



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

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May 2015

MAY MEETING

DATE: Thursday, May 7, 2015

TIME: 7:00 PM

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

PROGRAM – Denise Hoodock

Peter Nebel is our speaker this month. He is a life-long birder trained in Biology/Ecology. While he has not worked much in pure Biology, his career has generally had biological components - fish culture, irrigation, environmental consulting, and environmental management all used his training to some degree. He spent 25 overseas, mostly in Honduras. Before retiring he spent 10 years as an environmental manager on US air bases in Honduras, South Korea and Qatar.

His talk will draw on his year working at Al Udeid AB in Qatar, during which he lived in Doha, and will include pictures of birds as well as some of the wider and stranger experiences that come with living in a Middle-eastern desert. Yes, there will be camels.

Before the meeting, please join us in hosting Peter at Taste of India, 498 University Blvd in Harrisonburg, for dinner at 5:30 PM. If you would like to attend, please let Denise Hoodock know. Contact her at home – 540-828-2595, cell – 703-216-5499 or by email dhooock@gmail.com.

FIELD TRIPS - Diane Lepkowski

Hillandale Walk, Wednesday May 6, with Tom Mizell – Let's gather at the Children's playground parking lot at 8:00 AM.

Shenandoah National Park, Saturday May 9, with Greg Moyers – Stops will include Pocasin Cabin Trail and South River Picnic Area. We'll meet in the bottom section of the Kohl's parking lot (in front of the store, towards Rt. 33) at 8:00AM. We'll finish at the picnic area so bring a lunch if you wish. We should return by 2:00. Contact Greg at gwmoyers@msn.com or 434-3029 if you plan to attend.

Cub Run Road, George Washington National Forest, Saturday June 6 – Lisa Perry & Diane Lepkowski: After car-birding up Massanutten Mountain's eastern slope, we'll hike a Breeding Bird Survey route that Lisa took on last year, where she and Diane found Prairie Warblers after noting the species-suitable habitat. Other targets include Yellow-breasted Chat and Yellow-billed Cuckoo. We'll hike about 3 miles on a moderately difficult trail (rocky in places, and about 500-600' elevation gain.) Bring snacks, water, and lunch if you wish. Please sign up in advance -- contact Diane (432-1047, dianelep1@yahoo.com) or Lisa (koerner.lisa@gmail.com) and meet at Kohl's parking lot (Rt. 33, east of Harrisonburg) at 7:30 AM to carpool. We'll return by early afternoon. (For those not wishing to hike, our car-birding stretch we hope will turn up both Prairie Warblers and Chat.)

OTHER TRIPS:

Sierra Club Family-Friendly Bird Walk "Birds of the Burg" – Saturday May 2 – *Anne Nielsen*: On the first Saturday of May from 8:30 AM – 10:30 AM, starting at Shelter #12 at Hillandale Park in Harrisonburg. Beginners and families are welcomed! RBC birders will help lead these trips. Children under 18 must be accompanied by an adult— a Sierra Club rule. No reservations necessary. Rain date is May 9. Contact Ralph Grove at 478-3677 or Anne Nielsen at 574-6125.

TRIP REPORTS

Shenandoah National Park, American Woodcock Trip at Big Meadows – *Diane Lepkowski*

Seeming perhaps too cold and windy for right-minded woodcocks to be flying, eight of us shivered in the Meadow as the sun set. Loud wind noise and a hearty frog chorus overwhelmed us at first, and well after sunset the woodcocks finally hit the skies. We enjoyed watching and hearing several birds in flight; our group reported hearing as many as eight. One bird returned nearby several times, giving us good earthbound looks between flights. Earlier, along Story of the Forest Trail, a cooperative Hermit Thrush gave good views to all. A few of us dined at the Wayside Restaurant and gave both the food and the service high marks!

Madison Run Fire Road Trip – *Greg Moyers*

Seven members of the RBC attended the walk at Madison Run Fire Rd on April 11. The weather was gorgeous and we had a number of cooperative birds. Shortly after beginning the hike, we were treated to close looks at a pair of Louisiana Waterthrushes. One bird was so cooperative that Bill Benish had time to get his scope on the bird and we all took turns looking at the bird while it remained stationary on a streamside log. For most of the walk up the road birds were vocal but hard to spot. Our luck changed near the turnaround spot and we got very nice looks at Pine Warblers, Blue-headed Vireo, and Blue-gray Gnatcatcher. The group also had good looks at a breeding-plumaged Yellow-rumped Warbler, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, and Golden-crowned Kinglet. Some participants saw a Ruby-crowned Kinglet, others heard a Pine Siskin, and Bill Benish was lucky enough to spot a female Black-and-white Warbler. The total count for the walk was 20 species.

April Hillandale Trip – *Tom Mizell*

Under a cloudy sky and with temperatures in the 40s, fourteen members of the Rockingham Bird Club

and one visitor were greeted by American Robins and dozens of daffodils after passing through the gate to Hillandale Park on April 13, 2015. Anticipation of spring migrants had many of us anxious to hit the trail and; as we gathered in the parking lot, a group of 4-5 early arrival birders politely asked permission to proceed across the pedestrian bridge to the cabin. “Absolutely” was the answer! How could anyone hold back such enthusiasm! So, off they sped.

As more members arrived at the parking lot, we quickly compiled our wish list that included Gray Catbird, Eastern Towhee, Brown Thrasher, and “any warbler.” Walking to the cabin, we listed about a dozen species including: Eastern Towhee, American Crow, American Goldfinch; Carolina Wren and Chickadee; Northern Cardinal, Mockingbird; Flicker; Red-bellied and Hairy Woodpeckers; White-throated and Field Sparrows; and Tufted Titmouse.

As we walked the trail beside the golf course, a Red-tailed Hawk carrying nesting material flew south, overhead, chased by a crow. Further down the trail we spied both Turkey and Black Vultures on the ground and in the canopy. As we drew closer they left their breakfast. Thanks to an unfortunate raccoon we were all afforded very good looks at both Vulture species as they lingered close by, hoping we would soon pass and they could return to the feast. No doubt the vultures were doing their public service in recognition of Earth Day soon to follow. By 9:15 AM we crossed the northernmost pedestrian bridge; the 15 birders were spread along about a hundred yard stretch of trail as different birds demanded our divided attention. Shortly after crossing the bridge about five of us were looking towards the golf course pond, hoping to see ducks. We heard quite a ruckus in a nearby tree. Somewhat reminiscent of our Bridgewater experience last winter, we found ourselves once again surprised as a squirrel tumbled through the limbs to the ground about 20 feet away. It did not seem too concerned as it sought safety and went back into the tree it had fallen from. Be careful of falling critters.

Other sightings included Brown Thrasher, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker; Purple and House Finches; and Brown-headed Cowbirds. A Junco was the last bird to be counted as it greeted one of our members driving out of the main shelter parking lot. This raised our tally to 31.

One of the usual park hikers told us that a Cooper's Hawk nest was near the second shelter. So, those that remained went to the location where we found the nest but not the birds. We will keep a watch for the Cooper's Hawks on future visits. Over the past several years they have nested in the same general area.

We did not see “any warbler” this day but we enjoyed what we saw and heard; and we look forward to those “FOY” warblers we may find there next month. *Anonymous Quote: “Warbler sightings in May MAY be rewarded.”*

Bridgewater Parks Trip – Tom Mizell

Forty-eight hours and about 1.3 inches of rainfall after the Hillandale Park walk, 13 members of the Rockingham Bird Club and a young guest met at Wildwood Park to kick off the Bridgewater Parks morning. As I met the first arrivals at the gate, Tree Swallows were perched overhead on the power lines as Northern Cardinals and Common Grackles shared songs with Blue Jays and Mourning Doves. A local celebrity “Mother Goose” eyed each one of us as only “Mother Goose” can do, as she protected “her” Mallards in the pool near the suspension bridge.

We formed our circle for introductions, safety reminders and wish-list conversations. Phyllis Showalter said “I would like to see a Bald Eagle fly over the river.” At 8:07 AM, before we completed our wish, list a Bald Eagle flew at tree top level headed downstream. How timely was that?! It is likely that it is one of the eagles that has the nest on nearby Round Hill, less than one half mile to the west across the North River.

Our wish list grew to nine species as we perhaps thought the success of the Bald Eagle wish might portend a bonanza of wish-list sightings. Walking the loop trail we soon saw Brown Thrashers and 2-3 pairs of Wood Ducks, thus giving us three of the nine wish-list birds. We were afforded grand views of Double-crested Cormorants, Ruby-crowned Kinglets, Eastern Bluebirds, Eastern Towhees, Northern Flickers, Field Sparrows, and a Downy Woodpecker pair. Spring was indeed in the air as American Robins and Blue Jays carried nesting material. The call of the Pileated Woodpecker came from the woods across the river. But the sweetest song of the day came from Addison, the youngest birder, as she sang throughout the picnic area. It’s always good to have the young birders with us. Yellow-rumped Warblers were quite active across the river near the bluff. As we headed back toward the gate we enjoyed a fleeting glimpse of a Red-breasted Merganser; its flyby caught our attention just above the dam. Thank you to Greg Moyers who offered ID in the blink of an eye. Wildwood Park yielded 31 species during our first 90 minutes of birding.

As we left the parking lot I passed several lawnmowers and grounds staff approaching as they descended upon Wildwood. Somehow our timing was exceptional this morning. Leaving the sounds of mowing behind, we headed to Edgebrier Park, on the east side of Route 42. There we stood on the concrete slab overlooking North River and added Song Sparrow and Turkey Vulture. In this area we sought the Northern Pintail that spent the winter with the local Mallards. No Pintail sighting, so it appeared the Pintail had left, hopefully to find more of its own kind. Along the river's edge an Eastern Phoebe flew past us several times as it carried nesting material to its Route 42 Bridge nest-site.

Next stop was the Cook’s Creek Arboretum where we were joined by John Shea and Bob Eggleston. They helped us add Ruby-crowned Kinglet and Blue-headed Vireo to the day’s sightings. We also saw a Fish Crow with a beak full of nesting material as it was being escorted by not-so-friendly Grackles. The Fish Crow escaped to land in one of the huge Sycamore trees in the Southeast end of the Arboretum, where it was heard to call “un uh” or something like that. Other Arboretum additions included Dark-eyed Junco, Red-winged Blackbirds, Barn Swallows, and American Goldfinches. Creekside singing was provided by 'The Song, White-throated and White-crowned Sparrows Trio' as a House Sparrow sat quietly in a White Pine.

By 11:15 AM most of the group called it a day. Two of the three that remained followed Don Perkuchin as he braved the soggy wetland west of Cook's Creek. We were pleased to find a Swamp Sparrow and not so pleased to find a Brown-headed Cowbird in the wetland. We totaled 44 species for the morning and enjoyed lots of pleasant birding company. Thanks to all!

BIRD SIGHTINGS:

Kevin Shank reported at least four displaying **American Woodcocks** at his place at Union Springs on March 21.

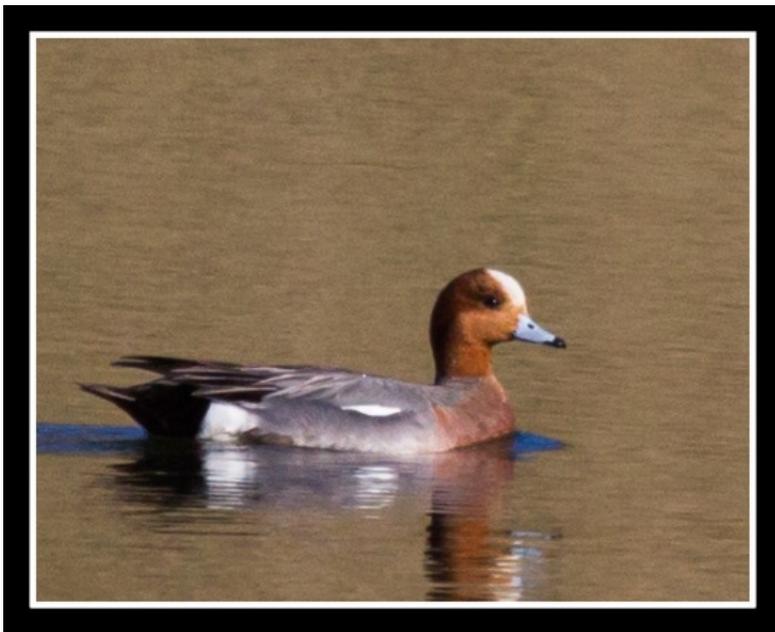
Diane Lepkowski found **Horned Grebes, Common Mergansers, Red-breasted Mergansers, and Ring-billed Gulls** at Lake Shenandoah on March 22. As many as 10 **Horned Grebes** were reported through the day.

Gabriel Mapel reported an early **Solitary Sandpiper** along with a **Wilson's Snipe** and 14 **Tree Swallows** at Leonard's Pond and a **Red-breasted Nuthatch** on Shenandoah Mountain on March 24. John Shea reported an **Osprey** at Silver Lake on April 24, and two **Rusty Blackbirds** at Cook's Creek Arboretum on March 25. John had a **Northern Rough-winged Swallow** at Silver Lake on the same date.

Matt Gingerich reported a **Loggerhead Shrike** on his property near Linville on March 29.

Tom Mizell found a **Great Egret** and an **Osprey** at Silver Lake on March 31.

Charles "Zig" Ziegenfus and his class found a **Eurasian Wigeon** at Lake Campbell on April 1. They also had a number of other good birds around the county including **Pine Siskins, Purple Finches; Barn, Tree, and Northern Rough-winged Swallows; Osprey, Horned Grebes, Blue-winged Teal, Canvasbacks,** and a **Great Egret** on the same date.



Eurasian Wigeon, Lake Campbell, 4-1-15
A rarity found by Charles "Zig" Ziegenfus!

Photo: Diane Lepkowski

William Leigh reported two **Red Crossbills** at the usual spot at the top of Shenandoah Mountain on April 4. William also had a **Greater Yellowlegs** at the intersection of Spaders Church and Scholars Roads on the same date.

Kevin Shank reported his first **Louisiana Waterthrush** and **Blue-headed Vireo** of the season at his place in Union Springs on April 3. His first **Whip-Poor-Will** of the season came on April 10 and the first **Chuck-Will's-Widow** on April 25. Kevin has seen a lot of early activity in April with over a

dozen warbler species, 13 species on April 25 alone, including **Cape May, Hooded, Northern Parula, Blackburnian, and Black-throated Blue**, along with **Red-breasted Nuthatches**, a **Scarlet Tanager** on April 20, and up to a dozen **Wood Ducks**, among others.

Greg Moyers and Diane Lepkowski reported a **Louisiana Waterthrush** and a **Black-and-White Warbler** at Madison Run Fire Rd on April 4.

Ken Hinkle and Bob Eggleston saw a **Golden Eagle** and an **Osprey** on Spring Creek Rd on April 5.

Diane Lepkowski and Dave Wendelken reported a **Broad-winged Hawk, Winter Wren, Blue-headed Vireos, Louisiana Waterthrush, and Pine Warbler** at Madison Run Fire Rd on April 5. William Leigh and Greg Moyers reported **Common Loons, Bonaparte's Gull, Louisiana Waterthrush, Pine Warbler, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Fox Sparrow, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, and Wild Turkey** at Switzer Dam on April 6.

Diane Lepkowski reported a **Palm Warbler** from the EJC Arboretum at JMU and a pair of **Common Loons, Double-crested Cormorant, American Coot**, and four **Red-breasted Mergansers** at Lake Shenandoah on April 8.

John Shea found a **Caspian Tern** along with a **Purple Martin** and a **Blue-winged Teal** at Silver Lake on April 9.

Ken Ranck had four **Purple Finches** at his place in Mt. Crawford on April 9.

John Shea reported two **Bonaparte's Gulls**, a **Green Heron**, and a **Common Loon** at Lake Shenandoah on April 10.

Diane Lepkowski and Greg Moyers reported four **Greater Yellowlegs** at the sod farm on Captain Yancey Rd as well as a **Great Egret** at the Merck Swamp on April 11.

Greg Moyers and Diane Lepkowski reported a **Black-throated Green Warbler** at Switzer Dam on April 12.

William Leigh saw three **Greater Yellowlegs** at Silver Lake and three **Greater Yellowlegs** and a **Spotted Sandpiper** at Leonard's Pond on April 12. William also had **Blue-winged** and **Green-winged Teal** along Rt. 340 on the same date.

On April 14 Ken Hinkle, Tom Mizell, and Bob Eggleston found a **Spotted Sandpiper** at Wildwood Park and **Blue-winged Teal, Wood Ducks, Northern Shovelers, and Barn Swallows** at the Nazarene Church Rd Wetland. Ken added **Northern Rough-winged Swallows** at Wildwood later that day.

Also on April 14, John Shea found two **Forster's Terns** at Lake Shenandoah.

John Todd reported on April 15 that the **Black-crowned Night-Herons** have returned to the Newman Lake area at JMU.

Greg and Abby Moyers watched a **Great Horned Owl** fly across Quince Drive and perch atop a pine tree in Belmont Estates Subdivision at dusk on April 17.

William Leigh reported **Blackburnian Warblers** at Switzer Dam on April 17.

Debbie Harrison had her first-of-year **Whip-Poor-Will** at her place on April 17.

Ken Ranck reported that a **Ruby-throated Hummingbird** joined the **Purple Finches** and **Pine Siskins** at his place in Mt. Crawford on April 17.

Greg Moyers and Diane Lepkowski found several **Prairie Warblers** along Cub Run Rd on April 19.



Prairie Warbler, Lake Shenandoah, 4-27-15

Photo: John Shea

Diane Lepkowski found a **Warbling Vireo** at Lake Shenandoah on April 21.

On the Edith J. Carrier Arboretum bird walk on April 22, Greg Moyers and the group found their first-of-year **Wood Thrush**.

William Leigh saw 30 **Lesser Yellowlegs** and a **Peregrine Falcon** at the Nazarene Church Rd Wetland on April 24. William then headed to the Bother Knob area and found **Wood Thrushes** and a **Worm-eating Warbler** among several others. Earlier in the day, at Lake Shenandoah, William saw **Baltimore Orioles** as well as **Bonaparte's** and **Ring-billed Gulls**.

William Leigh saw a **Sandhill Crane** flying over Rt. 257 near Montezuma on April 25. At Paul State Forest on the same date, William, Diane Lepkowski, John Shea, and Greg Moyers reported **Black-throated Blue Warbler**, **Black-and-white Warbler**, **Hooded Warbler**, **Yellow-rumped Warbler**,

American Redstart, Ovenbird, Hermit Thrush, House Wren; and Red-eyed and Blue-headed Vireos.

John Shea found a **Northern Waterthrush** at Wildwood Park on April 25. The next day, a singing Northern Waterthrush was heard, then spotted, by Greg Moyers and Diane Lepkowski at Mace's Pond.

Tom Mizell reported a **Yellow Warbler** at Silver Lake on April 25.

BIRD CLUB BOOK CLUB - *Maureen Gallagher-McLeod*

The B.C.B.C. will meet on Thursday, May 21, 6:30 PM, at the home of Elizabeth Ilhe. After sharing a carry-in meal, we will discuss "The Life of the Skies: Birding at the End of Nature" by Jonathan Rosen. If you are interested in joining a monthly book discussion, contact Maureen at famcleod@earthlink.net or 896-9541 or Elizabeth at eliza51@aol.com or 421-5257.



Rebirth

by Carroll Lisle

December 2, 1971

Six weeks ago our maple trees
glowed with incandescent leaves.
Firebrands, the tall trees stood
ignited, but with unburnt wood.

Their leaves sped.

Their fire, dead.

Today the yellow grosbeaks came.
One tree, at least, was lit with flame.
In noisy, crackling leaps ahead
the feathered conflagration spread.

Like flinders of the sun, the flare
emblazoned my soul, unaware.

The birds have flown.

The sparks have blown,
but I, kindled by the sight,
bank the embers for the night.

UPCOMING PROGRAMS.....

JUNE 2015 – Diane Lepkowski and Greg Moyers will present our year-end program “NO BIRD LEFT BEHIND.”

NO MEETING IN JULY AND AUGUST – ENJOY SUMMER BIRDING!

SEPTEMBER 2015 – Teta Kain, rescheduled from the cancelled snowy March meeting, will give her program about Argentina.

Rockingham Bird Club
151 Deerlick Lane
Broadway, VA 22815



PRESIDENT: Debbie Harrison
151 Deerlick Lane
Broadway, VA 22815
Phone - 540-856-3058
woodshar@aol.com

VICE PRESIDENT: PROGRAMS - Denise Hoodock

VICE PRESIDENT: FIELD TRIPS - Diane Lepkowski

SECRETARY: Phyllis Showalter

TREASURER: Steve White - 540-833-6726

MEMBERS AT LARGE: Bill Benish & Lisa Perry

GOLDFINCH GAZETTE - Denise Hoodock