



Goldfinch Gazette

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

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March 2014

MARCH MEETING

DATE: Thursday, March 6, 2014

TIME: 7:00 PM

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

PROGRAM, *Elizabeth Ihle*

We are pleased that Teta Kain will again be with us for a March program. Teta, a birdwatcher, naturalist, photographer, and speaker from Gloucester County, will be sharing her travels along Virginia rivers. Her program is entitled "River Rhapsody" and explores the flora, fauna, and people's activities along the state's waterways. Our meeting will be at 7 PM in the Detweiler Auditorium of VMRC.

We will meet for dinner at 5:30 at "Traditions" at 625 Mount Clinton Pike and club members are invited to join us. Please call or email Elizabeth Ihle (234-8296) or eliza51@aol.com if you choose to meet us so that she can give the restaurant an approximate number.

MARCH FIELD TRIPS, *Diane Lepkowski*

Highland County, Saturday March 1, with Michael Shank, note new date - Highland, with the highest mean elevation of any Virginia County, serves as wintering grounds for Golden Eagles, Rough-legged Hawks and more. Tree Sparrow and Loggerhead Shrike are other target trip species. Meet at the parking lot beside (south of) Bob-a Rea's in Bridgewater (Rt. 42) at 7:00AM. Dress warmly (temps ten degrees lower than locally are possible) and bring water/drinks and lunch/snacks. A stop in Monterey for rest rooms/snacks is possible, but otherwise modern facilities will be few and far between. Please sign up in advance, and advise if you can offer to drive. Contact Mike Shank at tallwhiteoak@verizon.net or 540-879-2650/ 540-810-7444.

Lake Shenandoah, March 8 with Greg Moyers - We will meet in the parking lot at the lake at 8:30 AM. Please contact Greg at gwmoyers@msn.com or 434-3029 if you plan to attend.

Hillandale Park, March 20 with Tom Mizell – We will meet at the parking lot of the Children’s Playground at 12 noon for our monthly Hillandale Park Walk.

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT -- VARC CBC Summary Report- CBC Year 114 -- Bill Benish:

74 species this year is not far from our all time high of 78 three years ago. We added our first full species count for Snowy Owl! At a later date, we found a second individual nearby. Palm Warblers also made a showing for us at the Shank’s on Cannery Woods Drive. We had another good number (30+) of field observers after postponing from our originally planned date 12/14/13.

Charles “Zig” Ziegenfus (Area 3) provided the following observations: “No surprises, less and less habitat each year here. One can see where most fields are plowed up to road's edge, additional houses, barns, etc. erected. Fewer feeders as older people move away from farms and younger people take over.”

Species only seen in one Area / Sector:

A1=0 distinct species {Northwest – largely forest}

A2= 5 distinct species {Northeast}: Mute Swan, Gadwall, American Wigeon, Northern Pintail, Black-capped Chickadee

A3= 3 {East / Central}: Snowy Owl (First full appearance! – We had a Count Week Bird in 95th CBC year), Palm Warbler, Savannah Sparrow

A4= 4 {Southeast}: Red-breasted Merganser, American Coot, Eastern Screech Owl, Red-headed Woodpecker

A5= 1 {Southwest}: Eastern Phoebe

A6= 4 {West }: Winter Wren, Hermit Thrush, Field Sparrow, Eastern Meadowlark

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“Good news” Birds - (Identified this year and not last year): Gadwall, American Wigeon, American Black Duck, Northern Pintail, Redhead, Bufflehead, Red-breasted Merganser, Snowy Owl, Palm Warbler (last year was CW), Common Grackle.

Birds identified during last year’s count and not this year:

*CW Ross's Goose

Green-winged Teal (American, *Anas crecca carolinensis*)

*CW Lesser Scaup

Hooded Merganser
Wild Turkey
Pied-billed Grebe
Northern Harrier
Peregrine Falcon
Wilson's Snipe (old name Common Snipe)
Fish Crow
Red-breasted Nuthatch
Swamp Sparrow
Pine Siskin

*CW= "Count Week" -Identified on one of the three days prior to or following, but not on the actual count date.

*All Time High (including ties and first time species):
(Species, number in ATH year count number; Previous / notes)*

Redhead 6 in 114; was 4 1986
Sharp-shinned Hawk 7 in 102, 114; tie with 102nd
Red-shouldered Hawk 3 in 112, 114; tie with 112th
American Kestrel 47 in 113, 114; tie with 113th
Rock Pigeon 1267 in 114; previous 112th @ 1232
Snowy Owl 1 in 114; New species! Previous CW in 1993
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker 13 in 114; previously 9 in 1999, 2001
Hairy Woodpecker 9 in 107, 111, 114; tie with 107, 111
American Pipit 235 in 114; previous 115 in 95/107th
Palm Warbler 2 in 114; previous 1 in 7 other years
Red-winged Blackbird 1011 in 114; previous 985 in 92nd

Historic data for our count code "VARC" (last year 113th and prior) is accessible via <http://netapp.audubon.org/CBCObservation/Historical/ResultsByCount.aspx>

Please contact Bill Benish wcbenish@comcast.net for a PDF of the current year's submission for this year's full list.

Thanks to all participants and leaders for another count year of excellent effort and data contributions. - *Bill*

BIRD CLUB BOOK CLUB, Maureen Gallagher-McLeod: The B.C.B.C. will meet at 6:30 PM on Thursday, March 20, at the home of Elizabeth Ihle. After a carry-in dinner, we will discuss the book *An Exhilaration of Wings: The Literature of Birdwatching*, edited by Jen Hill. If you are interested in joining the discussion, contact Maureen at famcleod@earthlink.net or 896-9541.

TRIP REPORTS

Hillandale Park Walk, -- Tom Mizell: Anonymous Quote: "Who would believe that 7 members of the Rockingham Bird Club would show up for a bird walk when the morning's low temperature was 11 F?"

As I headed out of Bridgewater for our February 12 Hillandale walk, I noticed that the temperature was 11 F at 7:15 AM. By the time I reached Hillandale Park the temperature was a toasty 16 F. It amazed me that 7 members of the RBC arrived at the usual meeting place in spite of the frigid morning weather. A Winter Weather Advisory forecast 10-16 inches of snow that would begin that evening and be centered along the I-81 Corridor. However, it was the morning before and temperatures were climbing as the soon-to-be Frozen Seven began our monthly walk. Our impromptu "wish list" of birds were Dark-eyed Junco, Loggerhead Shrike, Winter Wren, Rough-legged Hawk and Bluebird. Which ones do you think we saw?

First birds heard and/or seen included Red-bellied Woodpecker working the trees at the playground. We also saw numerous Blue Jays making lots of noise. The Mourning Doves were cooing, White-breasted Nuthatches were talking and a large flock of American Robins flew overhead. Time to move out of the parking lot to the trail. As we approached the cabin pedestrian bridge a large bird was spotted by Dan Perkuchin. It flew to a tree near the volleyball sand court and we digressed from our usual pathway. Getting closer we got a good look at a Pileated Woodpecker working its way up the tree in search of what must have been frozen treats. Next we were back on track and we crossed the bridge. We noticed that the stream channel had a lot more water flowing than usual and looking upstream, we were attracted to bird activity. So, we digressed a second time and worked our way upstream several hundred feet. In the Cedar and Walnut Trees and brush along the stream channel, we were afforded good looks at Yellow-rumped Warblers, House Finches, Northern Cardinals and Carolina Wren. As we turned back toward the log cabin to resume our usual path, a pair of Mallards was seen in the stream just twenty feet away. How had we missed them only minutes earlier?

As our walk took us by the cabin, we heard the call of Canada Geese from the direction of the golf course. We tallied 15 species by 9:15 AM. Between the log cabin and the second pedestrian bridge at the North end, the bird activity slowed down drastically. We searched and scanned and managed to find very few birds along that stretch. The pace picked up at the bridge as Mockingbird, Downy Woodpecker, Bluebird and Dark-eyed Junco made their presence known. Don Perkuchin spotted a Yellow-rumped Warbler in the same general area. Then Greg Moyers found more yellow as he observed a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker. All of us enjoyed watching it maneuver around the trees. The Sapsucker was a life bird for one of the group. It was approaching 9:30 AM and collectively we talked about cold hands and cold feet. It was quite chilling along the stream. Before 10:00 AM four of the group called it a morning and headed out for warmer places. Three of us continued towards the second loop south of the log cabin.

Nearing the bridge at the log cabin, we paused a good while to look upstream where we earlier enjoyed a lot of activity. With the more-than-normal water flow in the stream, lots of birds were active near and in the water. A nice flock of Yellow-rumped Warblers moved

toward the cabin bridge pausing to drink from the strong-flowing stream. A pattern of perching on the grasses and brush momentarily then moving into the water repeated as they moved downstream. We counted at least 6 of these colorful birds and thought that the yellow was particularly brilliant.

We walked up to the golf course fence and scanned the horizon towards Harrisonburg High School. A Red-tailed Hawk was perched in a tree in the distance. Only two of us were left as we completed the second loop. The two remaining birders paused one last time near the cabin bridge in an attempt to add more species to the morning's tally. We were pleased to add American Crow. Also, we saw two accipiters circling and climbing overhead. We focused our glasses trying to make a clear ID. As they circled ever higher, they gave us helpful clues as they called Kek-kek-kek-kek-kek-kek-kek-kek in rapid fire. So, we added Cooper's Hawk. A Northern Flicker flew across the stream pushing our total for the morning to 25 species.

By now the temperature had risen to 23 F and we decided to get home before the snowfall. I leave a blank (____ inches) for you to enter how much snow fell as measured at your home that night. I measured at least 15 inches at Bridgewater. Anonymous Quote: "We found much to enjoy with the birds that ventured out even on such a frigid day."

Thinking of warmer times please note our March walk will help us welcome Spring—hope you can join us March 20. Note that Spring officially arrives at 12:57 EDT that day. Do we dare to start our walk in the Winter and finish our walk in the Spring? I think so. Meet at the Playground Parking Lot at noon on March 20.

BIRD SIGHTINGS:

Diane Lepkowski found a **Hermit Thrush** at Lake Shenandoah on Jan. 27. Diane and Greg Moyers reported a **Chipping Sparrow** at the lake on Feb. 2.

Greg Moyers saw approximately 12 **Ring-billed Gulls** on Feb. 3 in the fields around RMH.

Charles "Zig" Ziegenfus and his ornithology class found a pair of **Red-necked Grebes** on Lake Shenandoah on Feb. 6. Later that day, Ken Hinkle and Tom Mizell had a third grebe stop in for a quick visit. Up to five grebes have been seen routinely at the lake throughout the month.

While checking for the grebes on Feb. 7, David Wendelken was present at Lake Shenandoah for a brief visit from a **Common Goldeneye**. Goldeneyes have also been reported at this location by William Leigh, Diane Lepkowski, and Greg Moyers throughout the month. The birds typically fly in at dusk. Diane had a count of eight on Feb. 17.

Greg Moyers and Diane Lepkowski found a **Clay-colored Sparrow** along the Days Inn access road off Bell's Lane in Staunton on Feb. 8. The bird has been successfully viewed by other club members including William Leigh, David Wendelken, and Gabriel Mapel.

Diane Lepkowski saw 40 **Ring-billed Gulls** at Lake Shenandoah on Feb. 9.

The **Snowy Owl** on Dinkel Avenue was last reported on Feb. 9 by William Leigh.

Gabriel Mapel found two **Snow Geese** on the Merck pond on Feb. 10.

Ken Hinkle reported **Northern Pintails** on North River in Bridgewater at the Rt. 42 bridge on Feb. 12. Ken Ranck reported five **Common Mergansers** at the same spot later in the day. Good numbers of Common Mergansers have been in the area with a group routinely coming in to Lake Shenandoah each evening. Greg Moyers reported 17 birds on the evening of Feb. 20.

Also, on Feb. 12, Zig and Diane Lepkowski reported a **White-winged Scoter**, five **Red-necked Grebes**, a **Red-breasted Merganser** and a group of **Ring-billed Gulls** at Lake Shenandoah. Greg Moyers also saw one, and possibly two, **White-winged Scoters** at the lake on Feb. 22.

A group of eight **Red-breasted Mergansers** has spent most of the month on Lake Campbell.

Ken Ranck had a **Rusty Blackbird** and a **Red-winged Blackbird** coming to his feeder in Mt. Crawford during the snow storm on Feb. 13.

On Feb. 17 Marshall Faintich found a **Lapland Longspur** in the same place along Rt. 340 south of Elkton where one was seen last winter.

Mike Smith had a **Red-breasted Nuthatch** in his yard east of Elkton on Feb. 20. Mike has also had a **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** coming to his suet feeder.

Kay Gibson reported four **Tundra Swans** along Rt. 340 just north of the intersection with Ore Bank Road on Feb. 20. The swans were still present as of Feb. 22.

Brenda Tekin found an early **Tree Swallow** at Lake Shenandoah on Feb. 22. Diane Lepkowski reported one at Silver Lake the following day.

Treasurer's Report, Steve White

We are entering the time of year when you loyal treasurer can catch his breath and get his books in order for the fiscal year's annual inspection by our Auditing Committee later in the spring. The member list is close to complete, although I still have some non-renewals to contact just to make sure their failure was not an oversight.

The inflow of revenue from our bird seed sale in October is complete. Our sales taxes to the Virginia Department of Taxation have been paid.

The latter required a bit of additional footwork this year. The Virginia Department of Taxation no longer accepts paper returns or paper checks in payment of sales tax. It took about a week to communicate with the Department and to set up the electronic online

payment option from our checking account at SunTrust. We will now be ready for years to come, however, to help the State of Virginia reduce the paper consumed in its sales transactions.

Outstanding matters include this year's required declaration in mid-May to the IRS to be filed, stating that our annual income has not exceeded the \$50,000 cap. I will then be instructed by the Executive Committee to make our annual donations to ornithological and conservation causes and charities. A report on that series of donations will follow in a subsequent edition of the *Goldfinch Gazette*.

Meanwhile, thanks to all members who have renewed and a reminder to any stragglers that you can still mail renewal checks (\$15 for individual membership and \$20 for family membership) to me at 7738 Sparkling Springs Road; Singers Glen, VA 22850. Make checks out to "RBC". Thank you, and ***Good Birding*** as we head into spring!

Editor's Note: We are sorry to hear of the deaths of three former long-time members of the RBC—Isabel Dotson and Janet Cowger and Milton Perlman have passed away within the past month. The RBC extends deepest sympathies to the families and loved ones of these former members.

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