



Goldfinch Gazette

The Newsletter of the Rockingham Bird Club

<http://rockinghambirdclub.com>

Volume XLIV

Number 10

June 2019

JUNE MEETING

DATE: Thursday, June 6, 2019

TIME: 7:00 PM

PLACE: Detwiler Auditorium, Virginia Mennonite Retirement Community, 1501 Virginia Avenue, Harrisonburg, VA 22802.

PROGRAM: Photographic Review of Rockingham & Surrounds – presented by Diane Lepkowski and Greg Moyers

Join our own Rockingham Bird Club birders/photographers Diane Lepkowski and Greg Moyers as they share photos, adventures, and experiences of June 2018 through May 2019. The presentation will feature local area birding and might include a few adventures from places outside the Valley. Diane and Greg hope to share not just photos but also their birding enthusiasm, along with site-specific highlights to help new birders and/or birders new to the locale enjoy and appreciate the birds that grace our area.

Before the meeting, please join Diane and Greg for dinner: 5:30 PM at Taste of India, 498 University Boulevard, Harrisonburg 22801. Please contact Robyn Puffenbarger, 540-908-7335 or by email rpuffenb@bridgewater.edu in advance if you plan to attend.

JUNE, JULY AND AUGUST FIELD TRIPS - *Diane Lepkowski*

Members and guests welcome. Minors (under 18) must be accompanied by a parent or adult.

Hillandale Summer Monthly Walks, with Tom Mizell: Wednesday, June 12; Friday, July 12; Monday, August 12 -- *Please Note:* Since potential little birders will likely enjoy the playground this summer let's plan to meet at the parking area at the **main shelter** just beyond the log cabin on the left side of the main road at 8 AM.

Additional Hillandale Walk, Friday, June 21, with Tom Mizell: Meet at **11:00 AM** as we will have an opportunity to officially welcome **Summer** at 11:54 AM. Plan to meet at the parking area at the **main shelter** just beyond the log cabin on the left side of the main road.

Union Springs, Tuesday, June 11, with Greg Moyers: Greg will lead a trip to Union Springs to listen for Whip-poor-wills and Chuck-will's-widows. Meet at the Food Lion parking lot on Rt. 42 **south** (S. High St.) at 7:00 PM. Please contact Greg at gwmoyers@msn.com or 434-3029 if you plan to attend.

TRIP REPORTS

Hillandale Monthly Walk – *Tom Mizell*

May 6, 2019 was an overcast morning and it had rained the previous day. As we gathered in the parking lot I was surprised by the fallout of **birders**. Likewise, I was surprised and pleased with the “fallout of birds”. A final Box Score for the walk might read: Bird species 46 and birders 24.

With all those birding enthusiast's ears and eyes, we collectively enjoyed a warbler parade of at least 14 entries. But let's not get too far ahead and back up to the beginning.

It was 53 degrees as the parking lots filled. American Robins were singing, and a Red-bellied Woodpecker called as we gathered in the parking lot. At least three folks walked into the park and one rode a motorbike. A Magnolia Warbler was reported by a walk-in. Wish list birds included Black-and-white Warbler, Cuckoos, Red-eyed Vireos, Scarlet Tanager, Night Heron and just plain “Warblers.” Early arrival sightings at the parking lot included Red-winged Blackbirds, Mourning Doves, Blue Jays, American Crows, Northern Cardinal and Carolina Wren. As we crossed the cabin bridge, we heard Common Yellowthroat and saw some Mallards in the stream. A Brown Thrasher gave us its proud profile as it sang from the treetops. Greg Moyers left the gravel trail in front of the cabin and went upstream about 100 yards into the heavily wetted grass. Wisely most of the group followed and were rewarded with excellent views of Black-and-white, Northern Parula, Black-throated Green, Black-throated Blue, Chestnut-sided, Cape May, and Hooded Warblers. We backtracked to the cabin and followed the trail north along the golf course boundary. By 9:30 we reached the small concrete slab and listed 14 Warbler species and 36 total bird species including Palm, Blackburnian, American Redstart, Yellow-rumped, Black-throated Blue and Hooded Warbler along with Veery, Northern Mockingbird, Brown Thrasher, Gray Catbird and Eastern Towhee. We glimpsed a White-throated Sparrow as it likely said “Goodbye” as it would soon be heading north.

A surprise visitor clocking in around 8:55 AM was a Prothonotary Warbler. Yes! Many of us were able to enjoy its close presence along the trail. We hope to see that bird again next spring. By now the sun was shining and as we drew within about 100 yards of the northwest corner, a striking Rose-breasted Grosbeak flew into a tree along the golf course boundary and gave excellent, well actually “spectacular,” views.

Just prior to the Grosbeak's arrival we saw Turkey Vulture, Great-crested Flycatcher, Red-eyed Vireo, Blue-headed Vireo, and Cooper's Hawk. Before we crossed the NW Pedestrian Bridge, we also saw White-breasted Nuthatch, Chimney Swift, Eastern Wood Pewee, Carolina Chickadee and Ruby-crowned Kinglet. The Kinglet was sharing a tree with a Black-and-white Warbler that gave many of us very good eye-level looks. About this time after being swamped with warblers and other highly sought-after birds someone said, “We haven't had a single House Sparrow today have we?”

Around 11 AM and before we reached the cabin bridge a second time, most of the group had left the park. A handful of us made a quick walk around the southwest loop and added Downy Woodpecker, Red-tailed Hawk and Tufted Titmouse, bringing our day's collection to 46 by 11:30 AM. It was sunny and about 60 degrees.

Thanks to all of you as your collective sight and hearing skills gave the group many enjoyable moments on a pleasant May morning. Hope you can join us on the summer days ahead. (editor note: See FIELD TRIPS above for upcoming summer birding walks.)

Anonymous quote: **“WOW, what an EXTRAORDINARY HAPPENING!! Rather overwhelming**

warbler variety show (with a gorgeous Rose-breasted Grosbeak thrown in for good measure), eh!? What a rare privilege to witness such a beautiful thing!!!”

And a second anonymous quote helps to underscore what a special day we all enjoyed: **"Wow - what a morning! The warblers came at us virtually non-stop. Who would've expected a Prothonotary Warbler? A Hillandale first!"**

Switzer Dam – Greg Moyers

Twelve members of the Rockingham and Augusta bird clubs attended the field trip to Switzer Dam on May 8. The weather was gorgeous, and we had reasonably good cooperation from our feathered friends. As we pulled over immediately after exiting Rt. 33, we had a nice group of birds in a roadside tree, including Cape May, Yellow-rumped, and Black-and-white Warblers, as well as a Red-eyed Vireo. Across the road a Yellow-throated Vireo and a Cerulean Warbler were singing, and a Baltimore Oriole flew by. Along the road down toward the lake we got nice looks at Cerulean, Worm-eating, and Blackburnian Warblers, a couple of Yellow-throated Vireos, and a Scarlet Tanager. In the camp areas beyond the lake we were treated to more Blackburnian Warblers, Northern Parulas, Ovenbirds, Louisiana Waterthrushes, Common Yellowthroat, Acadian Flycatchers, Blue-headed Vireos, Ruby-throated Hummingbirds, Wood Thrush, a Broad-winged Hawk, and a drumming Ruffed Grouse. On our way out, we stopped to scan the lake and were rewarded with a Common Loon. On the day we tallied 15 species of warblers and approximately 53 total species.

Bergton, Crab Run - at Henry Hawkins' Family Property – Bill Benish

On May 16, Henry Hawkins hosted a special first-time offering for RBC members at his family's private property in Bergton, extending from Crab Run upward through a couple beautiful ridges and complete with wildlife watering holes at the upper elevations. As this property is leased for use by several hunters, we were fortunate that Henry could allow us to visit during migration and while no one was hunting. Between our seven participants, we tallied 51 species at the property and at least two more nearby.

Although we didn't see the recently scouted pair of Common Mergansers at Crab Run, we had already tallied three of them near the Bergton Store where we also heard Louisiana Waterthrush singing. Other highlights included a singing male first-year Orchard Oriole, Wild Turkey and Bald Eagle. Mark Tanis found a Red-headed Woodpecker exiting a cavity after declaring that the habitat was perfect for them. After Henry heard a Ruffed Grouse, Mark Tanis scouted a nearby high elevation watering hole favored by Black Bear and discovered some feathers we thought to be from Ruffed Grouse. We had four warblers including numerous Ovenbirds and Worm-eating Warblers as well as American Redstart and Pine Warbler. When we scanned the view of Crab Run, we found a constantly teetering sandpiper with a lot of dark in the belly prompting me to call it a Spotted Sandpiper. My distant view wasn't as good as that of some others, so there was also discussion of it being a Solitary Sandpiper. Ruth Shank alerted us as the bird flew toward us, allowing a view of its wings as it flew by showing white lines which would seem to support Spotted.

Great thanks to Henry and participants as well as to Bob Eggleston who helped with a scouting run a week earlier!

Long Run Road, GW National Forest – Bill Benish

Although I suspected it would be cold and windy, ten participants enjoyed a beautiful day for our trek at Long Run Road on May 15. We traveled 6 miles upward to the intersection about a mile beyond the powerline-cut and returned along the same route. The 49 species tallied on the main trip included

twelve warblers – Ovenbird, American Redstart, Northern Parula; and Worm-eating, Black-and-white, Hooded, Blackburnian, Chestnut-sided, Black-throated Blue, Pine, Yellow-rumped (Myrtle) and Black-throated Green Warblers. A singing Scarlet Tanager and Rose-breasted Grosbeak seemed like they may have been duetting. Another highlight was Barred Owl near the location Greg Moyers had scouted one about a week earlier. Ralph and Chris Bolgiano snapped a photo of a presumed Eastern Whip-poor-will on their early return downward separate from the main group.

Sightings after the group dispersed to head home included at least 15 more species such as Bald Eagle reported by Ralph in Fulks Run near the North Fork of the Shenandoah River. Horned Lark, Red-headed Woodpecker and Eastern Meadowlark were along Whitmore Shop Rd. Warbling Vireo was heard at War Branch Rd. As I was getting out of the car at home, I found Robyn and our neighbors Vince & Cindy Capaccio with eyes and ears on a male Northern Bobwhite feeding and calling at our yards next to Bridgewater College.

BIRD SIGHTINGS

Kevin Shank reports that April 20 was the last sighting of the **Evening Grosbeaks** that spent the winter at his place in Union Springs.

Shaphan Shank reported **Great-crested Flycatcher** and **Scarlet Tanager** plus **Yellow-throated Vireo** and seven warbler species, including **Black-throated Blue, Worm-eating,** and 26 singing **Ovenbirds** at Union Springs on April 24.

Matt Gingerich reported **Orchard** and **Baltimore Orioles** and a **Least Flycatcher** at his place in Linville on April 25.

Bob Eggleston reported **Purple Martins** on Lewis Byrd Rd in Bridgewater and the resident **Eastern Screech-Owl** and a nesting (probable) **Cooper's Hawk** at the Cooks Creek Arboretum on April 26.

Greg Moyers reported a **Forster's Tern** at Lake Shenandoah and a **Least Flycatcher** at Hillandale Park on April 26.

William Leigh and John Shea reported a **Cerulean Warbler** at Paul State Forest and **Sora, Lesser Yellowlegs, Solitary** and **Spotted Sandpipers**, and two **Bald Eagles** at the Nazarene Church Rd Wetland on April 27.

Herb Myers had his first **Wood Thrush** of the year as well as an **Eastern Screech-Owl** making trips in and out of the nest box at his place in Keezletown on April 27. On April 30, Herb reported a **Northern Waterthrush** at his place.

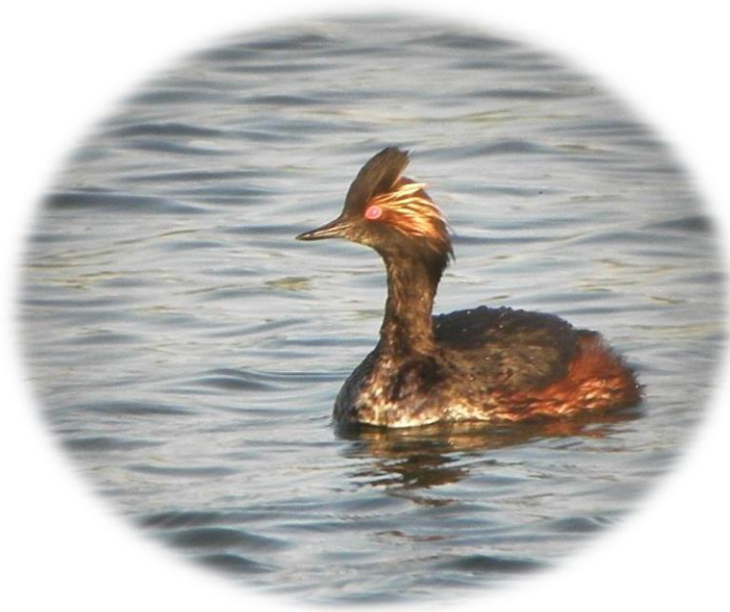
Greg Moyers found an **Eared Grebe** near Timberville on April 28.

Greg Moyers reported four **Pectoral Sandpipers** at the Oakwood Drive farm pond and a **Palm Warbler** at Cooks Creek Arboretum on April 29. On May 1, Greg reported **Veery, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Chestnut-sided Warbler,** and **Least Flycatcher** at Hillandale Park, five **Least Sandpipers** at Leonard's Pond, and **Yellow Warbler** and **Baltimore Oriole** at his place in Harrisonburg.

William Leigh reported a **Semipalmated Plover** at the Oakwood Drive pond on May 2.

Shaphan Shank reported his first-of-year **Yellow-billed Cuckoo** and **Eastern Wood-Pewee** as well as 11 warbler species, including **Cape May, Magnolia, Palm,** and **Bay-breasted** at Union Springs on May 2.

Bill Benish and Robyn Puffenbarger had two **Bobolinks** fly over their place in Bridgewater on May 3.



Eared Grebe

Photo credit: Greg Moyers

Tom Lord reported several **Cape May Warblers** in the Norway Spruce trees along Vista Heights Rd in Bridgewater on May 3.

Ken and Mildred Ranck heard **Northern Bobwhites** calling across the river from their place in Mt. Crawford on the morning of May 3.

Greg Moyers reported a **Lincoln's Sparrow** and a calling **Barred Owl** at Long Run Rd on May 4. On the same date, Greg and Barbara Andes reported that the **Common Nighthawks** have returned to the field adjacent to the Broadway Community Park.

A **Prothonotary Warbler** was seen on Tom Mizell's Hillendale Park walk on May 6. See Tom's trip report for more details on the warbler-rich walk.

Cheryl Shank found a **Hairy Woodpecker** nest at Union Springs in early May.

Numerous good birds have been reported at Paul State Forest in late April and early May, including **Northern Waterthrush, Least Flycatcher, Grasshopper Sparrow, Red-headed Woodpecker, Yellow-throated Vireo, Baltimore and Orchard Orioles**; and **Nashville, Cape May, Canada, Black-throated Blue, Magnolia, Bay-breasted, Tennessee, Blackpoll, and Cerulean Warblers**, among others. On May 10, William Leigh and Greg Moyers found a **Prothonotary Warbler** at this location.

The **Dickcissels** have returned to the field at the intersection of Trissels Rd and Woodlands Church Rds near Broadway as of May 10. On the morning of May 29, one utility line-perched male was singing, and the field was mostly mowed.

Greg Moyers found a **Wilson's Phalarope** and a **Dunlin** at Leonard's Pond on May 13. **Lesser Yellowlegs, Semipalmated, Least, Spotted, and Solitary Sandpipers** were also present. Greg also reported two **Dunlins** at the intermittent pool adjacent to the McDonald's at the Bridgewater/Mt. Crawford I-81 exchange on the same date.

Black Terns were reported near Timberville in mid-May.

Mike Smith reported nine **Cerulean Warblers** along the stretch of Skyline Drive from Swift Run Gap to Loft Mountain on May 15.

William Leigh reported six **Short-billed Dowitchers** at the Oakwood Drive farm pond and two **Semipalmated Plovers** at Leonard's Pond on May 16.

Greg Moyers and William Leigh reported a **Mourning Warbler, Veery,** and **Swainson's Thrush** at the Edith J. Carrier Arboretum at JMU on May 17.

Herb Myers found a **Wilson's Warbler** on Caverns Rd in Keezletown on May 17. Herb also reported **Louisiana Waterthrush, Magnolia Warbler,** and **Black-throated Green Warbler** in the same area.

Diane Lepkowski had a **Mourning Warbler** visit her yard water feature near Harrisonburg on May 18.

William Leigh reported two **White-rumped Sandpipers** at the Oakwood Drive farm pond on May 19.

Ken Rank reported that the **Bobolinks** were still present at Goods Mill Rd as of May 19.

Charles Ziegenfus reported Northern Bobwhites calling at Leonard's Pond on May 20 and Bob Eggleston reported a **Northern Bobwhite** calling in Bridgewater on May 21.

Elizabeth Ihle heard a **Northern Bobwhite** in a brushy area of her Fairview Rd, Mt. Crawford yard for four consecutive days: May 22-25.

Matt Gingerich found seven **Ruddy Turnstones** at a pond on Weavers Rd west of Harrisonburg on May 21. William Leigh reported four **Semipalmated Plovers** along with **Semipalmated, Least,** and **Spotted Sandpipers** at this spot later the same day.

Diane Lepkowski reported nine **Whip-Poor-Wills** at Cub Run Rd on the east side of Massanutten Mountain, between Peterfish Gap and Martin's Bottom, on May 26. NOTE – this is just south of a Breeding Bird Atlas 2 priority block that needs exploring!



Mourning Warbler

Photo credit: Diane Lepkowski

ANNOUNCEMENTS

25th Annual Purple Martin Field Day in VA

Date: Saturday, June 22, 2019

Time: 11:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m.

Location: Central Virginia (Louisa County) (40 miles west of Richmond)

Cost: Free, but donations are welcome

Questions? Call Kathy at (434) 222-1831 (You must leave a voicemail; she will call you back.)

This year, we are scheduling a full program! Plan to arrive before **11:00 AM** so you won't miss the Door Prize give-away (including free GOURDS!) and the beginning of the presentations.

See www.purplemartinfieldday.org for directions, photos, and to find out what to bring (and NOT to bring!) Come join the fun in central Virginia!

MVPs of the VABBA2, Part 1, featuring Diane Lepkowski

The Commonwealth has many talented birders who use their field skills, talent for communication, and/or tech knowledge to benefit this project. But a number of these folks stand out - some for their committed advocacy, some for the sheer scope of their data collection efforts, but all for their commitment to this project from day one. We want to recognize a few of those who are still going strong after three years of tremendous Atlas contributions.

To get us started, let's talk about Rockingham County Deputy Zoning Administrator/ Deputy Subdivision Agent and avid hiking enthusiast **Diane Lepkowski**. Diane was hesitant about joining a bird club—yet doing so introduced a life-defining passion. She went from skeptic to elected Vice President of Fieldtrips in less than two years. She's worked with the VABBA2 regional coordinator, Lisa Koerner-Perry, to steer club-members into remote areas and blitz priority blocks in Rockingham County and surrounding areas since 2016. To read more about Diane's birding journey and Atlasing contributions, visit <https://ebird.org/atlasva/news/mvps-of-the-vabba2-part-1/>

Support to Partners – Shenandoah River Watershed – With new fishing access comes new birding access

- The Commonwealth of Virginia and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) announce the launch of a new program to help Commonwealth citizens with the development of public recreation access to Shenandoah Valley rivers. This new program, named "*Support to Partners – Shenandoah River Watershed*," is a partnership through the DuPont-Waynesboro Natural Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA) settlement among the Commonwealth, the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (DGIF) and USFWS. These NRDA trustees have dedicated monies to enhance or create recreational fishing access on reaches of South River, North Fork Shenandoah River, South Fork Shenandoah River, Mainstem Shenandoah River, or tributaries. DGIF staff developed criteria for evaluating recreational access with partners from multiple agencies. An oversight committee will review all submitted proposals.

"Support to Partners is a critical step toward improving recreational access to the legendary Shenandoah River," said Secretary of Natural Resources, Matthew J. Strickler. "This program and ongoing conservation and restoration projects will help offset the damage caused by past toxic pollution."

Mercury from industrial activities at the former E.I. du Pont de Nemours and Company (DuPont) facility in Waynesboro, VA, contaminated the South River and South Fork Shenandoah River, impacting fish, wildlife, and their habitats, including over 100 miles of river and associated floodplain and riparian habitat. Recreational fishing opportunities were also impacted from the mercury contamination, due to the fish consumption advisory on the South River and South Fork Shenandoah River.

Please visit <https://www.dgif.virginia.gov/strategies-for-partners/> to learn more about this new program.

PHOTO GALLERY



Black-and-white Warbler

Photo credit: Greg Moyers



Dunlin, Wilson's Phalarope & Lesser Yellowlegs

Photo credit: Dave Wendelken



Eastern Screech Owl family at Cooks Creek Arboretum

Photo credit: Tom Mizell. PS- the owl pictured in Diane's atlas article feature is one of these same little guys...pretty sure it's the one upper right in this photo!

Rockingham Bird Club
151 Deer Lick Lane
Broadway, VA 22815



PRESIDENT: Debbie Harrison
151 Deer Lick Lane
Broadway, VA 22815
Phone - 540-856-3058

VICE PRESIDENT: PROGRAMS - Robyn Puffenbarger

VICE PRESIDENT: FIELD TRIPS - Diane Lepkowski

SECRETARY: Anne Nielsen

TREASURER: Audrey Shenk

MEMBERS AT LARGE: Katherine Cummings & Tom Lord

GOLDFINCH GAZETTE - Denise Hoodock

EMAIL: info@rockinghambirdclub.com

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