



Goldfinch Gazette

The Newsletter of the Rockingham Bird Club

<http://rockinghambirdclub.com>

Volume XLIII

Number 7

March 2018

MARCH MEETING

DATE: Thursday, March 1, 2018

TIME: 7:00 PM

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

PROGRAM: The Study of Bird Behavior with Dr. Kim Bolyard

We have all seen male robins fluttering at each other in spring, is this a fight? We have seen the cardinal male offer the female a seed, is that courtship? All of us make hundreds of observations of bird behavior as we bird watch, but what does it mean to study animal behaviors in the science of ethology? Dr. Kim Bolyard teaches animal behavior at Bridgewater College and is going to take us on a journey into how a scientist studies behavior and some of the incredible things birds do. Her background includes studies on territoriality and aggression in threespine stickleback fish, and now impacts of mercury on fish behavior. Join us for this unique opportunity to learn more about the science of animal behavior and another way to decode and understand the amazing array of bird actions we see in birds.

Join us for dinner with Kim before the meeting: Bella Luna, 80 West Water Street, Harrisonburg, VA 22801 at 5:30 PM. Please contact Robyn Puffenbarger, 540-908-7335 or rpuffenb@bridgewater.edu, in advance if you plan to attend.

MARCH FIELD TRIPS - *Diane Lepkowski*

Members and guests are welcome on all field trips. Minors under the age of 18 must be accompanied by a parent or adult who is responsible for the minor.

American Woodcocks at Big Meadows, Saturday March 31, with Diane Lepkowski: Meet in Shenandoah National Park at Big Meadows' Byrd Visitor Center at 4:45 for a hike through Story of the Forest trail, then dine at the Wayside Restaurant or snack on your pack-your-own meal. (Arrive early to peruse the Visitor Center's wonderful displays and shop! It closes at 5 PM.) We'll meet again around 7:00 PM near the Visitor Center to head down to the Meadow, where we'll try for displaying woodcocks after sundown (around 7:35 PM). Bring water, flashlight and dress warmly! (Mountain temps can be 10 degrees colder than in the Valley.) Contact Diane Lepkowski if you plan to attend or wish to carpool. (dianelep1@yahoo.com or 540-432-1047) (SNP Entrance pass or fee applies.)

Hillandale Monthly Walk, Tuesday, March 20: Meet at the Children's Playground parking lot at 11 AM. Once again we will have the opportunity to enjoy both Winter and Spring birds all on the same day. Spring arrives at 12:15 PM.

TRIP REPORTS

Raptor and Waterfowl Count, February 17, 2018 – *Diane Lepkowski*

Nineteen participants logged 44+ total hours, covering nearly 500 miles of Rockingham & Harrisonburg for our annual Raptor and Waterfowl Count. Temperatures hovered between 30- 35 degrees F, with snow beginning around noon before changing to a wintry mix. The Club has held this count annually, usually in mid-February, since 1998 (with four years missed).

Thirty eight species were tallied. We had two first-ever Count species: Barn Owl (2) and our long-visiting female Long-tailed Duck. All other owls were missed. Three species were found only once prior: Greater White-fronted Goose (1), White-winged Scoter (1) and Merlin (2 – a new high count).

Waterfowl highlights included Tundra Swans (2) on the South River and a nice assortment of ducks including Wood Duck; American Black Duck; Northern Shoveler; Northern Pintail; Green-winged Teal; Redhead; Ring-necked & Ruddy Ducks; Bufflehead; Lesser Scaup; and Hooded & Common Mergansers. We set new records for: Wood Duck (11, past record 6), Greed-winged Teal (51, former record 36), Common Merganser (56, previously 46 – last year), and Lesser Scaup (9, up from 8). Shorebirds were Killdeer and Wilson's Snipe. Interestingly, no Common Mergansers were found in the Count's first 16 years until beginning in 2014. Numbers have climbed steadily since (consecutively from 2014: 10, 13, 31, 46 and 56 this year). Most notable species for low numbers was Canada Goose, with the second-to-lowest record of 745 (low was 686 in 2012, highs were 2,404 in 2005 & 2,231 in 2006. Most other years ranged around 1,100-1,200).

Raptors, including vultures and Ravens set a few new records in addition to our new species (Barn Owl) and the two Merlins mentioned above. Common Ravens – new high of 15 (up from 11 last year) and Cooper's Hawk, 6 (vs. 3 previously). The most noteworthy "Species of the Year" in terms of increase was Red-shouldered Hawk. A new high count of **23** well-surpassed the prior high of just 4! As with Common Mergansers, NO Red-shoulders were logged in the Count's early years. Our first record was four individuals in 2007 followed by several years of just one. Then in 2015-2017: 3, 3 & 4. This year, Red-shoulders were found in every sector, with the highest numbers reported in the northwest with 8 birds (Rt. 33 north and west of Rt. 11) and the County's east side with 7 (east of the South River). Other sectors reported 1-3 individuals each.

Hillandale Park/Ridge Lodge – *Kathy Byers*

Nine members met Kathy Byers at her home on Ridge Road in Harrisonburg on Monday, February 12th. The first hour was spent enjoying coffee and muffins, socializing, and birding from the windows and porch. In addition to the healthy squirrel population, 18 species were seen or heard. These included the usual suspects such as Northern Cardinal, White-throated Sparrow, White-breasted Nuthatch and Red-bellied Woodpecker. A pair of Northern Flickers was seen and a Song Sparrow was heard.

As the group gathered to walk to the park, the drizzle became rain, so we hung out on the patio a bit longer. There was some discussion of going back inside and making another pot of coffee, but the group final headed to the park. We noted a great many robins in the neighborhood. Five species of

birds were added in the park, including Mallard and Turkey Vulture. Nice views of a perched Red-tailed Hawk were appreciated.

Kathy was surprised to have a pair of Hairy Woodpeckers sharing the suet in the front yard with a pair of Downy Woodpeckers shortly after everyone had headed home. It was such a great opportunity to see the differences in the two species, and no one else was there to see it. Oh well, maybe next year!

P.S. Kathy saw a Brown Creeper in her neighborhood the very next day!

BIRD SIGHTINGS

The **Long-tailed Duck** at Silver Lake has continued through February and has been joined by **Lesser Scaup, Redheads, Northern Pintails, Bufflehead, American Coots, American Black Ducks,** and **Gadwall.**

The **Lapland Longspurs** originally reported by Gabriel Mapel and Vic Laubach in mid-January at Nicholson Rd continued at the same location through February with reports from multiple birders including Gabriel, Baxter Beamer, Mike Smith, Greg Moyers, Diane Lepkowski, and William Leigh.

Matt Gingerich reported a **Golden Eagle** on Shenandoah Mtn on Jan. 22.

Tom Mizell reported a **Merlin** feeding on “something with bird feet” on Airport Rd on Jan. 23.

Gabriel Mapel and Baxter Beamer reported a **Ruffed Grouse** on Briery Branch Rd on Jan. 24 and found six **Red Crossbills** at the usual spot at the top of the mountain.

William Leigh reported a **Ross’s Goose** at the Merck marsh along Rt. 340 south of Elkton on Jan. 27. Another, or the same, **Ross’s Goose** moved around between the Fort Lynne Rd pond, Lake Terrace, and the Technology Park ponds north of Harrisonburg the last few days of January and into the first part of February.

Greg Moyers reported two **Fox Sparrows, Hermit Thrush, Winter Wren,** and **Yellow-rumped Warbler** at Lake Shenandoah on Jan. 28.

Mike Smith had several good yard birds at his place east of Elkton in late January including **Brown Creeper, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Chipping Sparrow, Hermit Thrush, Cedar Waxwing,** and **Pine Warbler.** Mike reports that the **Pine Warblers** and **Brown Creeper** have continued coming to his suet feeder through February. Mike also reported **Snow Goose, Red-shouldered Hawk,** and **Northern Harrier** sightings in the eastern part of the county earlier in January.

Jonathan Todd reported a **Red-shouldered Hawk, Hermit Thrush,** and four **Northern Pintails** at Lake Shenandoah on Feb. 2 and added **Winter Wren** and **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** on Feb. 5.

Diane Lepkowski and Greg Moyers reported five **Pine Siskins** and a **Red Crossbill** at Briery Branch Gap on Feb. 3.

Diane Lepkowski reported a **Merlin** on Osceola Springs Rd on Feb. 4.

Matt Gingerich reported a **Long-tailed Duck** at Lake Terrace on Feb. 7.

Jonathan Todd reported a **Merlin** on Chrisman Rd on Feb. 11.

Diane Holsinger found a **White-winged Scoter** at Silver Lake on Feb. 13. The bird continues to be reported as of this writing.

Jonathan Todd reported a **Horned Grebe** and five **Northern Pintails** at Lake Shenandoah and a possible **Merlin** on Port Republic Rd on Feb. 14.

Dave Boltz and Diane Holsinger independently reported that three **Ross's Geese** flew in to Silver Lake during the early afternoon of Feb. 15.

Herb Myers reported a **Bald Eagle** near Rawley Springs on Feb. 15.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Technical Help Needed!

Kathy Byers would like to work on making it possible to place bird seed sale orders online this year. Please contact her if you feel you could help with the "tech" side of this or have any suggestions for this project. Kathy Byers - kkbyers77@gmail.com, 540-820-6517.

Help and Field Trip Leaders needed: Virginia Society of Ornithology (VSO) Annual Meeting, Friday May 18 - Sunday May 20. The meeting will be held at Hotel Madison in Harrisonburg this year. While the VSO is officially hosting the meeting, they've asked for local help leading field trips and also manning the registration tables on Friday. Please let a RBC Board member know if you'd like to help, and be ready for Board members to reach out to those of you we know are familiar with our local field trip sites!

Project Feeder Watch 2017-2018, NOW through Friday, April 13: Consider participating! Contribute your feeder observations to this annual citizen science project. New participants will be able to log into online data entry and set up their count site on November 1. The last day to start a two-day count is Thursday, April 12. Information at: <https://feederwatch.org/>

Bird Club Book Club

March 22: *H Is for Hawk*; April 29: *The Genius of Birds*; May 24: *Silent Spring*; June 28: *Penguin Lessons*; July 26: *Spirals in Time*; August 23: *America's Other Audubon*; September 27: *Coyote America*; October 25: *Birding without Borders*.

We welcome new members. Questions: Please call Elizabeth Ihle (540-421-5257) or email her at eliza51@aol.com.

Bluebird Trail – Debbie Harrison

The Rockingham Bird Club, with the help and support of the Rockingham County Fair Association, has established a 'Bluebird Trail' of nest boxes at the Rockingham Fair Grounds and there are more requests to establish & monitor more trails. Any Trail needs MONITORS to check the boxes on a weekly basis (April thru August) which takes about 1 hour.

People interested in volunteering **1 HOUR per MONTH**, will be joining a monitoring team (including mentoring) & given an orientation on nest box monitoring and the protocol used for collecting and reporting data. If you have a home nest box (or trail) that you monitor, you can register your trail as well. A sign-up sheet will be available at the club meeting, or contact Debbie at 540-856-3058 woodshar@aol.com.

ARTICLE VI (Annual Elections)

Section 1. At the March club meeting, the Executive Committee will name a Nominating Committee of three members. The immediate past President will be the Chairman of the Nominating Committee. It will be the duty of the Nominating Committee to prepare a slate of one nominee for each office described in Article IV, Section 1 of the Constitution, plus two members – at – large. This committee shall present a report to the membership at the May meeting. Nominees will be selected from the roster of members in good standing.

Please help by volunteering to be on the Nominations Committee:

1. Debbie Harrison, chair
2. _____
3. _____

Generally, members of the Nominations Committee do NOT run for office.

Please indicate your willingness to serve as:

One-year terms:

President

VP – Programs

VP – Field trips

Secretary

Treasurer

Two-year terms (with 1 successive term allowed):

2 Members-at-Large

(Our current Members-at-Large are: Tom Lord, through June 2018 & eligible to serve again, and Bill Benish, through June 2018 & **ineligible** to serve again.)

Upcoming Meeting Dates and Speakers

April 5, 2018 - Mark Adams on butterflies

May 3, 2018 - Jon Kastendiek on bird intelligence

June 7, 2018 - Greg Myers and Diane Lepkowski on our birds from the past year



NAME TAGS – Remember to please find your name tag on the back table and wear for the duration of the meeting. Please return it after the meeting. Thanks!

Rockingham Bird Club
151 Deer Lick Lane
Broadway, VA 22815



PRESIDENT: Debbie Harrison
151 Deer Lick Lane
Broadway, VA 22815
Phone - 540-856-3058

VICE PRESIDENT: PROGRAMS - Robyn Puffenbarger

VICE PRESIDENT: FIELD TRIPS - Diane Lepkowski

SECRETARY: Martha Faw

TREASURER: Steve White - 540-833-6726

MEMBERS AT LARGE: Bill Benish & Tom Lord

GOLDFINCH GAZETTE - Denise Hoodock

EMAIL: info@rockinghambirdclub.com



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