



Goldfinch Gazette

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

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October 2013

OCTOBER MEETING

DATE: Thursday, October 3, 2013

TIME: 7:00 PM

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

PROGRAM, *Elizabeth Ihle*

Birding in Chile -- Club members Ed and Nance Lawler are our speakers this month, telling us about their birding adventures in central Chile. Except for a few of the migrating waterfowl and just a couple of raptors, Chile has a completely different set of birds from those in the U.S. Ed and Nance will take the club members on a field trip through Central Chile to look for some of those birds. They could possibly find for us condors high in the Andes Mountains, penguins along the rocky coast and rushbirds in the reeds of the coastal wetlands.

Beforehand, we shall meet for dinner with the Lawlers at Taste of Thai at 5:30 PM, and all club members and guests are welcome to join us. If you wish to attend, please call Elizabeth Ihle at 421-5257 or email her at eliza51@aol.com so that she can give the restaurant an accurate number.

2013 RBC BIRD SEED SALE, Wayne A. Shifflett -- *This is the Club's primary annual fundraiser* and a wonderful opportunity to purchase guaranteed-fresh seed, this year's crop, along with the scrumptious, homemade peanut butter suet of Kay Gibson and friends, plus other assorted feeders, etc.. **Orders are due by September 29**, pickup day is October 12. Contact Wayne with questions at 540-383-2243 or wayneshif@gmail.com.

OCTOBER FIELD TRIPS, *Diane Lepkowski*

Hillendale Park with Tom Mizell, Tuesday October 8 -- Meet at the children's playground at 8:00 AM.

Bridgewater Parks with Tom Mizell: Thursday Oct. 17 -- Meet at the Wildwood Park main parking lot at 8:00 AM. We may repeat the same three stops (Wildwood, Cooks Creek Arboretum and the Sandy Bottom Golf Course area) that we enjoyed on 19 September. As an

add-on for those that are interested in extending their day at Wildwood Park, bring lawn chairs, food and snacks. We may watch the river bluff for a while after we return to Wildwood from the other parks. Contact Tom Mizell at 828-6059 if you plan to attend.

Lake Shenandoah with Greg Moyers: Saturday Oct. 19 – In recent years, we have had a good mix of incoming and outgoing birds on the October walks, totaling as many as 50 species. We will meet in the parking lot at the lake at 8:30AM. Please contact Greg at gwmoyers@msn.com or 434-3029 if you plan to attend. *Reminder: Lake Shenandoah is now a fee-use area. An access permit or hunting/fishing license is required. Day passes are available at the Virginia DGIF website.*

TREASURER'S REPORT, Steve White – Thank you for your prompt membership renewals. If you haven't already done so, please see me at the meeting or send your check (made out to RBC) to me at 7738 Sparkling Springs Road, Singers Glen, VA 22850. Dues are \$15 for individual membership or \$20 for a family membership. There are also categories for additional optional donations at the "Expanded" level (\$30), "Contributing" level (\$50) or "Sustaining" level (\$100) for those so inclined. All but \$15 of the latter enhanced amounts may be claimed as a charitable donation on your income tax returns; the Rockingham Bird Club, Inc. is a 501(c)3 registered charity.

BIRD CLUB BOOK CLUB, Maureen Gallagher-McLeod: The B.C.B.C. will meet on Thursday, Oct 17, 6pm at Elizabeth Ihle's to discuss the first half of "Beatrix Potter—A Life in Nature," by Linda Lear. If you are interested in attending a book discussion, contact Maureen at famcleod@earthlink.net or 896-9541.

TRIP REPORTS

Switzer Dam Area - September 7, Ken Hinkle: Eleven RBC members had a perfect day for the trip, tallying close to 50 species including 14 warblers; but part of the group missed some of the quality birds. Blackburnian, Chestnut-sided, Magnolia, Black-throated Green, and Tennessee Warblers along with Scarlet Tanagers were first found in a few hot spots going down the mountain from the entrance. Another very productive area was just past the low-water bridge where Black-and-white, Cape May, Northern Parula, Pine, Ovenbird and a very cooperative Hooded Warbler were seen along with Cedar Waxwings.

Back in the rock-bed flat, half the group ventured deeper into the brush and rocks and hit the jackpot with an array of birds in a single flock including Blue-winged, Worm-eating, Chestnut-sided, Blackburnian, Tennessee, Black-throated Green and Magnolia Warblers, Redstart, Scarlet Tanager, Blue-head Vireo and a Tufted Titmouse.

Other notables were Red-eyed and Yellow-throated Vireos, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Indigo Bunting, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Acadian and Least Flycatchers and a Wood Pewee. A high-altitude Great Blue Heron was observed during one of the first warbler waves.

Shenandoah National Park, Greg Moyers: Twelve members of the RBC made the trip to Skyline Drive on September 14th. It was chilly and breezy when we arrived at the Pocosin Cabin

trail. The walk started slowly but soon picked up just past the cabin when a huge mixed flock moved in. Birds were everywhere and it was virtually impossible to point out any one bird to the group. It was a frenzy of bird activity! The list of birds found included thirteen warbler species: American Redstart, Bay-breasted, Blackburnian, Blackpoll, Black-and-white, Black-throated Blue, Black-throated Green, Cape May, Chestnut-sided, Hooded, Nashville, Ovenbird, and Tennessee. We also found three vireos – Blue-headed, Red-eyed, and a heard Yellow-throated, as well as Rose-breasted Grosbeak and several Scarlet Tanagers. After leaving Pocosin, most of the group splintered off. Three group members walked the loop at the South River picnic area. Birds were scarce on the trail but we enjoyed a nice picnic lunch to conclude the trip.

Hillandale Park Walk, Sept. 11 -- Tom Mizell:

On 11 September 2013 twelve members of the Rockingham Bird Club (RBC) enjoyed a parade of migrating warblers along with a host of other fine birds during our morning walk.

We enjoyed Magnolia, Yellow, Common Yellowthroat, American Redstart, Black-throated Blue, Chestnut-sided, Tennessee and Black-throated Green Warblers. A Prairie Warbler flitted briefly atop a tree, its ID confirmed later by photo ID. Also, highlights include Warbling and Yellow-throated Vireos. Downy Woodpecker, White-breasted Nuthatch, a probable Least Flycatcher, and Red-bellied Woodpeckers were present as well.

As we were about to wrap up the northern loop we paused at a water fountain near the northernmost shelter. Luck was with us as the fountain faucet had a slow leak and the wet ground appeared to be a magnet for bird activity. Carolina Chickadee, Red-eyed Vireo, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Tennessee Warbler, Brown Thrasher, Great Crested Flycatcher and Rose-breasted Grosbeak were found at the spout or close to the fountain. By the time we walked to the next shelter we added Eastern Wood-Pewee and Baltimore Oriole. By the close of the first hour we had listed 32 species. The second loop added American Goldfinch, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Mockingbird and Tufted Titmouse. As we were concluding the second loop and as we approached the juncture of the two loops near the log cabin we were treated to much activity in a walnut tree. Seven species of birds were feeding in that walnut including Red-eyed Vireo and Magnolia Warbler. A bonus popped into our field of view as in the adjacent tree we enjoyed a Yellow-throated Vireo. We concluded our walk at 10:40 AM and listed 38 species for the morning.

Anonymous Quote: "It's been a real learning experience for me in a couple of ways. Though urban, Hillandale has several very good birding hotspots in late summer. Also, I'm finally realizing that many pairs of experienced eyes looking, and ears hearing is more productive than going it alone; and I'm enjoying it more than I thought I would on top of it all!"

Hillandale Park Walk, Sept. 16 – Tom Mizell: On 16 September, 2013 eleven members of the RBC braved the falling rain. Many were equipped with opened umbrellas and rain gear as we departed from the parking lot with great optimism. Due to rains that started at or near 8:00 AM we headed toward the above mentioned shelter to check out the status of the water fountain leak. As a matter of coping with the weather we remained at the shelter for about an hour and were rewarded. The rains stopped around 8:25 but the birds remained nearby. We found American Redstart, Canada Warbler, and Chestnut-sided Warbler while at the shelter. Other birds that were actively feeding in the trees at the shelter included Red-eyed Vireo, Brown Thrasher, Eastern Wood-Pewee, Eastern Towhee and American Goldfinch. After the rains stopped high overhead Chimney Swifts chattered. Many of us watched as Chickadees flew from the walnut laden

branches to walnut after walnut. They pecked and pecked the nuts as they hung overhead, clinging to leaves, or they walked about the tops of the walnuts apparently drinking the beads of moisture from the earlier rain. That was a special show. No, none of us tried the walnut drippings.

The walk concluded at 10:30 AM and as the last three of us left the park we paused at the squirrel feeding station at the last shelter on the east side. A Blue-gray Gnatcatcher and Great Crested Flycatcher were our reward for searching until the last moment. Thirty species for the morning. *Anonymous Quote: "Birding walks may be serious business for us, but we sure have fun and fellowship with other members while looking for birds."*

Bridgewater Parks Walk -- Tom Mizelle: Fifty species of birds greeted eleven RBC members during the Bridgewater Parks walk on 19 September 2013. Our parks birding tour began at Wildwood Park. It was a sunny morning as we gathered downstream of the waterfall at the dam. A Carolina Wren announced our arrivals and within moments the Mallards and House Sparrows greeted us warmly as well. If we didn't see or hear enough Blue Jays at Hillandale Park during the past week there were more than enough at Wildwood.

A Kingfisher, Northern Flicker and Red-bellied Woodpecker beckoned us to walk along the river. Numerous Robins hopped along the grassy areas. We paused about 200 yards upstream of the dam and watched for activity on the bluff on the south side of the river as the sun warmed its steep slopes. Karen Shank glimpsed a Black-throated Green searching for insects. A Hairy Woodpecker and Downy Woodpecker both flew in the trees at feeding time. Breakfast was served for a Yellow-billed Cuckoo as it grabbed a moth (or butterfly). The Cuckoo demonstrated its smooth curving flight as it flew from tree to tree-sometimes hiding itself from our view and other times out in the open in the bright sunlight. Should we leave this place? Some discussed the possibility of a lawn chair birding visit to this spot. We proceeded further upstream to the bend near the small floating dock on the west bank. We added Rough-winged Swallows, White-breasted Nuthatch, Wood Ducks, two Pied-billed Grebes, Wood Pewee, Chickadee and a Chestnut-sided Warbler. A distant Pileated Woodpecker called out from the woods on the west side of North River. As we completed the looping trail and returned to the dam we added Canada Geese as they arrived from the east with great cackling and splashing and a Great Blue Heron circled overhead. 28 species at Wildwood Park.

On to the Cooks Creek Arboretum where we added 12 more species including Catbird, Indigo Bunting, Phoebe, and Great Crested Flycatcher. Small kettles of Turkey Vultures and Black Vultures enabled us to see a couple of Broad-winged Hawks high overhead. Ken Hinkle spotted a Ruby-throated Hummingbird working some dry leaves for insects along Cooks Creek. Before we pulled out of the Arboretum Parking Lot we added American Crow, Song Sparrow, Blue bird and American Goldfinch bringing our total species to 43. As the Goldfinch bounced along in its flight one of the RBC members alarmed some of the group by shouting quite loudly as an American Kestrel dove after the Goldfinch two or three times but was unsuccessful. The count now stands at 44.

Our last stop on this beautiful morning was the Sandy Bottom Golf Course. In the woods just west of the course (near the Harrisonburg Water Supply intake structure in the North River) we added Magnolia Warbler, Chestnut-sided Warbler and Red-eyed Vireo. The Magnolia Warbler gave us some good training as it moved about very quickly, often hidden by the leaves thus making itself difficult to see. However, over a 15 minute span the persistence of the group

enabled most of us to get pretty good looks at this impressive little bird. Our final stop was the parking lot at the golf course's first tee where we took a water break. By then there were still 10 of us. An Osprey circled overhead and within seconds all of us poured out of our vehicles with binoculars trained on the skies. One of the town employees who was mowing at the time seemed to be happy to share his routine sightings as he cares for the course. As I stopped watching the Osprey to listen to this fellow birder's accounts I heard in near rapid fire "Cedar Waxwings", "kettle of Broad-winged Hawks" (15), then I heard "Bald Eagle". The town worker told me that he often sees two Bald Eagles and as many as three Ospreys at the course as he is mowing. He also mentioned that he thought the Osprey may have a nest along the river near the 3rd tee. We concluded our morning outing around noon and returned to Wildwood Park where a Mockingbird bid us good day. We look forward to more visits to the parks in Bridgewater. *Anonymous quote: "The Bridgewater Parks field trip was a winner! A gorgeous day and we found all kinds of birds such as a Yellow-billed Cuckoo in an Oak tree and a Broad-winged Hawk ""behind that wispy cloud."" As the lawn maintenance fellow mowing at the golf course said "You all look like you are having fun." Indeed we were!"*



Black-throated Green Warbler

Especially during dry seasons, water features and birdbaths such as this one are a sure way to entice migrant warblers.

Photo: Diane Lepkowski

BIRD SIGHTINGS:

Greg Moyers found a few **Bank Swallows** in a flock with Cliff, Barn, Tree , and Northern Rough-winged Swallows on Aug. 30 at the Nazarene Church Road wetland.

Gabriel Mapel saw over 250 **Common Nighthawks** at his home in New Hope on Sept. 1, and a **Mississippi Kite** while manning the Rockfish Gap Hawk Watch on Sept. 3.

Diane Holsinger found a variety of migrants including **Cape May, Tennessee, Black-throated Blue, Blackburnian,** and **Canada Warblers** as well as **Yellow-throated Vireo** at Highland Retreat on Sept. 6.

A **Blue-winged Warbler** was seen by several club members on Ken Hinkle's Switzer Dam trip on Sept. 7.

Nashville Warblers were among the 11 warbler species seen by Diane Lepkowski, William Leigh, Dave Wendelken, and Greg Moyers at Pocosin Cabin on Sept. 8. Diane Holsinger had a "yard" Nashville at her place in Tenth Legion on Sept. 9.

A **Prairie Warbler** offered barely a glimpse at the Sept. 11 RBC Hillendale Walk and was photographed by Diane Lepkowski for positive ID.

Diane Lepkowski has had several good yard birds at her place near Harrisonburg, including a **Magnolia Warbler** on Sept. 9 and **Scarlet Tanagers** and **Black-throated Green Warblers** on Sept. 15 (two of each.) On the same date, Dave Wendelken found a **Northern Waterthrush** at Lake Shenandoah.



Scarlet Tanager

One of a pair of central-Rockingham County yard visitors during fall migration, this tanager investigated a garden waterfall feature.

Photo: Diane Lepkowski

Ken Hinkle welcomed a **Black-throated Green Warbler** and a **Chestnut-sided Warbler** to his yard in Bridgewater on Sept. 17.

Diane Lepkowski and Greg Moyers found a **Veery** at Lake Shenandoah on the evening of Sept. 20. An **Osprey** was also having success fishing at the lake.

*Reports are mainly from Rockingham County and the mountains accessed from same. For more reports in Rockingham and surrounding Counties, join the *Shenandoah Valley Birding* group list serve at: <http://pets.groups.yahoo.com/group/shenvalbirds/>

ROCKINGHAM COUNTY FAIR BLUEBIRD TRAIL, *Debbie Harrison --*

Debbie Harrison will coordinate a meeting time & place for Bluebird Trail monitors, hopefully in October. If you're interested (& she doesn't already have your contact information) please see her at the meeting, or contact her at 540-856-3058 or woodshar@aol.com

ROCKFISH GAP HAWK WATCH:

The Hawk Watch continues at the grounds of the Inn at Afton, located just off I-64 (exit 99) at the intersections of Rt. 250, Skyline Drive and the Blue Ridge Parkway, five miles east of Waynesboro and 20 miles west of Charlottesville.

The Hawk Watch will continue through November. Counters are present daily unless it's raining. For more information, visit the website: www.rockfishgaphawkwatch.org.

RBC CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT – Saturday December 14, 2013. Save the date! Bill Benish will continue to serve as CBC Coordinator for our Count.



Eastern Kingbirds: Breakfast at Lake Shenandoah

An adult with a juvenile -- can you guess which is which?(!)

Photo: Diane Lepkowski

Rockingham Bird Club
4684 Timber Ridge Rd
Mt. Crawford, VA 22441



PRESIDENT: Gloria Crump
4684 Timber Ridge Road
Mt. Crawford, VA 22441
Phone – 540-234-9300
ggcrump@comcast.net

VICE PRESIDENT: PROGRAMS – Elizabeth Ihle – 540-234-8296

VICE PRESIDENT: FIELD TRIPS – Diane Lepkowski

SECRETARY: Phyllis Showalter

TREASURER: Steve White – 540-833-6726

MEMBERS AT LARGE: Debbie Harrison & Ken Hinkle

GOLDFINCH GAZETTE – Sandy Sylvest