



Goldfinch Gazette

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

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Number 7

March 2013

MARCH MEETING

DATE: Thursday, March 7, 2013

TIME: 7:00 PM

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

PROGRAM, *Elizabeth Ihle*

The bird club will be back in its usual meeting place in Detweiler Auditorium at 7:00 PM on Thursday, March 7th to hear one of our favorite speakers, Teta Kain. Her program is "What's In Your Backyard?" It will be a collection of the doings, goings, wars, love affairs, and other events in the lives of bugs, birds, butterflies, and assorted other critters. As spring slowly approaches, Teta can give us pointers on events to look out for.

Beforehand, we shall meet for dinner at 5:30 at Teta's favorite Harrisonburg restaurant: Traditions at 625 Mount Clinton Pike. If you are planning to join us, please contact Elizabeth Ihle at 540-421-5257 or eliza51@aol.com.

MARCH FIELD TRIPS, *Diane Lepkowski*

Bridgewater Parks, Thursday March 14, Tom Mizell: Meet at the parking lot at Wildwood Park in Bridgewater for an outing that will cover some of the local town parks. We will begin at Wildwood Park at 8:30 AM with plans to visit other parks in Bridgewater including the Bridgeview Park, Seven Bridges Park, and the Cooks Creek Arboretum. Contact Tom Mizell at 828-6059 if you wish to join us. We should finish by noon. It is suggested that you bring snacks and drink.

Lake Shenandoah, Saturday March 16, Greg Moyers: Greg Moyers will lead a walk around Lake Shenandoah on Saturday March 16. We hope to find some migrating waterfowl such as Horned Grebes or Red-Breasted Mergansers as well as some early returning birds such as Tree Swallows and Eastern Phoebes. We will meet in the parking lot at the lake at 8:30AM. Please contact Greg in advance at gwmoyers@msn.com or 434-3029 if you plan to attend.

Hillandale Park Walk, Wednesday March 20, Tom Mizell: Meet at the Children's Playground Parking Lot at 8:00 AM for our usual monthly walk. For those that would like to both end the winter and begin the spring birding, meet me at 6:45 AM at the Children's Playground Parking Lot. Spring is scheduled to arrive at 7:02 AM and maybe we can enjoy some birds in both seasons.

Woodcock Trip – date and time TBA: We'll hope to coordinate a trip to watch displaying American Woodcocks this month. Possible destinations include Slate Lick Fields in Fulks Run or Shenandoah National Park/ Skyline Drive. Sign up at the meeting if interested in more information or contact Diane Lepkowski at dianelep1@yahoo.com.

BIRD CLUB BOOK CLUB, Maureen Gallagher-McLeod: The B.C.B.C will meet at 6PM on Thursday, March 21, in the home of Charles and Pat Churchman in Bridgewater. After sharing a meal, we will discuss the first half of the book *The Great Naturalists* edited by Robert Huxley. If you are interested in joining the discussion you may contact Maureen at famcleod@earthlink.net or 896-9541.

TREASUER'S REPORT, Steve White:

"Bonked Bird Boxes" -- Those of us who attended the RBC's December meeting were treated to a great presentation by Maureen Eiger on the rescue and rehabilitation of wounded birds. One way a bird gets hurt, as many of you have no doubt witnessed, is by flying into windows. Our club member of long standing Christina Bolgiano, author and nature writer, has generously offered to donate a pair of what she calls "Bonked Bird Boxes" that are beautifully crafted by her resourceful husband Ralph and imprinted with the image of one of our local birds. The Bolgianos report success in resuscitating stunned birds that have mistaken their large picture windows for thin air. They place the box on the ground over the wounded bird. In time, the bird then regains its bearings unthreatened by predators and when ready, it exits through the hole in the end of the box and flies off. Chris and Ralph report a sadder-but-wiser Northern Cardinal they managed to rescue this way that has since repeatedly returned to their feeders, carefully avoiding the "air space" that suddenly coalesced on him last time he plied it.

We are asking a \$20 donation for the purchase of each box, which will go to the RBC's operating fund. If you are interested, please contact me either by phone (540 908-1277) or email (finfile44@gmail.com). I will gladly deliver your Bonked Bird Box in person.

"Birdwatcher's Digest" Subscriptions -- Do not forget our club's mutually advantageous relationship with the publishers of the bi-monthly "Birdwatcher's Digest." If you subscribe to this informative little periodical and mention your membership in the RBC, the club receives a \$10 patronage check in return. It is a great way to support the club and get fascinating information on ornithology and birding every other month. There are several ways to subscribe. You can call toll-free at 1-800-879-2473 (don't forget to mention the RBC). Or you can mail or fax subscription forms which I'll bring to our next meeting on Thursday March 7th. The cost for a year's subscription is \$19.99

NOTE OF THANKS – Ken Hinkle

Folks, I was overwhelmed with the basket presented to me at the January meeting. I have dubbed this an "Early Easter Basket" as it was full of eggs loaded with so many kind words of appreciation and many other goodies. I am not even sure who all put some of the items in the basket, but thanks so much for being such a great group of people to be associated with. One more thing -- Cora loved the basket!

I have loads of White-crowns and Cardinals and have enjoyed a Flicker working my feeders this winter along with a regular Brown Creeper gleaning the trees. Looking forward to spring birding. - Ken

**editor's apology – we missed including Ken's thank-you last month!

TRIP REPORTS

Hillandale Park Walk -- Tom Mizell

On 20 February 2013, five members of the Rockingham Bird Club gathered in the parking lot at Hillandale. It was a sunny morning and the temperature for the walk ranged from 28 to 37 degrees F. Our wish list for the morning included: Rough-legged Hawk, Snowy Owl, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Bald Eagle, and Brown Thrasher. It is okay to smile when you read the wish list.

By the time we reached the bridge near the cabin we listed 15 species. These included Northern Flicker, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, American Robin and Eastern Towhee. Song and White-throated Sparrows along with Dark-eyed Juncos rustled and flipped over leaves along the path. Overhead Goldfinches, White-breasted Nuthatches, Carolina Chickadees, and Tufted Titmice moved about quite actively in the leaf bare canopy. The call of the Carolina Wren greeted us from time to time. Some Blue Jays chattered but we noticed there were not nearly as many as we had encountered in recent months.

As we drew closer to the northwest corner of the Park we were entertained by a Brown Creeper. It decided to land directly overhead allowing the group several minutes to practice their warbler neck exercises. The Brown Creeper stayed with us for a good while and inspired one of our members to lie down on the trail in order to get a more comfortable viewing of this special treat. You might guess who the young birder was that touched the earth that morning. A Yellow-rumped Warbler also appeared in this general area.

A solitary Mallard and a Canada Geese couple flew by around 9:37 AM. Near the completion of our first loop we distinctly heard several calls of a Sharp-shinned Hawk. We searched for this bird but were unsuccessful this time around. By now we were near the volleyball court. A few members sat down at one of the picnic tables while another member decided that the table top would be very comfortable to rest upon in similar fashion to that of the earlier mentioned young birder. The horizontal position on the table top was not only very comfortable but beneficial as very high overhead a Red-tailed Hawk was readily seen kiting. Thanks to Gabriel for demonstrating the benefits of horizontal birding earlier when he observed the Brown Creeper!

We began the second loop at 10:30 having encountered 28 species. It was fairly quiet for the next 30 minutes and the only new species added in that time was a calling Raven. We called back a few times and as you might imagine the Raven disappeared. One more flurry of new species occurred as we neared the cabin for a second time. We enjoyed a modest finish to this 3 hour walk as in rapid succession Eastern Bluebirds and a Hairy Woodpecker moved our morning total to 31 species. Before we left the Parking Lot, a Fish Crow moved the count to 32. See you in March!

2013 Raptor and Waterfowl Count, February 16 - Tom Lord

Six groups, totaling 19 people, looked for waterfowl and raptors throughout Rockingham County on a cloudy 29-34 degree F day with some snow flurries. This was the 13th year of the count. A total of 28 species were seen and 9 were new record high counts as follows: Mute Swans (17), Gadwalls (110), Northern Shovelers (48), Green-winged Teals (36), Belted Kingfishers (16), Turkey Vultures (411), Bald Eagles (6) Northern Harriers (4) and Red-tailed Hawks (94). The surprise of the day was finding 58 Wild Turkeys at the Packsaddle Ridge Golf Club-unfortunately not raptors or waterfowl. Thanks to all that participated! A job well done!

Christmas Bird Count (CBC), Bill Benish: On December 15, 2012, we completed our count day for the 113th CBC year for the Rockingham Bird Club-sponsored CBC Circle, code-named "VARC."

This year's highlights included Peregrine Falcon, and "Count Week (CW)" Palm Warbler and Ross's Goose. Unfortunately the Ross's Goose, which had been reported regularly on a Narrowback Rd. pond, eluded us on Count Day. Species with all-time high counts included: Carolina Wren (72), Killdeer (96), Red-tailed Hawk (73 – far surpassing last year's previous all-time high of 53), Northern Harrier (3), Bald Eagle (5), and Wood Duck (9.) Bald Eagles gave several field participants exciting experiences and great views. Several Wild Turkeys appeared in the flood plain at the doorstep of Bridgewater, east of Dry River near the confluence of the Dry and North Rivers.

Misses included Cedar Waxwing, and Purple Finch and some waterfowl species. The weather was warm and gentle which may have affected the likelihood of sightings for some species. Pine Siskin and Red-breasted Nuthatch both revealed themselves; this has been an irruptive season for these species and others more commonly wintering farther north.

A challenging bird was originally considered as a potential first for our count- Rough-legged Hawk. The photo documentation and written analysis on count day and photos taken later of what was possibly the same bird helped us see that although the belly band was unusually strong/dark, the wing length proportion was too short for Rough-legged and was consistent with the Red-tailed Hawk. My deep gratitude and thanks go to everyone who helped report and review this.

This year the \$5.00 individual participation fee was eliminated, and the CBC moved to an on-line format. The RBC covered the participation fees for Club members last year, and I'm pleased to report the Executive Committee has agreed that the Club will continue its support of this ongoing citizen science project with an annual \$150 donation. More importantly, I appreciate the 30 field participants and several others who focused as feeder watchers. Much of our circle lies within Augusta County, and we were delighted to have members of both clubs contributing to the Rockingham Count.

To receive information regarding the digital edition of *American Birds* this year, sign up online at www.audubon.org/citizenscience. The CBC report will no longer be printed and mailed to participants. For those without Internet access, please feel free to contact me (Bill Benish) at 540.908.7336 to review any details.

BIRD SIGHTINGS: Greg Moyers

Gabriel Mapel and his dad found two **Merlins** on Badger Road on 1/28. The following day, Gabriel reported that the **Great Horned Owl** was back on the nest near his house in New Hope. Gabriel reported that on 2/20, unfortunately the nest had been blown down.

Matt Gingerich reported a **Grasshopper Sparrow** and a possible **White-Winged Crossbill** on 1/31 at his place north of Harrisonburg.

Mike Smith had a **Pine Warbler** coming to suet from 2/1-2/4 at his home near Elkton.

William Leigh found eight **Redheads** and a **Greater Scaup** at Lake Campbell on 2/2.

Redheads have also been reported from Dinkel Avenue in Bridgewater and Silver Lake throughout February.

Diane Lepkowski and William Leigh flushed an **American Woodcock** at Slate Lick Fields on 2/10. They also found an early **Brown Thrasher** and a **Ruffed Grouse**.

John Shea found and photographed a **Peregrine Falcon** along Badger Rd on 2/12.



Golden Eagle (immature)
Highland County
Photo: Diane Lepkowski



Peregrine Falcon (immature)
Badger Rd.
Photo: John Shea

Gabriel Mapel found 65 **American Pipits** with **Horned Larks** on Strickly Road in Augusta County on 2/12. Gabriel also found a **Rusty Blackbird** along Patterson Mill Road on the same trip. He reports **Pine Siskins** and **Purple Finches** visiting his feeders in New Hope.

Diane Lepkowski and William Leigh found a male **Common Merganser** on North River in Bridgewater on 2/17.



Common Merganser
Bridgewater

Photo: Greg Moyers

Bill Benish and Robyn Puffenbarger had a **Dickcissel** at their feeder in Bridgewater on 2/18. On that same day, Greg Moyers, William Leigh, and Diane Lepkowski had a five **Golden Eagle** day in Highland County. **Bald Eagles** and a dark-morph **Rough-Legged Hawk** were also seen.

William Leigh reported a pair of **Horned Grebes** at Lake Shenandoah on 2/23. Gabriel Mapel found another Horned Grebe at Silver Lake and an **American Tree Sparrow** on Badger Road on the same date. Also on the 23rd, Greg Moyers reported three American Tree Sparrows and a pair of **Short-Eared Owls** in Swoope. Short-Eared Owls are continuing to be seen both in Swoope and near the Shenandoah Valley Regional Airport in Weyers Cave.

Diane Holsinger reported an **Evening Grosbeak** at her feeder on 2/25. On a private pond in Shenandoah County, Diane found good numbers and variety of waterfowl, including 11 **Tundra Swans**, 15 **Redheads**, 11 **Canvasbacks**, 17 **Ring-necked Ducks**, 25 **Gadwall**, seven **American Wigeons**, and seven **American Coots**

Charles “Zig” Ziegenfus and the JMU Ornithology Class reported a “single, lonesome” **Tree Swallow** at Lake Campbell on 2/27. (Highlight is likely the species’ return, not the bird’s possible emotional state...)

Wintering Waterfowl: Redhead

The male **Redhead's** plumage is very similar to the Canvasback's. Check your field guide for distinguishing features, including forehead and bill shape in profile view, and bill color. The Valley is within both species' wintering range.



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Redhead (male) at Silver Lake

Photo: *Diane Lepkowski*

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