



Goldfinch Gazette

The Newsletter of the Rockingham Bird Club

<http://rockinghambirdclub.com>

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SEPTEMBER MEETING

DATE: Thursday, September 1, 2016

TIME: 7:00 PM

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

PROGRAM: This month we welcome back Teta Kain to our podium to start off our 42nd program year. Teta, a birdwatcher, naturalist, photographer, and enthusiastic speaker from Gloucester County, will be sharing her recent adventures in Alaska. This is sure to be a program full of wonderful stories and photographs.

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 703-216-5499 or dhoodock@gmail.com if you'll be joining us for dinner.

Be a Field Trip Leader! You choose the location and schedule. We have been relying on the same SMALL core group of leaders who generously continuing to offer trips. If you would like more trips, trips to different locations (including out-of-area), trips that start late or start early, then please contact Diane Lepkowski about the trip(s) you'd like to help coordinate and lead. You do not need to be an experienced birder to be a trip leader!

SEPTEMBER FIELD TRIPS - *Diane Lepkowski*

Shenandoah National Park, Saturday, September 3, with Greg Moyers – Greg will lead us on this trip to Skyline Drive. Stops will include Pocosin Cabin Trail and South River Picnic Area. We will meet in the bottom section (away from the storefront) of the Kohl's parking lot at 8:00AM. We'll finish at the picnic area so bring a lunch if you wish. **Contact Greg at gwmovers@msn.com or 434-3029 if you plan to attend.**

Rockfish Gap Hawk Watch – NOT AN ORGANIZED TRIP but if the weather cooperates, **Saturday September 17 & Sunday September 18, should be at or near peak for Broad-winged Hawk migration.** This is the weekend following the Open House. (So there will be less food and

entertainment, but more birds are likely!) Peak day in the past has fallen between Sept 16 and 22 or so, with thousands of Broad-wings tallied in a single day!

Visit <http://www.rockfishgaphawkwatch.org/> for more information and/or find them on Facebook.

Hillandale Park, Thursday, September 22, with Tom Mizell – Meet at 8:00 AM at the children's playground parking lot just across the road from the log cabin. The walk will continue past 10:21 AM which a little birdy tells us marks the passage of Summer to Fall. Hope to see you in September.

Shenandoah National Park, T.B.A with Tom Mizell – We will try to schedule a Shenandoah National Park "lawn chair trip" in September to catch some early fall color as well as migrants and year-round residents of our National Park. The National Park is celebrating 100 years so this will be a special time to enjoy our local resources. *The date for this trip will be announced via email.* We have enjoyed these trips for several years now. We stop at some of our favorite spots, scenic overlooks and picnic areas between Swift Run Gap and Big Meadows. Stops may be as short as 10 minutes or a half an hour or more with several opportunities to get out the lawn chairs and snacks and relax with other birders. We then enjoy a brown bag lunch by the time we reach the Big Meadows picnic area. Bring food and drink as needed along with lawn chairs, insect repellent, sunscreen, etc., and jackets in case it gets cool. For those that enjoy walking you will have opportunity for that as well but it's mainly a time to enjoy birding from a comfortable seat. If interested, call Tom at 828-6059.

TRIP REPORTS

Cub Run Road, June 6 – *Diane Lepkowski*: Prairie Warblers sang all along the way in the National Forest's previously burned areas. We found lots of E. Towhees, Hooded Warblers, Ovenbirds, and a few Scarlet Tanagers; plus a couple of Black-and-white Warblers, Wood Thrushes, and A. Redstarts. We were excited to find a pair of Pine Warblers, with one feeding a youngster. That excitement turned sour with better looks at the juvie – a Brown-headed Cowbird.

Heading back down the mountain as we wrapped up the trip, we really lucked out. One of our last stops in good "chat-habitat" turned up a distant bird, calling. Though it was at least 100 yards away, we spotted the Yellow-breasted Chat atop a snag. It graciously stayed long enough for Greg to set up his scope, giving most of us nice looks. Nearby a Broad-winged Hawk flew by low, carrying food.

We did our best to atlas this trip for the VA Breeding Bird Atlas as we meandered through two atlas blocks, dipping briefly into a third. With Lisa Perry (co-Region 3 atlas coordinator) co-leading the trip, we had lots of good conversation re: atlasing protocol. A nice learning experience for us all!

Though we enjoyed many birds, species with the highest individual count seemed to be dog tick! Unfortunately, that's a species that sticks with you... we didn't have this "blessing" last year; next year we'll be ready!

Union Springs – *Greg Moyers*: Seven club members and a guest made the trip to Union Springs on the evening of June 9. We saw a pair of Indigo Buntings at the dam and then proceeded back to the shale pit to wait for the Whip-Poor-Wills to start calling. While waiting, we heard Ovenbirds and Hooded Warblers and got looks at Worm-eating and Black-and-white Warblers. Harold Jones alerted us to a Barred Owl calling in the distance. We only heard one Whip-Poor-Will at the shale pit so we started back toward the dam. Along the way we were able to see one Whip in the road and heard as

many as three calling at the same time at a few stops. We estimated 10-11 total birds. We concluded the trip with a stop at Kevin Shank's place where we were pleased to hear the Chuck-Will's-Widow calling in what has become the usual spot at the back of a clearing.

July Hillandale Walks – *Tom Mizell*: Now, how many birds do you see in that Bitter Cherry Tree? Our July 21, 2016 bird walk got off at a slow pace as only 13 species of birds were seen or heard during the first hour of the walk. Not that 13 was a disappointment, but when 6 new species are found at 1 tree after an hour and a half search that gave us reasons to smile and nod our heads in enjoyment. But let's go to the beginning of the walk...on a sunny Thursday, seven members of the Rockingham Bird Club gathered at the main Hillandale Shelter for our first walk of Summer. It was 70 degrees by 8 AM and the bright sun was shining warmly. As we flexed our binoculars, our wish list included Wood Thrush, Scarlet Tanager and Yellow-billed Cuckoo. An Accipiter flew over announcing 8 AM. Let the walk begin. As we walked through the gate at the shelter and under some Walnut trees we heard a two sentence Safety Lecture cautioning us about the Walnut crop. Exercise caution due to Walnuts possibly falling on us and/or us stepping on them and falling ourselves. Now properly cautioned we headed to the shadier loop in our figure-eight trek, which, by the way, is loaded with Walnut trees. Early birds included American Robin, Blue Jay, Mourning Dove, White-breasted Nuthatch, and Fish Crow. We found Tufted Titmouse as we approached the northernmost shelter and Dan Perkuchin spied a Downy Woodpecker at the woods edge. A Red-bellied Woodpecker called and Chimney Swifts' rapid wing beats were observed overhead. By the time we reached the northern pedestrian bridge, we enjoyed Northern Cardinal and Eastern Towhee songs as the notes cascaded along the somewhat dry stream channel.

Crossing the bridge, Fletcher Bingham spied a Carolina Wren. The temperature was heating up and, being intelligent birders, we lingered along this shady section of the trail adjacent to the golf course. For the first time (likely due to the lull in bird activity) one of the regulars noticed the side-by-side exercise seats and tried them out. Now mindful of fitness opportunities about us, we journeyed on to the cabin area. Due to the lack of birds, many of the group were now looking at butterflies and flowers. The scarcity of birds had turned our attention elsewhere. We enjoyed Tiger Swallowtails, Eastern-tailed Blue, Orange Sulfurs and a multitude of Cabbage White Butterflies. A faded Emperor Butterfly was visiting many of the Sapsucker holes in a small tree. Would he visit them all? We did not have time to answer that question. Plants such as Heal-all, Bergamot and Knapweed became a focus of discussion that was usually loaded with comments on bird sights and sounds.

Never fear -- Donna Dobbs noticed what at first was thought to be a Great Crested Flycatcher flitting about in a tall Bitter Cherry tree that was heavy with fruit. Various branches bounced and within a few minutes we added Gray Catbird, Northern Mockingbird, Cedar Waxwing, American Redstart and American Goldfinch. A bit down the trail Ken Hinkle spotted a Northern Flicker and another Redstart as Ken found himself perched on another piece of the exercise equipment. (There are at least 6 pieces of exercise devices along the gravel trail). Robins and Cardinals were also feasting on the bitter cherry berries and in short order our observation list reached 21. Two Turkey Vultures streamed westward over this snacking tree. We enjoyed the activity in this tree for at least 10 minutes. We heard the singing of an Indigo Bunting and soon saw one atop a distant tree. Total species now 23.

By 10:00 AM we were standing in the shade in the southwest corner of the loop. Dan Perkuchin added House Sparrow and Eastern Wood Pewee to round out the southern loop. Seven birders soon dropped

to three birders and we headed towards our cars by following the channel upstream of the cabin bridge. We walked up on a solitary young fawn as it grazed in the grasses. Also at this location, we watched a mix of Cardinals, Doves and Robins that were bathing in some small pools of water. We spied a preening Brown Thrasher that gave us good looks. The Thrasher was a life bird for Debbie Witman. And on that note, with the temperature in the low 80s, we concluded our walk at 10:45 AM. Twenty-seven species were enjoyed this day. We are hopeful the Jewel weed will be in bloom in August and provide us at least a glimpse of the Ruby-throated Hummingbird.

BIRD SIGHTINGS

In addition to **Red Crossbills** and other expected species, Ken Hinkle and Tom Mizell found a **Red-headed Woodpecker** on top of Shenandoah Mtn on May 24. **Red Crossbills, Red-breasted Nuthatches, Yellow-rumped Warblers, Prairie Warblers, Golden-crowned Kinglets, and Ruffed Grouse** have been reported from this location throughout the summer. Ed and Nancy Lawler also reported a **Black-billed Cuckoo** and **Blue Grosbeak** along the Bother Knob Rd on May 28.

Herb Myers reported a **Dunlin** at Leonard's Pond on May 26.

Marshall Faintich found a **Franklin's Gull** at Silver Lake on May 27.

Greg Moyers and Barbara Andes found a **Kentucky Warbler** at Slate Lick Fields on May 30. **Kentucky Warblers** have also been found throughout the summer around the Hightop Mtn parking area on Skyline Drive.

Jonathan Todd reported a **Least Flycatcher** at Slate Lick Fields and a **Cerulean Warbler** on Long Run Rd on May 30.

A **Yellow-breasted Chat** was seen on the RBC club trip to Cub Run Rd on June 4. Jonathan Todd heard a probable Chat at the same location a couple of weeks later.

Diane Holsinger had several good yard birds over the summer including **Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Scarlet Tanager, Wood Thrush, and Great Crested Flycatcher.**

A **Sandhill Crane** made a brief appearance at a farm west of Dayton on June 10.

Ken Ranck reported a **Red-headed Woodpecker** on Valley Branch Rd on June 11.

Greg Moyers reported that a pair of **Green-winged Teal** was present at the Nazarene Wetland as late as June 11. Greg also found a **Blue-winged Teal** at the wetland on June 23.

Jonathan Todd spent time on the Shenandoah River near Port Republic on June 20 and near Elkton on June 26 and found juvenile **Spotted Sandpipers, Bald Eagle, Wood Ducks, and Red-headed Woodpeckers**, among others.

Greg Moyers reported a **Great Egret** at the pond at the intersection of Lewis Byrd Rd and Oakwood Drive near Bridgewater on June 24.

Jonathan Todd reported **Common Yellowthroat, Willow Flycatchers, and Orchard Orioles** in his yard in Harrisonburg in late June and early July. Jonathan also reported a **Red-headed Woodpecker** on Greendale Rd on June 29.

Ron Shearer found an adult **Sora** with three chicks at the Nazarene Wetland on July 5. On July 15, four **Virginia Rails**, including two chicks, were reported at the same location. Both species were seen and photographed by multiple birders in subsequent days.

William Leigh found an **American Woodcock** on the Bother Knob Rd (FR-85) and a **Great Egret** at Nazarene Wetland on July 10.

Diane Lepkowski reported a **Great Egret** at Lake Shenandoah on July 14 and four **Spotted Sandpipers** on July 15.

Diane Holsinger reported a **Pied-billed Grebe** at Nazarene Wetland on July 16.

Jonathan Todd reported a **Red-shouldered Hawk** on Stone Spring Rd on July 22 and a **Glossy Ibis** and several **Cliff Swallows** at Nazarene Wetland on July 27.

Greg Moyers reported several good birds at Switzer Dam on July 31 including a calling **Barred Owl**, **Golden-crowned Kinglets**, **Red-breasted Nuthatch**, juvenile **Broad-winged Hawks**, and 11 warbler species, including **Canada** and **Black-throated Blue**.

Tom Mizell found an immature **White Ibis** at Wildwood Park on Aug. 1. Multiple birders were able to see this bird over the next couple of weeks.

Diane Holsinger found a **Blue Grosbeak** and a **Bald Eagle** on Mountain Valley Rd on Aug. 2.

The farm pond off Oakwood Drive near Mt. Crawford has hosted several nice birds in recent weeks. Greg Moyers and Diane Lepkowski reported **Least, Semipalmated, Pectoral, Solitary, and Spotted Sandpipers, Greater Yellowlegs, and Blue-winged Teal** on Aug. 13, Huck Hutchens added **Semipalmated Plover** on Aug. 14, and William Leigh found a **Stilt Sandpiper** on Aug. 19.



Sora chick, Nazarene Church Road Wetland

Photo: Diane Lepkowski

The Bird Club Book Club will meet the evening of Thursday September 15, to share a carry-in meal and discuss The Forest Unseen: A Year's Watch in Nature by David George Haskell. Contact Maureen Gallagher-McLeod for more information at famcleod@earthlink.net or 896-9541.

Birds of the 'Burg: Saturdays, September 3 and October 1 - Guided bird walks for children and their families. 8:30-10:30 AM at Hillendale Park - Meet at shelter #12 parking area. Walk the trails and learn about the surprising variety of birds right here in our city park. School-age children and their families are welcome. Bring binoculars if you have them. All children (under 18) must be

accompanied by a parent or legal guardian. Led by Kathy Byers of the Rockingham Bird Club; sponsored by Sierra Club Shenandoah Group. For more information, contact Kathy Byers [\(540\) 820-6517](tel:5408206517) or Ralph Grove [\(540\) 478-3677](tel:5404783677)



Juvenile White Ibis, Wildwood Park

Photo: Diane Lepkowski

From The Treasurer - Steve White: I would like to welcome all returning members as well as new members. In starting my twelfth year as treasurer of the Rockingham Bird Club, let me note that annual member dues in this fine organization have remained the same for my entire tenure - \$15 for individual membership, \$20 for family membership. Dues are generally payable in September and October, according to our by-laws. Membership gets you our monthly newsletter by email or by regular US mail - your preference. In "The Goldfinch Gazette," you will find announcements concerning our monthly meetings, the time and place of the meetings, and the program to be presented. You will also find a schedule of upcoming field trips and contact information for those who wish to participate. You can read reports of past field trips and a list of interesting bird sightings to which you, as a member, are invited to contribute any unusual species. There will be announcements of impending meetings of the Bird Club Book Club and the book to be discussed as well as information on happenings of general interest in the Shenandoah Valley region.

As official keeper of the list of club members in good standing, I give my thanks to those who have already renewed for the current fiscal year (2016-2017). I encourage others to do so promptly, either through me at the club's Thursday meetings or by sending your checks, made out to "RBC," to 7738 Sparkling Springs Road, Singers Glen VA 22850. Thank you, and happy birding to everyone!



Juvenile White Ibis with Lunch! Wildwood Park

Photo: Diane Lepkowski

Rockfish Gap Hawk Watch Open House, Saturday, September 10, 10 AM – 3 PM

The Rockfish Gap Hawk Watch will be holding its annual Open House on Saturday, September 10, from 10 am until 3pm and we are looking for volunteers to help. Please let me know if you might be available to help for a few hours or the entire day. I need help with everything from setup starting at 8:30 am & take down at 3 pm, to manning the BBQ for cooking hotdogs, providing information at the display tables, offering raptor identification workshops, and in general helping visitors orient to the hawk watch and learn more about our migrating raptors.

We also invite the local bird clubs to setup information tables and if you wish, promote your annual birdseed sales. We are hoping to have a falconer on hand this year, which was a huge success last year. Please let me know ASAP if you are able to help in some capacity and when you are available.

In addition, the hawk watch continues their request for donation of binoculars and spotting scopes. We have several counters and trainees in particular who do not own a scope so if you have a used one you are no longer using the watch will put it to good use. Visitors at the hawk watch also always appreciate the ability to use binoculars when they visit.

We are also looking for donations toward the open house BBQ and the general operation of the hawk watch. Any help is always greatly appreciated.

Thanks for your support and we look forward to seeing you mountaintop.

Mary Mapel Hawk, Watch Open House Coordinator, [540-363-5035](tel:540-363-5035)

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