



# Goldfinch Gazette

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

Volume XXXIX

Number 1

September 2013

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## SEPTEMBER MEETING

**DATE: Thursday, Sept. 5, 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***

**Water Features and Bird Baths** -- We'll begin our 2013-14 program season with Bob Schamerhorn, a birder and photographer from Richmond, who will talk about birds' use of water and bird baths. He'll tell us how to build a low-maintenance water feature. Our meeting will be as usual, at the Detweiler Auditorium at VMRC at 7 PM.

Beforehand, we'll meet Bob for dinner at 5:30 at Vito's Italian Kitchen at 1029 Port Republic Road (the Food Lion Shopping Center). If you wish to join the group, please call or email Elizabeth Ihle (234-8296 or [eliza51@aol.com](mailto:eliza51@aol.com)).

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**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.. Order forms and price list will be distributed by mid-September, with orders due around the month's end. Pickup day will be scheduled for a Saturday in October. Contact Wayne with questions: [wayneshif@gmail.com](mailto:wayneshif@gmail.com)

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### **SEPTEMBER FIELD TRIPS, *Diane Lepkowski***

**Switzer Dam Area with Ken Hinkle: Saturday Sept. 7** -- Meet 8:00 AM at the old Waterman Square parking lot on Rt. 33 west of Harrisonburg. Bring snacks and drinks. Should be good for fall migrants. Contact Ken at 828-3782 or [kencora@verizon.net](mailto:kencora@verizon.net).

**Shenandoah National Park with Greg Moyers: Saturday Sept. 14** -- We'll plan to make stops at Pocosin Cabin Trail and South River Picnic Area. Bring snacks or a light lunch if you wish as we will plan to finish at the picnic area around lunch time. There

are rest rooms at South River; if needed we can stop there both before and after visiting Pocosin. Meet in the Kohl's parking lot at 8:00 AM. **Please contact Greg at [gwmovers@msn.com](mailto:gwmovers@msn.com) or 434-3029 if you plan to attend.**

**Hillandale Park Walks: (TWO!) with Tom Mizell: Wednesday Sept. 11 and Monday Sept. 16 (last walk of the summer!)** -- Meet 8:00 AM at the children's playground parking lot. As always, Tom Mizell plans to lead us, but if a last minute commitment deters him, plan to enjoy the birds regardless! Advance notice is not needed, but contact Tom with questions: 828-6059.

**Bridgewater Parks with Tom Mizell: Thursday Sept. 19** – Meet at 8:00 AM at the Wildwood Park parking lot, and after birding Wildwood traverse another two or three Bridgewater-area Parks. Contact Tom Mizell 828-6059 if you wish to join us in Bridgewater.

**Rockfish Gap Hawk Watch with Tom Lord: Saturday Sept. 21** -- This should be around peak Broad-winged Hawk migration, which in recent years has been around 9/18 – 9/21, with several thousand (or more!) birds possible on peak day. To carpool, meet at 8:00 AM at the park-and-ride off I-81 at Mount Crawford (on the south side of Rt. 257 just west of I-81 Exit 240, Mt. Crawford.) Destination: The Inn at Afton on Rt. 250 near the Skyline Drive/ Blue Ridge Parkway entrance. Bring a chair, along with lunch, drinks, AND a light jacket (it can get WINDY!) Restrooms are available. We'll plan to return by around 3:00 PM. Please contact Tom at 828-1226 if you plan to attend.

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**TREASURER'S REPORT, *Steve White*** -- The RBC treasurer's accounting for fiscal year 2011-2012 and the first three quarters of FY 2012-2013 was duly reviewed by the Auditing Committee on June 5th 2013, and was found to be in order. The Committee's report will be submitted to the Executive Committee in advance of its meeting on August 29th.

We begin fiscal year 2013-2014 in good financial shape. Our savings account balance stands at \$11,363.50 (comprised of a Certificate of Deposit for \$10,131.01 and a standard savings account balance of \$1,232.49). Checking account balance is \$6,237.10 which compares well to our beginning balance in all previous fiscal years (8 total) of my tenure as treasurer.

I have already received membership renewals by mail from a few conscientious folks, and I thank you for being so prompt. I will be taking checks or cash for renewals at our September 5th meeting. Or you may renew by mail if you prefer. 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.

Thank you for your prompt renewals; I look forward to serving you as treasurer for another year.

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**BIRD CLUB BOOK CLUB, Maureen Gallagher-McLeod:** The B.C.B.C. will meet on Thursday, September 19, 6 PM, at the home of Joann Grayson to discuss the book *Falcon Fever* by Tim Gallagher after we share a meal. If you are interested in attending a book discussion, contact Maureen at [famcleod@earthlink.net](mailto:famcleod@earthlink.net) or 896-9541.

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## TRIP REPORTS

**Hillandale Walk - June – Tom Mizell:** On 21 June, eight members of the Rockingham Bird Club (RBC) took the last Hillandale walk of spring. The wish list of the group included two species: Bald Eagle and Golden Eagle. That's what I get for asking for the morning's hopes of the group. As we moved along, both Fish Crows and Red-bellied Woodpeckers welcomed us from atop the towering electric transmission poles. The ever present Blue Jays called and moved about the entire park. They were very loud and always made abrupt entrances into our fields of view numerous times on this day. The Great Crested Flycatcher, Eastern Kingbird, Baltimore Oriole, Eastern Towhee, American Goldfinch, Indigo Bunting and Northern Flicker were part of the walk's enjoyment. A Pileated Woodpecker called but did not give us any good views.

Phyllis Showalter spied a Field Sparrow our lone sparrow of the day. (We have wondered during the summer why we haven't seen more sparrows.) By 10:00 AM most of the group had departed and just two of us were left to complete the walk. We added Mockingbird, Brown Thrasher, European Starling and Black Vulture as bird activity had slowed down. As we cast our eyes upward for one more scan before calling it quits we were pleased to find two Cooper's Hawks circling overhead. Then beyond them and apparently riding the same thermals were two Red-tailed Hawks. A nice finish for a 2 1/2 hour walk. Our species total was 33 and we saved the Bald Eagle and Golden Eagle for another day.

Note: During the walk one of the Harrisonburg Parks and Recreation staffers asked us to be sure to contact them if we observed Emerald Ash Borers during our times in the Harrisonburg parks. I told him I would be sure to share that request in our newsletter. They would appreciate our help.

**Hillandale Park Walk, July -- Tom Mizell:** July 18, 2013, found nine RBC members bold enough to subject themselves to a forecast heat index of 106 F. Also, no less than five mowing machines (with engines synchronized) were at work early to keep the parks grassy areas neatly mowed. Ample summer rains have been keeping things green. Accordingly, we revised our walking routine and sought the quieter and shadier corners of the park. Overhead we found Chimney Swifts, Barn Swallows and Purple Martins feasting on high. Red-bellied Woodpeckers, Northern Flickers, White-breasted Nuthatches, Brown Thrashers and Great Crested Flycatchers were feasting also but closer to the viewing audience. A Yellow-billed Cuckoo was well received by the group and

the Cedar Waxwings found early ripening berries of the wild cherry trees. We also enjoyed the vibrant colors offered by Northern Cardinals, American Goldfinches, Indigo Buntings and Blue Jays. Our walk concluded around 10:15 AM with glimpses of a House Wren as it added to the tally of 27 species for the morning. We left the park before the full force of the forecast heat, as the temperature at departure time was about 80 F.

**Hillandale Park Walk, August – Tom Mizell:** On August 21, 2013, 17 members of the Rockingham Bird Club slipped not too quietly into a heavy fog at Hillandale Park. Visibility was about 200 yards as we crossed the bridge at the log cabin. The calls of American Crows and Blue Jays, and the songs of Field Sparrow and Eastern Wood-Pewees welcomed us. The fog seemed to add volume to the calls and songs. By 8:20 AM we encountered 10 species, and we listed our first warbler of the day -- the American Redstart near the cabin. Walking along the trail from the cabin towards the north (as the trail parallels the golf course) we enjoyed Red-bellied Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Eastern Phoebe, Eastern Towhee, Gray Catbird, Barn and Tree Swallows, and Chimney Swifts.

As we approached the northwest corner of the park, Karen Shank spotted a Baltimore Oriole that all enjoyed. By now (about 9:00 AM) the fog had lifted. The sun accented the Oriole's fine colors. Fletcher Bingham then spied a Black-and-White Warbler in the brush nearby and a flurry of activity brought on a case of "Warbler Neck" for much of the group. In this same general area we found Hooded Warbler, Canada Warbler and Downy Woodpecker. It took us two hours to walk the first loop and by 10:00 AM we tallied 30 species. Additional birds included Chestnut-sided Warbler, Great Blue Heron, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher and a young Indigo Bunting. Before leaving the park we scanned the skies one more time as we drove out and Everette Shank spied a Red-tailed Hawk. Total species for this three-hour walk was 38. Noticeably present and the cause of much conversation were a "bald cardinal" as well as a "bald Carolina Wren".

I would like to thank all the folks that joined us for the walks at Hillandale Park during our summer vacations. It was a fun summer with lots of good sightings and the simple enjoyment of the handiwork of nature. I look forward to seeing you in September as we hope to intercept some fall migrants and add to the warbler list.

PS -- "Anonymous" has been on vacation this summer. It is anticipated that he/she will once again join us in September.

\*Editor's note – the following was delivered last minute via Carrier Pigeon: *“The Hillandale Walks are unique in that arriving late or leaving early, one incurs no penalty. The group is notoriously slow-moving, enjoying both the birds and the camaraderie. And notoriously easy to spot, as Tom gently guides them through the walk's figure-eight loop.”* – Anonymous, who knows no vacations!



### RBC Hillandale Walk, May 2013

*Photo: Fearless Leader, Tom Mizell*

#### **BIRD SIGHTINGS:**

*Reports by: Bob Eggleston [BE], Matt Gingerich [MG], Ken Hinkle [KH], Diane Holsinger [DH], William Leigh [WL], Diane Lepkowski [DL] Gabriel Mapel [GMp], Greg Moyers [GM], Ken Ranck [KR], Kevin Shank [KS], John Shea [JS] Dave Wendelken [DW.]*

#### **Mountains:**

Reports of local summer residents flocking began around the third week of July.

Shenandoah National Park: In the South River area, on 7/20-21 & 7/28 mixed flocks were found two consecutive weekends in the exact same location. Between the two days, species included: **Black-throated Green, Blackburnian, Cerulean, Canada, and Hooded Warblers;** and **American Redstarts. Hooded and Worm-eating Warblers** were also found separate from the flocks, in apparent family groups. [DL, WL].

Shenandoah Mountain and its foothills, including Switzer Lake and Briery Branch Dam areas: On 7/28, a flock along Briery Branch Road included **Worm-eating, Black-and-white, Canada, Hooded, Chestnut-sided and Black-throated Green Warblers;** **American Redstarts** and **Black-capped Chickadees** [GMp.]



**Grasshopper Sparrow: “You are what you eat”**

Allegedly named for their insect-like song... which perhaps evolved after devouring one too many *grasshoppers*?(!) (Or maybe a dastardly case of snuffing out the musical competition?)

*Photo: Diane Lepkowski*

*Photo caption: Tom Pendleton*

Earlier in the month, at Bother/Flagpole Knob, the following summer residents, (not yet in flocks) were reported: **Canada, Chestnut-sided, Black-throated Blue, Black-throated Green Warblers**; and **American Redstarts and Common Yellowthroat** [7/14-- WL, DL, GM, DW.] Other reports included occasional sightings of **Red Crossbills** near Briery Branch Gap in July [GMp] along with one **Winter Wren** on the road to Reddish Knob [GMp, 7/10.]

**Valley:**

Six **Sandhill Cranes** were sighted flying northeast over Matt Gingerich’s Linville-area farm on 6/5. A pair of **Cliff Swallows** nested at his barn [MG.]

High-elevation summer residents and other migrants, including shorebirds, have begun their passage through the Valley. Valley yard-bird reports in Rockingham included **Black-and-white Warbler, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher** [8/18, DL], **Hooded Warbler** [8/17, DH] and **American Redstart** [DH, 7/23; DL, 8/18.]

**Black-crowned Night-Herons**, known to breed near Newman Lake, have been reported at Silver Lake and at Main St., Dayton on 7/3 [KS], on a Lewis Byrd Rd pond [7/15, KR – 2], and at Lake Shenandoah, an immature bird, on 8/6 [DL] & 8/11 [GM.]

**Double-crested Cormorants:** One at Lake Shenandoah on 8/6 & 8/7 [DL], and an 8/20 report of a tree-perched bird in Timberville [DH]

**Spotted Sandpiper:** multiple reports. Earliest of the season was a breeding-plumage bird on 7/11 at Silver Lake [WL.] The most recent was 8/25 on a Spaders Church Road pond [DL.]

**Sora:** Heard at Nazarene Wetlands on 8/2 [GM], 8/10 [GM & DL] and 8/13 [BE.]

**Least Sandpipers:** First seasonal report was 8/10, on Oakwood Drive. On the same day, **Pectoral Sandpipers** were found at both Oakwood Dr. and the Nazarene Wetlands [DL, GM.] Both have been reported since at several locations.

On 8/22, a **Short-billed Dowitcher** was seen on the Oakwood Drive pond [GM.]

Heavy rains on Friday 8/24 were followed by some nice shorebird drop-ins on 8/25 at both Turner Sod Farm near Elkton and Weyers Cave Airport. At the Sod Farm: four **American Golden-Plovers**, a **Black-bellied Plover**, and a **Semipalmated Plover** were highlights. About 50 **Killdeer** made for a four-plover day. Also found were **Lesser Yellowlegs; Pectoral, Solitary, and Least Sandpipers;** and about 30 **Horned Larks**. A male **Northern Harrier** coursed the fields' far edges [DW, WL, DL.] (Another Harrier was sighted in Linville, about a month earlier [7/27, MG.]) At the Airport, ten shorebird species were reported, including **45 Solitary Sandpipers**, two **Semipalmated Sandpipers**, one Semipalmated Plover, one Pectoral Sandpiper, and four **Dunlin** [GMp.]

On the evening of 8/26, at least 25 **Common Nighthawks** put on an aerial show above Cooks Creek Arboretum in Bridgewater [JS], and at least 150 were reported the following evening over Union Springs Dam [KS.]

A 6/19, wire-perched **Cockatiel** in Broadway, apparently an escaped pet, was one of the summer's more unusual sightings [GM.]

\*These reports are primarily from Rockingham County and the mountains accessed from same. For additional, and in some cases more detailed, reports and for up-to-date sightings in Rockingham and surrounding Counties, birders are welcome to join the *Shenandoah Valley Birding* group list serve (a "yahoo group,") at:

<http://pets.groups.yahoo.com/group/shenvalbirds/>

(group moderator is our own RBC member, William Leigh.)



**Peregrine Falcon** (juvenile), Shenandoah National Park, 6/15/13

The Shenandoah National Park, in cooperation with the Center for Conservation Biology, works to increase Peregrine survival rates by hacking (raising and releasing) nestlings in the Park that have been transferred from nests on bridges, where survival rates are low.

More info at: <http://www.ccbirds.org/2013/07/01/the-good-hackers/>

*Photo: Diane Lepkowski*

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



Do you like Bluebirds?

The Rockingham Bird Club, with the help and support of the Rockingham County Fair Association, has established a 'Bluebird Trail' of six nest boxes at the Rockingham County Fair Grounds. This Trail needs MONITORS to check the boxes on a weekly basis (April thru Sept.)

I'd like to have a pool of interested people to help with this monitoring. There will be a Program, at the Fairgrounds on a date/time yet to be determined, to provide more information and give those interested an opportunity to sign up. This program will provide an orientation on nest box monitoring and the protocol used for collecting and reporting data. If you have a home nest box (or trail) that you monitor, you can register your trail as well. Please contact Debbie Harrison at 540-856-3058 or [woodshar@aol.com](mailto:woodshar@aol.com)

## **ROCKFISH GAP HAWK WATCH OPEN HOUSE: Sat. 14, 11 AM – 2 PM**

The 38th season at Rockfish Gap Hawk Watch began on August 15, and we're off to a great start, having tallied 172 hawks in the first 10 days, including 10 Bald Eagles, 17 Osprey and 117 Broad-wings. We will hold an OPEN HOUSE on Saturday, September 14, from 11am–2pm. This is a chance to meet our volunteer counters, learn about what we do, how we do it and why, try out some binoculars and spotting scopes, and view our new educational display. Free refreshments will be provided, educational materials and mounted specimens of many raptors will be on display, and we're hopeful that a falconer will be on site with a live raptor.

Last season was awesome, with 21,497 total raptors, including three new season records (224 Bald Eagles, 370 Cooper's Hawks and 26 Merlin,) and three runner-up records (275 Osprey, 64 Red-shouldered Hawks, and 267 American Kestrels)!

The Hawk Watch is held on 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. Be sure to bring your binoculars, a lawn chair and sunscreen. We'd love to have you visit and experience the raptor migration (and help us spot the hawks)!

The Hawk Watch will continue through November, so please visit when you can. Counters are present daily unless it's raining. Peak Broad-winged Hawk migration typically occurs during the 3rd and 4th weeks of September, and thus the BIG weekend this year will likely be Sept. 21-22.

For more information, visit our website: [www.rockfishgaphawkwatch.org](http://www.rockfishgaphawkwatch.org).

See you at "The Watch"!

Vic Laubach & Brenda Tekin, Coordinators

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

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



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

**GOLDFINCH GAZETTE – Sandy Sylvest**