right-hand versions. The bright, green foliage turns brilliant shades of yellow, orange and red in autumn. There is no more inspiring sight than a sassafras

thicket in full, flaming autumn color. Next to Black Tupelo or Black Gum, this may be the best native tree for fall color.



Sassafras "mitten" leaf & berries  
 Photo: William S. Justice, Smithsonian.

Small, yellow flowers appear in April just before the leaves. Female trees produce ½ inch long blue fruit which attract birds in the fall. Unfortunately, Common Sassafras is almost impossible to transplant from the wild because of the

deep tap root and few spreading, lateral roots. You do need to remember that Sassafras is a fast grower to 20-25 feet, with slower growth to an eventual height of 30-60 feet. Sassafras is excellent in naturalized plantings, roadsides and home landscaping and a great native tree to attract birds and butterflies.

—Bill Leaning

**Next Month: Spicebush, and tips to grow both spicebush and sassafras from seed.**

ral area at the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel, which will be led by a security officer. The deadline to sign up is October 13<sup>th</sup>.

**Bird Seed Sale Update:** The sale will take place at the Southern Select Produce parking lot (behind Shopper's World shopping center) on November 12<sup>th</sup>. Order forms will be in the October newsletter. Bob Gilges reminded members that this is our one big annual fundraiser and encouraged everyone to buy seed.

### Miscellaneous Announcements:

Jenny Gaden read a letter from the Virginia Society of Ornithology thanking the club for supporting this year's "Roving Ravens" team at the annual 24-hour birding marathon in New Jersey. The team placed 8<sup>th</sup> overall and 3<sup>rd</sup> in the "out-of-state" category. They observed 194 species of birds, which was considerably higher than last year. The money for this fundraiser supports the

publication of the VSO's quarterly publication, *Virginia Birds*. Carol Hill brought an article from the *Washington Post* on eco-tours.

**Bird Sightings:** Dede Austin visited a Sandhill Crane staging area in Jackson, Wyoming, where she observed a great number of water fowl on a guided 30-mile trip. Brenda Tekin reported that there have been record numbers of early migratory birds during August at the Rockfish Gap Hawk Watch. They noted 70 Broad-winged Hawks and 11 Bald Eagles in one day (10 adults and one juvenile) all heading south. Helen Priest saw an American Tree Sparrow at the Colonnades. Peter Brask reported a Red-breasted Nuthatch. Jenny G. reported on the Nighthawk Watch that was held at Ivy Creek August 23 and 25. About 30 people attended and each night they saw over 30 nighthawks and also heard a Screech Owl.

—Peggy Cornett, secretary