



Goldfinch Gazette

The Newsletter of the Rockingham Bird Club

<http://rockinghambirdclub.com>

Volume XLIV

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December 2018

DECEMBER MEETING

DATE: Thursday, December 6, 2018

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: *Cornell Young Birders* by Baxter Beamer.

Baxter is a young birder who is very active in the local birding community and president of the Blue Ridge Young Birders Club. This past summer Baxter attended, with our club's financial help, the Cornell Young Birders Event at Cornell Lab of Ornithology in Ithaca, New York. This is an event designed to help passionate, serious, young birders find a career path in ornithology through field workshops and presentations. Baxter will be sharing his experience with us.

DECEMBER FIELD TRIPS - *Diane Lepkowski*

Members and guests welcome. Minors (under 18) must be accompanied by a parent or adult.

119th Christmas Bird Count, Saturday, December 15: Please mark your calendar to join the international citizen-science effort in this 119th year of the Christmas Bird Count (CBC). More information can be found on page 6 of this newsletter. Contact CBC Coordinator/Compiler Bill Benish at 540.908.7336 or wcbenish@gmail.com to participate or get additional information.

Hillendale Monthly Walk, Friday, December 21 with Tom Mizell: Meet at the Children's Playground Parking Lot at 8 AM for our last walk of Fall. Winter arrives at 5:23 PM.

TRIP REPORTS

Lake Shenandoah – *Greg Moyers*

Three RBC members attended the walk at Lake Shenandoah on Saturday, Oct. 27. The threat of rain diminished our numbers, but the light drizzle stopped just as we were ready to start the walk. We ended up having a pleasant morning with a good amount of bird activity. At the parking area we spotted three Ruddy Ducks, 13 American Coots, Pied-billed Grebe, and a Great Blue Heron. As we started along the path, we spotted a Blue-headed Vireo. At the point, we got a brief look at three American Black Ducks before they took off. On the far side of the lake we found several good birds, including Ruby-crowned and Golden-crowned Kinglets, Swamp Sparrow, Hermit Thrush, Purple Finch, Yellow-rumped Warbler, and Winter Wren. On our return to the parking area, we hit a nice group of Purple Finches in the brushy pollinator area. We decided to follow the path around the near side of the lake to look for sparrows and were rewarded with Chipping, White-throated, White-crowned, Song, and Field Sparrows. We'd previously seen or heard Swamp Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, and Eastern Towhee, which gave us a total of eight sparrow species. We tallied over 40 species on the morning.

Northern Saw-whet Owl Banding – *Debbie Harrison*

Thanks to everyone who came out on November 7th! We had eight RBC members who went out to meet Clair Mellinger & Charles "Zig" Ziegenfus, bird banders, at Highland Retreat. The nets were checked twice, with one owl found the first time and three the second time.

The first owl was previously banded & found to be from Peterboro, Ontario, in 2017! The second bunch were all 'hatch-year' birds and we all got to see them up close & hold them. Most all had left before the final net check when Clair returned with 5 owls! So, 8 visitors AND 8 owls.

Hillandale Monthly Walks – *Tom Mizell*

Fifteen members of the Rockingham Bird Club enjoyed a sunny morning at Hillandale Park with the temperature in the 40s on November 7, 2018. After entering the gate, I drove around the picnic shelter loop looking for birds. I was surprised when a Blue Jay caused a Red-tailed Hawk to swoop close in front of the van and land in a roadside tree. A welcome start.

The parking lot was full as I arrived, and I found the group absolutely "ready to go". Anne Nielsen asked this large assemblage to pose for a group photo (see photo on page 3). I then took a moment for safety and a quick survey to find out the wish list. Purple Finch, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Carolina Chickadee and Pheasant were listed. I note up front that the seasons have definitely changed-as the walk played out, we found over a dozen species we had not seen during the Summer. Always good to see the winter birds arriving. See how many winter birds you can find in this report.

A brisk walk from the parking lot to the stream in front of the cabin yielded Northern Cardinal, Mourning Dove, Carolina Wren, American Robin, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Red-tailed Hawk and its friend the Blue Jay. Randy Cline spied a White-throated Sparrow along the trail. A Coopers Hawk flew past. We had Junco, a nice Cedar Waxwing flock, Northern Mockingbird, American Goldfinch, Eastern Towhee and White-breasted Nuthatch near the cabin. The Bradford Pear was still in near full leaf, yet Kathy Byers spotted a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker in the dark shadows as it searched along its central trunks. Purple Finches and House Finches were in the treetops and Red-

winged Blackbirds and Grackles flew overhead. As often is the case European Starlings appeared with the Red-winged Blackbirds and Grackles. The Starlings synchronous flight movements are very hypnotic if one starts to follow them as they stay in tight knit groups.

Around 10 AM the call of the leaf blower resonated from the golf course into the chilled air at Hillandale. Recalling recent flotillas of lawn mowers and weed eaters during summer time some of us just looked at each other and smiled. Never fear the racket we soon found a Blue-headed Vireo along the golf course boundary. Song Sparrow, American Crow and Ruby-crowned Kinglet next appeared as we approached the Northwest Corner Bridge around 9:30AM. 27 species so far.

Tufted Titmouse seemed to play tag in the Walnut Trees which are now barren of leaves as we approached the main shelter. Likewise, their often traveling companions the Carolina Chickadees chased each other. We proceeded quickly back towards the cabin and according to my notes we crossed the cabin bridge a second time at 9:40. Temperature still 40 degrees.

Seven of the original 15 birders now remained as we walked the Southwest loop. We found Turkey Vultures as some perched on the transmission towers and Pileated Woodpecker. Dan Perkuchin tracked down an Eastern Phoebe and Brown Creeper along the southwest park boundary close to where the transmission line exits the park. We were also pleased to find a Northern Flicker in this corner. A good area to check out from time to time.

By 10:30 we paused at the cabin bridge for a third and final time. Our tally was 34 and we thought that perhaps 6 more species would appear to allow us to reach 40. Well a mallard pair flew over and then returned with 4 more from the north. They flew towards the bridge and apparently when they saw us looking at them, they dispersed just overhead flying in three of the 4 directions of the compass. A parade of Black Vultures then lazily flew overhead flying south and west. That pretty much wrapped up the count, or so we thought. Art and Kathy Fovargue and Kathy Byers relayed the addition of Yellow-rumped Warbler, Chipping Sparrow and Eastern Bluebird seen as they were leaving the park. 39 species for a nice November Fall day. Hope to see you in December for one more trip before 2019!



Anonymous Quote: What I enjoyed most was the final moments when we were standing at the bridge. We were observing all the Turkey and the Black Vultures circling. They just kept coming. We were at the right angle to see the white patches clearly near the end of the Black Vulture's wing tips. I cannot think how to make a quote out of the experience. Maybe that we were looking for a rare bird to pass but the common vultures provided a show.

BIRD SIGHTINGS

Ken Ranck had **Pine Siskins** and **Purple Finches** at his place in Mt. Crawford on Oct. 24.

Kathy Fovargue reported a **Peregrine Falcon** in downtown Harrisonburg on Oct. 24. Diane Lepkowski also reported a **Peregrine Falcon** downtown several times (Nov. 5 - Nov 20.)

Diane Holsinger reported a **Blackpoll Warbler** at Silver Lake on Oct. 25.

Tom Mizell reported a red-morph **Eastern Screech Owl** at Wildwood Park on Oct. 27.

Greg Moyers reported six **Wild Turkeys** on Betts Rd in Harrisonburg on Oct. 27.

Diane Lepkowski found a late **Wilson's Warbler** at Silver Lake on Oct. 28.

Avian Halloween treats in the area on Oct. 31 included a **Cattle Egret** on Wenger's Mill Rd reported by Matt Gingerich and a **Lincoln's Sparrow** at Lake Shenandoah reported by Diane Lepkowski. Mike Smith added a **Bald Eagle** over the river in Elkton and had **Red-breasted Nuthatch, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Cedar Waxwings, and Northern Harrier** at his place east of Elkton.

Herb Myers reported that a **Cooper's Hawk** was harassing his chickens in Keezletown on Nov. 1.

Diane Lepkowski had a late **Blackpoll Warbler** at her place near Harrisonburg on Nov. 2.

Ron Shearer found an injured **Sora** along Rt. 42 in Bridgewater on Nov. 4. Ron and William Leigh were able to corral the bird and get it to the Wildlife Center of Virginia in Waynesboro. Unfortunately, the bird did not survive.

Diane Holsinger had a **Blue-headed Vireo, Purple Finches, and Dark-eyed Juncos** at her place in Timberville on Nov. 5. **Pine Siskins** arrived at her feeders on Nov. 13.

Greg Moyers spotted a **Black-crowned Night-Heron** flying over Rt. 42 in Dayton on Nov. 7.

Greg Moyers and Diane Lepkowski reported a **Bonaparte's Gull** and a pair of **Bald Eagles** at Lake Shenandoah on Nov. 10. Greg added a **Fox Sparrow** at the same location.

Kathy Fovargue photographed a **Summer Tanager** at her place in Harrisonburg on Nov. 10. The tanager was kept company by **White-crowned Sparrows** and **Red-breasted Nuthatches**.

Diane Lepkowski had an immature **Red-headed Woodpecker** at her feeders daily, Nov. 11-17.

Tom Lord had a flock of 25 or more **Pine Siskins** at his place in Bridgewater on Nov. 14.

Diane Holsinger reported a **Common Goldeneye** at Lake Shenandoah on Nov. 14.

Diane Lepkowski reported several good birds at Lake Shenandoah during the ice storm on Nov. 15. Highlights included the continuing **Common Goldeneye, Canvasback, Redheads, Ruddy Ducks, 25 Hooded Mergansers, Buffleheads, 21 Ring-necked Ducks, five Horned Grebes, Pied-billed Grebes, 27 American Coots, and four Ring-billed Gulls.**

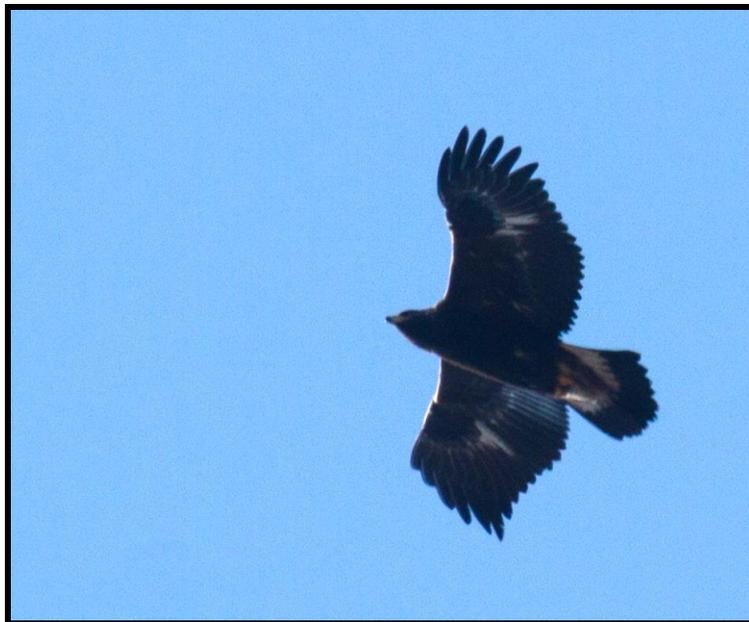
Matt Gingerich reported a **Greater White-fronted Goose** near Timberville on Nov. 20.

Greg Moyers reported two swans that appeared to be **Trumpeter Swans** on a pond near Timberville on Thanksgiving Day, Nov. 22. Also, on Nov 22, Diane Lepkowski found a **Merlin** on Faught's Rd, near Leonard's Pond.

Diane Holsinger reported a **Bald Eagle** along Rt. 42 south of Broadway and a **Common Goldeneye** on Silver Lake on Nov. 23.

Diane Lepkowski reported a **Peregrine Falcon** and a **Northern Harrier** on Long Meadow Rd near Timberville on Nov. 23. On the same date, Diane and Greg Moyers reported the **Common Goldeneye, Redheads, American Coot, and Ruddy Ducks** on Silver Lake. At the top of Shenandoah Mtn on Briery Branch Rd, they found a pair of **Red Crossbills** and then found a soaring **Golden Eagle** on their way back down the mountain. Just after crossing the Augusta Co. border on North River Rd, Diane and Greg added a pair of **Snow Geese** - one a blue-morph. They later added a **Bald Eagle** on Ridgedale Rd.

Greg Moyers found two **Rusty Blackbirds** on Cold Springs Rd north of Timberville on Nov 25.



Golden Eagle

Photo: Diane Lepkowski

ANNOUNCEMENTS

119th Christmas Bird Count (CBC) – VARC Circle - 12/15/2018

Please mark your calendars for our annual **Christmas Bird Count** planned this year for **Saturday, December 15, 2018**. Sector Leaders are not yet finalized, but we hope to have as many as possible able to contribute again. Our most valuable contributions usually come from afield, and most of that is done by car. When we have more participants, we also tend to be able to expand our efforts walking and listening. For people living within the circle boundary, even from indoors, a “feeder watcher” can provide data to our count compiler - Bill Benish.

Be sure to let Bill know if you think you may be able to participate. It’s also a good time for past leaders and participants to start checking in with each other about logistics for this year. This will help with planning and to ensure protocol data will be documented. More details will be recorded than are described here, but some data include start/finish times & distance, any time/distance effort exclusively during nocturnal hours as “owling”, as well as the number of participants. If you wish to see historic count data via web, you can enter our count circle code “VARC” or others through this link:

<http://netapp.audubon.org/CBCObservation/Historical/ResultsByCount.aspx>

The intensity of our coverage and time spent varies most dependent upon those of us available to join in the effort. Thanks also to everyone who has helped in the past!

Bill Benish, wcbenish@gmail.com, 540.908.7336

Birdseed Sale News

A dozen volunteers helped load over \$9,000 worth of birdseed on November 9th, a cold and rainy day. Thank you so much for the support of this sale. The success of our club comes from members that "do what I can" to support it! Some of our members supply the ingredients for the suet cakes, some make the suet cakes and many members buy the suet cakes and keep our birds well fed! Thanks again to all who helped with our sale. ~Kathy Byers

December Door Prize

We will have a drawing for a very nice Droll Yankee Clever-Clean Bird Feeder at our December meeting. Be sure to get your ticket that evening!

In memoriam

Our club mourns the recent passing of two treasured members, Ed Lawler and John Irvine. As is our tradition, a donation to the Massanutten Regional Library will be given in their memory.



Red Crossbill

Photo: Greg Moyers



Merlin

Photo: Diane Lepkowski



RBC members at Northern Saw-whet Owl Banding Station - Nov 2018

Photo: Debbie Harrison



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