



Goldfinch Gazette

The Newsletter of the Rockingham Bird Club

<http://rockinghambirdclub.com>

Volume XLI

Number 2

October 2015

OCTOBER MEETING

DATE: Thursday, October 1, 2015

TIME: 7:00 PM

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

PROGRAM - *Denise Hoodock*

This month our speaker, Jeff Blalock, comes to us from South Boston, Virginia. Jeff has been birding in Virginia for over 30 years and has participated in Breeding Birds Surveys, the VSO Atlas Project, lead the Halifax County VSO Foray; established, and is the compiler for, the Banister River WMA Christmas Bird Count. He has been to Texas, Maine, Idaho, California, both North and South Carolina and Alaska birding. Besides birding he enjoys all things in nature and loves being outdoors.

The title of his presentation is “*Alaska – Birds, Mammals and Scenery*”. Jeff traveled to Alaska in June 2013 with Field Guides for nearly three weeks. Based out of Anchorage, he visited St. Paul Island, Denali National Park, Stewart and Kenai Fjords National Park, Nome and Barrow. This slide program covers birds, mammals and the great scenery along the way.

Before the meeting, please join us in hosting Jeff at The Capital Ale House, 41-A Court Square, in Harrisonburg, for dinner at 5:30 PM. Please contact Denise Hoodock at 540-828-2595, 703-216-5499 or dhooock@gmail.com if you'll be joining us for dinner.

OCTOBER FIELD TRIPS - *Diane Lepkowski*

Hillendale Park, Monday, October 5 with Tom Mizell – Meet at the children's playground parking lot at 8:00 AM for our monthly walk.

Wildwood Park (Bridgewater), Tuesday October 13, with Tom Mizell – Meet at the Wildwood Park parking lot at 8:00 AM for a ¼ mile birding walk. Depending on the birds, we MAY gather to scan the bluff AFTER the walk. If you are interested in doing so, bring lawn chairs, snacks and drink.

Lake Shenandoah, Saturday, October 24, with Greg Moyers – Meet in the parking lot 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

Shenandoah National Park – *Diane Lepkowski*

On Saturday, September 5th, despite promising skies in the Valley eleven RBC members met fog, drizzle and more fog upon entering the Park. While some birds were active as we reached Pocosin Cabin, hazy silhouettes made for challenging ID. But rewards came en masse once the weather cleared. Many birds gave us great views, including strikingly beautiful male Black-throated Blue and Hooded Warblers. Other warblers included American Redstart, Common Yellowthroat; and Cape May, Tennessee, Black-throated Green, Blackburnian, Bay-breasted, Black-and-white, Chestnut-sided, Worm-eating, and Nashville Warblers, bringing us to 13 warbler species at Pocosin. Greg Moyers and Barbara Andes added a Hensley Hollow Overlook Magnolia Warbler for an even 14. Other nice finds included Baltimore Oriole, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Scarlet Tanager; and Blue-headed and Red-eyed Vireos. Species total for the trip was about 32.

The weather continued to “behave” as we wrapped up at South River Picnic area to enjoy lunch and (of course!) the good company of friends.

Switzer Dam – *Greg Moyers*

Twelve RBC members attended the trip to Switzer Dam on September 16. We had a gorgeous day and a good amount of bird activity. We encountered a few nice mixed flocks on our way down the mountain. Early highlights included Cape May, Black-throated Green, Blackpoll, and singing Pine Warblers. Mid-way down the mountain we had a nice flurry which produced Scarlet Tanagers, Baltimore Oriole, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Ovenbird, American Redstart, Black-throated Blue, and Blackburnian Warblers. As the road wound around the lake, we found another flock. This group of birds included Tennessee, Chestnut-sided, and Magnolia Warblers. A bit further on, we got looks at a handsome Hooded Warbler and a Red-breasted Nuthatch. Activity slowed considerably back at the camp areas as the noon hour approached. On our way out, we heard Golden-crowned Kinglet, and had to stop while a group of Wild Turkeys crossed the road in front of us. We also got extended looks at a Black-throated Green Warbler and a Tennessee Warbler resting about a foot apart under the canopy. As we climbed the mountain toward Rt. 33, we hit our final mixed flock. Here we got nice looks at a Northern Parula and a Blackpoll Warbler. We finished with 13 species of warblers and 37 total bird species.



Northern Parula, Switzer Area

Photo: Diane Lepkowski

Hillandale Park Walk – Tom Mizell

On Thursday, September 10th, with an overcast sky and thunderstorms forecast, no less than fourteen members of the Rockingham Bird Club gathered at Hillandale Park. It was a surprising turnout considering the conditions. Our wish-list birds were Broad-wing Hawks and “warblers.”

A Fish Crow called loudly from atop one of the tall power transmission towers, giving parking directions to the numerous arrivals. Northern Cardinals, Mourning Doves, Blue Jays and White-breasted Nuthatches added their distinct song and chatter.

As we reached the pedestrian bridge, the group quickly focused binoculars on walnut and other trees, and on the brush surrounding the log cabin. This area was rich in bird activity. Red-bellied Woodpeckers, House Finches, Black-throated Green Warbler, American Redstarts, Red-eyed Vireos, Wood Pewee and Yellow-throated Vireo gave us much to enjoy early on. By 8:37 AM we were behind the cabin, walking north on the trail paralleling the golf course. Our count was at 20 species.

It’s happening again! The flight and movement of birds contrary to our walking direction gently splits up the group. Team “A” now backtracks while the remaining portion of us continues northward. The northward moving group picks up a Yellow-billed Cuckoo around 8:48 AM as it begins to rain. The count now stands at 21. We are getting wet. Fittingly, the term “Rain Crow” seems quite appropriate.

As Team “A” rejoins us, 15 or so minutes later, their pursuit adds some more fine birds to the morning’s tally. “What did you see?” I ask. They found Scarlet Tanager, Baltimore Oriole; Chestnut-sided, Parula, Magnolia, Cape May Warblers; and Brown Thrasher. At the northwest corner of the park, just prior to the pedestrian bridge, the now combined group of 14 found Eastern Towhee and Blue Gray Gnatcatcher. By 9:15 AM, we tallied 34 species. And then the rainfall intensified.

We headed to the nearest shelter due to the steady downpour. It was good to have that shelter close by! As we waited out the rain, it was brought to my attention that Tennessee and Blackburnian Warblers were also seen during the walk. The heavy rains resulted in 10 folk heading to drier places and by 10:10 AM, only four of the original 14 remained, hoping for clearing weather.

Well, we were able to resume the walk and cover the southern loop. We found Eastern Phoebe, Great-crested Flycatcher, American Crow, Tree Swallow and Chimney Swifts. Our last sighting at noon, (yes we enjoyed two more hours) was a Cooper's Hawk. Forty four species for the day! Summer is almost over; hope to see you in the fall!

Anonymous quote: *"I thought the rain would really put a damper on bird activity and sightings but we had surprisingly good success!"*

Shenandoah National Park – Tom Mizell

On Tuesday, September 15th, nine members of the Rockingham Bird Club, equipped with comfortable lawn chairs and at least a day's supply of food and drink, ascended the Blue Ridge Mountains for a visit to Shenandoah National Park. It was a beautiful day with temperatures rising from the 40s to the 70s on the drive.



We stopped at Swift Run Gap at 8:10 AM, at the Governor Spotswood Historical Monument and walked up a service road to a maintenance building. During our initial minutes, the woods were still and quiet. Along the short walk we found Downy Woodpecker, an unidentified Thrush, and a Pileated Woodpecker chattered. As we arrived at the maintenance building parking area, a traditional hot spot we wandered into a few years ago, the stillness gave way to a feathered flurry with movement in all directions. The trees behind the building begged our attention for several minutes. Here we enjoyed Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Gray Catbird, Blue Jay, Mourning Dove, American Goldfinches, Cedar Waxwings and a host of warblers. Black-and-white, Black-throated Green, Black-throated Blues, American Redstart, Canada and

Hooded Warbler flitted and fed, and chased each other left and right. So many choices to focus on -- our binoculars got a work out. A Brown Thrasher flew into the brush and a Rose-breasted Grosbeak flew into the churning mix of warblers. By 9:10 AM we listed 21 bird species. Dare we leave this place? Well, other Skyline Drive overlooks and picnic areas waited, so we reluctantly headed out. As we walked back to our vehicles, a motion "to set up lawn chairs at this special place during our next such visit" was passed unanimously.

A brief stop at the Hensley Hollow Overlook presented Eastern Towhees and we were lucky to see a Sharp-shinned Hawk flap and glide overhead as it moved south. At the South River Picnic Grounds we set up chairs and snacked on pumpkin pretzels. I note that while we scanned the area various members broke out their field guides and shared insights on the birds we had seen and hoped to see

this beautiful day. Classroom on the mountaintop--very neat. There was not as much bird activity here as in previous trips but more species were added, including: Turkey Vultures, Tree Swallows and Chimney Swifts high overhead; Flickers and Red-bellied Woodpeckers sounding in the deep woods.

It was convoy time along the drive as we enjoyed the colors of Fall fast approaching. A stop at The Oaks Overlook provided a grand view of the Valley and Massanutten Mountain. We sat and/or stood on the stone wall and reached into the blue sky. Virginia Creeper and a host of yellow flowers offered great color as Hummingbirds enjoyed the abundant Jewelweed. Dark-eyed Juncos, a Prairie Warbler and a Broad-wing Hawk were added at this overlook. At 11:45 AM, we realized it was time to go to the Big Meadows Picnic Grounds for lunch. So, we took a whirlwind loop through Lewis Mountain Picnic Grounds where we enjoyed lunch in a prior year. This locale has proven to be a good stop for Veeries in spring.

Lunch at Big Meadows added Carolina Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse and White-breasted Nuthatch. From our picnic tables we found a mini kettle of Broad-wing Hawks--perhaps seven circled overhead and then dispersed. After lunch we stopped by the Visitor Center adding Bluebirds and Chipping Sparrow. Then to the Meadows where we set up chairs one last time near the gate. A Palm Warbler was spotted in the locust trees south of the gate. Black Vulture and a Flycatcher (species) were added as well.

Time to head back to the Valley but of course we had to stop at Pocosin Trail. So, at 2:50 PM we began a short half hour walk down to the cabin and back. A Raven called "No more time" and we then headed home with our species count of 40 for the day. I can't wait to do this trip again!

Rockfish Gap Hawk Watch – Tom Lord

The sky was sunny and free of clouds on Friday, September 18th, at Afton Mountain for the hawk watch. Combined with a hazy sky on the horizon it was difficult spotting the hawks. Most of the Broad-winged Hawks and other species were far out in the valley and required telescopes to see them as distant specks. A few Ospreys, Broad-winged Hawks, Sharp-shinned Hawks, American Kestrels and a Bald Eagle came close enough to see with binoculars. The total count reported by the hawk watch for the day included: 3142 Broad-winged Hawks, 54 Sharp-shinned Hawks, 14 Ospreys, 13 Bald Eagles, and 13 American Kestrels. A Cooper's Hawk and a Merlin were also seen.

BIRD SIGHTINGS:

A **Glossy Ibis** was reported at Silver Lake on Aug. 19.

Diane Holsinger found a **Blue Grosbeak** on Daniel Cupp Rd on Aug. 21.

William Leigh reported a **Great Egret** at Silver Lake and two **Semipalmated Plovers** at the Oakwood Drive pond on Aug. 23.

Tom Mizell found a **Pied-billed Grebe**, a **Red-headed Woodpecker**, and a **Yellow-billed Cuckoo** at Wildwood Park on Aug. 26.

Allen Larner and John Pancake found a **Western Sandpiper** at the Oakwood Drive pond on Aug. 26.

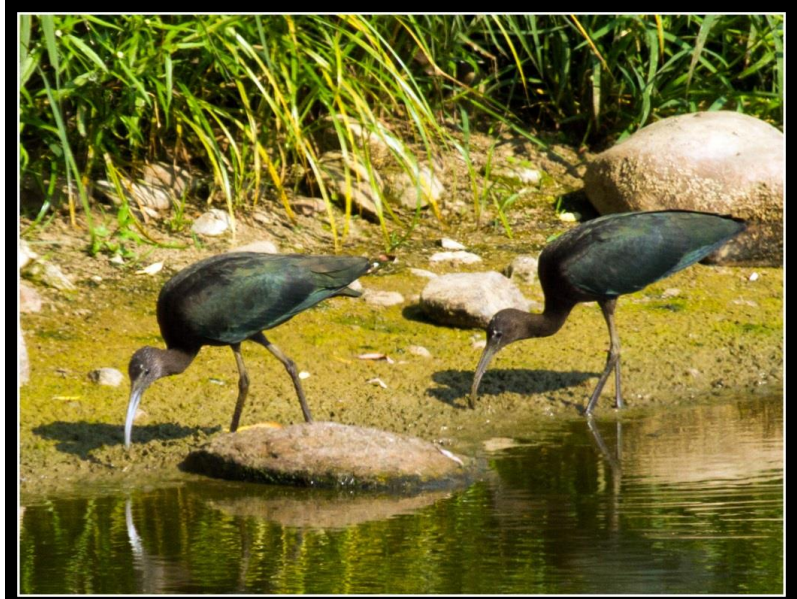
A pair of **Glossy Ibises** spent several days at a farm pond on Lumber Mill Rd. The birds were reported by Karen Shank and Ken Ranck on Aug. 27.

Diane Lepkowski had **Wilson's, Magnolia,** and **Blackburnian Warblers** in her yard near Harrisonburg on Aug. 31. Diane added a **Worm-eating Warbler** on Sept. 1.

Ken Ranck heard a **Northern Bobwhite** calling at his place in Mt. Crawford on Sept. 1.

Diane Holsinger reported several good yard birds in September including **FIVE Red-headed Woodpeckers** and a **Red-eyed Vireo** on the 1st, **American Redstarts** and a **Scarlet Tanager** on the 4th, **Yellow-billed Cuckoo** on the 10th, and **Nashville Warbler** and **Great Horned Owl** on the 18th.

Diane also reported an **Osprey** south of Broadway on Sept. 4 and another at Silver Lake on Sept. 18.



Glossy Ibises on Lumber Mill Rd, Dayton

Photo: Diane Lepkowski

William Leigh found three **American Golden-Plovers** at the Nazarene Church Rd Wetland on Sept. 5.

Greg Moyers found two **American Golden-Plovers** in the fields around the Shenandoah Valley Produce Auction on Lumber Mill Rd on Sept. 6. Earlier that day, Greg and Diane Lepkowski found a **Blue-winged Warbler, Canada Warblers,** and **Swainson's Thrushes** at Paul State Forest.

Greg Moyers, Barbara Andes, and Diane Lepkowski found a **Golden-winged Warbler, Red-breasted Nuthatch,** and probable **Philadelphia Vireo** at Switzer Dam on Sept. 7.

Tom Mizell watched seven **Yellow-billed Cuckoos** fly out of a tree at Wildwood Park on Sept. 8. The following day, Tom saw at least five **Great Egrets** below the dam at Wildwood.

John Shea found a **Wilson's Warbler** at Paul State Forest and six **Blue-winged Teal** at Silver Lake on Sept. 12.

Diane Holsinger found a **Merlin** and two flyover **terns** at Silver Lake on Sept. 12. On the same day, Diane reported a **Blue Grosbeak** on Cold Spring Rd near Timberville. Diane re-found the **Merlin** at Silver Lake the following day and added a **Black-crowned Night Heron** at the same location.

Greg Moyers and Diane Lepkowski found six **Pectoral Sandpipers,** along with the continuing **Semipalmated Plover** and a group of **Green-winged Teal** at the Oakwood Drive pond on Sept. 12. A group of up to nine **Pectorals** were still being seen at the pond through Sept. 18.

Karen Shank found a **Connecticut Warbler** west of Dayton on Sept. 13.

Diane Lepkowski reported a flock of **Blue-winged Teal** and several **Wood Ducks** at Leonard's Pond on Sept. 13.

William Leigh and Dave Wendelken found multiple **Philadelphia Vireos** and a **Golden-winged Warbler** at Switzer Dam on Sept. 14.

BIRD CLUB BOOK CLUB - *Maureen Gallagher-McLeod*

The B.C.B.C. will meet on Thursday, October 15, 2015, at 6:30 P.M. at the home of Joanne Grayson. After sharing a carry-in dinner, we will discuss the book “*In The Field Among the Feathered*” by Thomas R. Dunlap. Anyone interested in joining a book discussion may contact Maureen at famcleod@earthlink.net or [896-9541](tel:896-9541).

OTHER EVENTS:

Sierra Club Event: “Birds of the ‘Burg” Family-Friendly Bird Walk – Saturdays October 3 & November 7 – Meet at Shelter #12 at Hillandale Park in Harrisonburg, 8:30 AM – 10:30 AM. Beginners and families are welcomed! RBC birders and Virginia Master Naturalists will help lead these trips, which are sponsored by the Sierra Club Shenandoah Group. Children under 18 must be accompanied by parent or legal guardian. No reservations necessary. Bring binoculars if you have them. For questions, contact Ralph Grove (Sierra Club) at 478-3677 or Kathy Byers (RBC) at 820-6517.

REQUEST SUPPORT FOR KESTREL RESEARCH – *Jill and Lance Morrow*

There is much concern over decreasing kestrel populations in the eastern US, in particular. We have a kestrel nest box program that has been growing for 8 years called the Shenandoah Valley Raptor Study Area of approximately 144 square miles centered near Timberville. We had 70 boxes this year which produced about 200 young kestrels. Some of the nest boxes are getting old and are in need of replacement, plus we'd like to put up 11 more nest boxes. Thus, **we are in dire need of 16 kestrel nest boxes** but the boxes must be constructed to our needs and specifications. We'll provide the plans and details of construction. If you can help with construction or funding of construction materials, please contact Jill and Lance at landjmorrow@earthlink.net.

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