



Goldfinch Gazette

The Newsletter of the Rockingham Bird Club

<http://rockinghambirdclub.com>

Volume XLI

Number 6

February 2016

FEBRUARY MEETING

DATE: Thursday, February 4, 2016

TIME: 7:00 PM

PLACE: Detwiler Auditorium, Virginia Mennonite Retirement Community, 1501 Virginia Avenue, Harrisonburg, VA 22802

PROGRAM - *Denise Hoodock*

Our speaker this month is Peter Hamel, a National Park Service interpreter from the Blue Ridge District. Peter's talk will focus on nesting adaption of birds with an emphasis on cavity nesters. Using time lapse imagery, he will discuss the nesting cycle which has been observed along one of the Nest Box Trails in Lexington, VA.

Before the meeting, though our speaker won't be able to join us, we will have dinner at Oriental Café, 563 University Blvd. Suite 110 Harrisonburg (across from Costco) at 5:30 PM. Please contact Denise Hoodock at 540-828-2595, 703-216-5499 or dhoodock@gmail.com if you'll join us for dinner.

FEBRUARY FIELD TRIPS - *Diane Lepkowski*

Highland County, Saturday February 6, Mike Shank: Meet at 7:30 AM at the Bob-a-Rea's parking lot (SW of Bob-a-Rea's, intersection of N. Main & Green St. in Bridgewater) across from the Bridgewater Volunteer Fire Department. Bring lunch, snacks and drinks and dress warmly; Highland is usually colder than Harrisonburg. Restroom facilities are limited. **Please contact Mike at 540-810-7444 or tallwhiteoak@verizon.net if you plan to attend.**

2016 Raptor & Waterfowl Count, Saturday, February 13

The count covers six areas in Rockingham County. If you wish to participate, contact the leader of the area you are interested in or call the count coordinator, Tom Lord 540-828-1226.

The areas and leaders are as follows:

1. **NORTHWEST:** north of US 33, west of US 11 and within the county borders
Clair Mellinger 540-433-1752

2. **NORTHEAST:** north of US 33, east of US 11, to the northern border of the county
Tom Lord 540-828-1226
3. **EAST:** east of the South Fork of the Shenandoah River and to the northern, eastern and southern boundaries of the county
John Shea 540-820-7452
4. **SOUTHEAST CENTRAL:** south of US 33, west of the South Fork of the Shenandoah River, north of the southern border of the county, east of VA 276
Charles Ziegenfus 540-434-3164
5. **SOUTH CENTRAL:** south of US 33, west of VA 276, north of the southern border of the county, east of VA 42
Greg Moyers 540-434-3029
6. **SOUTHWEST:** south of US 33, west of VA42, north and east of the southern and western borders of the county
Tom Mizell 540-828-6059

Hillandale Park, Monday, February 15 with Tom Mizell – Meet at the children’s playground parking lot at 8:00 AM. The 15th is the last day of The Great Backyard Bird Count and our observations will be submitted. Hope you can join us for the Count!

TRIP REPORTS

Hillandale Park – *Tom Mizell*

On 11 January 2016, a bright sunny morning and temperatures in the frigid 20s greeted eleven pairs of gloves and matching bird enthusiasts who gathered at Hillandale Park to search for the birds of winter. Wish list birds were Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Yellow-rumped Warbler, “any” Kinglet, Red-shouldered Hawk and Snowy Owl. Our safety moment highlighted the wisdom for “layers of clothes” on a day such as today. A couple members shared that they almost didn't make the trip due to the penetrating cold but somehow the “call to bird” overpowered the inclination to stay warm.

Before leaving the parking lot, one of the first birds seen was the Northern Flicker perched high in a treetop beyond the log cabin. Almost simultaneously, Blue Jays, Northern Cardinals, and American Robins flew overhead in considerable numbers while at least two Carolina Wrens shared their winter song that permeated the cold crisp air. Nothing quite like that song to warm the chill and beckon us onward. By the time we made the 3 minute walk to the pedestrian bridge we added White-breasted Nuthatch, European Starling, Mourning Dove, Red-bellied Woodpecker and Mallard. Adjacent to the log cabin we added White-throated Sparrows, Song Sparrow, American Goldfinch, and House Finch. While many of the group proceeded towards the golf-course boundary behind the log cabin, Don Perkuchin lingered to view a bird in a cedar tree. Some of us were drawn back to him. One of us detected an eye ring, another, a “tail wag” and a third, a reddish tail. The last piece of this bird ID puzzle was the spots on the breast. All the pieces placed together gave us a Hermit Thrush and about the time the group made such a proclamation the bird dropped out of view. Diane Lepkowski’s photos may later confirm the ID. By 8:35 AM we listed 17 species.

Fresh from the past weekend “Polar like” experiences at several National Football League playoff games, the group's defensive set was to spread out along the trail. As the defense chased the birds northward, a Cedar Tree moved into view and the entire defensive unit swarmed together to enjoy a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker as it worked the cedar bark. (A target bird-Touchdown!) Nice extended looks were free for the taking as this special bird provided all a winter treat. Another Woodpecker teased us and for a while we vacillated between Downy and Hairy. Tentatively we settled on Downy and perhaps another photo by Diane will substantiate the species. A Red-tailed Hawk flew from a perch and quickly disappeared to the west. Tufted Titmouse and Mockingbird made appearances as well. Then the birding team went into a spread offense as 2-3 small groups lined up in a disjointed formation over a 100 yard stretch of trail. This cold weather maneuver added Eastern Bluebirds and a couple Yellow-rumped Warblers (another target bird-Touchdown!) that were enjoying Cedar berries.

Around 9:30 the cold temperatures had taken a toll on our fingers and toes. Ken Hinkle announced “A cold wind is beginning to stir” and by 9:50 many birding team members headed to the locker room and our offense fell to four. The frozen four finished the game by adding Ravens to the morning’s tally as we shivered along the southern loop of the figure 8 trail. Passing along the cabin again we were pleasantly surprised to meet up with our Hermit Thrush friend once more at the same tree where we viewed it earlier. It was a good sport and was content to allow us extended looks this time and we confirmed the ID.

This morning’s species total was 28. As the temperature was now a toasty 33 degrees, three of us decided to walk along the stream in front of the cabin and were rewarded with at least 5 Flickers and numerous House Finches, Goldfinches, Mourning Doves, White-throated Sparrows, Blue Jays, Cardinals and a few more Fox Sparrows. All these birds seemed to celebrate the moment and were quite active in their foraging, enjoying the fully flowing stream channel and adjacent cover. As we prepared to drive off the lot around 11:15 AM, Anonymous was heard to say “Even though it was extremely cold the first Hillandale walk of 2016 was surprisingly productive.” Hope you can join us in February.

Lake Shenandoah – Greg Moyers

Ten members of the RBC attended the walk at Lake Shenandoah on Saturday, January 9. Waterfowl on the lake included five Pied-billed Grebes, American Black Ducks, Gadwall, and a Ruddy Duck. Birding along the path was generally slow but we did find a handsome male Golden-crowned Kinglet with crown splayed out for all to see. Other finds included Yellow-rumped Warbler, Belted Kingfisher, and a singing Fox Sparrow. Half of the group continued on to Lake Campbell where highlights included Ring-necked Ducks, a Redhead, Great Blue Heron, Yellow-rumped Warbler, and a pair of Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers carrying on a prolonged chase around the parking area. Five woodpeckers were seen at Lake Campbell including Red-bellied, Downy, Northern Flicker, Pileated, and the Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers. We finished the trip with around 40 species.

Lost City, Kimsey Run Reservoir, WV – Debbie Harrison

The weather forecast for Saturday, January 16, 2016 was sunny and 40 degrees. We left Broadway with partly sunny skies and 39 degrees and headed toward West Virginia--into cloudy skies and

definitely cooler temperatures & wind. Along the way to Mathias, we saw starlings, pigeons, American crows, Canada Geese but a Red-shouldered Hawk bolstered our anticipation for raptors.

As we approached Kimsey Run Reservoir, it started to sprinkle raindrops, but a Kingfisher was preening right when we crossed the bridge. We stopped across from the campground and saw some song birds and saw 'something big' fly up over the dam and out of sight.

At the partially frozen lake, we heard a Raven calling, found lots of Bluebirds, several Flickers and a pair of Mallards. We were disappointed there were no Eagles and couldn't find any Red-headed Woodpeckers either, but we didn't have a scope and binoculars weren't strong enough. We continued further into Hardy County (Dove Hollow Road, Parker Hollow Road and Big Ridge Road) where we added more song birds and spoke with the people in the 'big log cabin'. They said the eagles had been scarce the last week, but they usually see a couple each day! We followed a road they suggested, behind their house to a higher elevation. That was an adventure--more mud than gravel and it started to rain! Still no Eagles.

We then doubled back to Kimsey Run Reservoir and had 1 immature Bald Eagle flying. We started back toward Rt. 259 and watched a Kestrel hunting on the back side of the dam, then continued on past the Kingfisher (sitting on the power line) to Rt. 259 and headed for the Animal Hospital. We parked and immediately spotted 7 mature and 2 immature Bald Eagles sitting in trees across the road, along the river. With one fly-over of another mature Bald Eagle, we called it a day!

Species seen: Starling, American Crow, Pigeon, Canada Geese, Red-shoulder Hawk, Kingfisher, White-breasted Nuthatch, Mockingbird, Tufted Titmouse, Chickadee, Bluebird, Flicker, Mallard: male & female, Bald Eagles: mature & immature, Kestrel, Junco, Goldfinch, Downy Woodpecker, Raven.

BIRD SIGHTINGS:

A **Rufous Hummingbird** spent more than three weeks in December and into January at a private residence on Airport Rd in Bridgewater. A **Baltimore Oriole** has also been present at this location. Another hummingbird, likely a Selasphorus species, was reported at a private residence south of Elkton in early-mid January.

Diane Lepkowski reported six **Horned Grebes** and two **American Black Ducks** at Lake Shenandoah on Dec. 23.

Gabriel Mapel reported a **Merlin** at the intersection of Oakwood Drive and Lewis Byrd Rd near Bridgewater on Dec. 26.

Diane Lepkowski found a nice group of waterfowl at Lake Shenandoah on Dec. 29 including 21 **Hooded Mergansers, Northern Pintail, Ring-necked Duck, Pied-billed Grebes, and a Ring-billed Gull.**

Shaphan Shank reported a displaying **American Woodcock** at Union Springs on Dec. 29.

Ken Hinkle reports that his yard **Brown Thrasher** is still around, with sightings on Jan. 4, Jan. 11, Jan. 17, and Jan. 25. Ken also had a **Red-winged Blackbird** at his feeder on Jan. 18.

Mike Smith had a **Pine Siskin** at his place on Jan. 5 and reported a **Peregrine Falcon** on Badger Rd on Jan. 11.

A **Dunlin** was present at Leonard's Pond from at least Jan. 6-9. Tom Pendleton originally photographed the bird on Jan. 6 and Charles "Zig" Ziegenfus reported the bird again on Jan. 9.

Diane Lepkowski reported a **Winter Wren** at Wildwood Park in Bridgewater on Jan. 7. She also saw three **American Coots** on North River at the Rt. 42 bridge.

Robyn Puffenbarger and Bill Benish had a **Baltimore Oriole** in their yard in Bridgewater on Jan. 9.

Zig reported that he and Andrew Sharp recaptured a **Pine Warbler** on Jan. 9 at his banding area east of Harrisonburg. Zig and Joanna Morelli had banded the bird last year on Jan. 15.

Steve White reported 56 **Pine Siskins** at his place near Sparkling Springs on Jan. 18.

Tom Mizell reported **American Wigeon, Gadwall, Ruddy Duck, American Coot, and Green-winged Teal** at Silver Lake on Jan. 19.

Zig and his ornithology class found a **Trumpeter Swan** on Silver Lake on Jan. 20. The bird was still being seen as of Jan. 24.

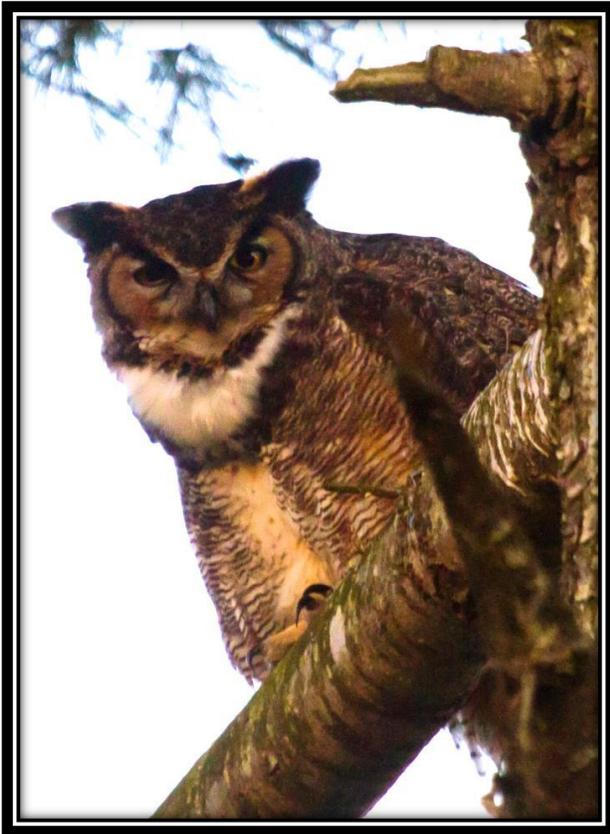


Trumpeter Swan, Silver Lake

Photo: Ken Hinkle

The **Northern Parula** originally found by John Shea at Bridgeview Park in Bridgewater and reported in last month's newsletter, is still being seen. Ron Shearer has had multiple sightings, both at the park and, more recently, on South Main Street in Bridgewater. Ron's most recent sighting was on Jan. 21.

Chris Bolgiano has had a **Hermit Thrush** hanging around her place in Fulks Run for the last three months.



Diane Lepkowski reported that her yard **Great Horned Owl** made an appearance on Jan. 21. She had a singing **Fox Sparrow** in the yard on Jan. 24 and a **Brown Thrasher** on Jan. 25. Diane also reported **Purple Finches** and a **Pine Siskin** on Ore Bank Rd on Jan. 22.

Dave Wendelken had **Pine Siskins** at his feeders the week of Jan. 18, including 17 on Jan. 22.

Don Perkuchin reported at 50-100 **Horned Larks** and a group of **American Pipits** on Old Bridgewater Rd in Mt. Crawford on Jan. 25.

Bill Benish and Robyn Puffenbarger had a **Brown Thrasher** at their place in Bridgewater on Jan. 25.

John Shea reported a **Brown Thrasher** at Hillandale Park on Jan. 26.

Great Horned Owl

Photo: Diane Lepkowski

BIRD CLUB BOOK CLUB - Maureen Gallagher-McLeod

The B.C.B.C. will meet at 6:30 PM on Thursday, February 18, 2016, at 6:30 PM in the home of Elizabeth Ihle. After sharing a carry-in meal, we will discuss "The Urban Bestiary" by Lyanda Lynn Haupi. If you are interested in joining the discussion, contact Maureen at famcleod@earthlink.net or 896-9541.



We have had an overwhelming response from RBC on our kestrel box request. Here is the tally as of 8 January 2016:

*4 from Joe Shank
3 from Ralph Bolgiano
16 from Richard Smith
16 from Valley Building Supply*

We do not think we will get any more calls to pick up more boxes (but we didn't expect the last 32 boxes either). Thanks so much for getting the word out and getting us nearly 40 boxes made for kestrels.

Jill and Lance Morrow

Great Backyard Bird Count: Friday, February 12, through Monday, February 15, 2016

The Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) is a free, fun, and easy event that engages bird watchers of all ages in counting birds to create a real-time snapshot of bird populations. Participants are asked to count birds for as little as 15 minutes (or as long as they wish) on one or more days of the four-day event and report their sightings online at birdcount.org. Anyone can take part in the Great Backyard Bird Count, from beginning bird watchers to experts, and you can participate from your backyard, or anywhere in the world.

Each checklist submitted during the GBBC helps researchers at the [Cornell Lab of Ornithology](http://cornelllabofornithology.org) and the [National Audubon Society](http://naturesociety.org) learn more about how birds are doing, and how to protect them and the environment we share. Last year, more than 140,000 participants submitted their bird observations online, creating the largest instantaneous snapshot of global bird populations ever recorded.

The 19th annual GBBC will be held Friday, February 12, through Monday, February 15, 2016. Please visit the official website at birdcount.org for more information and be sure to check out the latest [educational and promotional resources](#).

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