



Goldfinch Gazette

The Newsletter of the Rockingham Bird

<http://rockinghambirdclub.com>

Volume XXXIX

Number 9

May 2014

MAY MEETING

DATE: Thursday, May 1, 2014

TIME: 7:00 PM

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

PROGRAM, *Elizabeth Ihle*

Our bird club is fortunate to have Dr. William Leaning of Earlysville return to us, this time with a program called "New Zealand: the Living Land." We shall learn about the flora and fauna of Dr. Leaning's native country. When first discovered over 800 years ago, New Zealand had over 200 species of birds. However, within 100 years of human arrival with dogs, rats, and fire more than 50 of these would be extinct. However, today New Zealand is a world leader in bringing back species from the brink. More than 30% of New Zealand's land has been set aside as National Parks, Reserves, or special Heritage Sites to preserve the country's ecological uniqueness. A retired veterinarian, Dr. Leaning is a nature photographer and the keeper of a seventeen acre home site certified by the National Wildlife Federation. We shall be meeting at 7 PM at Detweiler Auditorium at VMRC.

Beforehand, we shall be meeting Dr. Leaning and his wife at Taste of Thai, 919 South High Street, for dinner at 5:30. If you are able to join us, please call Gloria Crump at 234-9300 or 820-9600 or email her at gcrump@comcast.net.

MAY FIELD TRIPS, *Diane Lepkowski*

Edith J. Carrier Arboretum, Saturday May 3, with Tom Lord: Meet at the parking lot near the main pond at 8:00 AM. Bring snacks if you wish; the walk will end by noon. Please contact Tom if you plan to attend (540-828-1266.)

Shenandoah National Park Lawn Chair Birding Thursday May 8, with Tom Mizell:

Meet at 7:30 AM at the Kohl's parking lot (E. Market St, Harrisonburg.) Please contact Tom if you plan to attend (540-828-6059.)

Hillendale Park -- Wednesday May 14, with Tom Mizell: Meet at the children's playground parking lot at 8:00 AM.

"Harrison Haven," Saturday May 17, 8:00 A.M., with Debbie Harrison: Debbie will again host RBC members at her home (between Broadway & Orkney Springs) for a bird walk/ feeder watch. Sit on the porch & watch for hummingbirds & goldfinches at the feeders or search the treetops for warblers and more. The walk will meander thru hardwood forest, by a stream, thru a field by the pond and also thru pine woods. **Please RSVP to Debbie at 540-856-3058 or woodshar@aol.com** if you plan to attend, and for directions. If you'd like to carpool from Harrisonburg, she'll try to connect you with other attendees (there's plenty of parking space).

Shenandoah National Park, Sunday May 18, with Mike Smith: Mike will lead this trip, where we'll check for warblers, migrants, and high elevation breeders including Scarlet Tanager and Rose-breasted Grosbeak. Stops will include a few overlooks and the Pocosin Cabin/ Fire Road area. **Bring snack, water, and lunch if you wish** (we may finish around lunch time at South River Picnic area.) **Please contact Mike at 540-298-1913 with questions and if you plan to attend. Meet at 8:00 A.M. at the Elkton Food Lion parking lot** (Rt. 33, west of Elkton), just as you pass Burger King and enter the lot. There is an entrance fee for the Park; it's expected some of us will have annual passes, but the entrance fee will apply to any vehicles w/o a pass-carrying passenger.

West Virginia Breeding Bird Atlas Field Trip, Saturday May 31, with Lisa Perry:

We will take a birding trip across the State line, to eastern West Virginia (eastern Pendleton County, east and north of Sugar Grove), to conduct a census-style count of every species we can find (sort of like a Christmas Bird Count.) This will be our contribution to data collection for this final season for the West Virginia breeding bird atlas study. We will **meet at the Waterman Square parking lot (West Market St just west of Waterman Drive) at 7:45 A.M.** Bring water, snacks, and lunch. We'll plan to return by late afternoon. **Please contact Lisa at koerner.lisa@gmail.com or 540-455-3601 if you plan to attend.**

TRIP REPORTS

Lake Shenandoah, Greg Moyers: Fifteen members and guests of the RBC attended the walk at Lake Shenandoah on March 8. It was a gorgeous morning and the birds were very cooperative. A few of the highlights on and above land were Yellow-rumped Warbler, Cooper's Hawk, Chipping Sparrow, and Yellow-bellied Sapsucker. Most of the highlights were found floating on the lake. Five Red-necked Grebes were seen. One breeding-plumaged bird popped up out of the water right in front of us as we approached the pine woods. We also had nice views of seven Red-breasted Mergansers and a female Common Goldeneye. As we stood on the dam, a nice-sized flock of ducks landed on the water. We

counted 36 Ring-necked Ducks and a pair of Lesser Scaup. Other waterfowl on the lake included a Pied-billed Grebe and four American Coots.

As the group dwindled, we decided to finish at Lake Campbell. Here we added several more species of waterfowl. Highlights were eight Canvasbacks, nine more Red-breasted Mergansers, most of which were adult males, Buffleheads, American Wigeons, Greater Scaup, American Coots, and 81 Ring-necked Ducks! On the way back to the cars, we got nice looks at a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker. We ended the walk with just shy of 50 species.

Edith J. Carrier Arboretum at JMU – Greg Moyers: On Saturday, April 5, 11 people attended the bird walk at the Edith J. Carrier Arboretum at JMU. Highlights of the walk included a Cooper’s Hawk, a pair of Brown Creepers, Eastern Phoebe, Field Sparrow, and a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker.

Madison Run Fire Road Walk – Greg Moyers: Twelve members of the RBC attended the walk at the Madison Run Fire Road on April 12. The weather was ideal and the birds made a fine showing. At the parking area we had our first Louisiana Waterthrushes of the day. Shortly thereafter, we heard a Black-and-White Warbler. We ran into a nice group of birds a bit farther up the road. Here we got good looks at Pine Warblers, Blue-Headed Vireos, Blue-Gray Gnatcatcher, and, after much searching, finally got our binoculars on a Black-and-White Warbler. An early Ovenbird also belted out its song and a few Broad-Winged Hawks circled overhead. We then watched and listened to three more Louisiana Waterthrushes along the stream below us. As we turned to head back down the road, we heard a pair of Barred Owls calling repeatedly. On the way out, we added a pair of Pileated Woodpeckers, a Yellow-Bellied Sapsucker, and Bob Eggleston was lucky enough to see a male Wood Duck as he awaited the rest of the group near the parking area. The trip concluded with around 23 species seen and/or heard.



White-eyed Vireo, Hillandale Park RBC walk, April 17 *Photo: Diane Lepkowski*

Hillandale Park Walk – Tom Mizell: 26 Fahrenheit at 8:00 AM. Is it really April 16, 2014? Yes cold air and sunshine greeted 11 members of the Rockingham Bird Club on April 16, 2014 at Hillandale Park at 8:00 AM. We had anticipated warmer conditions but once again we found ourselves as part of a chilly scene as we sought our gloves, warm jackets and stocking caps and other winter survival gear before crossing the bridge. While we gathered at the parking lot I heard one member say. "Let's get moving so we can warm up!" Compiling a quick wish list including Fox Sparrow, Rose Breasted Grosbeak, Catbird, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher and Purple Finch we "got moving" and set out for the bridge.

Before we crossed the stream a growing color full list included Blue Jay, Northern Cardinal, Rousful-sided Towhee, Carolina Chickadee, Mallards and White-throated Sparrows sporting that rich mustard yellow. The song of the Carolina Wren, Tufted Titmouse, Cardinal and Jay filled the frigid air. The Canada Goose "honk honk" at the Golf Course contrasted with Mourning Dove as they softly "cooed". White-breasted Nuthatches were vocal as well. We were pleased (actually excited) to find a White-eyed Vireo along the northwest part of the trail around 8:30 AM. (We found one here last year a month later.) All of us were afforded good viewing of this very cooperative bird as it flitted about and perched often near us and at eye level. More excitement as a Blue-gray Gnatcatcher and Ruby-Crowned Kinglet competed for our attention. The Kinglet's display of the ruby crown was well received by the onlookers. We enjoyed the return of the Brown Thrasher as one flew over the stream. By 9:15 we listed 24 species as we crossed the northernmost pedestrian bridge. We noted that there were spots of "ice" on the bridge so the temperature had not risen too much. As a matter of fact earlier radio reports mentioned that the wind chill was on the order of 21 F when our walk began. Brrrrrrh!

A Hermit Thrush was seen by some of the group near the main shelter. Prior to completing the first loop Fletcher Bingham spotted a Swamp Sparrow in the woods where Northern Flickers abounded. About 150 yards southeast of the Cabin pedestrian bridge a House Wren sang. Our walk concluded three hours from the start with American Bluebirds and a Red-tailed Hawk flying high over the golf course. 30 Species were observed this fine "crisp" day. It is noted that the temperature had risen to 36 F.

Bottom line: "COLD", "Warblers yet to arrive in full force", and one wish list bird found. Let's try to find the warblers again. Hope to see you Wednesday May 14, 2014 at Hillandale. Bring a guest.

PS. We were pleased to learn that for one of today's group this was their first group bird walk ever! They saw at least a hand full of species that they did not recall ever seeing before this chilly 16 April day.

Bridgewater Parks – Tom Mizell: On 22 April, 14 members of the Rockingham Bird Club began the morning at Wildwood Park. The group birded three of the parks in Bridgewater. The morning was overcast and the temperature at the 8:00 AM was in the mid 40s. Very mild compared to the Hillandale walk just six days earlier.

Wish list birds included Scarlet Tanager, Wood Duck, Rusty Blackbird and Winter Wren. We introduced ourselves near the dam at Wildwood Park and by that time 10 species had been observed in and around the parking lot. Three Wood ducks took flight to the east as the Wildwood walk got underway. A few Canada Geese and a couple Mallards under the watchful care of "Mother Goose" greeted us near the suspension bridge. Downy and Red-bellied Woodpeckers were working in the sycamores as a Northern Flicker called from loop trail area. The Carolina Wren's call sounded off the river bluff along with Tufted Titmouse and Northern Cardinal. At the small pool just west of the beginning of the trail a Towhee preened and fluffed after taking a bath. Most of us later got to see it as it perched quite high in a Poplar Tree.

Dan Perkuchin spied a Muskrat in the river. The Muskrat and the call of a Phoebe somewhere along the water's edge drew some of the group off the gravel trail to stream side. Peering at the bluff we found Yellow-rumped Warblers across the river and a pair of Blue-gray Gnatcatchers flew back and forth a couple times across the river. These were the first of numerous Gnat catchers and Yellow-rumped Warblers that we saw at our three park stops. At the river's bend Karen Shank heard a Yellow Warbler and shortly thereafter she spotted it and some of us enjoyed fairly good views. After about an hour walk at Wildwood we set out for the Cooks Creek Arboretum as a Song Sparrow and House Sparrow waved goodbye from the parking lot's wooden board fence. We tallied 28 species at this initial stop at Wildwood that also included Chickadees, Blue Jays, Brown Thrasher, and both Fish Crow and Pileated Woodpecker flyovers.

As the car pool filled the parking lot at the Arboretum, and before the trailing passengers got out of our cars, our advanced birders directed our attention to a Cooper's Hawk nest not too far from the parking lot. The entire group got very good looks at the Cooper's Hawk pair both on the nest and in flight. The Cooper's Hawks seemed oblivious to the weed eating and lawn mowing going on at what some would consider a high decibel level just below their nest tree. Undaunted by that noise along with recurrent gunfire from a nearby farm the bold birders intent on birding walked undaunted along the loop trail. We added Red-winged Blackbirds, Mockingbird, Rock Pigeon and Field Sparrow. At the north end of the Arboretum a Blue-headed Vireo was found and most of the group was able to enjoy seeing the return of this distinguished looking migrant. We added 7 new species for the morning at the Arboretum.

By now it was 10:50 AM and we proceeded to Sandy Bottom along the river just south of the Bridgewater Par 3 Golf course. Along the river we added Chipping Sparrow, American Crow, Cowbird, Junco, and Raven. It is quite likely that we saw a couple Broad-winged Hawks flying northward but their flight quite high overhead was not conducive for a sure ID. A Field Sparrow chimed in shortly before noon. We enjoyed a couple of Juncos along the roadside and a few moments later they drew our attention again as they ascended into some tree tops. One in our group likened the Junco's movement/appearance in the treetops to "Creeping Juncos." Some of us were intrigued by their tree top antics and we smiled at that impromptu title. So, 5 new species at Sandy Bottom.

Back to Wildwood for lunch. By now most of the group departed for other places and their homes. However, three of us gathered at the Wildwood Park riverside where we earlier

encountered the first Blue-gray Gnat catchers. Walt Daggett joined us for lunch and during our relaxing meal and a bit thereafter we added Turkey Vulture, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Belted Kingfisher and Red-tailed Hawk. After the meal Don Perkuchin spotted a mink across the river complete with what appeared to be a carp clinched in its mouth. As the heavily laden mink scurried along the bank it tumbled a couple feet back into the water and splashed a bit. The resourceful mink emerged upon the bank again complete with the fish before it disappeared into the recesses of the rock outcrop. About 10 minutes later two mink emerged on the bluff in that same general area and a short chase took place.

It was a fine morning in the parks of Bridgewater. We completed our list of 45 species for this Earth Day of 2014. Thanks to all that joined us for an enjoyable and memorable time.

BIRD SIGHTINGS:

On March 17, Mike Smith saw 12 **Fox Sparrows** near his feeders.

On March 27, Charles “Zig” Ziegenfus and his ornithology class found a **Greater Yellowlegs**, 11 **Wood Ducks**, **Ring-necked Ducks**, **American Pipits**, **Northern Shovelers**, **Green –winged Teal**, and a **Savannah Sparrow** at the pond across from the Green Valley Book Fair. Ken Ranck also reported about a dozen **Wood Ducks** at this site the same evening.

Dan and Don Perkuchin saw four **Wilson’s Snipes** at the Nazarene Church Rd wetland on March 28. Diane Holsinger reported an **Osprey** at Lake Shenandoah on the same date.

On March 29, Gabriel Mapel saw a **Peregrine Falcon** at Lake Shenandoah. He also found a few **Rusty Blackbirds** throughout the county. Mike Smith saw a FOY pine warbler.

Don Perkuchin had a **Bald Eagle** fly over while he watched the **White-Winged Scoter** at the RMH ponds on April 2. The scoter was last reported on April 13. Also on the 2nd, Zig and his class found a **Great Egret** along Mossy Creek Rd and **Vesper** and **Savannah Sparrows** on Faughts Rd.

On April 1 & 3, Mike Smith saw 2 **Fox Sparrows** and heard a **Louisiana Waterthrush**.

April 3 was a good day to be at Lake Shenandoah. Independent reports from Zig, Diane Holsinger, and Diane Lepkowski documented 40 **Wood Ducks**, two **Bonaparte’s Gulls**, 17 **Horned Grebes**, 5 **Red-necked Grebes**, 4 **Pied-billed Grebes**, a **Great Egret**, **Ruddy Duck**, **Hooded Mergansers**, **Redheads**, **Gadwalls**, **Buffleheads**, **Double-crested Cormorant**, **Red-breasted Mergansers**, **Osprey**, and a **Brown Thrasher**.

William Leigh reported **Solitary** and **Pectoral Sandpipers** and **Greater** and **Lesser Yellowlegs** at the pond across from the Green Valley Book Fair on April 3. Zig and his class had seen many of these birds the previous day.

On April 6, Dave Wendelken counted 89 **Bonaparte's Gulls** at Lake Shenandoah. Diane Lepkowski had reported 12 gulls earlier in the morning. Diane reported a **Common Merganser** and **Ruddy Ducks** at the lake on April 7.

Ken Hinkle had a **Hooded Merganser** at Leonard's Pond and **Northern Shovelers** and **Green-winged Teal** on the pond near the electric coop on Dinkel Avenue on the 7th.

Diane Lepkowski found a **Blue-gray Gnatcatcher** at Hillandale Park on April 8. Diane saw a **Common Loon**, a **Blue-winged Teal**, and five **Double-crested Cormorants** at Lake Shenandoah on April 9.

Gabriel Mapel saw a **Great Egret** at Lake Campbell on April 10. Mike Smith reported seeing a **Sapsucker** at the suet and a **Gnatcatcher**.

Kevin Shank reported hearing **Whip-Poor-Wills** at Union Springs on April 12. He also had his first **Broad-Winged Hawk** of the season the same day. John Shea had a **Green Heron** at Lake Shenandoah the same day.

Also on April 12, Diane Lepkowski and William Leigh counted 13 **Lesser** and one **Greater Yellowlegs** at the pond across from the Green Valley Book Fair.

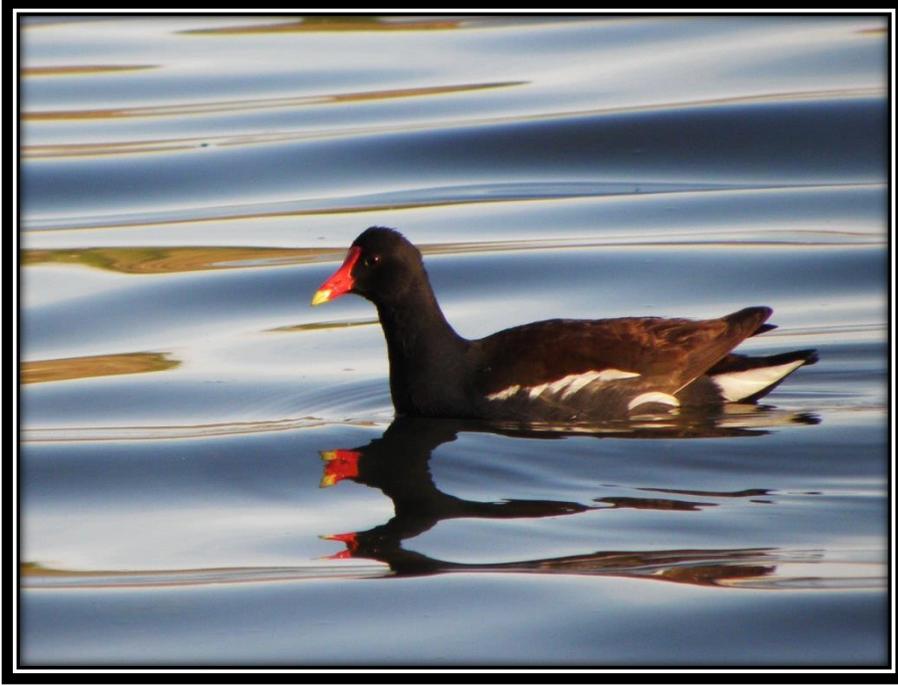
On April 13th William Leigh, Greg Moyers, and Diane Lepkowski saw **Blackburnian Warblers**, **Black-throated Green Warblers**, **Pine Warblers**, a **Black-and-white Warbler**, and a **Common Loon** at Switzer Dam. William Leigh found a **Great Egret** at the Nazarene Church Rd wetland that afternoon. Also on April 13, Diane Lepkowski saw a **Black-Crowned Night-Heron** at Lake Shenandoah.

Tom Lord saw a **Northern Harrier** near Custer Rd on April 13. Also, on the 13th, Ken Hinkle and Tom Mizell found a couple of **Hermit Thrushes** at Paul State forest. Ken and Harold Burkholder heard a **Whip-Poor-Will** at Hone Quarry the same evening.

William Leigh found two **Vesper Sparrows** along Grist Mill Rd on April 14. The following **Whip-Poor-Wills**, **American Woodcocks**, and a **Barred Owl** at Slate Lick fields. Also on April 14, Kevin Shank's sons heard a **Chuck Will's Widow** at Union Springs.

Diane Lepkowski and Greg Moyers saw four **Red-Crossbills** at the Reddish Knob/Bother Knob crossroads on Shenandoah Mountain on April 19. They also heard a **Red-breasted Nuthatch** along the road toward Bother Knob.

William Leigh found a **Common Gallinule** at Lake Shenandoah on April 17. Mike Smith reported a **Hairy Woodpecker** at a suet feeder.



Common Gallinule, Lake Shenandoah, April 20

Photo: Greg Moyers

Gabriel Mapel and Vic Laubach added **Worm-eating Warbler** to the list of Switzer Dam warblers on April 19. They also saw a **Ruffed Grouse** and a **Wild Turkey** at Switzer. They reported hearing a very early **Acadian Flycatcher** at Lake Shenandoah and saw a **Least Sandpiper** at the Green Valley Book Fair pond.

Greg Moyers and Diane Lepkowski found a **Yellow-throated Vireo** at the Swift Run Gap Overlook on Skyline Drive on April 21, and an **American Redstart** at Pocosin Cabin. Also on the 21st, Ken Ranck reported the first **Purple Finch** of the season at his feeder in Mt. Crawford and John Todd reported that at least four Black-Crowned Night-Herons have returned to the Newman Lake area at JMU.



Charles "Zig" Ziegenfus with Wood Thrush for banding
Rockingham Co., April 18, 2014 *Photo: Susan Eckworth*

20th ANNUAL PURPLE MARTIN FIELD DAY: Saturday, June 21, 2014, 10:00 AM
at the farm of Merle and Lance Wood in Louisa County (between Richmond and Charlottesville.) If you are interested in establishing or expanding a Purple Martin colony, attend this event. Enjoy watching hundreds of these beautiful birds soaring and feeding their young while an expert tells you all about them. No registration is necessary. The event is free, but donations are appreciated to help cover expenses. Bring lawn chairs, binoculars, notepad, camera, and a picnic lunch to enjoy on the grounds. Drinks and snacks are provided. Please, no pets. A next box trail tour to view Bluebirds, Tree Swallows, Kestrels, and Barn Owls follows the lecture at approximately 12:00 PM. For information and directions, visit the Purple Martin Field Day website at <http://www.purplemartinfieldday.org/> or contact Ron and Priscilla Kingston at kingston@cstone.net or 434-962-8232.

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