



Goldfinch Gazette

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

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JANUARY MEETING

DATE: Thursday, January 8, 2015

TIME: 7:00 PM

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

PROGRAM - *Denise Hoodock*

Our very own Gabriel Mapel, of New Hope in Augusta County, will be our January speaker. Gabriel is 15 years old and has been birding for 5 years. This year, he took his first birding trip to Maine, attending the Bird Studies for Teens Birding Camp at Hog Island. His presentation will take us on the adventures and birds Gabriel experienced during his time at Hog Island.

Gabriel has a "life list" of 560 species. He wrote a book about Bears when he was 10 years old, is the president of the Blue Ridge Young Birders Club founded in 2012, and is on the board of directors of the Monticello Bird Club as Field Trips Coordinator.

Before the meeting, please join us in hosting Gabriel at Taste of Thai, in Harrisonburg, for dinner at 5:30 PM. Please contact Denise Hoodock at 540-828-2595, 703-216-5499 or dhoodock@gmail.com if you'll be joining us for dinner.

JANUARY FIELD TRIPS - *Diane Lepkowski*

Hillandale Field Trip, Monday, January 12 **Wednesday January 14 with Tom Mizell** -- Meet at the Children's Playground parking lot at 8:00 AM. (*Date revised 1-5-15*)

Wildwood Park Field Trip (Bridgewater), Tuesday, January 20 with Tom Mizell – 8:00 AM – Dress WARMLY; we may sit at the picnic tables from time to time that morning to see what might be stirring around when we are still.

Lake Shenandoah, Saturday January 24, with Greg Moyers - Join Greg for a walk at the Lake as we search for birds, including wintering waterfowl. Meet at the parking lot at 8:30 AM. Remember, Lake Shenandoah is a VDGIF fee area; an access permit or hunting/fishing/boating license is required. Please contact Greg at gwmoyers@msn.com or 434-3029 if you plan to attend.

TRIP REPORTS

December Hillandale Park Trip - Tom Mizell

On the 8th day of December the Blue Jays said to me
“Come visit us at Hillandale Park!”
I arrived, braving ice and 28 degrees
With eight members on a very cold walk

As we gathered in the lot
We noted wish list birds:
Large Canada Goose,
Small Brown Creeper,
Chatty Blue Jays and,
1 Hummingbird of any species.

Well, if you found yourself singing parts of the above Smile! And congratulations!

After the interesting Club programs on Hummingbirds, we were indeed hoping to see some. Didn't happen this day but some of us shared our plans to put our hummingbird feeders back in service; now, on with the report.

The Blue Jays were certainly calling before we started the walk and followed us around as usual. The weather forecasts were calling for snow to move in within the next 24 hours and some of us anticipated we might benefit from a feeding frenzy. However, things were slow!

We enjoyed numerous Blue Jays and Dark-eyed Juncos. The Red-bellied Woodpeckers, Northern Flicker, Downy Woodpeckers and White-breasted Nuthatches searched and hammered in the bark for frozen meals. Eastern Towhees were out in full force. White-throated Sparrows, Carolina Chickadees, Tufted Titmice, Mourning Doves, Northern Cardinals and American Goldfinches and Robins were found in the first hour. By the time we reached the northernmost pedestrian bridge we tallied 15 species (about half the total we had at the same point in November.) But often the quality of an outdoor walk by “birders” is not diminished by the lack of quantity of birds. One of the treats of a cold winter day is the call of the Carolina Wren as the song resonates in the crisp, frigid air. Our thanks to the Wren for that often-heard gift on a chilly day.

About 9 AM several folks were really feeling the cold. They heard other calls that most likely beckoned them to warmer places. About half of the starting group remained and we continued in 30 degree temperatures. We searched and searched and managed to add 2 more species in the second loop. Cooper's Hawk and European Starling helped our count soar to 19. Try as we might that's the

final number of species we found on this wintry day. However, we must have enjoyed the walk as we did not complete the figure eight circuit until 11 AM.

Anonymous Blue Jay Tweet: “Come back in January and we will welcome you to a Happy New Year!”

It has been fun this year to explore the park with the Rockingham Bird Club and guests. As I look forward to the New Year, I wish you the best and hope you can join us in January 2015 at Hillandale! Who knows what birds you may sight? It might result in a “life bird” for another person, or just a special bird behavior for you to observe and ponder.

Christmas Bird Count Report – Bill Benish

We do not have all the data from the CBC available, but a few notes struck me. Although we had no Snowy Owl this year, for the first time since 1995, we had a Barn Owl! We even counted two of them somewhat near each other. This marks the first year that we ever had Barn, Barred, Eastern Screech and Great Horned Owls in the same count day. Kevin Shank’s family of Union Springs snagged our first Ruffed Grouse since 2007. A Merlin, a Peregrine Falcon and a Loggerhead Shrike rounded out some very nice birds. Count week birds included continuing Eurasian Collared Dove (Mount Solon) and Green Heron, a very unusual find for the season, reported by Karen Shank on Nazarene Church Rd.

Thanks to all who were able to contribute directly and to those for helping facilitate this labor of love.

BIRD SIGHTINGS:

William Leigh found a **Snow Bunting** on Koiner Ford Rd on Nov. 27.

Diane Holsinger reported that the **Loggerhead Shrike** on Mountain Valley Rd was still present on Nov. 27. The following day, Nov. 28, Diane found her second **Loggerhead Shrike** of the season. This bird was near the intersection of Radar Rd and Byrd Orchard Rd near Timberville.

Diane Holsinger reported a **hybrid Canvasback/Redhead** on Silver Lake on Nov. 29.

William Leigh saw a juvenile **Snow Goose** on a pond off Moore’s Mill Rd on Nov. 30.

Tom Mizell reported **Ruddy Ducks, Horned Grebes, and Ring-billed Gulls** at Silver Lake on Dec. 2.

Also on Dec. 2, Greg Moyers found a host of waterfowl on Lake Shenandoah. Included were (number in parentheses): **Common Goldeneye (3), Long-tailed Duck (3), Horned Grebe (5), Pied-billed Grebe (2), Red-breasted Merganser (2), Hooded Merganser (26), Canvasback (17), Redhead (25), Ruddy Duck (31), Bufflehead (4), both Scaup (17 total), Ring-necked Duck (18), Ring-billed Gull (5), and a single Mallard.** Greg also reported seven **Bonaparte’s Gulls** and four more **Redheads** at the RMH pond on the same day.

On Dec. 3, Calvin Jordan and Matt Gingerich each reported seeing a flock of **Snow Geese** at the Mt. Crawford exit along I-81. Matt counted 22 birds. Matt also reported a **Snow Goose** at Linville on Dec. 8 and Lake Terrace on Dec. 7. Ken Hinkle found three birds on Dec. 6 on the Narrow Back Rd pond just across the Augusta County border. Diane Lepkowski and Greg Moyers found a **Merlin** hanging out near this pond on Dec. 13.

Ken Hinkle reported six **Red-breasted Mergansers** and five **Horned Grebes** at Silver Lake, Dec. 5.

Also on Dec. 5, Greg Moyers reported a **Common Loon** and three **Double-crested Cormorants** at Lake Shenandoah. Two **Loons** were present on Dec. 6.

Diane Holsinger reported that two **Bald Eagles** were sitting in a tree near the nest off Spring Creek Rd in Bridgewater on Dec. 6.

Diane Holsinger had an **Eastern Towhee** and a **Purple Finch** at her feeder on Dec. 9. On Dec. 20, Diane reported 30 **Pine Siskins** at her place. Also on the 20th, Diane reported a **Bald Eagle** on Rt. 259 south of Broadway.

Gabriel Mapel found a **Merlin** on Horeb Church Rd during the Christmas Bird Count on Dec. 20. Gabriel also had three owls, including a **Barn Owl** heard on Limestone Rd, a **Great Horned Owl** on Oakwood Rd, and an **Eastern Screech-Owl** at Wildwood Park.

Also on the CBC on Dec. 20, Ken Ranck found a **Peregrine Falcon** and a **Bald Eagle** near Mt. Clinton and Dan Perkuchin reported a **Loggerhead Shrike** in the Augusta County portion of the RBC circle near Mt. Solon.

Diane Lepkowski reported a flock of 45 **Rusty Blackbirds** in a tree along Osceola Springs Rd on Dec. 21. A flock returned at least two more times; she and Dave Wendelken counted close to 200 Rustys in the same area on December 30. Diane also saw a **Northern Harrier** on Model Rd. the same day.



Peregrine Falcon
December 9. This immature bird was found in the Town of Dayton by Tom Mizell.
-photo by Diane Lepkowski

BIRD CLUB BOOK CLUB - *Maureen Gallagher-McLeod*

The book club will meet on Thursday, January 15, at 6:30 PM at the home of Elizabeth Ihle. There will be a carry-in dinner and discussion about the book *Cod: A Biography of the Fish that Changed the World* by Mark Kurlansky. If you are interested in joining the discussion, contact Maureen at 896-9541 or speak with Elizabeth.

Great Backyard Bird Count: February 13-16, 2015 – Get Ready to Participate!

From Cornell's Website: “Launched in 1998 by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and National Audubon Society, the Great Backyard Bird Count was the first online citizen-science project to collect data on wild birds and to display results in near real-time.

Since then, more than 100,000 people of all ages and walks of life have joined the four-day count each February to create an annual snapshot of the distribution and abundance of birds.

We invite you to participate! Simply tally the numbers and kinds of birds you see for at least 15 minutes on one or more days of the count, **February 13-16, 2015**. You can count from any location, anywhere in the world!” More information at: <http://gbbc.birdcount.org/>

PROGRAMS ON THE HORIZON....

FEBRUARY 5, 2015 – Bob Schamerhorn, life-long birder and Virginia native will be warming us with images and discussion of Florida's birding hotspots!

MARCH 5, 2015 – Teta Kain will return with a presentation of her November trip to Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego in Argentina!

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