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

**Volume XLI**

**Number 1**

**September 2015**

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**SEPTEMBER MEETING \*\* NOTE CHANGE OF LOCATION \*\***

**DATE: Thursday, September 3, 2015**

**TIME: 7:00 PM**

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

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**PROGRAM - *Denise Hoodock***

We are pleased that Teta Kain will again be with us for our September program. Teta, a birdwatcher, naturalist, photographer, and speaker from Gloucester County, will be sharing her program entitled "Amazing Argentina." In November 2014, Teta traveled with a Victor Emanuel Nature Tour (VENT) group to Argentina, South America's second largest country, to explore points south of Buenos Aires, all the way to the city of Ushuaia, the southernmost city in the world. By the end of the trip, the group had tallied over 250 species of birds and 12 native mammals. As always, Teta had her camera poised for action at every turn, capturing a great cross-section of wildlife and the scenic beauty of this exotic country.

Before the meeting, please join us in hosting Teta at Traditions, 625 Mt Clinton Pike in Harrisonburg for dinner at 5:30 PM. Please contact Denise Hoodock at 540-828-2595, 703-216-5499 or [dhooock@gmail.com](mailto:dhooock@gmail.com) if you'll be joining us for dinner.

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**2015 BIRD SEED SALE \*\*COORDINATOR NEEDED\*\***

No one has stepped up to chair this important Club fundraiser. This is our prime fundraiser! We have a few folks willing to help get this rolling, but Bird Seed Sale help is needed. It is an annual event that will take some effort from now until the seed is delivered sometime in October. It's your opportunity to buy guaranteed-fresh seed for our feathered friends while supporting the RBC. Stay tuned for a coming September announcement, with orders due around mid-September and seed pickup mid-October. Please see Debbie Harrison or Diane Lepkowski if you can help IN ANY WAY, such as 1.) Make contact with supplier to get prices & make order, 2.) Prepare order forms, 3.) Receive order forms & money, 4.) Help loading vehicles on pick-up day.

## **SEPTEMBER FIELD TRIPS - *Diane Lepkowski***

**Shenandoah National Park, Saturday September 5, with Diane Lepkowski** – We'll visit Pocosin Fire Road/ Cabin and South River Falls areas, ending at South River Picnic area for lunch, weather permitting. This should be prime time for fall migrants, including warblers. We'll walk/ hike about 3 miles in all. Bring drinks, snacks and lunch if you wish, and be prepared for temps about ten degrees cooler than in the Valley. A few rain showers won't stop us, but we'll reschedule if severe weather looms. Restrooms are available at South River. Meet at Kohl's parking lot, Rt. 33 East, at 8:00 A.M. Shenandoah National Park entrance fee (or annual pass) applies. Please sign up in advance – contact Diane at [dianelep1@yahoo.com](mailto:dianelep1@yahoo.com) or 540-432-1047.

**Hillandale Walk, Thursday September 10 AND Wednesday, September 23 with Tom Mizell** – Meet at the Children's Playground at 8:00 A.M. Note two walks planned for the month. Hopefully we will find migrants and warblers and who knows what other surprises.

**Harrison Haven, Saturday September 12 with Debbie Harrison, 8:00 AM** – Debbie Harrison invites RBC members to her home (between Broadway & Orkney Springs) for a bird walk/ feeder watch. Sit on the porch & watch feeders for hummingbirds and more or search the treetops for migrating warblers and other feathered friends. The walk will meander thru varied habitats: hardwood forest (with stream), field (with pond), and pine woods. **Please contact Debbie if you'll attend** (and for directions): [woodshar@aol.com](mailto:woodshar@aol.com) or 540-856-3058. If you'd like to carpool from Harrisonburg, she'll try to connect you with other attendees.

**Shenandoah National Park, Tuesday September 15 with Tom Mizell** – Let's break out the lawn chairs and plenty of snacks, drinks and lunch for a trip to SNP. Meet at the Kohl's Parking Lot at 7:30 A.M. Please let Tom Mizell know if you plan to attend. He can be reached at 828-6059.

**Switzer Dam, Wednesday September 16 with Greg Moyers** – Meet at the Food Maxx (former Food Lion) parking lot on Rt. 33 west at 8:00 A.M. Bring a snack/ lunch and water if you'd like. We expect to return by 1:30 P.M. Please contact Greg at [gwmoyers@msn.com](mailto:gwmoyers@msn.com) or 434-3029 if you plan to attend.

**Rockfish Gap Hawk Watch, Friday September 18 with Tom Lord** – This should be near peak Broad-winged Hawk migration; thousands of birds are possible on peak day. Meet at 8:00 A.M. at the Mount Crawford park-and-ride off I-81 (on the south side of Rt. 257 just west of Exit 240). Return time by 3:00 P.M. Destination: The Inn at Afton, on Rt. 250 near Skyline Drive's southern end. Bring a chair, lunch, drinks, AND layers of clothing (it can get WINDY!) Restrooms are available nearby. Please contact Tom at 828-1226 if you plan to attend.

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## **TRIP REPORTS**

### **Cub Run Rd (George Washington National Forest), June 6 – Lisa Perry & Diane Lepkowski**

Our group of around fifteen convoyed up Cub Run Rd on Massanutten Mountain's eastern slope, first car-birding along the Forest Service Road, then hiking a couple of miles, partly creek-side, toward the ridge. With beautiful weather and virtually no other traffic, the group was able to enjoy the road trek, finding one target species, Prairie Warbler, in new-growth (previously burned) areas, and an unexpected group of Red Crossbills. Other finds included Black-and-white, Pine, Worm-eating and

Hooded Warblers, along with Common Yellowthroat and Ovenbird. Multiple “life bird” experiences made for lots of fun for everyone -- always a blast to share in that joy! And while the main group missed finding Yellow-breasted Chat, Greg Moyers continued a solo adventure and added the species.

### **Union Springs – *Greg Moyers***

Eighteen RBC members attended the trip to Union Springs on the evening of June 11. We gathered at the dam and headed back to the shale pit. Birds were fairly quiet along the way though we did hear a couple of Hooded Warblers singing near the road just beyond the shale pit. Around 8:40 P.M., our first Whip-Poor-Wills began calling. We could hear at least two birds calling but they remained distant so we headed back toward the dam. Our luck improved along the way as we had Whips in the road at multiple spots and most of the group was able to get a look at the birds, or the eye shine, if nothing else. We arrived at Kevin Shank’s place around 9:30 P.M. and immediately heard a Chuck-Will’s-Widow calling in the distance. We eventually followed the call to one of the clearings and were able to clearly hear the bird calling just inside the forest. It was a pleasant and productive evening. Many thanks to all who attended and to Kevin Shank and his family for letting us come listen to the hard-to-find Chuck-Will’s-Widow.

### **Summer Hillandale Park Walks – *Tom Mizell***

The June, July and August "17th" Hillandale Park field trips attracted forty people including six visitors. Our bird species totaled fifty. June (31 species) notables included Cedar Waxwing and Wood Thrush. July (35 species) added Red-winged Blackbird and Red-tailed Hawk. On Monday, August 17, fourteen members of the Rockingham Bird Club and two visitors filled the parking lot at Hillandale Park. It was 63 degrees as we gathered and while Blue Jays and Fish Crows loudly conversed, Randy Cline had a fleeting glimpse of a Pileated Woodpecker as it flew into the woods near shelter 12. Our wish list included Yellow-rumped Warbler, Baltimore Oriole, Scarlet Tanager and Frigate bird. Yep, that was on the wish list. We managed to see one of the target birds. Can you guess which one?

At the suggestion of Kathy Byers we departed from our usual clockwise walk around the trail and boldly reversed our routine pattern. We were quickly rewarded as some of the group saw a Yellow-billed Cuckoo in the walnut trees near the northernmost pedestrian bridge. Here we also got excellent views of a Red-eyed Vireo having breakfast in the canopy. Eastern Wood-Pewee, American Goldfinch and Carolina Chickadee and Carolina Wren added their songs to the morning walk. A Ruby-throated Hummingbird chased a Red-bellied Woodpecker into the Walnut trees. Chimney Swift, Northern Cardinal, Northern Flicker, White-breasted Nuthatch, Gray Catbird (feeding young), and Downy Woodpecker moved our count to 17 within the first 40 minutes of the walk. Many of the group lingered under the walnut trees in search of the elusive Cuckoo. By the time we crossed the bridge I noted that the original group of 16 had separated into 3 groups, each proceeding at a comfortable pace.

As we walked along the golf course boundary, close to a concrete slab near the mowed stretch along the stream channel, Diane Lepkowski spotted a Worm-eating Warbler. In the same brushy area we saw Tufted Titmouse, American Robin, Brown Thrasher and several other birds many of them feasting on bitter cherries. This turned out to be a hot spot as before we left the vicinity many were able to get excellent views of the Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Black-and-White Warbler enjoying a caterpillar, Blue-gray gnatcatcher catching moths and American Redstart. Ken Hinkle spotted a rather striking Hairy

Woodpecker that most of the group was able to enjoy as it worked its way up an oak limb. The Hairy lifted our woodpecker species count to five.

As two of the 3 groups converged around 9:15 A.M., Diane spotted a Canada Warbler in the walnut trees shading the log cabin. Field Sparrow, Great Crested Flycatcher and, what we concluded was a young Phoebe, were added to the list.

By 10:00 A.M. and temperature around 80, we were seven birders still searching. Northern Mockingbird, Turkey Vulture, Eastern Towhee, Tree Swallow, House Wren, Indigo Bunting and American Crow were added on the southern loop of the trail. Hoping to regain our birding legs after walking counterclockwise earlier in the morning, the remaining birders walked the northwestern loop again, this time in a clockwise manner. Our reward was an Osprey flyover and then a "wings folded back" dive at rocket speed resulted in Greg Moyers finding a Cooper's Hawk as it perched in a nearby tree. The hawk represented species number 42 and the walk concluded at 11:30 A.M. If you read this far, the only wish list bird observed this day was Baltimore Oriole. We hope you can join us in September to help us search for more warblers and other migrants as well as our usual friends of Hillandale Park.

A heartfelt "Thank You" to all who braved the rain, (drizzle in June), heat and humidity to help us explore Hillandale Park the summer of 2015. Your eyes, ears and helpful observation skills enabled us all to enjoy the birds and their habitat. Hope to see you on the trail in September!

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#### **BIRD SIGHTINGS:**

John Shea reported a **Wilson's Warbler**, **Northern Waterthrush**, and **Willow Flycatcher** at Cook's Creek Arboretum on May 23.

Ken Ranck reported **Black-crowned Night Herons** at the usual spot near Newman Lake at JMU on May 24.

Diane Holsinger reported a singing **Hermit Thrush** in her yard on May 31.

Tom Mizell found three **Ruddy Ducks** at Silver Lake on June 2.

William Leigh and Greg Moyers reported **Dunlin**, **Semipalmated Plover**, and **Semipalmated Sandpiper** at the Oakwood Drive pond on June 5.

Greg Moyers reported **Common Nighthawks** and a **Grasshopper Sparrow** in the fields behind the Broadway town park on June 5.

Tom Mizell found a **Black Tern** at Silver Lake on June 9.

Kevin Shank found a pair of **Eurasian Collared Doves** on West Dry River Rd on June 12.

Shaphan Shank reported a **Black-crowned Night Heron** along Cook's Creek in Dayton on June 23.

On July 3, William Leigh saw two **Night Herons** (probably **Black-crowned**) flying over the Cargill plant in Dayton.

Kevin Shank reported that 2-3 **Chuck-will's-widows** were still calling near his place at Union Springs as of June 29.

Diane Holsinger reported 14 **Whip-poor-wills** at Union Springs on July 2.

Calvin Jordan reported a **Pied-billed Grebe** on the Shenandoah River near Island Ford on July 6.

Diane Holsinger reported two **Eastern Screech Owls** at her place on July 7. Diane had several other good summer birds at her place including a **Worm-eating Warbler** on July 31, **American Redstart**, **Black-and-white Warbler**, and **Baltimore Oriole** on Aug. 4, **Blue-gray Gnatcatchers** on Aug. 10, and a **Blue-headed Vireo** on Aug. 14.

**Great Egrets** were seen frequently in the county this summer. Greg Moyers reported nine sightings between July 11 and Aug. 9 including three flying over Mossy Creek Rd on July 11, two at Silver Lake on Aug. 3, and birds at two different spots along Oakwood Drive in Bridgewater on Aug. 5. John Shea reported sightings at Cook's Creek Arboretum on July 19 and at the Nazarene wetland on July 22. Tom Mizell found four **Great Egrets**, as well as an **Osprey**, at Silver Lake on July 24. William Leigh had a pair of flyover birds at the Nazarene wetland on July 25. Tom Mizell reported one at Wildwood Park in mid August.

Allen Larner reported four **Ruddy Ducks** on Lake Shenandoah on July 11.

Karen Shank found **Blue Grosbeaks** at two locations along Nazarene Church Rd in mid July.

William Leigh heard a **Sora** and saw **Cliff Swallows** at the Nazarene Church Rd wetland on July 18. The **Sora** was still present as of Aug. 1.

Switzer Dam was a hotbed of warbler activity in July. Greg Moyers tallied at least thirteen warbler species including **American Redstart**, **Black-and-white**, **Blackburnian**, **Black-throated Blue**, **Black-throated Green**, **Canada**, **Cerulean**, **Hooded**, **Louisiana Waterthrush**, **Northern Parula**, **Ovenbird**, **Pine**, and **Worm-eating**.

Greg also reported **Red-breasted Nuthatches** at Switzer Dam on July 5 and July 18.

Greg and Diane Lepkowski found four **Common Mergansers** at Switzer Dam on Aug. 1.

William Leigh reported **Least**, **Solitary**, and **Spotted Sandpipers** at the intermittent pond at the intersection of Nazarene Church Rd and Community Center Rd on July 25.

Ron Shearer reported a **Barn Owl** along Thomas Springs Rd on July 26.

Dave Wendelken and William Leigh found a **White-eyed Vireo** on Waggy's Creek Rd on Aug. 2. **Bank Swallows** were seen at Silver Lake on several dates during the first week of August.

Kathy Byers saw a **Black-crowned Night Heron** at Purcell Park on Aug. 4. Later the same day, Kathy found seven young Black-crowned Night Herons at the Newman Lake spillway.

Ken Ranck and his wife saw three **Barn Owls** west of Dayton on Aug. 6.

Greg Moyers found a **Pectoral Sandpiper** along with **Least** and **Spotted Sandpipers** at the Oakwood Drive pond on Aug. 10. Diane Lepkowski added a **Semipalmated Plover** at the same location on Aug. 11.

Diane Lepkowski found a **Bonaparte's Gull** at Lake Shenandoah and a **Semipalmated Plover** on Osceola Springs Rd on Aug. 16. Diane had a **Yellow Warbler** and an **American Redstart** at her place outside of Harrisonburg on the same date.

William Leigh reported **Bank Swallows** along Artillery Rd on Aug. 16.



Bank (left) and Tree Swallows

Greg Moyers captured this comparison at Silver Lake.

*August 2015*

Kevin Shank had his first **Common Nighthawk** of the season at Union Springs on Aug. 17.

**Notable Out-of-County Birds:** A **Wilson's Phalarope** and a **Stilt Sandpiper** spent a few days at a small pond in Stuarts Draft recently. The phalarope was reported on Aug. 7 by Allen Lerner. The **Stilt Sandpiper** was reported later the same day by William Leigh.

**FROM THE CLUB PRESIDENT – Debbie Harrison**

The Executive Committee has resolved that some changes need to be made to our Constitution and Bylaws. The Bylaws stipulate that written notice be given at least 2 weeks prior to a vote by the membership. This vote will be taken at our October meeting. The changes will be available at the September meeting and/or sent via mail/email. If you would like to see the current Constitution and Bylaws, please check our website: [www.rockinghambirdclub.com](http://www.rockinghambirdclub.com), or contact President Debbie for a written copy.

The Bluebird Trail at the Rockingham County Fairgrounds was a big help to our local birds: 28 Bluebirds, 3 Tree Swallows, 6 Chickadees & 9 House Wrens were fledged! If anyone (not already involved) is interested in monitoring Bluebird trails, please let Debbie Harrison know. The Club has had a request to establish a trail at the Edith J. Carrier Arboretum. Monitoring requires a monthly (couple hours) commitment and is very rewarding to see the transitions from nesting to eggs to young to fledging. More information is also available at [www.virginiabluebirds.org](http://www.virginiabluebirds.org).



**House Wren eggs and young**

Found in bluebird box at the Rockingham County Fairgrounds – May 2015

*Photo: Jake Hoodock*

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

The B.C.B.C. will meet on Thursday, September 24, 2015, at 6:30 PM in the home of Martha Few. After sharing a carry-in dinner, we will discuss the book “*Nature Wars: The Incredible Story of Wildlife Comebacks*” by James P. Sterba. If you are interested in joining the book discussion, contact Maureen at [famcleod@earthlink.net](mailto:famcleod@earthlink.net) or 896-9541.

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## **TREASURER REPORT – *Steve White***

I’m happy to start a new fiscal year with this wonderful organization that I've had the pleasure of serving for eleven years.

On 28 July 2015 the annual inspection of the treasurer's books was held, as mandated in our by-laws. The committee for reviewing the treasurer's books met and, after a fine-toothed comb was passed over the records for fiscal year 2014-2015, it was determined that all was in order and that all checks and receipts were duly authorized, written, substantiated by our bank, and balances at the end of the fiscal year agreed to the penny with bank statements.

In fiscal year 2014-2015, our club registered its most generous year of my tenure as treasurer. We donated a total of \$5,550 to a number of conservation and ornithological-oriented charities, fulfilling the mission as stated in our by-laws, of furthering the study, appreciation, and preservation of birds.

Those donations are largely made possible by revenue from our member dues. (You were probably afraid I would say that!) So, **please renew your membership as soon as convenient**. The price is still the same good deal as it's been for the last eleven years. \$15 for individual, \$20 for family. Greater contributions are most heartily accepted: \$30 for expanded; \$50 for contributing, and \$100 for sustaining. I will be at all of the club's regular meetings (Lord willing and the creeks don't rise) for the rest of this fiscal year. You can bring your member dues to me then. Or you can send them by check to me at 7738 Sparkling Springs Road, Singers Glen VA, 22850.

Welcome back, and good birding to all our members, past, present, and new.



Peregrine Falcons

Raised and released this summer in the Shenandoah National Park.  
Note the size difference between the larger female, top right, and the  
male beside her.

*Photo: Diane Lepkowski*

Rockingham Bird Club  
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**MEMBERS AT LARGE: Bill Benish & Lisa Perry**

**GOLDFINCH GAZETTE - Denise Hoodock**