



Goldfinch Gazette

The Newsletter of the Rockingham Bird Club

<http://rockinghambirdclub.com>

Volume XLIV

Number 3

November 2018

NOVEMBER MEETING

DATE: Thursday, November 1, 2018

TIME: 7:00 PM

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

PROGRAM: *A Million Penguins Watching Penguins in the Antarctic* by William "Bill" Young.

Bill is a writer who lives in Arlington, Virginia. His long-time interest in birds developed when he was growing up in suburban Philadelphia. He has traveled around the world to study birds and is especially interested in bird behavior and bird conservation. His travels have taken him to all seven continents as well as throughout the United States. In 2016, Bill Young took a cruise from southern Argentina to the Falklands, South Georgia, and the Antarctic Peninsula. On the trip, he saw an estimated one million penguins from seven species. His presentation will focus on each of the species, with special emphasis on their biology and behavior and on the environmental issues affecting them. Penguins are found as far north as the Galapagos Islands, but to see large numbers of them, you need to travel to more southerly waters.

Join us for dinner with Bill before the meeting: 5:30 PM at Taste of Thai, 917 S. High Street, Harrisonburg, VA 22801. Please contact Robyn Puffenbarger, 540-908-7335 or rpuffenb@bridgewater.edu, in advance if you plan to attend.

NOVEMBER FIELD TRIPS - *Diane Lepkowski*

Members and guests welcome. Minors (under 18) must be accompanied by a parent or adult.

Hillandale Monthly Walk, Wednesday, November 8 with Tom Mizell: Let's look for Turkeys and other birds at Hillandale Park. Meet at the Children's Playground Parking Lot at 8 AM as we get in our last park walk before Thanksgiving.

Saw-whet Owls at Highland Retreat, TBA, with Debbie Harrison: Debbie will lead a trip to Highland Retreat. Date and time to be announced. If interested, please contact Debbie at 540-856-3058 or email woodshar@aol.com.

REMINDER: Bird Seed Pick-Up

Bird Seed Sale Pick-Up is **FRIDAY**, November 9th, 2:00 pm - 6:00 pm

Directions to BFG Supply (formerly Wetsel's) Main Warehouse 961 N Liberty Street, Harrisonburg

From Route 42 on the northern edge of Harrisonburg go east on Mt. Clinton Pike to North Liberty Street. Turn right (south) and it is about one-half mile to 961 N Liberty St. Look for the Southern States sign on the right. Turn right into the entrance shared by Southern States Oil Company. Continue past Southern States through the gate to Wetsel's (BFG) Warehouse. Bird seed volunteers will help you at the loading dock.

TRIP REPORTS

Paul State Forest – Bill Benish

On September 28, we visited Paul State Forest, which is a large public managed forest where vehicles and hunting are restricted. I was delighted to have a chance to explore this location with other birders.

In the spirit of citizen science, I submitted two eBird lists for this trip since this walk was essentially, one way out and back along the same trail. When retracing our steps, eBird recommends considering starting a new list at the far end turn around point.

Outward bound: <https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S48795299>

Walk back to the parking area: <https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S48795299>

Ten birders made it outside together in the morning starting around 7:45 AM. Three of us walked a full mile to the farm road crossing through the forest and wrapped up the return trip at 11:30 AM. The early morning fog was beautiful up through the large open cathedral canopy of the tall trees near the entrance. We had some high silhouette birds, but felt our necks bending back. After conceding that we needed to get some easier views, we advanced and were rewarded by Black-throated Blue Warbler. When we reached the small creek area, the canopy shortened allowing views of several warblers, Scarlet Tanager and Rose-breasted Grosbeaks.

Later, on the return trip, the same spot yielded two Cuckoos. I only saw dark in their bills. Their tails showed very little white and chestnut was barely visible in the wings. These factors led me to sort them as Black-billed Cuckoo rather than Yellow-billed Cuckoo. Also, references I reviewed show that immature Black-billed do not have the red orbital around their eyes. Even still, these may have been better reported as Yellow-billed / Black-billed Cuckoo to avoid inaccuracy, especially since we didn't have any photos to analyze. For contrast, this eBird list link - <https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S49133369> - from our yard on October 11, shows a cuckoo with a dark bill that I determined to be Yellow-billed Cuckoo based on some key photos I snapped and tips from book resources I reviewed about immature cuckoos. The more helpful tips advised that the immature cuckoos are best separated by the amount of white on the throat, breast and tail. Also, the bill shape is much heavier with Yellow-billed Cuckoo compared to the finer, slender bill of the Black-billed Cuckoo.

Also, on the return walk, Magnolia Warbler provided great views partly due to its lower canopy preferences and apparent abundance. We watched a Rose-breasted Grosbeak eating for several minutes during our return encounter with the creek. Ken Ranck later checked his wildflower book and believed the bird was eating from a Bur-Cucumber vine (*Sicyos angulatus*). On his way out, Greg Moyers found a big show with lots of Magnolias, a smattering of Blackpolls, a couple more Black-throated Blues plus several others. He also had Hooded Warbler at a low area, Chestnut-sided

Warbler, several Bay-breasted Warblers, Black-and-white Warbler, Tennessee Warbler, Cape May Warbler and Red-eyed Vireo. As the last three of us were about to exit the forest, we looked up again to see a relatively low kettle including several Broad-winged Hawks and an Osprey for a total above 30 species including Greg's sightings.

On October 8, six of us visited Paul State Forest again. We found some warblers and thrushes still present with a few photo opportunities. I raked in 26 species documented on this eBird list: <https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S49045828>. Greg Moyers also had Ovenbird and another special sighting of either a presumed Mourning Warbler or Connecticut Warbler near the creek area about a half mile from the parking lot. The Red-breasted Nuthatch was heard only for me. Karen Shank helped me get on a Black-throated Green Warbler. Some of us had nice views of Swainson's Thrush. Greg Moyers helped pin down Blackpoll Warbler as one of my photos showed orange toes which surprised me since I only remembered yellow as a toe color. A couple of us thought we may have seen a large dark owl fly away, but we weren't positive that we could distinguish it from a Pileated Woodpecker that had called from the same vicinity. I was delighted to get out again to this location partly because it is only about a quarter mile from the center of our Christmas Bird Count "VARC" circle.

Hillandale Monthly Walks – Tom Mizell

On October 11, as Tropical Storm Michael made its presence known in the Southern US and after a rainy night in the Valley, 11 members and a guest of the Rockingham Bird Club gathered at Hillandale Park. A surprising number of folks were hoping to enjoy another monthly walk in the park. It was 70 degrees, humidity was 99% and rain just might be an issue.

Undaunted by the forecast, the group was ready to move forward. The wish list included White-throated Sparrows, Osprey, Wood Thrush, Great Crested Flycatcher and Bittern. Yep, always at least one surprise wish from the group. Our moment for safety addressed slippery rocks, snakes and jogger traffic on the trail.

Beginning at the parking lot we listed European Starlings, Northern Flicker, Eastern Phoebe, and Blue Jay. As we crossed the bridge, Greg Moyers' keen ears picked up several calls. He headed upstream and as usual most of the group followed and waded into the wet grasses to investigate. The rest of the group numbering 3-4 remained on the trail and proceeded counterclockwise only to be found about an hour later near the second pedestrian bridge in the northwest corner. As the larger mass of birders walked along the stream we found American Robin, several Gray Catbirds, Northern Cardinal, Scarlet Tanager and Eastern Wood Pewee in the cluster of trees about 300 feet upstream of the cabin. After 10 minutes or so of scouring this area we returned to the cabin.

Since last month most of the walnut trees had lost their leaves and we got some looks at several species in the walnut trees near the log cabin. Carolina Wren, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Red-bellied Woodpeckers to name a few. A Common Yellowthroat was in the brush south of the cabin. An Eastern Towhee called and showed itself by 8:22 AM giving us 14 species in the first 22 minutes. More activity in those walnut trees as Purple Finches flew into the tops. White-breasted Nuthatches entered the field of view and Chimney Swifts were seen racing high overhead.

Magnolia Warblers were present, and they afforded some striking looks. We were still close to the cabin and we saw a Hairy Woodpecker and Yellow-bellied Sapsucker. Tree Swallows joined the swifts and House Finches called. Fish Crows sounded in the distance. Now, by 8:38AM, we listed 23 species.

The cabin area proved to be a productive area in the early morning and it is a strong candidate for the site of lawn chair field trips next spring and fall.

As we walked along the golf course boundary, we added Mourning Dove, Brown Thrasher, at least three Yellow-billed Cuckoos, Downy Woodpecker, and American Redstart. Nearing the northwest corner, Art Fovargue called out and we were soon enjoying species number 29: A Cape May Warbler. In this corner some of us enjoyed watching some Carolina Wrens seeking something in a leafy squirrel's nest.

At the northwest corner bridge, Greg spied a Brown Creeper. I believe it was enjoying a stroll up a walnut tree trunk. Tufted Titmouse and Carolina Chickadee decided they would enter the records for this day and an American Crow called out at 9:30. A slow walk back towards the cabin and our birding crew was now 8.

The southeast loop provided a good mix of birds. We saw Northern Mockingbird, Ravens, a Great Blue Heron flyover, Bob Eggleston spotted a Cedar Waxwing that brought along at least 3 dozen more Waxwings, and Don Perkuchin saw species number 38: a Ruby-throated Hummingbird in the blooming honeysuckle near the golf course. By 11:05 we were slowly and reluctantly heading to the parking lot to depart. As we crossed the cabin bridge we enjoyed the overhead passage of what we collectively identified as a Peregrine Falcon! Always, always pause at the bridge when you leave the park!

I got an email that Turkey Vultures and Black Vultures made a showing as well so our total for the day was 41 species by 11:10. We did not see any of the wish list birds but that's OK. We enjoyed Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Brown Creeper and their many feathered friends. As I turned onto Route 42, I noticed the Harrisonburg Water tank near the car wash was adorned with Black Vultures and Turkey Vultures. Quite a sight. Hope to see you in November for our Hillandale walk.

BIRD SIGHTINGS

William Leigh found **Wilson's, Magnolia, Cape May, and Black-and-White Warblers, Northern Parula, and Solitary, Pectoral, and Semipalmated Sandpipers** at Captain Yancey Rd on Sept. 23.

Fletcher Bingham reported an **Osprey** at Silver Lake on Sept. 24.

Matt Gingerich reported a **Baird's Sandpiper, Black-bellied Plover, American Golden-Plover, Pectoral Sandpipers, and a Merlin** at Koogler Rd west of Dayton on Sept. 25. Matt reported **Ring-necked and Ruddy Ducks** at Silver Lake and another **American Golden-Plover** in a nearby field on the same date.

Taylor Jessica Mizzi reported a **Connecticut Warbler**, as well as **Blackpoll and Worm-eating Warblers** at Hillandale Park on Sept. 26. Taylor reported the **Connecticut Warbler** again on Sept. 28, along with **Nashville Warbler, Purple Finch, House Wren, and Red-breasted Nuthatch** and on Sept. 29, **Tennessee and Cape May Warblers**.

Mike Smith saw an **American Woodcock** near Loft Mtn in the Shenandoah National Park on Sept. 26. Mike had a **Cape May Warbler** and an **American Redstart** in his yard near Elkton on the same date.

Diane Holsinger had a **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** at her feeder in Timberville on Sept. 27.

William Leigh and Greg Moyers found several notables at Hillandale Park on Sept. 27, including a **Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, Philadelphia & Yellow-throated Vireos, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Rose-**

breasted Grosbeak, Swainson's Thrush, and several warblers, including **Bay-breasted, Tennessee, Nashville, Magnolia**, and others. Marshall Faintich and Walt Childs reported a **Bald Eagle** and many of the same warbler species at Hillandale on Sept. 28 and Taylor Jessica Mizzi and John Todd reported **Yellow-bellied Flycatcher** and **Philadelphia Vireo** on Sept. 30. Taylor added a **White-eyed Vireo** on Oct. 1.

Ira Lianez reported a **Common Tern** at Silver Lake on Sept. 28.

William Leigh reported at least nine **American Golden-Plovers** and a **Semipalmated Plover** at the Shenandoah Valley Produce Auction fields on Lumber Mill Rd on Sept. 29.

Greg Moyers and Diane Lepkowski reported a **Connecticut Warbler** at Paul State Forest on Sept. 29. Greg saw another **Connecticut** in the forest on Oct. 8 after leaving the RBC group. William Leigh and Dave Wendelken found a **Gray-cheeked Thrush** and a **Wilson's Warbler** at the same location on Sept. 30.

Diane Lepkowski had a **Purple Finch** at her place near Harrisonburg on Sept. 29. She had her first yard **White-crowned Sparrow** on Oct. 13, a bird sporting a band (likely applied by Charles "Zig" Ziegenfuss in a prior year).

Karen and Annie Shank have had several good birds at their place in Spring Creek including **Purple Finches** on Oct. 1 and regularly since Oct. 13, an **Orange-crowned Warbler** on Oct. 6, **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** and **White-crowned Sparrow** on Oct. 9, **Cape May Warbler** on Oct. 12 and 15, **Tennessee Warbler** on Oct. 13, and **Nashville Warbler** on Oct. 15.

Diane Holsinger reported thousands of **Tree Swallows** near her place in Timberville on Oct. 3. She also reported an **Ovenbird** on the same date.

Mike Smith reported around 300 **Chimney Swifts** entering the chimney at Elkton Elementary School on Oct. 4.

Diane Lepkowski and Dave Wendelken reported **White-throated Sparrows** at Hone Quarry on Oct. 7, along with **Yellow-billed Cuckoos, Pied-billed Grebe, Blue-headed Vireo, Swainson's Thrushes, Tennessee Warbler**, a late **Worm-eating Warbler**, and a **Cooper's Hawk** in hot pursuit of a **Belted Kingfisher**.

Matt Gingerich reported nine sparrow species at, and around, his place in Linville on Oct. 8 – **Lincoln's, Savannah, Swamp, Song, Field, Chipping, White-throated, White-crowned**, and **Eastern Towhee**.

Mike Smith had a **Ruby-crowned Kinglet** at his place near Elkton on Oct. 10.

Diane Holsinger hosted a **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** and **White-throated Sparrow** on Oct. 10 and **Purple Finches** on Oct. 14.

Taylor Jessica Mizzi reported **Tennessee, Blackpoll, Nashville**, and **Palm Warblers** on Faughts Rd on Oct. 13.

Ken Ranck had five **Purple Finches** at his place in Mt. Crawford on Oct. 15.

Eric and Christine Wenger had 14 **Great Egrets** visit their farm west of Bridgewater on Oct. 15.

Diane Holsinger reported a host of waterfowl on Silver Lake on Oct. 16, including **American Black Duck, Ruddy Duck, Gadwall, Ring-necked Duck, Pied-billed Grebe, Northern Shoveler, and Mute Swan.**

A **Clay-colored Sparrow** was reported at Silver Lake on Oct. 18.

Greg Moyers reported a **Lincoln's Sparrow** on Well Hollow Rd on Oct. 21.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Highland Retreat Owl Banding – Clair Mellinger

Charles Ziegenfus and I will be opening the Highland Retreat owl banding station again this year around 1 November 2018. Please check the blog page listed below for results, schedules, weather conditions at the site, groups scheduled, etc. ... rather than calling. Stations to the north of us are reporting various degrees of success but it probably won't be a banner year for the number of owls moving south. On the blog home page there are mini-articles on "Directions" and "Suggestions for visitors" which should provide most of the information that you need if you plan to visit. One change that I am making this year is that I will not be taking visitors to the nets for a variety of reasons including for the safety of net-tenders, visitors, and owls ... not necessarily in that order.

If you have any questions, please contact me at: mellinac@emu.edu

The blog is located at: highlandretreatowls.wordpress.com

Christmas Bird Count (CBC) – VARC Circle - 12/15/2018

Please mark your calendars for our annual **Christmas Bird Count** planned this year for **Saturday, December 15, 2018**. Sector Leaders are not yet finalized, but we hope to have as many as possible able to contribute again. Our most valuable contributions usually come from afield, and most of that is done by car. When we have more participants, we also tend to be able to expand our efforts walking and listening. For people living within the circle boundary, even from indoors, a "feeder watcher" can provide data to our count compiler - Bill Benish.

Be sure to let Bill know if you think you may be able to participate. It's also a good time for past leaders and participants to start checking in with each other about logistics for this year. This will help with planning and to ensure protocol data will be documented. More details will be recorded than are described here, but some data include start/finish times & distance, any time/distance effort exclusively during nocturnal hours as "owling", as well as the number of participants. If you wish to see historic count data via web, you can enter our count circle code "VARC" or others through this link:

<http://netapp.audubon.org/CBCObservation/Historical/ResultsByCount.aspx>

The intensity of our coverage and time spent varies most dependent upon those of us available to join in the effort. Thanks also to everyone who has helped in the past!

Bill Benish, wcbenish@gmail.com, 540.908.7336

Virginia Society of Ornithology Field Trip to Virginia Beach, Nov 30 – Dec 2

The VSO annual field trip to Virginia Beach will be held Friday, November 30 through Sunday, December 2, 2018. Trips on Friday, 11/30 are still being planned. There will be a Meet and Greet at 7 on Friday night at the hospitality room on the 12th floor of the Comfort Suites Beachfront hotel. It is important to register for the field trips as participation is limited. Register with the trip coordinator, Lee Adams, by email by November 15 at leeloudenslageradams@gmail.com. Please put **VSO VIRGINIA BEACH TRIP** in the subject line of the email, and **include your name, e-mail address & cell phone number**, and the field trips you are requesting.

On Saturday, a visit to the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel (CBBT) Island 4, the only one open, is scheduled. Participation will be limited to the first 30 to sign up since there is a requirement to pay a security guard to accompany each group of 15. The fee is \$10 per person for the cost of the security guard; please bring **cash** so that the fee can be paid to CBBT Saturday morning. The security information form, which must be filled out by each participant, is available at: <http://www.cbbt.com/forms/2011RevisedRESEARCHERBirdingApp.pdf> and must be in my hands by November 15 as I must deliver them to the CBBT 10 days in advance of our visit. Please fill out **ONLY page 2** which is headed: **Each individual in this Group must provide the following information** & email, or mail to me, Lee Adams Box 1671 Fredericksburg, VA 22402. I will fill out the group information that is requested.

After we leave the CBBT we will drive to the Eastern Shore of Virginia and continue to Chincoteague. Sunday morning, we will visit Back Bay NWR. For additions to the schedule & updates, please check VSO's website: www.virginiabirds.org/



Photo credit: VSO website (<http://www.virginiabirds.org/>)

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: Anne Nielson

TREASURER: Audrey Shenk

MEMBERS AT LARGE: Katherine Cummings & Tom Lord

GOLDFINCH GAZETTE - Denise Hoodock

EMAIL: info@rockinghambirdclub.com

 Rockingham Bird Club