



# Goldfinch Gazette

The Newsletter of the Rockingham Bird Club

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## NOVEMBER MEETING

**DATE: Thursday, November 6, 2014**

**TIME: 7:00 PM**

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

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### PROGRAM - *Denise Hoodock*

Our originally scheduled presenter was unable to be here, so we are very fortunate, and thankful, to welcome back Dr. John Spahr, from Staunton, VA., who graciously agreed to fill in on short notice. John will present "*Hummingbirds: Jewels of the Americas*" to us on Thursday, November 6. In multiple trips to the American tropics, John has seen more than 100 species of hummingbirds. Their amazing flight capabilities, fantastic plumage, and unique physiology have enthralled all. John will discuss many interesting and fascinating aspects of "hummers," all illustrated with colorful images.

Before the meeting, please join us in hosting John at Taste of India, 498 University Blvd in Harrisonburg for dinner at 5:30 PM. If you wish to attend, please contact Denise Hoodock at 828-2595, 703-216-5499 or at [dhoodock@gmail.com](mailto:dhoodock@gmail.com).

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### NOVEMBER FIELD TRIPS - *Diane Lepkowski*

**Hillandale Field Trip, Tuesday, November 11 (Veterans Day), with Tom Mizell** -- Meet at the Children's Parking Lot at 8:00 AM and let's see what surprises we can find in the middle of Fall.

**Bridgewater Parks, Thursday, November 13, with Tom Mizell** -- Meet at Bridgewater's Wildwood Park at 8:00 AM. The morning may also include the Cooks Creek Arboretum and other Bridgewater Parks. Bring drink and snack as needed. We will try to finish around noon.

## TRIP REPORTS

### Lake Shenandoah Trip - Greg Moyers

Thirteen members of the RBC enjoyed a gorgeous morning at Lake Shenandoah on October 25. The birding was slow for most of the morning but a few notables were seen including Ruby-crowned and Golden-crowned Kinglets, Swamp Sparrows, Purple Finch, Pied-billed Grebe, and nice looks at a colorful Yellow-bellied Sapsucker. The final tally was around 40 species.

### October Hillandale Park Trip - Tom Mizell

A rainy morning was not a problem as seven members of the Rockingham Bird Club celebrated Columbus Day at Hillandale Park on October 13, 2014. Most of us left our homes in a bit of a drizzle but by 8:00 AM the rains stopped! We were joined by two James Madison University seniors, Travis and John, who are taking a class in Environmental Policy and were encouraged by their professor to “get out and get into nature activities”.

As we gathered in the parking lot around the puddles from the early morning rain we heard American Crow, Red-bellied Woodpecker and Blue Jay. I began to describe our general walking route to Travis and was interrupted by a Northern Harrier which surprised us, heading south over the transmission line. When I resumed describing our route, an Eastern Phoebe flew up into one of the walnut trees at the parking lot; so much for describing our figure eight route. Our target birds included Ovenbird, warblers, Pileated Woodpecker and Mourning Dove.

As we worked the trees behind the cabin, we welcomed the return of a Golden-crowned Kinglet (a life bird for Randy Cline). The Kinglet shared the canopy with House Finches and a Blue-headed Vireo along with a Downy Woodpecker pair. In the same area, a Brown Creeper was sighted by William Leigh and that caused a bit of excitement.

It was quite an eventful morning. By 9:40 AM we added Northern Flicker, Black-throated Green Warbler, and Eastern Towhee, a pair of Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers, White-throated Sparrow and Ruby-crowned Kinglet bringing our count to 23. An extended viewing of the woods line near the northwest corner yielded a couple of Purple Finches.

At the shelter water fountain (where we saw a snake last month) we found a tree full of Eastern Towhees. At least 5 were seen up in a tree. After this show the group followed a pathway into the woods where we found the Sapsucker again along with a pair of Black-throated Blue Warblers. In this area we also had Magnolia Warbler and Eastern Wood Pewee.

We crossed the bridge at the cabin after 3 hours on the first half of the figure eight loop trail having listed 28 species. As we walked along the stream channel we added House Wren and Brown Thrasher. Gray Catbirds had called out much of the morning and we found a group in a Cedar tree. In a period of about 5 minutes at least 7 Catbirds launched themselves out of the Cedar tree flying a short distance toward the cabin. We don't usually see that many Catbirds together. Other birds included Common Yellowthroat, American Goldfinch and Field Sparrow found in an area of low brush. Near the trail fork behind the cabin, a pair of Cooper's Hawks darted among the cedars; we wondered what they were chasing. About this time Phyllis Showalter noticed a pair of Chimney Swifts overhead. We next

enjoyed watching a dozen or more Cedar Waxwings land and then feed in a treetop. They perched and occasionally flew up to grab insects and then return to the tree.

What's that? Something black and orange caught our attention. An American Redstart was seen feeding in a Cedar tree adjacent to the trail just beside the cabin. The six of us that remained got fairly good looks at this colorful and final warbler of the day.

As we approached the bridge our early morning friend, the Northern Harrier, scanned the ground from above. We stood one last time on the bridge talking about the walk beginning and ending with Northern Harriers. At least we thought the species count was complete at 42. However, as often happens, there are some birds that make themselves visible as we slowly exit the parking lot. Most of us cast final glances high and low before we depart. William Leigh and Diane Lepkowski spied a Sharp-shinned Hawk just as I was about to get in my car. It circled overhead a couple of times and then streamed south. I then left at 12:20 PM. By 12:40 PM my phone rang. Diane and William reported an Osprey had flown over before they left the park. So, today's total was 44 species. We satisfied two of the target birds - warbler and Mourning Dove. We will likely have to wait until spring to see Ovenbirds again. But then one never knows what one may see on a given day at Hillendale Park. Hope you can join us in November.

Truly Anonymous Quote: We often make way for the numerous morning exercise enthusiasts. One of the joggers asked during 3 separate morning passes, "*How many birds have you seen?*" We replied 14, 18 and 24 during the three brief "running in place" conversations. They seemed surprised at the number of species and, upon an invitation from Phyllis, said they may join us sometime.

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## BIRD SIGHTINGS:

Diane Holsinger found a **Blue Grosbeak** along Mt. Clinton Pike on Sept. 22 and a **Black-crowned Night Heron** at Lake Campbell on Sept. 25. Diane has had several good yard birds including **Yellow-throated Vireo**, **Black-and-white Warbler**, and **Red-headed Woodpeckers** on Sept. 22, **Ovenbird** on Sept. 27, **White-eyed Vireo** on Oct. 1, **Black-throated Blue** and **Chestnut-sided Warblers** on Oct. 2, **Ruby-crowned Kinglets** and a **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** on Oct. 3, **Yellow-rumped Warbler** and **Purple Finch** on Oct. 18, and a **Brown Creeper** on Oct. 21. Diane heard a late **Red-eyed Vireo** singing in her woods on Oct. 22. On Oct. 26, Diane had a **Blue-headed Vireo**, two **Wood Ducks**, and a seven woodpecker day at her place with **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker**, six **Red-headed Woodpeckers**, and **Downy**, **Hairy**, **Red-bellied**, **Pileated**, and **Flicker** all accounted for.

Greg Moyers reported a **Wilson's Warbler** at the Edith J. Carrier Arboretum at JMU on Sept. 23. On the same date, Greg found **Pectoral** and **Spotted Sandpipers**, a **Savannah Sparrow**, and a **Green-winged Teal** at Leonard's Pond.

Dave Wendelken, Diane Lepkowski, and Greg Moyers had some nice finds at Switzer Dam on Sept. 27 including a very cooperative **Connecticut Warbler** and a **Philadelphia Vireo**.

Also on Sept. 27, William Leigh found a pair of **American Golden-Plovers** in the fields near the produce auction on Lumber Mill Rd.

Tom Lord hosted a pair of **Cape May Warblers** at his place in Bridgewater Sept. 28-29.

Ken Ranck had both **Greater** and **Lesser Yellowlegs** at Leonard's Pond on Oct. 3. Ken has also been getting **Purple Finches** at his feeder in Mt. Crawford.

Greg Moyers reported a number of good birds at the Edith J. Carrier Arboretum at JMU on Oct. 4. Highlights included **Yellow-billed Cuckoo**, **Swainson's Thrush**, **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** and **Cape May**, **Tennessee**, **Magnolia**, **Nashville**, and **Blackpoll Warblers** among others.

Diane Holsinger saw a **Ring-billed Gull** and a **Pied-billed Grebe** at Silver Lake on Oct. 5.

Ken Hinkle reported two **American Coots** and a **Pied-billed Grebe** at Silver Lake on Oct. 11.

Also on the 11<sup>th</sup>, Greg Moyers, Diane Lepkowski, and William Leigh had a number of good finds at Switzer Dam including a late **Baltimore Oriole**, **Swainson's Thrush**, **Lincoln's Sparrow**, and 14 warbler species including **Bay-breasted**, **Blackpoll**, **Nashville**, **Tennessee**, **Cape May**, **Magnolia**, and **Palm**.

William Leigh found a **Red Phalarope** on the Oakwood Drive pond in Bridgewater on Oct. 13. The bird was last reported on Oct. 18. While watching the Phalarope on Oct. 13, Diane Lepkowski found a **Semipalmated Plover** at the same pond. A **Pectoral Sandpiper** was also present.

John Pancake found a **Dunlin** at Leonard's Pond on Oct. 14.



Male Purple Finch, October 2014      *Photo: Diane Lepkowski*

Diane Lepkowski had some good yard birds at her place just outside of Harrisonburg on Oct. 18 including **Cape May**, **Palm**, and **Yellow-rumped Warblers** and a **Purple Finch**. She added **Pine**

**Siskins** to the list on Oct. 25. Also on the 25<sup>th</sup>, Diane found a pair of **Red-breasted Nuthatches** at Lake Campbell.

Dave Wendelken, William Leigh, Diane Lepkowski, and Greg Moyers reported five **Buffleheads**, 15 **Wood Ducks**, **Purple Finch**, **Fox Sparrow**, **Hermit Thrush**, and a **Ring-billed Gull** at Lake Shenandoah on Oct. 26.

Mike Smith reported a **Ruby-crowned Kinglet** on Oct 3, a **Magnolia Warbler** and **Redstart** on Oct 10, **Purple Finches**, a **Yellow-rumped** and **Pine Warbler** on Oct 12, a **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** on Oct 24, a **Red-breasted Nuthatch**, 40+ **Pine Siskins**, a **Winter Wren** and a **Ruby-crowned Kinglet** on Oct 26 at his home. He heard a **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** and a **Pine Warbler** on Oct 13, and a **Blue-headed Vireo** on Oct 24.

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### **BIRD CLUB BOOK CLUB - *Maureen Gallagher-McLeod***

The B.C.B.C. will meet on Thursday, November 20, 2014, at 6:30 PM at the home of Joann Grayson. We will have a shared carry-in meal and discuss the book *The Oysters of Locmariaquer* by Eleanor Clark. Anyone interested in joining a book discussion can contact Maureen at [famcleod@earthlink.net](mailto:famcleod@earthlink.net) or 896-9541.

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### **TREASURER'S REPORT - *Steve White***

Preliminary figures show we grossed \$10,419.00 from this year's fundraiser sale of bird seed. The only invoice I have from BFG Supply so far is for \$6,619.00 and if no more come in, we netted a record \$3,800.00! There will be some small tweaking of this figure in the weeks to come, but once again 2014 was a very successful sale for us. Big thanks to all who helped move tons of bird seed on October 18th or labored over a hot stove making our famously delectable suet cakes. Big thanks to all our supportive customers as well, and especially to this year's eight (8!) members of our "300 Club" - those who bought \$300 or more worth of seed and, in reward of their excellent support, received free membership. Last but not least, a huge thanks to Wayne Shifflett for his superlative organizational skills in putting the whole show together and making it such a success!

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### **NORTHERN SAW-WHET OWL BANDING - *Clair Mellinger***

Charles Ziegenfus and I will open the **Northern Saw-whet Owl** migration banding station at Highland Retreat Camp at least by the last weekend in October and perhaps a little earlier than that depending on reports from farther north. We have no idea at this point what the migration will bring but it almost has to be better than last year. Visitors are welcome on any evening but we would be happy to know about groups that are coming. Some groups have already contacted me about certain dates. For a number of reasons, I am considering limiting the number of persons that we take up to the nets this year. Always check with one of us before you make the long drive up there. There will be some nights when weather and other factors will prevent us from opening the nets. A club outing to Highland Retreat is in the planning stages. If you are interested in participating, please contact Debbie Harrison at 540-856-3058 or woodshar@aol.com.

## **CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT - Bill Benish**

Please mark your calendar to join in this year's 115<sup>th</sup> Christmas Bird Count for the VARC (Rockingham County, VA) circle. Our count date will be **Saturday, December 20, 2014**. Our circle, VARC, is sponsored by the Rockingham Bird Club, which contributes both financially and through the dedication and skills of our members. The count circle extends into Augusta County and many participants have been members of both the RBC and the Augusta County Bird Club. The RBC covers the individual participant fee. Compiler Bill Benish can provide more details about what data needs to be collected to fit the count criteria. (Count-week birds within the "circle" are reportable.)

More information at: <http://birds.audubon.org/christmas-bird-count> -- Look for prior year results by clicking on the "Results, Data & Research" link.

Our circle is a 7.5 mile radius from the intersection of Ottobine Road and Clover Hill Road. We divide the area into six sectors and hope that most sectors leaders from last year will be serving again this year. Please start making your plans with them directly and soon. If you need help connecting with a sector leader or have any questions, please contact Bill Benish at 540-908-7336 or [wcbenish@comcast.net](mailto:wcbenish@comcast.net). If you think you already know who you'll be joining, please advise both your sector leader and Bill. Thanks again in advance for your contribution and efforts!

## **Do you like Bluebirds?**

The Rockingham Bird Club has established a 'Bluebird Trail' of seven nest boxes at the Rockingham Fair Grounds. This trail needs MONITORS to check the boxes on a weekly basis (April thru Sept).

I'd like to have a pool of interested people to help with this monitoring. There will be a program at the fairgrounds on Thursday, November 20 at 7:00 PM to provide more information, and give those interested an opportunity to sign up. This program will provide 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. ~ Debbie Harrison, 540-856-3058, [woodshar@aol.com](mailto:woodshar@aol.com)

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## **SIERRA CLUB / RBC COMBINED FIELD TRIP INITIATIVE**

The emerging cooperative venture between RBC and the local Sierra Club, to offer family-friendly local birding outings, is beginning to lift. Kathy Byers will lead, starting in the spring, but we need back-up and possibly additional leaders if the group grows quickly.

We also need binoculars! If anyone has extras, especially smaller, 8x ones, we'd be happy to solve your storage problem. Kathy will be the keeper. Please let her know, or bring them to the next RBC meeting. Thanks! Anne Nielsen (Kathy Byers – 896-1067 or [kathy1bike@yahoo.com](mailto:kathy1bike@yahoo.com))

## **PROGRAMS ON THE HORIZON....**

DECEMBER 4, 2014 – Bruce Peterjohn, Chief of the Bird Banding Laboratory, USGS Patuxent Wildlife Research Center, will be our speaker.

JANUARY 8, 2015 – Gabriel Mapel will be sharing his experience with the Audubon Coastal Bird Study at Hog Island.

FEBRUARY 5, 2015 – Bob Schamerhorn, life-long birder and Virginia native will be warming us with images and discussion of Florida's birding hotspots!

MARCH 5, 2015 – Teta Kain will return with a presentation of her November trip to Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego in Argentina!



Pine Siskins, October 2014

*Photo: Diane Lepkowski*

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**GOLDFINCH GAZETTE - Denise Hoodock**