



Goldfinch Gazette

The Newsletter of the Rockingham Bird Club

<http://rockinghambirdclub.com>

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March 2015

FEBRUARY MEETING

DATE: Thursday, March 5, 2015

TIME: 7:00 PM

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

PROGRAM - *Denise Hoodock*

We are pleased that Teta Kain will again be with us for our March program. Teta, a birdwatcher, naturalist, photographer, and speaker from Gloucester County, will be sharing her program entitled "Amazing Argentina". In November 2014, Teta traveled with a Victor Emanuel Nature Tour group to Argentina, South America's second largest country, to explore points south of Buenos Aires, all the way to the city of Ushuaia, the southernmost city in the world. By the end of the trip, the group had tallied over 250 species of birds and 12 native mammals. As always, Teta had her camera poised for action at every turn, capturing a great cross-section of wildlife and the scenic beauty of this exotic country.

Before the meeting, please join us in hosting Teta at Traditions, 625 Mt Clinton Pike in Harrisonburg for dinner at 5:30 PM. Please contact Denise Hoodock at 540-828-2595, 703-216-5499 or dhooock@gmail.com if you'll be joining us for dinner.

PLEA FROM THE PRESIDENT

Needed: *Annual Bird Seed Sale Chair/Coordinator*. Wayne Shifflett has capably carried this responsibility for a couple of years and we need someone to carry on this important Club fundraiser. Please let an officer know if you can help.

MARCH FIELD TRIPS - *Diane Lepkowski*

Lake Shenandoah, Saturday March 14, with Greg Moyers - Join Greg for a walk at the Lake; meet at the parking lot at 9:00 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.

Highland County, Friday March 20, with Mike Shank – *Rescheduled from February* – Target species include Golden and Bald Eagles, and Loggerhead Shrike. Meet at 7 AM at the Bob-a-Rea's parking lot (south side Bob-a-Rea's) across from the Bridgewater Volunteer Fire Department. Bring lunch, snacks and drinks and dress warmly; Highland is often five to ten degrees colder than Harrisonburg. Restroom facilities are limited. Please contact Mike at 540-810-7444 or tallwhiteoak@verizon.net with questions, and if you plan to attend.

Hillandale Walk, Friday March 20, with Tom Mizell - Morning walk? Not this time. Hmmmm, what could this mean? Meet at the parking lots near the Shelter beyond the Children's Playground. This is the next to the last shelter on the left. Time 5:00 PM. **Yes 5:00 PM.** This will allow us to begin the walk in winter and welcome in spring at 6:45 PM. Wonder if there will be any snow on the ground? Hope to see you there at a different time of the day as we enjoy both winter and spring birds.

Edith J. Carrier Arboretum: On behalf of the RBC, Diane Lepkowski will offer a lunch-time birding lecture on March 25, which will be followed by Greg Moyers leading a birding walk on April 22. More information at: <http://www.jmu.edu/arboretum/>

TRIP REPORTS

Lake Shenandoah Trip – Greg Moyers

Eight members of the RBC attended the walk at Lake Shenandoah on Saturday, Jan 31. Weather was cold but sunny and the lake was mostly frozen. The only waterfowl on the open sections was a group of Canada Geese. Mallards and an American Black Duck were seen at the stream near the path across the road from the lake. Bird activity around the lake was fairly slow with highlights being one or two Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers and a couple of Golden-crowned Kinglets. We finished the walk with a tally of 26 species.

BIRD SIGHTINGS:

William Leigh found a **Merlin** behind the RMH ponds on 1/25.

Charles "Zig" Ziegenfus found a **Trumpeter Swan** on a pond along Silver Creek Rd on 1/27. A **Mute Swan** was also present. A Trumpeter Swan, possibly the same bird Zig first spotted, has been seen regularly at Silver Lake since, along with a **Tundra Swan** and Mute Swans.



Trumpeter Swan, Silver Lake

Photo: Diane Lepkowski

Diane Holsinger reported on 2/14, that the **Tundra Swan** had fishing line around its bill.

Marshall Faintich reported a flock of **Common Mergansers** on the river south of Elkton on 1/28. Zig found **Common Mergansers** in this same area, along Power Dam Rd. on 2/14, and Diane Lepkowski and Greg Moyers reported 17 **Common Mergansers** along the same section of river, viewed from Captain Yancey Rd., the following day.

Donna Dobbs reported a **Bald Eagle** at the intersection of Port Republic Rd and Cross Keys Rd on 1/27.

Eve Gaige and Gabriel Mapel reported a pair of **Snow Geese** at the RMH ponds on 1/29.

Matt Gingerich reported a pair of **Rough-legged Hawks** along Rt. 42 south of Broadway on 1/30. Matt also reports that he's had a **Merlin** around his place near Linville and that the **Snow** and **Ross's Geese** were spotted again at Lake Terrace on 1/28.

William Leigh and Dave Wendelken reported a pair of **Short-eared Owls** on Moores Mill Rd on 1/31. The following day, Ken Ranck reported a **Rough-legged Hawk** at the same location.

Ken Hinkle's **American Tree Sparrow** was still around his place in Bridgewater as of 1/31.

Diane Holsinger has had some nice feeder birds at her place in Tenth Legion including **Purple Finches** on multiple occasions, a **Red-breasted Nuthatch** on 2/10, a **Red-headed Woodpecker**, **Pine Siskins**, and around 65 **American Goldfinches** on 2/16, and a **Fox Sparrow** on 2/18. Diane also reported a **Savannah Sparrow** near Broadway on the 18th.

Mae Houff reported two **Red Crossbills** at the 4-way intersection at the top of Shenandoah Mountain (at Briery Branch Gap) on 2/11. Mike Smith reported a **Northern Harrier** south of Elkton.

Zig reported a pair of **Common Goldeneyes** at Lake Shenandoah on 2/14. A NICE find for our Raptor and Waterfowl Count!

Greg Moyers and Diane Lepkowski found a **Ross's Goose**, a pair of **Snow Geese**, and four **Northern Pintails**, along with the usual assortment of ducks at Lake Campbell on 2/15.

Greg Moyers saw a **Black-crowned Night Heron** in the stream that runs under College St. in Dayton on 2/17.

John Shea reported a large flock of **American Pipits** on Oakwood Drive in Bridgewater on Feb. 17.

Gabriel Mapel reported **Hooded Mergansers**, the resident **Eastern Screech-Owl**, an **Eastern Towhee**, and an **Eastern Phoebe** at Wildwood Park on 2/18.

Silver Lake and Lake Campbell have been waterfowl hotspots in February with **Gadwalls**, **Canvasbacks**, **Redheads**, **American Wigeons**, **Scaup**, **Ring-necked Ducks**, **Buffleheads**, and others being seen regularly.



Northern Pintail, North River @ Bridgewater
Photo: Diane Lepkowski

BIRD CLUB BOOK CLUB - *Maureen Gallagher-McLeod*

The B.C.B.C. will meet on Thursday, March 19, 6:30 PM, at the home of Elizabeth Ilhe. After sharing a carry-in meal, we will discuss Part 2 of the Snoring Bird by Bernt Heinrich. If you are interested in joining a monthly book discussion, contact Maureen at famcleod@earthlink.net or 896-9541.

Christmas Bird Count Report – *Bill Benish*

The Rockingham Bird Club celebrated the 115th Christmas Bird Count on December 20, 2014, covering the CBC circle “VARC” once again, as the Club has since about 1951. 35 participants nearly matched our high of 36.

We had coverage from around 5AM to 6 PM, with a record-high 84.5 hours. Another high of 28 nocturnal hours paid off with a record four-owl finding of Barred, Barn, Great-Horned and Eastern Screech. Even with a couple of big misses, we racked up 75 species and 11,579 individuals; 78 in 2010 remains our high count for species.

Gabriel Mapel included 8 Northern Pintails based on photos by Ron Shearer at Wildwood Park in Bridgewater. Other notable sightings included Ruffed Grouse (by the Kevin Shank family at Union Springs Dam), Redhead, Ring-necked Duck, Northern Harrier, Peregrine Falcon, Loggerhead Shrike, Merlin, and two Barn Owls.

Misses:

Karen Shank saw a Green Heron just six days prior to count day. This would have been a species record, but was unfortunately outside of “count week” – the three days before and after count day.

Other frequently expected, but missed species included: American Wigeon, Killdeer, Black-capped Chickadee, Brown-headed Cowbird and Common Grackle.

Another report of interest was a possible Pine Warbler along the N. River in Bridgewater, but we conservatively decided that we could not confirm the sighting. We have only had that species once previously, in 2002.

Several All Time High (ATH) and matching records:

Barn Owl: 2

Pileated Woodpecker: 29 - previously 18 in CBC 95;

Great Horned Owl: tie at 7 w/ CBC 112;

Blue Jay: 279 -- previously 274 on 96th Count;

N. Cardinal: 231-- previously 216 on 83rd Count;

Red-bellied Woodpecker: 70 -- previously 63 on 107th Count;

Peregrine Falcon: tie at 1 with 105th, 108th, 113th;

Am. Kestrel: 58, previously 47 for 113th & 114th;

Red-shouldered Hawk: 3

Cooper's Hawk: 12 , ties a couple of prior counts

E. Towhee: 5 -- tied with 70th .

Count week (cw) birds included:

Cedar Waxwing, Purple Finch and Eurasian Collared-Dove.

20 of this year's total 75 species were identified in only one area as follows.

Area 1 led by Clair Mellinger with Debbie Harrison and Joe Shank: Ring-necked Duck and Red-winged Blackbird

Area 2 led by Ken Ranck with Mike Smith, Judi Breeden and Randy Cline: Redhead, Peregrine Falcon

Area 3 is currently split along E/W of Dry River with Charles "Zig" Ziegenfus leading the West with Annie, Karen, and Everette Shank; and Gabriel Mapel leading the East with Mary Mapel: Am. Green-winged Teal, Merlin, Barred Owl, Am. Pipit, Savannah Sparrow and Swamp Sparrow

Area 4 led, by Bob Eggleston in two groups with Tom Mizell, Don Perkuchin and Dan Perkuchin and another group of Fletcher Bingham, Denise Hoodock and Fred Swartz: N. Shoveler, N. Pintail, E. Screech Owl, **Loggerhead Shrike**, Fish Crow, Ruby-crowned Kinglet and Pine Siskin (courtesy of feeder watcher Robyn Puffenbarger)

Area 5 led by William Leigh with Greg Moyers, Diane Lepkowski, Kathy Byers, Lauren Jefferson, Al Wolf, Lisa Perry, John Shea and additional contribution by Mike Shank: Field Sparrow and E. Meadowlark

Area 6 led by Bill Benish with great help from a mentor of mine - Larry Rohr of Richmond and Rudy and Terri Tucker: Ruffed Grouse (kudos to the Kevin Shank family at the Union Springs Dam area for noting birds around their home)

28 species were found in 5 or all 6 areas.

To review web-based data: <http://www.audubon.org/conservation/science/christmas-bird-count>

To sign-up to receive American Birds online and to find out more about Audubon's Citizen Science programs: <http://www.audubon.org/citizenscience>

Thanks to all participants, leaders and landowners for another great year!

Respectfully,

Bill Benish, CBC Compiler, VARC and Member-at-large
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“Birds of the Burg” - beginning March 7 – Anne Nielsen

Most of us who have children or grandchildren have had the great pleasure of sharing our love of birds and their environs with them. They learn so quickly when they are young, and I believe the experience runs deep. Some of you have also had the experience of mentoring children, who are not your own; that must be truly an exquisite satisfaction, as you see them carry that learning forward in new and previously unconsidered ways.

Richard Louv, in his 2006 book “Last Child in the Woods” put it this way: “Passion is lifted from the earth itself by the muddy hands of the young; it travels along grass-stained sleeves to the heart. If we are going to save environmentalism and the environment, we must also save an endangered indicator species: the child in nature.” Those of us who read the book and sucked the truth of it right into our marrow have been searching for some way to help children escape the electronic age back into the natural world. I am so thankful that members of the Rockingham Bird Club are going to help us try to do that.

About a year ago, Ralph Grove of the local chapter of the Sierra Club began “family-friendly bird walks” in Hillandale Park. He used his extensive email list and brought forth a whole batch of retired folks like me. No kids. About six months ago, I asked the bird club for volunteers to help get children out with the birds, and Kathy Byers volunteered on the spot to lead such trips. A few others, including our local hero, Tom Mizell, have offered to help. Ralph Grove will be there also with his vast experience outdoors and in conservation. And me.

So we begin! On the first Saturdays of March, April and May from 8:30 AM – 10:30 AM, starting from Shelter #12 at Hillandale Park in Harrisonburg, we’ll hope that our many messages found a home, and we have children (under 18 must be accompanied by an adult—Sierra rule) with us on the trail. We’ll begin in March while the trees are still bare. There will be fewer birds, but they’ll be easier to see for those who may just be learning how to use binoculars. In April we’ll get a touch of spring and the early migrants, and in May we may expect the full flood of birds to be coming through. We think it’s going to be marvelous.

I am nothing if not an optimist, so I’m sure some of you will help, and will enjoy the experience, as I know I will. Bring your grandchildren too. And spare binoculars. Thanks!

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GOLDFINCH GAZETTE - Denise Hoodock