



# Goldfinch Gazette

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

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May 2013

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## MAY MEETING

**DATE: Thursday, May 2, 2013**

**TIME: 7:00 PM**

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

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### **PROGRAM, *Elizabeth Ihle***

Our May speaker is Mary Elfner, a TogetherGreen Fellow, Class of 2011, of the Virginia Audubon Council. She will present a program about the Virginia Important Bird Areas Program, starting at the global level and working to the local level, and high priority species at all levels of conservation. She will also tell us about the TogetherGreen Fellowship program. Each year a portion of our proceeds goes to the Audubon Council, and so we'll learn a bit about how this money is being used.

Before the meeting, we'll meet for a 5:30 PM dinner at Taste of Thai (917 S. High St, Harrisonburg.) If you are able to join the group, please call Gloria Crump at 234-9300 or email her at [gcrump@netlos.net](mailto:gcrump@netlos.net).

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### **MAY FIELD TRIPS, *Diane Lepkowski***

**Shenandoah National Park with Greg Moyers, Saturday May 4:** We will plan to stop at the Pocosin Cabin Trail and South River Picnic Area. Meet at the Kohl's parking lot at 8:00 AM. We will plan to finish at the picnic area so bring a lunch if you'd like. Contact Greg at 434-3029 or [gwmoyers@msn.com](mailto:gwmoyers@msn.com) if you plan to attend.

**Hillandale Park Walk with Tom Mizell, Monday May 15:** Meet at the Children's Playground Parking Lot at 8:00 AM.

**Bother Knob/ Reddish Knob (Shenandoah Mountain) with William Leigh, Saturday May 18:** Meet at 7:30 AM in Bridgewater at the parking area at the end of West Riverside Drive, just west of Rt. 42 and north of the North River Bridge. Stops along the way will include the Nazarene Wetlands and Hone Quarry. We'll park at the mountaintop, four-way intersection at Briery Branch Gap and hike north towards Bother Knob and then along Hone Quarry Ridge

Trail, on the east side of the mountain (where a controlled burn was conducted a few years ago.) The hike is around 3 miles round trip; folks who want to attend but skip the hike (or turn around early) are welcome. The car-trip up the mountain alone should yield several warbler species. Bring water, sunscreen, appropriate shoes, drinks and a lunch/snack. Contact William Leigh if you wish to attend at [leightern@msn.com](mailto:leightern@msn.com) or 540-908-6473.

**Shenandoah National Park, Lawn Chair Birding with Tom Mizell, Thursday May 9:** Let's try out our lawn chairs a month earlier this year, to see what birds will seek us out as we enjoy Shenandoah National Park. **Meet at the Kohl's Parking Lot at 7:30 AM.** Bring extra clothing (May mornings may be cool on the mountains), lawn chairs, water, snacks and food for a trip to overlooks and picnic areas along The Park, from Swift Run Gap to Big Meadows. The trip may be canceled due to inclement weather or other unforeseen events-**alternate date is Thursday May 16.** Please contact **Tom Mizell at 828-6059** if you would like to join us. Also, wildflowers may be an added plus to this trip.

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**BIRD CLUB BOOK CLUB, Maureen Gallagher-McLeod:** The B.C.B.C. will meet at 6:00 PM on Thursday, May 23, at the home of Denise Hoodock. After sharing a meal, we will discuss the second half of the book *The Great Naturalists*, edited by Robert Huxley. In June, we will discuss *Cerulean Blues* by Katie Fallon. If you are interested in attending a book discussion, contact Maureen at [famcleod@earthlink.net](mailto:famcleod@earthlink.net) or call 896-9541.

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## TRIP REPORTS

**Madison Run Fire Road – Greg Moyers:** Seven birders spent a gorgeous morning at the Madison Run Fire Road on April 10. Louisiana Waterthrushes were numerous, vocal, and visible throughout the walk. Pine Warblers also made a strong showing with several individuals coming very low to forage along the path. Other good finds were Black-and-white Warbler, Winter Wren, Blue-headed Vireo, Hairy Woodpecker, both Kinglets, and a pair of Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers. On the way back down the road, a few of us heard what we're confident was a very early Worm-eating Warbler. Non-avian finds included a Black Snake and a Red Bat. The trip concluded with around 25 species seen or heard.

**Hillandale Park Walk -- Tom Mizell:** For some inexplicable reason I was about 15 minutes ahead of schedule for the April 18 walk and was the first to arrive at Hillandale Park. As I exited the car the first thing I heard was the call of Fish Crows. There were three, each perched on its respective tall power transmission pole, chatting and watching over the park. Shortly after 8:00 AM 12 members of the RBC and a guest filled the parking lot for our monthly walk. Target birds "suggested" were Field Sparrow, Blue-headed Vireo and Cooper's Hawk. The morning was overcast and very pleasant, with temps in the 60s.

Bird song filled much of the morning, as Carolina Wren, Blue Jay, and Cardinal competed for air time. Other early sightings included Northern Flicker, Eastern Phoebe, Carolina Chickadee, White-throated and Field Sparrows, and American Goldfinches.

Near the cabin we were pleased to find an Eastern Towhee pair in the Cedar trees to the left of the trail. Soon we found a Ruby-crowned Kinglet. White-breasted Nuthatches high overhead and other activity in the tree tops gave us opportunity to fall victim to warbler neck. Greg

Moyers spotted a Yellow-throated Vireo overhead, and we all listened to its hoarse notes. Blue-headed Vireos were abundant. By now the group was strung out along the trail spanning a section of about 200 yards. Three birders in the procession's rear spied a Northern Waterthrush perched in a tree within 45 feet of where only minutes earlier 10 of us passed by, unaware of this treat. Of course, the 10 of us all dropped back to see the bird, but as often is the case it successfully escaped our viewing. A Pileated Woodpecker called from the woods at the Park's Northwest Corner. We spread out again around the pedestrian bridge adjacent to the golf course, and as luck would have it the last three found another Northern Waterthrush along with a Worm-eating Warbler.

It took us about two hours to cover the first loop of our usual "figure 8" walk. By now we had encountered two of our target birds (Field Sparrow and Blue-headed Vireo,) and a total of about 30 species as we approached the second loop. About half of the original birders remained.

As we passed the horseshoe pits, Kathy Byers spied a yellow bird in some white pines that line the park to the southwest. A very striking Prairie Warbler gave us excellent views. A pair of Brown Thrashers demonstrated their aerial skill, chasing each other and landing in the treetops several times. Our species total had reached 38 and you know we were scanning the skies for two more. A vibrant red showed up in a cedar tree as we drew near the log cabin. We turned our field glasses on it to enjoy its rich color and we were greeted by a Scarlet Tanager, the 39th species encountered this morning.

Our walking time having approached three hours, we decided that before disbanding we would check the Cooper's Hawk nest near Shelter #1. We were optimistic that we would see at least one bird, since we had been afforded good looks at the pair during the March walk. Also, one of the group had observed a lot of activity at the nest during the past week. However, this day we were not to see either one of the nesting pair. Before leaving the parking lot we were somewhat determined to add to our count for an even 40 species. After about 10 minutes Fletcher Bingham spied a Red-tailed Hawk gliding over the stream, heading south. It landed on one of the transmission poles that some 3 hours earlier had been occupied by a Fish Crow. The hawk wrapped up this day's walk, giving us 40 species for the morning.

Kathy Byers reported that she observed the Cooper's Hawk pair the morning of 24 April. So, if you visit Hillandale be sure to be on the lookout for this nesting pair. Linger a while and observe their activity. Perhaps you will see some young ones. Hope to see you in May!

*Anonymous Quote:* As the walk was winding down we saw bright red movement in a Cedar tree. Those that first got a glimpse of the color didn't give it much thought thinking it was a cardinal as we had seen many cardinal pairs this morning. As happens sometimes, things may not be what they appear to be. Our trusty field glasses gave us a treat for as we focused on the moving red color a male Scarlet Tanager came into focus looking back at us. Perhaps it was quietly chirping "I almost fooled you."

## **BIRD SIGHTINGS: Greg Moyers**

At the end of March, several birders including Diane Lepkowski and Charles Ziegenfus reported good numbers of **American Pipits** around the county. Several birders also reported **Rusty Blackbirds, Blue-winged Teal, and Red-breasted Mergansers** in the final days of March.

On 3/30, Diane Lepkowski reported a pair of **Common Loons** on Lake Shenandoah. The following day, Diane found **Bonaparte's Gulls** and a **Greater Yellowlegs** at the Nazarene Church Road wetland. The Loons and Bonaparte's Gulls have been sighted at the Lake on multiple dates throughout April.

On 4/1, Diane Lepkowski found a **Dunlin** at Leonard's Pond.

Also on 4/1, Gabriel Mapel reported **Red Crossbills** at the top of Shenandoah Mountain at the intersection of the Reddish and Bother Knob Roads. Crossbills have been sighted at this spot multiple times throughout the month.



**Red Crossbill (male)**

Shenandoah Mountain

4/6/13

*Photo: Diane Lepkowski*

On 4/7, Greg Moyers reported a **Short-eared Owl** on Moores Mill Road in the northern part of the County.

Kevin Shank reported hearing the first **Whip-poor-wills** of the season at Union Springs on 4/9. Gabriel Mapel and Eve Gaige found both **Yellowlegs** and a **Pectoral Sandpiper** at the Nazarene Church Road wetland on 4/10.

**Purple Finches** are showing up again at feeders in the area including reports from Ken Hinkle on 4/10 and Dave Wendelken a week later.

Diane Lepkowski reported a **Forster's Tern** at Lake Shenandoah on 4/13.

Elizabeth Ihle reported her first **Ruby-throated Hummingbird** of the season on 4/14.

Diane Lepkowski found a **Northern Waterthrush** and a **Warbling Vireo** at Lake Shenandoah on 4/17.

Tom Mizell's Hillendale Park walk on 4/18 produced several good birds including **Yellow-throated Vireo**, **Northern Waterthrush**, **Scarlet Tanager**, and **Prairie Warbler**.



**Caspian Tern**

Lake Shenandoah  
4/20/13

*Photo: John Shea*

On 4/20 a group of birders including Dave Wendelken, Diane Lepkowski, William Leigh, and Greg Moyers found four **Caspian Terns** at Lake Shenandoah. A day earlier, Charles Ziegenfus and his ornithology class had seen a Caspian Tern in Augusta County on Narrowback Road.

Gabriel Mapel heard a **Chuck-will's Widow** while birding with Vic Laubach in the Big Levels area of Augusta County on 4/22.

Many birders are reporting a variety of returning warblers including **Louisiana Waterthrushes** at the end of March with **Black-and-white**, **Palm**, **Blackburnian**, **Black-throated Green**, **Worm-eating**, **Ovenbird**, **Northern Parula**, **Prairie**, **Northern Waterthrush**, and **American Redstart** following as April commenced.

## BLUEBIRD TRAIL REPORT: Debbie Harrison

The signs have been installed on the nest boxes at the Rockingham County Fairgrounds. We have six boxes, and as of 4/21/2013, here is the activity:

1. Has a partially built grass nest with 2 white feathers
2. Has a partial grass nest
3. is empty
4. is empty (but a bluebird was sitting on the wires overhead)
5. has a partial grass nest (& Bluebirds were in the area)
6. is empty (but Tree Swallows were checking it out)



**RBC Bluebird Box on the newly-established “Fairgrounds Trail.”**

*Photo: Debbie Harrison, Project Coordinator*

On a personal note: my home trail of four boxes has two nests, each containing five Bluebird eggs, one box has a partial nest, & the fourth is empty!

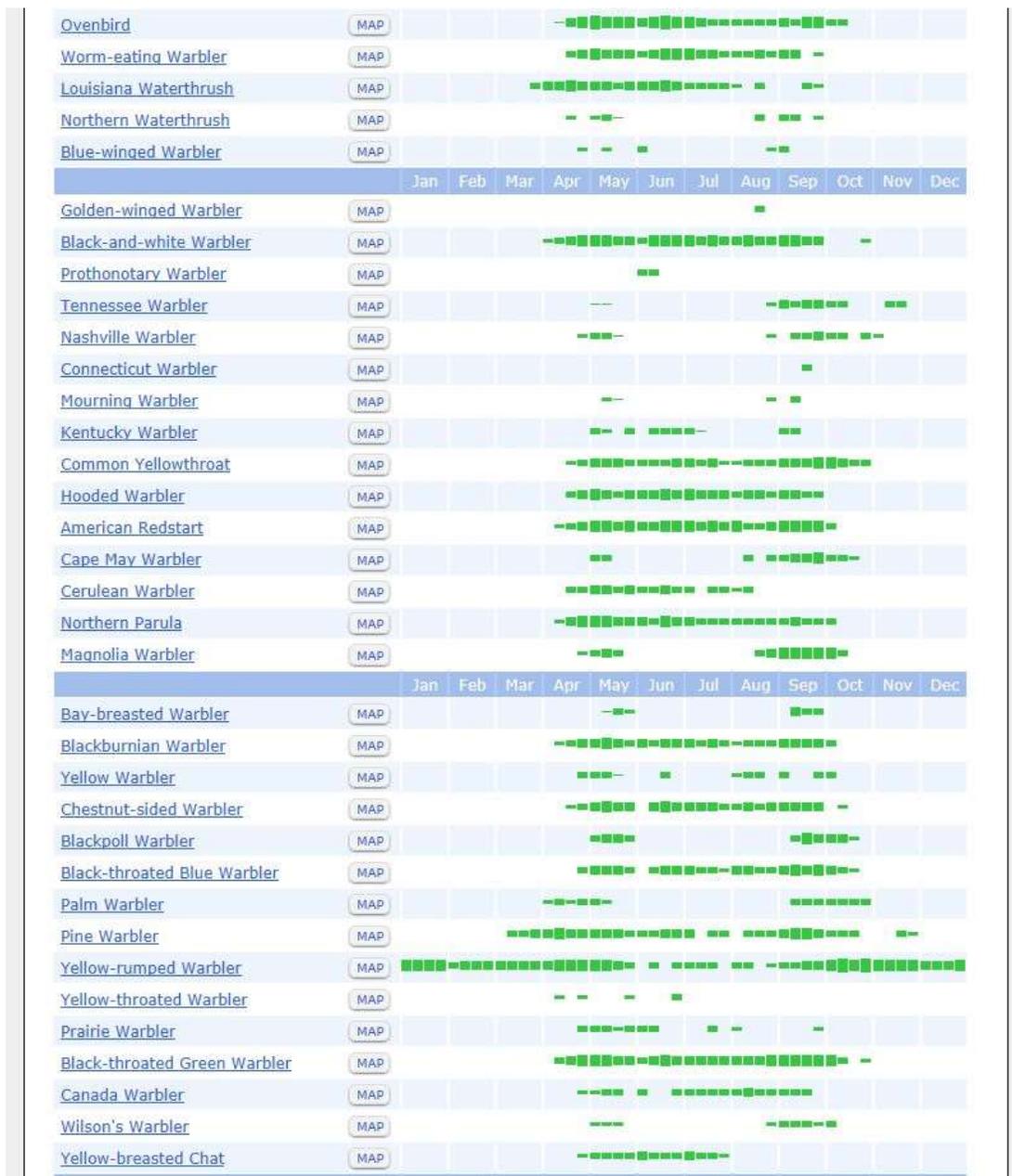
I hope to hold a Monitors’ meeting regarding the Fairgrounds Trail soon.

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**19<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL PURPLE MARTIN FIELD DAY: Saturday, June 22, 2013, 10:00 A.M.**, at the farm of Merle and Lance Wood in Louisa County (between Richmond and Charlottesville.) If you are interested in establishing or expanding a Purple Martin colony, attend this event. Enjoy watching hundreds of these beautiful birds soaring and feeding their young while an expert tells you all about them. No registration is necessary. The event is free, but donations are appreciated to help cover expenses. Bring lawn chairs, binoculars, notepad, camera, and a picnic lunch to enjoy on the grounds. Drinks and snacks are provided. Please, no pets. A nest box trail tour to view bluebirds, tree swallows, kestrels, and barn owls follows the lecture at approximately 12:00 p.m. For information and directions, visit the Purple Martin Field Day

website at <http://www.purplemartinfieldday.org/> or contact Ron and Priscilla Kingston at [kingston@cstone.net](mailto:kingston@cstone.net) or 434-962-8232.

**eBIRD Feature: [Bar Charts](#)** -- Find out what birds to expect throughout the year in a region or location. Below is the result of a sample search showing the timing and frequency of warbler species reported in Rockingham County. The chart shows sightings reported by month, and the height of each bar correlates to the number of sightings that month. Hence, we can see what season(s) to expect a species, or whether it may pass through during migrations only (spring, fall, or both.) Visit [www.ebird.org](http://www.ebird.org) for more information.



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**GOLDFINCH GAZETTE** – Sandy Sylvest