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# Goldfinch Gazette

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

Volume XXXIX

Number 3

November 2013

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## NOVEMBER MEETING

**DATE:** Thursday, November 7, 2013

**TIME:** 7:00 PM

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

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**PROGRAM: "Bringing Back the Birds" -- David Wiedenfeld, American Bird**

**Conservancy.** With profits from our Bird Seed Sales Day, our club donates to a number of nature-related charities. One of these is the American Bird Conservancy, headquartered in The Plains, Virginia. David Wiedenfeld, a senior conservation scientist for the ABC, will provide an overview of the ABC's projects such as Cats Indoors, work with habitat conservation in North America, and protection of rare species in the Americas and Hawaii. Dr. Wiedenfeld has worked on bird conservation projects, from Prairie-Chickens and Black Rails in North America, to highly-endangered species such as Stresemann's Bristlefront and Marvelous Spatuletail in the tropics, and on seabird bycatch in fisheries throughout the world. He spent three years in the Galapagos doing conservation work.

We will meet beforehand for dinner at 5:30 at *El Charro* at 1570 East Market Street. If you are planning to join Dr. Wiedenfeld and other club members, please call or email Elizabeth Ihle at 540 421 5257 or [eliza51@aol.com](mailto:eliza51@aol.com).

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**2013 RBC BIRD SEED SALE, Wayne A. Shifflett** -- I want to express my appreciation to all members of the Rockingham Bird Club for their support in ordering and picking up their favorite seeds for their wintering feathered friends. The gross proceeds for this year were almost identical to 2012 totals. We had a total of 84 orders. I also want to express my appreciation to Joe Shank and Chuck Kahler for their last-minute efforts in constructing bird houses and ground feeders. The ladies again showed outstanding efforts in producing more than 225 suet cakes. Overall the bird seed campaign was an outstanding success and it will help to ensure we will have proceeds to support the Club's many conservation efforts for the year.

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## NOVEMBER FIELD TRIPS, *Diane Lepkowski*

**Hillendale Park, Tuesday November 12, with Tom Mizell** -- Meet at the children's playground parking lot at 8:00 AM.

**Northern Saw-whet Owl Banding, Highland Retreat -- Clair Mellinger** – Charles Ziegenfus and I will be banding owls again this year at Highland Retreat Camp, in northwest Rockingham County near Bergton. We will again have two sets of nets deployed this year, so that at least one of us will probably be banding on any night that has suitable weather conditions. We will probably start opening the nets sometime during the last week of October, but the best chance of catching owls has typically been the first two weeks of November. We generally band at least until Thanksgiving. What we hear about the migration north of us is that it is very light and somewhat late. Even the people in Canada are saying that it is still too warm to stimulate good migration movement. I think that we are in for a very low catch this year, especially when compared to last year's best-ever season. We will see. – Clair Mellinger, 540 433-1752, [mellinac@emu.edu](mailto:mellinac@emu.edu)

*\*Clair and Zig welcome visitors. We will try to coordinate a Club trip, too. "Suitable weather" is generally that devoid of rain or significant winds. Contact Clair with questions. – Diane Lepkowski*

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**TREASURER'S REPORT, Steve White** --Our bird seed sale fundraiser on October 12th was a success as usual, despite the rain, drizzle, and mist. We grossed \$10,715.50 and, with an overhead of \$7,898.65 in wholesale seed cost, we made a net income of \$2,816.85 which is up by \$239.42 over last year's net. Many thanks to all for your support for this important fundraising effort, as well as to those who helped distribute seed and most especially to those wonderful folks who slaved over a hot lard-&-peanut butter-melting pot to produce the delectable suet cakes that Rockingham County birds find so irresistible.

Speaking of fundraising, as in past years the bi-monthly magazine **Bird Watcher's Digest** is continuing to offer our club a \$10.00 patronage rebate for anyone starting a subscription. Merely mention that you are a member of the Rockingham Bird Club, and they will mail us a check for \$10.00 in support of our mission. I will have forms for faxing or mailing at the upcoming meeting on November 7th. Or simply call toll-free at 1-800-879-2473 to start your subscription. Don't forget to mention the Rockingham Bird Club!

Thanks to all who have renewed membership this season. We are about halfway to getting a full complement of our last year's membership. For those who have not yet renewed, mail a check made out to RBC for \$15 (individual) or \$20 (family) to me at 7738 Sparkling Springs Road, Singers Glen, VA 22850 at your earliest convenience.

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**BIRD CLUB BOOK CLUB, Maureen Gallagher-McLeod:** The BCBC will meet on Thursday, November 21, 2013, at 6 PM in the home of Davene Wolfe. After a shared meal, there will be a discussion of the final chapters of the book *Beatrix Potter: A Life In Nature* by Linda Lear. If you are interested in attending a book club meeting, contact Maureen at [famcleod@earthlink.net](mailto:famcleod@earthlink.net) or 896-9541.

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## **TRIP REPORTS**

**Lake Shenandoah, Greg Moyers:** Nine members of the RBC attended the walk at Lake Shenandoah on October 19. Additionally, we were joined for the second half of the walk by a young couple from California who are currently enrolled in grad school at Villanova. They had stopped to bird the lake on their way back to Philadelphia after visiting the New River Gorge.

Waterfowl on the lake was limited to Mallards and three Pied-Billed Grebes but we had a flyover of nine Northern Shovelers while standing on the dam. Another highlight at the dam was

watching a flock of an estimated 200-300 Tree Swallows feeding over the water and then streaming overhead.



#### **Chipping Sparrow**

This Lake Shenandoah visitor dined on grass seeds while keeping a seemingly casual eye on the camera's close approach.

*Photo: Diane Lepkowski, 10/19/13*

Other highlights included Osprey, a late Green Heron, Blue-headed Vireos, Winter Wren, Swamp Sparrow, both Kinglets, and a Common Yellowthroat. While these birds may have been considered the highlights for the trip leader and most of the local group, it was interesting that one of our visitors from California was thrilled to get three life birds – the Blue-headed Vireo, Eastern Towhee, and White-throated Sparrow. Highlights are truly a matter of perspective (and geography)!

#### **Hillandale Park Walk, -- Tom**

**Mizell:** 15 members of the Rockingham Bird Club, including two first timers, joined in for the Tuesday October 8, 2013 Hillandale walk. The only "wish list" birds requested by the group were "warblers."

I will say "up front" that I have always enjoyed the helpful and friendly nature of the folks that show up for the bird walks. One of our first timers shared a note with me that I would like to pass along to club members as I think it well illustrates our club in all its caring ways: "Whenever I had a question someone answered it and other members were great at calling birds out as they saw them."

We were joined by lots and lots of talkative American Robins and Tufted Titmice throughout the morning. The sky was clear and temps were in the 40s as we crossed the pedestrian bridge near the cabin. Early in the walk we saw Downy, Red-bellied and Hairy Woodpeckers and a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (2 for the morning). Cedar Waxwings presented themselves as only Cedar Waxwings can do. The first 45 minutes provided slower than usual bird sightings. Twelve species by this time was a bit lower than normal but nice that 4 were woodpeckers.

Along the golf course boundary on the north loop we found White-eyed Vireo and our first warbler of the day, a Black-throated Green. The Black-throated Greens were crowd pleasers. They performed well earning a "10" on a 1-10 scale in sharing a very cooperative "Here I am, at all angles, so look at me" nature. Blue-headed Vireos, Carolina Chickadees, Chipping Sparrows and Golden-crowned and Ruby-crowned Kinglets along with Northern Flicker helped push our total for the first hour and a half to 25 species. The highly productive water fountain area that provided such a showcase of birds in September was strangely silent today.

Tree Swallows flew overhead as we wrapped up the first loop and returned to the pedestrian bridge. By 10:00 AM we crossed the bridge a second time and were spread out along the loop where some of the group found a Common Yellowthroat and Catbird. Greg Moyers left a few minutes before the remaining part of the troop finished and phoned in that he closed out his walk with a Rose-breasted Grosbeak at the parking lot. A fine finish for our 3 hour walk. Total species this day at Hillandale was 33. Hope to see you in November. *Anonymous Quote: "It was nice to get to watch the Black-throated Green warbler for a solid 5 minutes in the sunlight."*

**Bridgewater Parks Walk -- Tom Mizell:** On October 17, 2013 I stepped out my front door at 7:00 AM to the call of the Cardinal, Carolina Wren and, a bit distant in the woods of Wise Hollow, a Great Horned Owl. Temps were in the 60s and rain was forecast for the morning as 9 members of the Rockingham Bird Club gathered near the dam on North River at Wildwood Park in Bridgewater. Canada Geese, Golden-crowned Kinglets, Tufted Titmice and Carolina Chickadees greeted the first arrivals. We walked the loop trail and paused along the bank to scan the bluff on the south side of North River. Here we saw (and heard) Blue Jays and Carolina Wrens. A Great Blue Heron was perched over the stream in a tree on the south side and seemed quite content to allow us to give it a thorough inspection. A Red-tailed Hawk flew swiftly overhead. As we approached the western corner of the park we found Cedar Waxwings, Bluebirds and three Wood Ducks. As we nearly completed the 1/4 mile loop we saw Black-throated Greens. Another warbler appeared but for today we were not able to identify it. In this same area a family of Carolina Wrens surrounded us and began to sing loudly and scold something (certainly not us!). As we enjoyed the singing, one wren seemed to explode out of the brush and flew through the middle of the group at about head level. It was sudden and quite surprising! We all marveled at how close it flew by us. Don Perkuchin asked "Did anybody get hurt?" First time I recall on any walk the thought that someone may have been injured by a fast flying bird. Annie Shank and Addison, our youngest birder of the day, spotted a Ruby-crowned Kinglet as we approached the pedestrian bridge on the new woods trail. By 9:10 we had listed 23 species.

Next stop: Sandy Bottom Park. Things at this September hot spot were a bit quiet today and we searched and searched for the warblers we saw there last month. We added Downy Woodpecker, Northern (Yellow-shafted) Flicker, Song Sparrow, Starlings and Fish Crow, as a third Great Blue Heron watched us from its river's-edge perch. Just prior to driving away we added Belted Kingfisher and Osprey. Thus, seven additional species were added at Sandy Bottom.

By 10:50 AM three of the original birders arrived at the Cooks Creek Arboretum. Several dozen Tree Swallows flew above the farm field to the south. As we crossed Cooks Creek to the 1/3 mile trail, we saw lots of flitting in the white pines. Chickadees and Titmice flew repeatedly back and forth across the trail. Light rain turned to a nice little downpour and we sought shelter under a Bradford Pear. Some discussion ensued on "is it time to call it a day?" The rain, then the birds, decided to keep us under the tree. Within moments we had a pleasant surprise. The now fully-wetted leaves set the stage for nature's show time. Several Yellow-rumped Warblers moved about the Hawthorn trees at near eye level. They appeared to be bathing by fluttering next to and against the fully wetted leaves causing a spray. A grand performance just 10-20 feet away! We enjoyed a pair of Palm Warblers in that mix and some Blue-headed Vireos also enjoyed the showers. After 10-15 minutes of this activity, the rains subsided and the show quietly came to a close. Before leaving the Arboretum we added White-throated Sparrow, Rock

Pigeons and Mourning Doves as the sun and some blue sky returned. Without the rains causing us to be stranded under the tree we may have missed the warbler bath.

We returned to Wildwood Park around noon to set up our lawn chairs and had lunch across from the bluff upstream from the dam. Here we added a Cooper's Hawk and Turkey Vulture. On the walk back to the cars we added Hairy Woodpecker, Pied-billed Grebe and Catbird. Total for the day was 44 species. Anonymous Quote, as we watched the Yellow-rumped, Palm Warblers and Blue headed Vireos bathing: "*It would take a lot of this to hurt a guy.*"

### **BIRD SIGHTINGS:**

Ken Hinkle found a **Wilson's Warbler** at Lake Shenandoah on Sept. 24. Greg Moyers and Diane Lepkowski had a **Nashville Warbler** and **Great Horned Owl** at the lake that same evening. Also on the 24<sup>th</sup>, Mike Shank reported eight **American Golden Plovers** on Lumber Mill Rd west of Dayton. Later that evening, Greg Moyers counted 15 plovers as well as a **Pectoral Sandpiper** at the same location.



**Common Yellowthroat**

Atop a shrub near Switzer Dam, in close proximity to a Lincoln's Sparrow that eluded Greg's lens.

*Photo: Greg Moyers, 9/29/13*

Ken Hinkle has reported a number of good birds along Gardner Lane in Bridgewater including a **Lincoln's Sparrow** on Sept. 25, **Black-throated Green, Blackpoll, Palm, and Magnolia Warblers, Blue-headed Vireo, Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers, and House Wren** on Sept. 28, **Palm and Nashville Warblers and Blue Grosbeaks** on Oct. 5, and a **Vesper Sparrow** on Oct. 15.

Kevin Shank had a nice flock of migrants at Union Springs on Sept. 25. The flock included a **Philadelphia Vireo, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, and the following warblers: Black-throated Green, Tennessee, Magnolia, Bay-breasted,**

**Blackpoll, and Northern Parula.**

Matt Gingerich reported a **Clay-colored Sparrow** at his place in Linville on Oct. 1. On Oct. 22, Matt had a ten-sparrow day at the same location – **Lincoln's, Vesper, Savannah, Swamp, Grasshopper, White-crowned, White-throated, Chipping, Field, and Song.** Also on Oct. 1, Ken Hinkle and Harold Jones had a couple of suspected **Least Flycatchers** at Hillandale Park. Other birds seen included **Blackpoll, Black-throated Blue, Black-throated Green, and Yellow-rumped Warblers, American Redstart, and Yellow-bellied Sapsucker.** Meanwhile,

William Leigh found three **Short-billed Dowitchers**, six **Pectoral Sandpipers**, **Green-winged Teal**, and **Northern Shovelers** on the pond on Oakwood Drive in Bridgewater.

Back at Hillendale Park on Oct. 3, Ken Hinkle and Bob Eggleston found a **Wilson's Warbler**.

On Oct. 5, Greg Moyers got good looks at a **Connecticut Warbler** at Switzer Dam.

William Leigh found three **Stilt Sandpipers** at the Nazarene Church Road wetland on Oct. 6. **Pectoral** and **Solitary Sandpipers**, **Lesser Yellowlegs**, **Wilson's Snipe**, and **Blue-winged** and **Green-winged Teal** were also present. The Stilt Sandpipers have remained through at least 10/22.

Diane Holsinger had a **Brown Creeper** and **Black-throated Green Warbler** in her yard on Oct. 11 and a **Winter Wren** on Oct. 18.



**American Golden-Plover**

One of a flock found by Mike Shank at the Shenandoah Valley Produce Auction, Lumbermill Rd, Dayton.

*Photo: Greg Moyers, 9/24/13*

Greg Moyers found a **Marsh Wren** at Lake Shenandoah while birding with Diane Lepkowski and William Leigh on October 12. The group also found a **Lincoln's Sparrow**. The following day, Oct. 13, Diane relocated the Marsh Wren at the same location and she and Greg found a **Winter Wren**.

Tom Mizell found three **Northern Shovelers** at Silver Lake on Oct. 13.

On Oct. 14 Ken Hinkle reported **Ruddy Ducks** at a variety of locations including the Nazarene Church Rd wetland and the pond on Oakwood Drive. Diane Lepkowski also saw Ruddy Ducks on Lake Shenandoah on the same date.

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### **RBC CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT (VARC CBC) – Saturday December 14, 2013.**

This is a great opportunity to contribute to a long running citizen science effort. Our circle, VARC (Rockingham County, VA) is sponsored officially by the Rockingham Bird Club which has contributed financially and through the dedication and skills of many members. Much of the count circle extends into Augusta County and many of us are members of both the RBC and the Augusta County Bird Club. There is no fee for counters again this year, but the details make the story and the scientific record, so please document any records thoroughly whether with your sector leader or as a feeder watcher if your house is within the circle. As the compiler for the

count, Bill Benish can provide you with more details about what data needs to be collected to fit the count criteria.

Our circle is a 7.5 mile radius from the intersection of Ottobine Road and Clover Hill Road. We normally divvy up the area into six sectors. We anticipate that sectors leaders from last year will be serving again this year, so please start making your plans with them directly and soon. If you need help connecting with a sector leader or have any questions, please contact Bill Benish. If you think you already know who you'll be joining, please advise both your sector leader and Bill Benish.

We'll also try firming up more connections at the next couple of meetings. Thanks again in advance for your contribution of effort! Bill Benish C: 540.908.7336 [wcbenish@comcast.net](mailto:wcbenish@comcast.net)

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**ROCKINGHAM COUNTY FAIR BLUEBIRD TRAIL, *Debbie Harrison*** -- Debbie Harrison offered a training meeting for Bluebird Trail monitors in October. If you're interested in learning more about helping out beginning April 2014, please contact her at 540-856-3058 or [woodshar@aol.com](mailto:woodshar@aol.com)



**Bluebird Trail: Debbie Harrison tutors monitors-in-training**

Seven volunteers attended October's kick-off meeting for the Rockingham County Fairgrounds Bluebird Trail

*Photo: Diane Lepkowski*

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**MEMBERS AT LARGE: Debbie Harrison & Ken Hinkle**

**GOLDFINCH GAZETTE – Sandy Sylvest**