



Goldfinch Gazette

The Newsletter of the Rockingham Bird Club
<http://rockinghambirdclub.com>

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JANUARY MEETING

DATE: Thursday, January 2, 2014

TIME: 7:00 PM

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

PROGRAM, *Elizabeth Ihle*

Profits from our club's Bird Seed Savings Day go to fund donations to a variety of nature-related charities. This month, Brian Taber, director of the Coastal Virginia Wildlife Observatory, which is one of our recipients, will tell us about this group which monitors bird migration throughout the Chesapeake Bay region. The CVWO is celebrating its 20th anniversary this year. Beforehand, we will meet Brian for dinner at L'Italia at 815 Market Street at 5:30. If you are planning to join the dinner group, please call or email Elizabeth Ihle, eliza51@aol.com or 421-5257.

JANUARY FIELD TRIPS, *Diane Lepkowski*

Lake Shenandoah with Greg Moyers, Saturday December 28 -- (See the Dec 2013 Goldfinch Gazette for write-up.) Meet at the Lake at 8:30 AM, contact Greg in advance if you'll attend.

RBC Christmas Bird Count (VARC CBC) – Rescheduled to Saturday January 4, 2014: If you have questions, please contact Bill Benish at wcbenish@comcast.net or 540-908-7336.

Hillandale Park, with Tom Mizell -- TBA

BIRD CLUB BOOK CLUB, *Maureen Gallagher-McLeod*: The book club meets monthly, contact Maureen for more information at famcleod@earthlink.net or 540-896-9541.

TRIP REPORTS

Hillandale Park Walk, -- Tom Mizell: Tom will report on the Dec 21 trip in February's Gazette.

TREASURER'S REPORT, *Steve White*

Though our finances are nearly as robust as in past years, our membership renewals are lagging for Fiscal Year 2013-14. Thanks to the 49% of returning members who have renewed. But we still are lacking renewals of 51% of our last members. This is reflected in our lower revenues for FY '13-'14.

Our balances (\$11,377.07 in savings and \$7,764.96 in checking) are a source of assurance that we will be able to continue our support for both national and local ornithological and conservation causes. But I am a little concerned that more than half of last year's members have not yet renewed.

Club membership presently stands at a total of 76 paid members, broken down as follows: Five "300-club members (those who got free membership w/purchases of over \$300 in seed at our annual birdseed fund raiser); nine life members (voted to that status by the executive committee for years of exceptional support for RBC; 33 family members; and 29 individual members. It is difficult to come to an accurate figure for total club membership since "family" status includes at least two, but in many cases up to 6 or 7 additional members. It is also hard to give a firm figure for our membership on the cusp of the New Year since many members choose to renew exactly one calendar year from their joining the club, rather than during our membership renewal drive in September. But multiplying 33 x 2, for 66 family members, adding that to the 29, 9 and 5 (=109), and adding the 93 non-renewals I'm hoping to hear from—that would put our membership close to the 200 or so I have regularly given to those who inquire as the size of our organization.

I am hoping the 51% of non-renewals are mostly in the category of "good intentions" and will be renewing in the coming months. I will be getting in touch with them soon, based on the contact information I have for them.

If you have not renewed for fiscal year 2013-2014, please do so at your earliest convenience. I will be contacting those of you who have not renewed soon just to make sure your failure to do so was an oversight and not because you have moved out of the area. Please make sure that I get any changes in your email or snail-mail information so we can keep you on our mailing list for the Goldfinch Gazette.

Checks (\$15 for individual, \$20 for family membership) made out to "RBC" can be mailed to me at 7738 Sparkling Springs Road, Singers Glen, VA 22850.

BIRD SIGHTINGS

Mike Smith reported some good birds in his yard in Elkton on Nov. 4 including a stunned or injured **Swainson's Thrush**, a late **Rose-breasted Grosbeak**, and a calling **Eastern Screech-Owl**. Mike added a **Red-breasted Nuthatch** to his November yard list on the 23rd.



Snowy Owl, west of Dayton

After Clair and Zig found a single Snowy Owl last month, this bird was another “one-day-wonder” but stayed for much of the day, giving lots of birders and a group of school children a great chance for views.

Photo: Dave Wendelken, 12/3/13

John Shea found 75+ **Rusty Blackbirds** in Cook’s Creek Arboretum in Bridgewater on Nov. 23. John continued to see Rustys at this location over the next couple of days. Also present on Nov. 24 was a male **Wood Duck** and on Nov. 25, a cold-hardy **Eastern Phoebe**.

On Nov. 24, William Leigh reported a **Peregrine Falcon** near the intersection of Singers Glen Rd. and Well Hollow Rd. William also saw a **Bonaparte’s Gull**, nine **Buffleheads**, and six **Hooded Mergansers** on Lake Shenandoah on the same date.

Gabriel Mapel found two **Ring-billed Gulls** at Lake Campbell on Nov. 25. He also saw three **Rusty Blackbirds** on Greenmount Rd. and three **Purple Finches** around the county on the same date.

Scott Blackshaw reported a **Snowy Owl** along Cecil Wampler Rd. on Nov. 27.

On Nov. 30, Diane Lepkowski reported **American Black Ducks**, **Hooded Mergansers**, **Gadwalls**, and **Ring-necked Ducks** at Lake Campbell.



Merlin at Lake Shenandoah

Photo: Diane Lepkowski 12/21/13

On Dec. 3, a **Snowy Owl** spent the day perched at a Mennonite Church at the intersection of Rushville and Coakley town Roads, west of Dayton. Numerous birders were able to see and photograph the owl, and a group of local school children enjoyed close spotting-scope views.

On Dec. 8, William Leigh reported nine **Redheads** on a pond behind the White Birch Center on Oakwood Drive in Bridgewater. He also found **24 Red-breasted Mergansers**, **22 Ring-billed Gulls**, a **Bufflehead**, and two **Ruddy Ducks** at Lake Shenandoah, three **Ring-necked Ducks** at Lake Campbell, and **60 American Pipits** at Silver Lake.

Mike Smith had a **Chipping Sparrow** at his feeder east of Elkton on Dec. 8. On Dec. 10, Mike had a **Pine Warbler** at the feeder and a **Bald Eagle** flying overhead.

Greg Moyers, William Leigh and Diane Lepkowski found **Lapland Longspurs** on Scholars Rd. and Spaders Church Rd. on Dec. 14. Both birds were found foraging with **Horned Larks**. Gabriel Mapel later reported **Rusty Blackbirds** at the Scholars Rd. location.

William Leigh found a **Snow Bunting** along with four **Lapland Longspurs** and six **Rusty Blackbirds** on Scholars Rd. on Dec. 15. Over 200 **Horned Larks** were also seen.

Harold and Grace Jones saw a **Bonaparte's Gull** at Leonard's Pond on Dec. 18.



Lapland Longspur, center, with a group of Horned Larks.

There were several longspur sightings this month, in Mt. Crawford-area fields.

Photo: Diane Lepkowski, 12/14/13

A **Merlin** was sighted at Lake Shenandoah on the morning of Dec 21, by Diane Lepkowski and Greg Moyers. Also on Dec 21, John Shea found a red-morph **Eastern Screech-Owl** at Cook's Creek Arboretum in Bridgewater.

On Dec 22, William Leigh found two Snow Geese, one a blue morph, in a field north of Timberville. On Lake Campbell, Greg Moyers found a male Canvasback. Other ducks spotted by Greg and Diane Lepkowski that day included five American Wigeons at Leonard's Pond.



The scene where "our" Snowy Owl rested, surveying Dayton-area farm fields on 12/3/13.

Photo: Diane Lepkowski

Rockingham Bird Club
4684 Timber Ridge Rd
Mt. Crawford, VA 22441



PRESIDENT: Gloria Crump
4684 Timber Ridge Road
Mt. Crawford, VA 22441
Phone – 540-234-9300
ggcrump@comcast.net

VICE PRESIDENT: PROGRAMS – Elizabeth Ihle – 540-234-8296

VICE PRESIDENT: FIELD TRIPS – Diane Lepkowski

SECRETARY: Phyllis Showalter

TREASURER: Steve White – 540-833-6726

MEMBERS AT LARGE: Debbie Harrison & Ken Hinkle

GOLDFINCH GAZETTE – Sandy Sylvest