



Goldfinch Gazette

The Newsletter of the Rockingham Bird Club

<http://rockinghambirdclub.com>

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October 2014

OCTOBER MEETING

DATE: Thursday, October 2, 2014

TIME: 7:00 PM

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

PROGRAM - Denise Hoodock

We are delighted this month to welcome Mark Adams who will share his presentation, "*Chasing Birds across Texas: A Birding Big Year*". Mark Adams is a professional astronomer at the National Radio Astronomy Observatory (NRAO) headquarters in Charlottesville, Virginia, where he leads the Observatory's Communications Office. In the year 2000, while living in the Davis Mountains wilderness of west Texas, Mark undertook a statewide birding Big Year, traveling across the enormous Lone Star state and recording 489 species. Mark's presentation will describe his Big Year motivations and experiences, the wide variety of Texas habitats he visited, and many of the state's most prized birds. Mark chronicled his Big Year in a book published in October 2003 by Texas A&M University Press titled *Chasing Birds across Texas: A Birding Big Year*. Signed copies of Mark's book will be available at a special price (\$10 trade paper, \$20 hardcover) after his talk.

Before the meeting, please join us in hosting Mark at L'Italia, 815 E. Market St. 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.

2014 RBC BIRD SEED SALE - Wayne A. Shifflett

Order forms have been sent out and need to be back to Wayne by October 4th; however, he will be accepting orders up until October 10th. The orders should be ready for pickup on October 18th. If you did not receive an order form, please let Wayne know. Order forms will also be available at the RBC meeting October 2nd. Contact Wayne at 540-383-2243 or email: wayneshif@gmail.com. His address is: Wayne A. Shifflett, 72 Cosby Mill Lane, Grottoes, VA, 24441.

OCTOBER FIELD TRIPS - *Diane Lepkowski*

Hillandale Field Trip, Monday October 13, with Tom Mizell -- Meet at the Children's Playground Parking Lot at 8:00 AM.

Lake Shenandoah, Saturday October 25, with Greg Moyers -- Meet at the parking lot at the Lake at 8:30 AM. Remember, Lake Shenandoah is a VDGIF fee area; an access permit or hunting/fishing/boating license is required. Please contact Greg at gwmoyers@msn.com or 434-3029 if you plan to attend.

TRIP REPORTS

Skyline Drive Trip - *Greg Moyers*

Five members of the RBC enjoyed a beautiful morning at the Pocosin Cabin Trail on Skyline Drive on September 6. As soon as we arrived at the clearing around the cabin, birds were everywhere. Large numbers of warblers were actively zipping around making it a challenge to “get on” everything. Several Tennessee Warblers were seen and one Black-throated Green Warbler came down and was feeding at waist level just a few feet away. In addition to the warblers, we also saw Rose-breasted Grosbeaks and Scarlet Tanagers. As we proceeded down the path, a large bird swooped out of the trees and across the path. The consensus was that it was likely a Barred Owl. William Leigh spotted a Blue-winged Warbler that flew before the rest of us could get on it.

After a brief lull, we headed back up the path and again ran into a large mixed flock. This time, the Blue-winged wasn't able to get away! The group got good looks at the bird this time. In all we totaled 15 species of warblers – American Redstart, Bay-breasted, Black-and-white, Black-throated Blue, Black-throated Green, Blackburnian, Blackpoll, Blue-winged, Chestnut-sided, Common Yellowthroat, Hooded, Magnolia, Ovenbird, Tennessee, and Worm-eating. We finished the trip with a picnic lunch at the South River Picnic Area and concluded the trip with 37 species.

September Hillandale Park Trips - *Tom Mizell*

Ten members of the Rockingham Bird Club (RBC) found 33 species at Hillandale Park on a pleasant **September 11, 2014** morning with temperatures in the 60-70s. Wish list birds included Kentucky Warbler and “any bird”. We satisfied the second wish.

During the first 75 minutes we found 21 species. Among the early birds were Blue Jays chattering (surprise!), Red-bellied and Downy Woodpeckers, Brown Thrasher, Gray Catbird, Common Yellowthroat and Eastern Wood Pewee. At 9:15 AM we found a Yellow-billed Cuckoo, American Redstart and Magnolia Warbler in a walnut tree next to the golf course (in the vicinity of some recently fallen trees). As we neared the northwest corner pedestrian bridge we added Yellow-throated Vireo, Turkey Vulture and Towhee.

After we crossed the bridge Greg Moyers spied a Philadelphia Vireo among the walnut trees between the bridge and Shelter #11. It was quite a treat as all had opportunity to watch this bird as it moved overhead giving various angles of viewing for several minutes before we finally moved on.

As we walked the southern loop we found Red-tailed Hawk, Northern Mockingbird, American Goldfinch, Bluebird and an accipiter that we could not ID. We concluded this walk around 10:45 AM. A Black Snake made an appearance to some of the group.

Anonymous Quote after a face to face encounter with a Ruby-throated Hummingbird. *“I believe Don needs to wear a safety helmet!”*

A Cooper’s Hawk was perched atop a dead oak tree to the north of the playground parking lot as we assembled at 8:00 AM on **September 17, 2014**. We observed a moment of safety, and one member encouraged us to exercise caution due to a fairly heavy walnut crop along many portions of the trail.

We then proceeded along the road toward the pedestrian bridge at the log cabin, and suddenly the Cooper’s Hawk swooped into the walnut trees at the cabin. It flew out within moments and a second one followed the first one heading south; a nice greeting for 10 members of the RBC and 1 visitor. This day’s “Wish list” included Kentucky and Hooded Warbler.

The morning air filled with the chatter of Blue Jays along with the churl of Red-bellied Woodpeckers. By the time we reached the tree line behind the cabin we tallied 10 species including Mourning Dove, Gray Catbird, Tufted Titmouse, Carolina Chickadee and Carolina Wren.

Eric Saner, our visitor who had never been on a bird walk before, spotted a Brown Thrasher on the trail ahead. Then we saw a second one. We moved a couple hundred feet down the trail, and Kathy Byers spied a Yellow-billed Cuckoo hiding in an osage orange tree. It remained in the tree for some time moving somewhat secretively among the leaves in its foraging. With ample time and various members’ kind directions I think we all got looks at this bird as it dined and moved about in its distinctive manner. It was a life bird for Milla Sue Wisecarver. We added Northern Flicker and Rose-breasted Grosbeak. Chimney Swifts flew above the treetops and a Ruby-throated Hummingbird moved around us feeding on the reddish-orange jewel-weed.

Bingo! A few moments after we enjoyed the Yellow-billed Cuckoo we encountered a feathered flurry. American Redstart, Downy Woodpecker, White-breasted Nuthatch, Red-eyed Vireo, Magnolia Warbler and Black-throated Blue surrounded the group. These appeared nearly simultaneously and challenged our “seeking, focusing and finding skills” By 9:05 AM we tallied 24 species.

It was fairly calm for the rest of the northern loop. As we approached the cabin again, we found a male Rose-breasted Grosbeak in a wild cherry tree. It was not the easiest bird to see but the determined group did not move on until **all** had seen this bird enjoying the fruit

of the tree. Those that remained for the southern loop were somewhat scattered along the path but as a group managed to add Black-and-white Warbler, House Finch, Turkey Vulture, Common Grackle, European Starling, Mockingbird and Phoebe.

By walk's end (at 11:25 AM) the original 11 enthusiasts had shrunk to 4 and as we slowly opened our car doors, we once more scanned the skies. Our last moment glances managed to find two Red-tailed Hawks circling overhead. In essence this walk was book-ended by a pair of Cooper's Hawks and the Red-tailed Hawks. Species total was 33.

On Monday **September 22, 2014** with blue skies with some clouds and temperatures in the 50s, nine members of the Rockingham Bird Club set up their lawn chairs in marching band precision. As members arrived groups of American Robins provided a welcome. A Red-bellied Woodpecker sounded as we entered the parking lot. The almost non-stop chatter of Blue Jays and White-breasted Nuthatches filled the cool crisp morning air as well.

At 8:04 AM the first warbler appeared. A Black-throated Green looked down upon us from the nearby walnut trees as it foraged among the walnuts and the now-yellow leaves for a snack. It quickly flew away as it must have known we all wanted to get good looks. Within the first half hour we tallied 17 species from the surrounds of shelter #11. These included Turkey Vultures (TV), Mourning Doves, and Chimney Swifts, Common Grackles and European Starlings winging overhead. We heard Canada Geese and a Yellow-billed Cuckoo from the direction of the Northwest corner of the park. In the nearby trees we saw Tufted Titmouse, Carolina Chickadee, Gray Catbird and Downy Woodpecker. The shelter water fountain attracted Blue Jays and Robins. Dona Dobbs spotted a Brown Thrasher. It was seeking moisture from the fountain overflow that filled a small depression on the ground allowing some water to pond. The group's collective voices jumped a few octaves when we saw that the ponded water was also being visited by a Garter Snake. Surprisingly the birds did not seem to be concerned about the snake.

About mid-morning Harold Jones spied some TVs high overhead, and in their company was at least one Broad-winged Hawk. It rose higher and then streamed south, no doubt headed towards the Afton Hawk Watch where several of this day's lawn chair observers had spent enjoyable times in recent days.

As our time drew to a close Fletcher Bingham and Randy Cline strolled around a small section of the woods in hopes of flushing some birds towards the lawn chair group. They met with some success as Randy was introduced to a Black-and-white Warbler.

Around 10:30 AM we packed up the chairs on this last day of summer. Some other birds we enjoyed were Cooper's Hawk, Cedar Waxwings, American Goldfinches, and Eastern Wood Pewee - most of us got very good looks at this bird as it hawked insects. Although not seen, a Pileated Woodpecker's call in the distance penetrated the cool air on at least one occasion. We had 31 species of birds this last day of Summer. See you in the Fall!

On **September 23, 2014** nine members of the RBC celebrated the first day of Fall at Hillandale Park. As the group gathered they listed Pileated Woodpecker, Parula Warbler and "any warblers" as target birds. It was a beautiful morning. Temperatures in the low

forties with the overnight low from Summer to Fall in the 30s. One member had 35 degrees this morning. **Thank you** Tom Lord for getting the walk started!

Thirteen species were found in the first 45 minutes. Eastern Phoebe, Cedar Waxwings, Northern Flicker, Gray Catbird and Brown Thrashers were some of the early favorites. About 8:45 AM, after we had passed the cabin about 100 yards along the golf course boundary, we were blitzed by Warblers. "WOW", "6 in a row!", "a double trifecta" were expressions that were shared by the group as the blitz concluded. The American Redstart was the first warbler to appear in the walk. It then shared the treetops and eye level brush with Black-throated Blues including a striking male, Magnolia Warblers, Black-throated Greens, Hooded Warbler and Tennessee Warbler. It was exciting to see these 6 warblers in quite rapid succession. At times one could see 2 different warbler species in the field of view. Then above the canopy most of the group got a glimpse of a Peregrine Falcon as it streaked overhead heading south.

It was an enjoyable 15 minutes and the group was quite pleased to witness this unexpected parade. Other warblers we observed included Blackpoll, Bay-breasted, Common Yellowthroat and a Yellow-rumped Warbler. Eastern Wood Pewees, and Blue-gray Gnatcatchers were also seen swooping for insects and perching on bare branches.

We also found Scarlet Tanagers, Ruby-throated Hummingbirds, House and Winter Wrens, Northern Mockingbird, House Finch and Field Sparrow. As I had previously promised my wife a late morning walk I excused myself to the remaining 3 birders still on the trail at 11:15 AM. As I was leaving, a Cooper's Hawk was heard calling from the direction of last years active nest just north of the Maintenance Building. My wife and I then walked a couple circuits of the road that loops around the first several shelters and that nest site and as we walked we happened to see a Cooper's Hawk flashing through the understory. It made an unsuccessful pass at what appeared to be Grackles and then perched on an oak limb for a few moments before it vanished into the forest. During our 3-plus hour walk we saw and/or heard 43 species. Welcome Fall! Hope you can join us in October.

Rock Fish Gap Hawk Watch Trip - Tom Lord

It was a beautiful day on the mountain with a lot of Broad-winged Hawks - 2674 reported for the day! Also reported were 10 Bald Eagles, 10 Ospreys, 2 Peregrine Falcons, 72 Sharp-shinned Hawks and 6 Cooper's Hawks. Our group of 3 didn't see all of these, but did see most of these species. It was crowded with people - about 30 were enjoying the show. One of the Bald Eagles came fairly close providing a good look at an adult with its white head and tail. A good day for watching hawks!

BIRD SIGHTINGS:

Ken Hinkle had **Chestnut-sided, Worm-eating, and Canada Warblers** in his yard on Aug. 24.

Diane Holsinger spotted a **Great Egret** flying over the North River Bridge in Bridgewater on Aug. 27.

Ken Hinkle and Harold Burkholder heard a late **Whip-poor-will** at Hone Quarry on Sept. 2.

Diane Holsinger has had a number of good yard birds including **Magnolia Warbler, American Redstart, and Common Yellowthroat** on Sept. 2, **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** on Sept. 8, and a **Red-headed Woodpecker** and calling **Eastern Screech-Owl** on Sept. 9. On Sept. 19, Diane had a banner day with **Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Wood Thrush, Red-headed Woodpecker, Ovenbird, and Cape May, Chestnut-sided, Magnolia, and Black-throated Green Warblers** among others.

Greg Moyers and William Leigh reported an 18 warbler day at Switzer Dam on Sept. 7. Highlights included **Wilson's, Nashville, Tennessee, Bay-breasted, Magnolia, and Canada. Red-breasted Nuthatches** were also seen.

Diane Lepkowski hosted a **Golden-winged Warbler** and a **Canada Warbler** in her yard water feature on Sept. 9.

William Leigh had several good warblers at Hillandale Park on Sept. 12 including **Wilson's, Cape May, Blackpoll, and Blackburnian**.

Diane Holsinger had a **Northern Shoveler** and a **Blue-winged Teal** along with **Semipalmated** and **Solitary Sandpipers** at Leonard's Pond on Sept. 15.

Clair Mellinger reported **Semipalmated, Spotted, and Solitary Sandpipers** at the pond on Sept. 19.

Diane Lepkowski and Greg Moyers reported the arrival of a few winter residents at Switzer Dam on Sept. 20. **Golden-crowned Kinglets, Red-breasted Nuthatches,** and a **Brown Creeper** joined **Scarlet Tanagers, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Swainson's Thrush,** and a number of warblers including **Bay-breasted, Tennessee, and Magnolia** among others. Diane and Greg then found an early **Northern Pintail** at the Nazarene Church Rd Wetland on their way back to town.

Diane Holsinger, while birding with friends in West Virginia, saw *several thousand* **Swallows** on the power lines and on the ground. There were mostly **Tree Swallows** but also some **Cliff, Rough-winged** and **Barn Swallows** mixed in. She also saw approximately 30 **Wood Ducks**.

Mike Smith reported seeing a **Nighthawk** flying near the Shenandoah River near Elkton on Sept 3. He heard a **Screech Owl** on Sept 9 near his home and on Sept 10, north of Luray, VA he spotted birds including 4 **Wild Turkeys**, 1 **Green Heron**, and 2 **Spotted Sandpipers**. On Sept 17 he saw the last **Hummingbird** at his feeder. He also heard a **Barred Owl** while camping at Loft Mountain campground in the Shenandoah National Park. At the Snickers Gap Hawk Watch, an adult **Bald Eagle** was chasing a fish-carrying **Osprey**. After a while the **Osprey** dropped the fish, and the **Bald Eagle** caught it midair.

An immature **Broad-winged Hawk** hunted from roadside utility lines for two consecutive days at Diane Lepkowski's home -- 9/23 and 9/24. Also on 9/24, a **Lincoln's Sparrow** visited Diane's yard water feature.

BIRD CLUB BOOK CLUB - *Maureen Gallagher-McLeod*

The B.C.B.C. will meet on Thursday, October 23, 2014, at 6:30 PM at the home of Elizabeth Ihle. After sharing a dinner, the group will discuss the book *The Private Lives Of Birds* by Bridget Stutchbury. For information about participation in a monthly book discussion, contact Maureen at famcleod@earthlink.net or 896-9541.

TREASURER'S REPORT - *Steve White*

Just a short note this time to remind those of you who have not yet renewed your membership that you can either see me at the meeting on Thursday October 2nd or mail me a check at 7738 Sparkling Springs Road, Singers Glen, Virginia 22850. Member dues are \$15 for individual membership and \$20 for family membership. Thanks to all those who have already renewed.

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 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.

If interested, please contact Clair at mellinac@emu.edu.

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT - Bill Benish

Please mark your calendar to join in this year's 115th 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. 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! Contact Bill Benish at [540-908-7336](tel:540-908-7336) or wcbenish@comcast.net.



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 a date/time (yet to be determined) in November, 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

PROGRAMS ON THE HORIZON....

NOVEMBER 6, 2014 – Peter Nebel, the VP of Programs for the Augusta Bird Club will present a program about “Qatar” birds.

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.

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