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# Goldfinch Gazette

## The Newsletter of the Rockingham Bird Club

<http://rockinghambirdclub.com>

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### JANUARY MEETING

**DATE:** Thursday, January 3, 2019

**TIME:** 7:00 PM

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

**PROGRAM:** *What Do Birds Eat? Investigating birds' insect prey preferences to improve avian conservation efforts* presented by Ashley Kennedy, PhD Candidate University of Delaware.

Understanding birds' diets is vital to avian conservation. Without clear knowledge of the various foods that birds rely on during different times of the year, we would be limited in our efforts to conserve them. To address this issue, a community science project was launched to collect photos of birds feeding their nestlings during the breeding season, and cameras were stationed at boxes to record the parent birds bringing food to their nestlings. More than 10,000 prey items have been identified so far. Ashley is a PhD candidate in the Department of Entomology and Wildlife Ecology at the University of Delaware.

Join us for dinner with Ashley before the meeting: Bella Luna Wood Fired Pizza, 80 West Water Street in Harrisonburg at 5:30 PM. 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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### JANUARY FIELD TRIPS - *Diane Lepkowski*

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

**119<sup>th</sup> Christmas Bird Count - Rescheduled, Tuesday, January 1:** Due to flood safety concerns on the original date, our "VARC" Christmas Bird Count was postponed to New Year's Day, January 1, 2019. Although, we already have enough participants to provide ample coverage, contact Bill Benish if you have any questions. Bill Benish, VARC CBC Compiler, 540.908.7336, [wbenish@gmail.com](mailto:wbenish@gmail.com).

**Lake Shenandoah, Saturday, January 5, with Greg Moyers:** We will meet in the parking lot at the Lake at 8:45 AM. Remember, Lake Shenandoah is a VDGIF fee area, requiring an access permit or VA hunting/fishing/boating license. Please contact Greg at [gwmoyers@msn.com](mailto:gwmoyers@msn.com) or 434-3029 if you plan to attend.

**Hillandale Monthly Walk, Friday, January 18, with Tom Mizell:** Meet at the Children's Playground Parking Lot at 8 AM for our first walk in 2019.

**Lost River, WV (Kimsey Run & Eagles), Saturday, January 19 with Debbie Harrison:** Meet at the 7-11 in Broadway on Rt 259 (261 W Lee St), at 8:30 AM. Bring snacks and dress warmly. Spotting scopes are especially helpful, so if you have one, please bring it. Please contact Debbie Harrison (woodshar@aol.com; home: 540-856-3058; cell: 703-216-2585) if you plan to attend. We will carpool from Broadway and return shortly after noon. Rain/snow date is Saturday, January 26.

## BIRD SIGHTINGS

There were several nice finds at Lake Shenandoah in early December, including three **Red-breasted Mergansers**, two **Ring-billed Gulls**, and the continuing **Common Goldeneye** reported by Greg Moyers and Diane Lepkowski on Dec. 1, five **Cackling Geese**, **Horned Grebe**, **Hooded Mergansers**, **American Coots**, and **Ruddy Ducks** reported by Diane Lepkowski on Dec. 2, a **Brown Creeper** reported by Huck Hutchens on Dec. 8, 75 **Ring-billed Gulls**, **Buffleheads**, and **Gadwalls** reported by William Leigh on Dec. 9, **Common Merganser** and **Redhead** reported by Huck Hutchens on Dec. 11, and three **Canvasbacks** reported by Greg Moyers and Diane Lepkowski on Dec. 15. The **Common Goldeneye** continued to be reported through at least Dec. 16.

Matt Gingerich reported several good finds in the Rawley Springs area on Dec. 8 including nine **Red Crossbills**, **Great Horned** and **Eastern Screech-Owls**, and a couple of **Winter Wrens**.

Herb Myers reported a **Canvasback** and 21 **Gadwalls** at Silver Lake on Dec. 12.

Bill Benish reported a **Merlin** and 80 **Horned Larks** near the Mt. Crawford Creamery on Dec. 12.

Marshall Faintich reported **Pine Siskins**, **Pied-billed Grebes**, and a **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** along the North River in Bridgewater on Dec. 12.

Greg Moyers reported a **Black-crowned Night-Heron** in the stream beside Hair Corral in Dayton on Dec. 13.

Kevin Shank reported several **Evening Grosbeaks** at his feeders and water feature at Union Springs on Dec. 18. The grosbeaks have made brief appearances every few days since Kevin's initial sighting.

Huck Hutchens reported three **Common Mergansers** at Union Springs Dam on Dec. 21.

Bill Benish and Robyn Puffenbarger reported a **Merlin** at their home in Bridgewater on Dec. 21.

Mike Smith reported 15 + **Rusty Blackbirds** on Ore Bank Rd on Dec. 26.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### **Reminder: Inclement Weather (for meetings)**

RBC follows the decision made by Blue Ridge Community College (BRCC) announced on the radio & website, etc. If classes are canceled OR delayed, then the meeting is canceled.

### **Treasurer's Report – Audrey Shenk**

At the latest RBC Executive Committee meeting in December, the committee agreed to make donations to the following organizations using the proceeds from our Bird Seed Sale:

- Wildlife Center of Virginia (the organization that cares for sick or injured wildlife in our area)
- American Bird Conservancy (conserving native birds and their habitats throughout the Americas)
- Coastal Virginia Wildlife Observatory (protecting migrating birds)
- Center for Conservation Biology at The College of William & Mary (preparing future ornithologists)
- National Audubon Society in recognition of their support for our local Christmas Bird Count
- Massanutten Regional Library
- Avian Conservation Center of Appalachia (promoting conservation of our local birds and their habitats)
- Saw-whet Owl banding station at Highland Retreat operated by Clair Mellinger and Charles Ziegenfus
- Community Cloud Forest Conservation, a new organization for us, working in Guatemala to alleviate poverty and protect the cloud forests through education, reforestation, community development and advocacy.

Thank you for your support of our annual fundraiser. By purchasing bird seed and volunteering on distribution day, you make these donations possible. Happy birding in 2019!

### **The Virginia Society of Ornithology (VSO) is Looking for a Webmaster!**

*Why would you want to be our webmaster?* Because this position is vital to communicating with members and partners across all of our activities, giving you many opportunities to be creative and help shape the direction of the VSO along the way. Our webmaster plays an important role in making us a welcoming organization and in driving our conservation accomplishments. Your main task is maintaining all existing information and updating the [www.virginiabirds.org](http://www.virginiabirds.org) web domain, specific duties are described below.

#### **Major duties**

- Maintaining current information regarding VSO activities, officers, and chapters.
- Uploading VSO publications to the website and ensuring that announcements regarding VSO field trips are posted in a timely fashion.
- Though the webmaster is not a voting member of the VSO, he/she is expected to attend VSO board meetings on a quarterly basis (Feb, May, Aug and Nov). Board meetings are typically held in Charlottesville or Richmond, with the May membership meeting held in various parts of Virginia.
- A detailed list of duties and activities related to the position is available upon request.

#### **Skills required**

Proficiency and access to Microsoft Word and Excel, Adobe Acrobat, Adobe Photoshop or other image editing software. Basic knowledge of HTML is a plus since some tables like the Official State List are written in this language and will need editing each year. The website interface is provided by [Squarespace.com](http://Squarespace.com), and the webmaster is required to create a personal account here.

## Interested in learning more?

Contact current webmaster Rob Bielawski at [robbielawski@gmail.com](mailto:robbielawski@gmail.com) and VSO President Lenny Bankester at [lennybankester@yahoo.com](mailto:lennybankester@yahoo.com) to express interest or ask questions.

## VSO Winter Field Trip to Outer Banks, North Carolina - February 1-3, 2019

Make plans now to join the VSO at the winter field trip to the Outer Banks of North Carolina. The weekend's leaders include Bill Akers and Jerry Via, as well as VSO field trip co-chairs Lee Adams and Meredith Bell. We always have great waterfowl, shorebirds and raptors, along with a wide assortment of land birds. Please register in advance. Provide the names of participants in your party with a telephone number and email address so we can contact you if needed. Register with Meredith Bell, trip coordinator, at [merandlee@gmail.com](mailto:merandlee@gmail.com) or 804-824-4958.

All VSO field trips have a registration fee of \$20 for NON-members only. This fee will be applied to an individual membership that will be active until the end of 2019. If 2 or more people from the same family register, the registration fee will be \$25, which covers a family membership. Groups of students accompanied by their instructor are exempt from this fee. Non-members can join in advance at <http://www.virginiabirds.org/membership-and-donate/> or pay the registration fee on the first evening of the event.

## Winter Birds in the Backyard by Melissa Mayntz ([www.thespruce.com](http://www.thespruce.com))

Backyards can be essential for winter birds and provide necessary food and water when natural resources are at their scarcest. In winter, deep snow and ice can bury foods just when birds need more calories to keep warm through bitter cold. At the same time, water is locked into frozen ice, so birds cannot easily drink. Dropping temperatures can make birds slower and more vulnerable to illness or predators, and fallen leaves offer less protection to keep winter birds safe. Fortunately, a bird-friendly yard can provide for all of a bird's needs even during the coldest months.

- *Food:* When insects are dead or inaccessible to feeding birds, nectar-producing flowers are long gone and seed supplies are exhausted, winter backyards can be a vital food source. Higher calorie foods such as suet, peanut butter and nuts are ideal for feeding winter birds and will attract more species to the backyard.
- *Water:* While snow and ice are both water, frozen water is less helpful to birds because they must expend energy to melt it to drink. Even if birds eat snow directly, their bodies must generate more heat to metabolize that snow and overcome the chill. A heated bird bath can be critical, and birds will quickly find and flock to such an easy, convenient, liquid water source in winter.
- *Shelter:* Evergreen trees provide great shelter for winter birds, but in areas where deciduous trees have lost their leaves, not as much shelter may be available. Birds can take refuge in hollow trees, but those hideaways may be few and far between. Backyards that offer winter bird shelters such as dense brush piles, roost boxes or year-round bird houses will attract more visitors.
- *Nesting Sites:* Birds do not breed in winter, but year-round residents remain in the same territories and will quickly revisit their favorite nesting sites when spring arrives. Ensuring that those sites, including bird houses or bird nesting shelves, remain safe and suitable can help keep even more backyard birds around all winter.

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**VICE PRESIDENT: PROGRAMS - Robyn Puffenbarger**

**VICE PRESIDENT: FIELD TRIPS - Diane Lepkowski**

**SECRETARY: Anne Nielson**

**TREASURER: Audrey Shenk**

**MEMBERS AT LARGE: Katherine Cummings & Tom Lord**

**GOLDFINCH GAZETTE - Denise Hoodock**

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