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# Goldfinch Gazette

## The Newsletter of the Rockingham Bird Club

<http://rockinghambirdclub.com>

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### DECEMBER MEETING

**DATE:** Thursday, December 7, 2017

**TIME:** 7:00 PM

**\*\*\* NOTE LOCATION CHANGE \*\*\***

**PLACE:** STRITE Auditorium in the Crestwood building, 2nd floor, Virginia Mennonite Retirement Community, 1501 Virginia Avenue, Harrisonburg, VA 22802.

**PROGRAM:** The Biggest Week in American Birding, Magee Marsh Ohio by Gabriel Mapel.

Learn about the magnificent spring migratory stop-over of warblers seen in Ohio on the edge of Lake Erie, as warblers and other neotropical migrants stop over before crossing Lake Erie on their way to Canada. Magee Marsh hosts the "Biggest Week in American Birding each May," an event offering bus trips, guided walks on their famous boardwalk, and a host of world renowned speakers and workshops. This festival has 50,000 visitors, and Gabriel served as a guide on the boardwalk at Magee.

Join us for dinner with Gabriel before the meeting: 5:30 PM at Hokkiado Japanese Restaurant, 3140 S. Main Street, Harrisonburg 22801. Please contact Robyn Puffenbarger, 540-908-7335 or [rpuffenb@bridgewater.edu](mailto:rpuffenb@bridgewater.edu), in advance if you plan to attend.

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### DECEMBER FIELD TRIPS - *Diane Lepkowski*

*Members and guests are welcome on all field trips. Minors under the age of 18 must be accompanied by a parent or adult who is responsible for the minor.*

**Hillendale Monthly Walk, Thursday, December 21 with Tom Mizell:** Jack Frost says Winter arrives at 11:28 AM. Accordingly we will meet in the Children's Playground parking lot at 10:00 AM! Repeat: meet at 10:00 AM. Hope you can join us as we seek the last birds of fall and the first birds of winter.

**118<sup>th</sup> Christmas Bird Count, Saturday, December 16:** Please mark your calendar to join the international citizen-science effort in this 118<sup>th</sup> year of the Christmas Bird Count. More information can be found on page 4 of this newsletter. Contact CBC Coordinator/Compiler Bill Benish at 540.908.7336 or [wbenish@gmail.com](mailto:wbenish@gmail.com) to participate or get additional information.

# TRIP REPORTS

## Northern Saw-whet Owl Banding – *Debbie Harrison*

Thanks to everyone who came out on November 8th! Sorry the owls didn't though.

We had 3 RBC members and 1 guest who went out to meet Charles “Zig” Ziegenfus, bird bander, at Highland Retreat. The nets were checked twice, but were empty both times. Thankfully, there was good conversation while we waited. We closed the nets after the second attempt around 9:00 PM.

## Hillandale Park – *Tom Mizell*

We were hoping to see a Turkey during the Thanksgiving month walk at Hillandale Park. That did not happen but a Turkey Vulture (TV) flew in low above the Playground trees. It was the “first” species sighted on 7 November as we gathered on Election Day. Dan Perkuchin, attired in traditional turkey hunting camouflage, made the TV sighting or was it Don? My notes said D. Perkuchin. Other voice votes for the wish list included: Bear, Brown Creeper, Golden-crowned Kinglet and Yellow-bellied Sapsucker.

Seven members of the RBC showed up even in spite of rain forecast for much of the day. In view of the wet weather forecast the group was ready to go. Before the usual introductions, making a wish list along with a brief moment for safety, our club president said something along the following: “Be careful of the walnuts -- let's get some birding done before it rains!” The President has spoken on Election Day so, off we scurry.

It was about 40 degrees and misting a bit. We had 14 species by 8:24 AM including American Robin (lots of them today), Blue Jay, White-breasted Nuthatch, Cedar Waxwings, Carolina Wren and Chickadee, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, White-throated Sparrow and Northern Cardinal. All of these were in close proximity to the log cabin. An American Crow called overhead.

Bob Eggleston spotted a Ruby-crowned Kinglet and Fletcher Bingham added a Yellow-rumped Warbler. We all got very good looks at the Ruby-crowns. After about an hour we neared the northwest corner pedestrian bridge and rains began to be more than misty. An accipiter flew by and we collectively identified it as a Sharp-shinned Hawk. Canada Geese called. We added Mourning Dove and Northern Flicker before we completed the first loop and arrived back at the cabin about 9:30 AM. Song Sparrow and House Finch made their appearances. Some of us now had wet feet due to the intermittent rains.

Five of us began the trail loop south of the cabin. We saw Juncos along the gravel trail and then, near the southernmost part of the loop (near the old horseshoe pits), we enjoyed a feathered flurry. In the cedar trees and other small trees we found more Juncos and Yellow-rumped Warblers, both repeats of earlier sighted species. However, to our surprise, they were accompanied by Palm Warblers and Golden-crowned Kinglets. We all enjoyed this feeding frenzy. To some of us this treat seemed to be a reward for perseverance in the rain.

By 10:12 AM the remaining four birders took some shelter at the cabin and watched more birds in the rain. European Starling was the last species added to the count (26). In dense flocks they demonstrated their precision flying skills overhead. The Starlings, along with several dozen Cedar

Waxwings, flew into the walnut trees west of the cabin and bid us a rainy “good day” as our walk finished up at 10:30 AM. Join us in December for our last fall walk!

## BIRD SIGHTINGS

William Leigh found two **Dunlins** and three **Pectoral Sandpipers** and Allen Lerner later added a **Least Sandpiper** along with 23 **Green-winged Teal** and two **Northern Shovelers** at the Oakwood Drive pond near Mt. Crawford on Oct. 28. William reported a **Dunlin** and an **American Golden-Plover** at the same location on Nov. 3. Jonathan Todd had two **Dunlins** here on Nov. 4.

Diane Lepkowski found five **American Golden-Plovers**, 43 **Eurasian Collared-Doves**, two **Pectoral Sandpipers**, and a **Bald Eagle** on Lumber Mill Rd on Oct. 29.

Diane Holsinger reported a **Redhead** and four **Pied-billed Grebes** at Silver Lake on Nov. 4.

Diane Lepkowski reported four **Buffleheads**, four **Ring-necked Ducks**, four **Pied-billed Grebes**, three **Ruddy Ducks**, and 14 **American Coots** at Lake Shenandoah and a yard **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** on Nov. 4. The following day, Nov. 5, Diane reported 11 **Common Loons**, 17 **Buffleheads**, 20 **Wood Ducks**, and a **Redhead** at Lake Shenandoah.

Debbie Harrison had an **Eastern Phoebe** at her place on Nov. 4.

Tom Mizell reported a **Snow Goose** flying with a flock of Canada Geese over Smithland Park on Nov. 4.

William Leigh found two **Common Loons** at Switzer Dam on Nov. 5.

Bob Eggleston reported 11 **Buffleheads**, two **Ring-necked Ducks**, a **Redhead**, and a **Pied-billed Grebe** at Silver Lake on Nov. 8.

Greg Moyers reported a large fallout of birds at Lake Shenandoah on Nov. 9. Highlights included 39 **Tundra Swans**, six **Common Loons**, two **Bonaparte's Gulls**, **Ring-billed Gull**, **Buffleheads**, **Gadwall**, **Ring-necked Ducks**, **Redheads**, **American Wigeons**, **Lesser Scaup**, **Ruddy Ducks**, **Pied-billed Grebes**, and 27 **American Coots**. Diane Lepkowski reported that two more **Tundra Swans** flew in later for a total of 41 swans.

Tom Mizell had over a dozen **Buffleheads** and a **Bald Eagle** at Silver Lake on Nov. 10.

Diane Lepkowski had a red **Eastern Screech-Owl** at her place near Harrisonburg on Nov. 15 & 16.

Shaphan Shank reported a late **Blue-headed Vireo** at his home at Union Springs on Nov. 18.

Robyn Puffenbarger and Bill Benish had 14 **Snow Geese** fly over their place in Bridgewater on Nov. 19.

William Leigh reported a **Snow Goose** and three **Dunlins** at the Oakwood Drive pond on Nov. 22.

Greg Moyers reported at least one remaining **Dunlin** at this spot on Nov. 24.

# ANNOUNCEMENTS

## **Extra Bird Seed**

From Kathy Byers: It is possible that I still have some Gourmet Wild Bird seed mix. Call or email if you are interested. kkbymers77@gmail.com, 540-820-6517

A great big THANK YOU to everyone who supported the sale!

I would like to start collecting suet trays for next year. Please bring any that you may get through this year to a meeting and give them to Steve White or myself.

## **Treasurer's Report - Steve White**

It was another phenomenally successful bird seed sale this year. After paying our overhead for seed wholesale price of \$5,226.95 and our sales tax obligation to the State of Virginia Department of Taxation of \$502.69, we netted a terrific \$4,724.00 which nicely bolsters our checking account balance and will enable us to contribute to the conservation charities and ornithological education-oriented recipients provided for in our mission statement and selected annually by our Executive Committee. It will also go to reimbursing our wonderful volunteers for expenses incurred in sponsoring our club's programs, maintaining our website, and publishing our newsletter.

There were many helpers at this year's fundraiser seed sale. Special thanks to our supremely well organized and energetic manager Kathy Byers who not only conducted the mailing of order forms, collected the revenue, and interfaced with BFG Supply to get the various types of seed delivered. She also generously devoted her time in giving the home-made suet chefs a hand in producing what my birds have repeatedly demonstrated is the very best, tastiest suet available to wild birds in the Northern Hemisphere! Thank you to all our supportive customers as well for your orders. A big thank you also goes to the platoon of helpers who assisted in doling out the seed on pickup day, November 11th: Debbie, Phillis, Judith, Michael, Joe, Everette, Karen, Annie, Betty and (if I may be so bold as to note my own participation) your loyal treasurer. What a great organization we have in the volunteer members of the Rockingham Bird Club, Inc!

## **118<sup>th</sup> Christmas Bird Count, Saturday, December 16, 2017**

Please mark your calendar to join the international citizen-science effort for the VARC CBC - Rockingham County, VA circle on Saturday, Dec 16 in this 118<sup>th</sup> year of the Christmas Bird Count.

Our 'VARC' circle is sponsored officially by the Rockingham Bird Club which has contributed both financially and through the dedication and skills of many members. Much of the count circle also extends into Augusta County, and some of us are members of both the RBC and the Augusta Bird Club. There is no longer a fee to participate. We participate in the field in coordination with a sector leader or from home as a "feeder watcher" if your house location is within the circle. As the compiler for the count, contact Bill Benish for the details about what data needs to be collected by "feeder watchers" to fit the count criteria.

Reminder: A camera is nearly essential as an important resource to help document less common birds, but we should also make notes about the details we notice for birds that require documentation. It can be fun to try describing plumage, sound and behavioral details we detect even for the more common species that we see most often.

Look for other years' results by clicking on the CBC Results > "Current year and historical data" link in one of the sections of the web page: <http://birds.audubon.org/christmas-bird-count>

Our VARC circle is a 7.5 mile radius from the intersection of Ottobine Rd and Clover Hill Road. We divide the area into six sectors and some subsectors. We hope to have most of the same sectors leaders serving yearly, so please start making your plans with them directly and soon. If you need help connecting with a sector leader or have any questions, please contact Bill Benish. If you think you already know who you'll be joining, please advise both your sector leader and Bill Benish.

Thanks again in advance for your contribution of effort!

Bill Benish C: 540.908.7336 [wcbenish@gmail.com](mailto:wcbenish@gmail.com)

(PLEASE NOTE- Although, the same as last year, this is a fairly NEW EMAIL address. If you email me and don't hear back within a couple days, please call me.)

**Project Feeder Watch 2017-2018, Saturday, November 11 to Friday, April 13:** Consider participating! Contribute your feeder observations to this annual citizen science project. New participants will be able to log into online data entry and set up their count site on November 1. The last day to start a two-day count is Thursday, April 12. Information at: <https://feederwatch.org/>

**Monticello Bird Club Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel Islands Birding Boat Trip, January 13, 2018.**

Cost: \$35.00 per person. A tip for the mate is included in your \$35.00 fee. Please make all checks payable to Monticello Bird Club. P.O. Box 4362 Charlottesville, VA 22905

To reserve your spot on the boat, please make your reservation now. I will need to have your money by Monday January 8, 2018. I will be able to give refunds for last-minute cancellations up until Thursday January 11, 2018. *Space is limited so please make your reservation early.*

To register, please contact Doug Rogers: [doug5996@gmail.com](mailto:doug5996@gmail.com) or 434.409.8156 or the Club email at: [birders@monticellobirdclub.org](mailto:birders@monticellobirdclub.org).

Rockingham Bird Club  
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**VICE PRESIDENT: FIELD TRIPS - Diane Lepkowski**

**SECRETARY: Martha Faw**

**TREASURER: Steve White - 540-833-6726**

**MEMBERS AT LARGE: Bill Benish & Tom Lord**

**GOLDFINCH GAZETTE - Denise Hoodock**

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