



Goldfinch Gazette

The Newsletter of the Rockingham Bird Club

<https://rockinghambirdclub.com>

Volume XLV

Number 1

September 2019

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

Important! To keep your membership in good standing, renew before November 1: RBC membership year begins each September. Dues are payable annually in September and are not pro-rated. In keeping with RBC bylaws, members who have not paid dues by November 1st, 2019 will be dropped from the Club roster and mailing lists.

Dues - note new rates:

Individual: \$20

Family: \$30

Student: \$10

*Dues can be paid by mail, at meetings, OR electronically on the new RBC website:

<https://rockinghambirdclub.com/join-or-renew/>

SEPTEMBER MEETING

DATE: Thursday, September 5, 2019

TIME: 7:00 PM

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

PROGRAM: "North American Crane Migration" by Dr. Amy Goodall

Amy Goodall is an Associate Professor in Geographic Science at James Madison University, teaching physical geography, biogeography, and human-environment interactions. She has a Bachelor of Arts in anthropology from California University of Pennsylvania, master's degrees in biology and geo-environmental studies from Shippensburg University and a Ph.D. in geography from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Her doctoral work emphasized "citizen science," GIS, and remote sensing methods for assessing crane habitat.

Our speaker can't attend, but we'll meet for dinner at 5:30 PM at the Golden Pony, 181 N. Main St; Harrisonburg. Please contact Debbie Harrison in advance if you'll attend. 540-856-3058(H), 703-216-2585 (M) or woodshar@aol.com

SEPTEMBER FIELD TRIPS - *Diane Lepkowski*

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

Paul State Forest, Friday, September 6, with Bill Benish: This is a walking trip; we'll aim for migrating warblers and more. Bring water and snacks if you wish. Meet at Paul Forest parking lot at **8:00 AM**. From Dayton, follow Rt 257 west towards Ottobine for about 6 miles, turn right at the stop sign onto Rt 613 (Clover Hill Rd), go about .2 miles to the gravel parking lot on the right. **Please contact Bill Benish at wcbenish@gmail.com or 540-908-7336 if you plan to attend.**

Switzer Dam, Wednesday September 11, with Greg Moyers: We'll car-bird on the Forest Service road with some walking on uneven terrain for those who wish to. Targets include migrating warblers and flycatchers. Meet at Food Maxx (former Food Lion) parking lot on Rt. 33 west at 8:15 AM. Bring a snack and water if you'd like. We expect to return by 1:30. There are no restroom facilities at Switzer. Please **contact Greg at gwmoyers@msn.com or 434-3029 if you plan to attend.**

Hillandale Monthly Walk, Monday, September 23 with Tom Mizell: Meet at the Children's Playground at 8:00 AM for our first walk of Fall.

TRIP REPORTS

Hillandale Park Monthly Summer Walks – June through August 2019 – Tom Mizell

A small gray cat with white paws walked the first loop, a Pileated Woodpecker was after something on Fletcher Bingham's vehicle, we step carefully around a very small fawn, and at least three species were feeding young. In that order these things and more occurred during our Hillandale Park walks of June 12, June 21, July 12, and August 12, 2019. About 30 people took part in the walks, some from as far away as California and at least 43 species allowed themselves to be seen or heard during those trips. Thanks to all of you that showed up and helped make the walks so very enjoyable. Some highlights from each walk follow.

June 12: It was 52 degrees when we began. We enjoyed the uplifting and energetic singing of Carolina Wrens and Brown Thrashers. We paused quietly for the “chip” of the Indigo Bunting, distant drumming of a woodpecker and the repetitive “kowlp” of the Yellow-billed Cuckoo. Brown Thrashers gave a visible showing throughout the day. A small gray cat with white paws joined the group at the outset and either led or trailed for the entire loop, no doubt exploring who might make an acceptable owner. It was surprising that it stayed with us so long. Some conversation was directed at several dead Ash trees along the trail; sad evidence of the work of the Emerald Ash Borer. Eleven birders and 23 species including ten with perfect attendance at the end of this write-up: Northern Flicker, Eastern Wood Pewee, and House Wren.

June 21: Starting at 11 AM our wish-list was unusually short with only a Pileated Woodpecker noted. We proceeded clockwise by the log cabin and finished the last minutes of spring with some of the usual birds. One highlight for many was watching a Brown Thrasher enjoy a dust bath on the trail, just beyond the concrete slab near the NW park corner. For several minutes the Thrasher seemed in its own little world, oblivious to our attention. The late morning walk, closing out spring, yielded 13 species including Red-tailed Hawk, Downy Woodpecker and House Finch. Summer arrived at 11:54 AM as we crossed the Northwest corner pedestrian bridge. We paused for a photo-op for this seasonal passage (see photo in gallery). We then headed toward shelter number 12, enjoying Blue Jays feeding young. A large bird was spotted on Fletcher Bingham's vehicle -- a Pileated Woodpecker was pecking

at something. It appeared it was interested in something at the front windshield's base. So, our "only" target bird made an unusual appearance. We added 6 more species during these first summer moments. Others were Chimney Swift, House Sparrow, Eastern Towhee, Cooper's Hawk and Great-crested Flycatcher. One in the group proclaimed somewhat happily that "We saw no Starlings today!"

We had a bird contest for this time of seasonal change. All were asked to bring a list of 8 birds that they expected to see this day. Fletcher Bingham and Dan Perkuchin took top honors as we saw 7/8 and 6/8 species on their respective lists. They received thundering applause and a certificate for ice cream. 12 birders/19 species.

July 12: Cicadas and Carolina Wrens were calling as we gathered in the parking lot. It was a pleasant, sunny morning, and the temperature was 68 degrees. We were joined by Martha Clymer along with her daughter and three grandchildren who were visiting from California. The youths added an extra dimension of viewing as they were quite adept at finding not only birds but also nests and spider webs. Blue Jays, a chatty pair of White-breasted Nuthatches, Northern Cardinal, Carolina Chickadees and Carolina Wren were some of our first finds. Once again, the Brown Thrasher gave us good looks as it looked back at us through its golden eyes. Before reaching the log cabin, we added American Robins, Mourning Dove, Tufted Titmouse and a flyover pair of Great Blue Herons. An Eastern Towhee and Starlings at the cabin pushed our first half hour to 14 species.

Along the trail bordering the golf course our California connections spotted several bird nests. They also spied spider webs glistening dramatically in the sunlight. The webs were disk-shaped and very well-engineered, their centers resembling CDs. We wondered what spiders may have made them.

Indigo Bunting and Yellow-billed Cuckoo along with Brown-headed Cowbird, Eastern Wood Pewee, American Crow, Red-bellied Woodpecker and Gray Catbird gave us 22 species once we reached the Northwest Corner Pedestrian Bridge. After crossing the bridge, and as we walked through the walnut trees towards the shelters, Dan Perkuchin spotted something lying low and motionless in the grass. Thankfully he pointed out a very small fawn, curled up and "hiding". We were able to carefully walk around it-thank you Dan. We added Turkey Vulture, Common Grackle, Downy Woodpecker and Black Vulture before finishing up around 11 AM. 14 birders/27 species

August 12: It was 62 degrees and sunny as we gathered at 8 AM for a "back to school walk". Twelve RBC members set out to see the following wish-list birds: Yellow-billed Cuckoo, any warbler, Ruby-throated Hummingbird and Indigo Bunting. My notes show we also went off the deep end and listed Puffin and Red-cockaded Woodpecker. (Yes, these are adults that compose the wish-list!)

The first hour was spent mostly around the cabin. Blue Jays, American Robins, Mourning Doves, Red-bellied, Downy and Pileated Woodpeckers, Carolina Wren, Common Grackle, Northern Cardinal, House Finch, Carolina Chickadee and Blue-gray Gnatcatcher got us off to a great start. Near the cabin we also picked up Eastern Towhee, American Redstart, Cedar Waxwings, Gray Catbird, American Goldfinch, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Yellow Warbler and Ruby-throated Hummingbird. We were still near the cabin at 8:50. Some suggested we have a lawn chair birding trip at the cabin SOON!

By 9 AM we added Turkey Vulture and Great-crested Flycatcher. I must note that the Yellow-billed Cuckoo gave us quite a show and we all got really good looks at this graceful bird as it moved about the trees, feeding and occasionally swooping about in Cuckoo fashion. Twenty-four species by 9 AM.

Northern Flicker, Black Vulture, Field Sparrow, White-breasted Nuthatch and Chimney Swift rounded out our list to 29 species by 11 AM.

I close by noting that we saw Blue Jays, Red-bellied Woodpeckers and Northern Cardinal's feeding young during this walk. The Jays and Woodpeckers were more visible; the young Cardinal was only detected due to its frequent chipping. Its drab brown feathers blended in nicely with the cedar branches, making it a challenge to see.

PS. Let's "Tweet" Thanks to the 10 species with perfect attendance for all our June-August walks: American Robin, Blue Jay, Carolina Wren, Chimney Swift, Common Grackle, Eastern Towhee, Mourning Dove, Northern Cardinal, Red-bellied Woodpecker and Turkey Vulture. Thanks again to all that joined us this summer. See you in September in Hillandale Park!

Union Springs – Greg Moyers

A dozen members of the RBC attended the field trip to Union Springs on the evening of June 11. The previous day's rain moved out and we had a beautiful and very comfortable evening. Our first stop was at the Union Springs dam, where we found Indigo Buntings, American Goldfinches, Cedar Waxwings, and nesting Barn Swallows. We heard a Pine Warbler and a Blue-gray Gnatcatcher nearby. On the drive back to our usual spot at the shale pit, we heard Ovenbirds, Acadian Flycatchers, and a Wood Thrush. At the shale pit, we heard a Hooded Warbler as well as an unknown bird singing a very interesting and unfamiliar medley of songs. The Whip-Poor-Wills began calling shortly after 8:30. We heard at least two birds at the shale pit then started back down the mountain. Along the way, we heard several more Whips and got nice looks at a few birds sitting in and flying around the road. Diane Lepkowski got her "red light" on a bird perched above the road on an exposed branch and a few of us got nice looks at it while it sang. The final stop was at Kevin Shank's place to try for the Chuck-Will's-Widow. We added another Whip-Poor-Will but had no luck with Chuck. The 15 Whip-Poor-Wills we saw and heard made it one of our highest counts in recent memory.

BIRD SIGHTINGS

Herb Myers reported that his son-in-law in Keezletown had a pair of **Blue Grosbeaks** on his property. Herb was able to see the male on June 3.

On June 4, Herb Myers found a **White-eyed Vireo** on the Massanutten Ridge Trail. Other birds of note included **Scarlet Tanager** and **Pine and Worm-eating Warblers**.

The **Dickcissels** at the Woodlands Church Rd and Trissels Rd intersection near Broadway were last reported on June 5, shortly after the fields were mowed.

Greg Moyers reported a **Wild Turkey** with three chicks at Lake Shenandoah on June 16. Greg spotted the group again on July 14, this time only two young birds were accounted for.

Greg Moyers reported a **Great Egret** at Leonard's Pond on June 21.

Diane Holsinger had a singing **Wood Thrush** in her yard in Timberville on July 4 and a yard **Red-eyed Vireo** on Aug. 9.

The **Bobolinks** on Goods Mill Rd remained through at least July 5. Ken Ranck saw them on May 28, Greg Moyers reported one on June 7, and Huck Hutchens saw six on July 5.

Huck Hutchens reported 10 **Common Mergansers** on the river at Plains Mill Rd just over the Shenandoah Co. line on July 5.

Greg Moyers reported a **Cliff Swallow** at Leonard's Pond on July 13.

Greg Moyers found at least 11 **Red Crossbills**, mostly immature birds, on Hone Quarry Ridge Rd just off Flagpole Rd on July 17. Other notable sightings in the area included **Rose-breasted Grosbeaks**, **Red-breasted Nuthatch**, **Golden-crowned Kinglet**, **Canada Warbler**, **Common Yellowthroat**, and **Chestnut-sided Warbler**.

Kevin Shank reported that he was still hearing **Chuck-Will's-Widows** at his place at Union Springs on July 15.

Diane Lepkowski and Greg Moyers reported singing **Hermit Thrushes** at multiple spots along Flagpole Rd on Shenandoah Mtn on July 27 and again on Aug. 3.

William Leigh reported **Blue Grosbeaks**, **Solitary Sandpipers**, and **Least Sandpipers** at Leonard's Pond on July 27.

Greg Moyers reported a **Great Egret** along Port Republic Rd on July 29. William Leigh reported an egret in the same area on Aug. 4. Multiple **Great Egrets** were reported in the stream along Rt. 42 south of Broadway during the first half of August.

Greg Moyers found a **Brown Creeper** on Dunkle Hollow Rd on Aug. 1. On Aug. 9, Greg reported at least seven **Common Nighthawks** hunting over the fields adjacent to the Broadway Community Park.

Diane Holsinger reported an **Osprey** at Silver Lake on Aug. 13.

The female **Greater Scaup**, which was reported last winter, has continued at Silver Lake through the summer. A **Redhead** has also been reported near Timberville through the summer.

Greg Moyers reported two **Semipalmated Sandpipers** at Leonard's Pond on Aug. 20 and a **Bank Swallow** at Silver Lake on Aug. 22.

Diane Lepkowski reported an **American Redstart** in her yard near Harrisonburg on Aug. 22.

Greg Moyers reported a probable **Olive-sided Flycatcher** at Switzer Dam on Aug. 22.

William Leigh reported a **Blue-winged Warbler** at Switzer Dam on Aug. 24.

On Aug. 25, this **Mourning Warbler**, probably a first-year bird, visited Diane Lepkowski's yard:



Mourning Warbler

Photo credit: Diane Lepkowski

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Note from the Treasurer

Welcome to another year of wonderful birding programs for all our returning as well as new members. This year the Executive Committee reviewed the membership rates and decided to increase dues to \$20 for individual membership and \$30 for family membership. We are also adding a student rate of \$10 for high school and college students. Membership benefits include our monthly programs, newsletter delivery (the Goldfinch Gazette, by email or U.S. mail, your choice) and field trip opportunities.

Please pay your dues promptly. Our by-laws state that *members who have not paid their dues by November 1 will be dropped from the roster and will no longer receive the newsletter.*

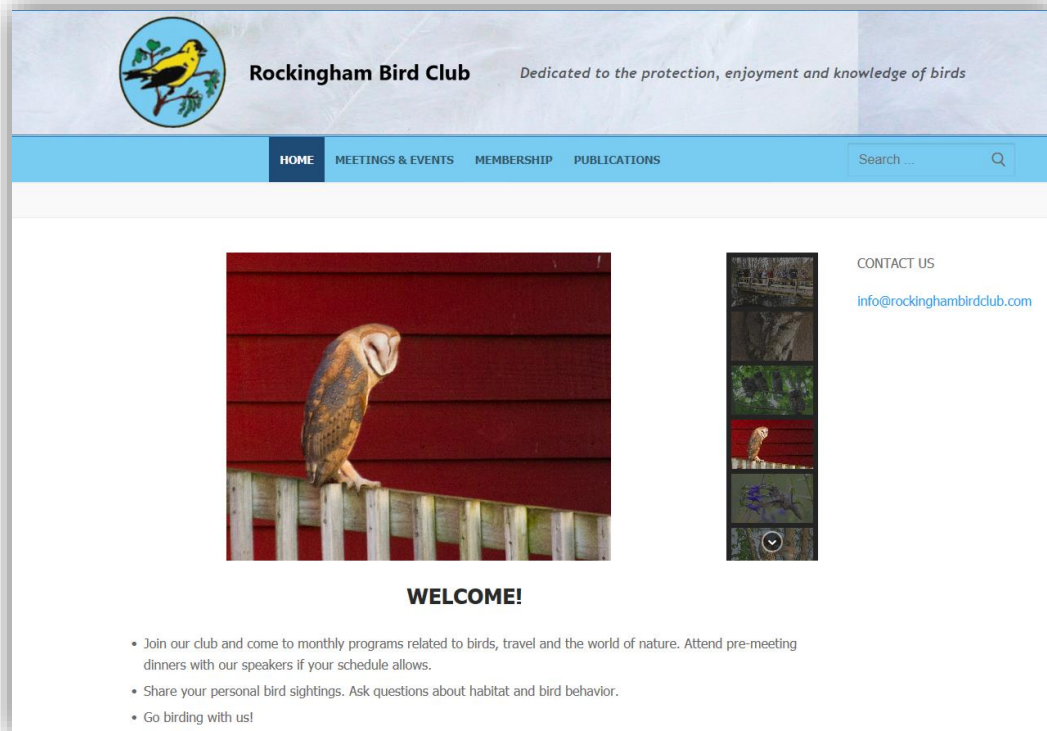
The good news is that you now have another option for paying your dues. **The new RBC website at rockinghambirdclub.com provides a method for paying for your renewal with a credit card via PayPal.** You can still pay for your membership at the club's Thursday meetings using cash or check or mail a check made out to "RBC" to:

Audrey Shenk, RBC Treasurer
949 Northfield Ct.
Harrisonburg, VA 22802

NEW RBC WEBSITE

The website committee has worked diligently on creating our new web presence. Check it out!

<https://rockinghambirdclub.com/>



RBC Audit Volunteers Needed

If you can pay your own bills and balance a checkbook, this opportunity is for you! Our Club Bylaws (Article III, Section 5) state “. . . *The club account shall be presented for audit once each year.*” We need a couple of non-Board Members to review our Treasurer’s records for 7/1/2018 thru 6/30/2019. Please contact Treasurer, Audrey Shenk (ajshenk@gmail.com) or President, Debbie Harrison (woodshar@aol.com) ASAP. This is a short-term commitment.

Historic RBC Presentations Featured on Massanutten Regional Library’s Website

Three slide presentations that RBC members compiled, used for education, and eventually donated to the Library in the early 1990’s, have been digitized and can be viewed at: <https://massanuttenlibrary.omeka.net/collections/browse>

Thanks to Reference Librarian Paul Frankel and MRL for suggesting and implementing the publication of these collections, which had become technological dinosaurs (35mm film slides in carousel slide trays.) We understand that RBC “producers” were Kathleen & Mike Finnegan, and Mary Smith.

Annual Rockfish Gap Hawk Watch Open House – VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

The open house will be held on **Saturday, September 21st, 10 AM – 3 PM.** Donations for the BBQ and volunteers to help with setup, take down, and helping visitors spot and learn about the birds. If you can help in any way, please contact Mary Mapel at 540-363-5035.



Got Bird Seed Bags?

Earth Day Every Day (a new non-profit in Harrisonburg) needs empty bird seed (or other grain) non-biodegradable bags (25-50 lb.) to upcycle into reusable shopping bags (see photo). They are looking for **PLASTIC** bags, not paper ones. Look for a box in the back of the room to deposit bags at the September Bird Club meeting.

Second Breeding Bird Atlas of Virginia (VABBA2) – Please donate!

The Second Virginia Breeding Bird Atlas has a great story to tell:

- **More than 1,200 volunteers, 75,000+ eBird checklists, and observations in over 3,700 atlas blocks throughout Virginia.**
- **More than 200 species have been recorded across the Commonwealth, with 190 so far being confirmed as breeders.**

This volunteer effort the past four years has been truly monumental. Going into the last breeding season, however, there are a number of remote and difficult to reach places that the VSO needs to cover with paid observers.

Click [here](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-hSrms-j-4&feature=youtu.be) (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-hSrms-j-4&feature=youtu.be>) to see a video about the important things we are learning and how **your donations will help us make a strong finish in the final season next year.**

Remember, the Breeding Bird Atlas will produce the most complete picture yet of where Virginia's birds live and breed, which is invaluable for their conservation. Every dollar you give helps secure their future! Thank you for your consideration and support.

Dan Bieker, President, Virginia Society of Ornithology

VSO Fall Field Trip Chincoteague, VA – September 20-22, 2019

Every fall holds surprises at Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge, so join us to discover what awaits us on this year's annual fall VSO trip, September 20-22, 2019. Last year we had to cancel the trip due to mandatory evacuation in the area for Hurricane Florence, so we're eager to return for this annual favorite! **TRIP REGISTRATION** To help us plan for the weekend, please register in advance. Provide the names of participants in your party with your mobile number and email address so we can contact you if needed. Register with Meredith Bell, trip coordinator, at merandlee@gmail.com or 804-824-4958. For more information about the field trip go to www.virginiabirds.org.

PHOTO GALLERY



Pileated Woodpecker
Hillandale Park – June 2019



Wild Turkey with three chicks at Lake Shenandoah – June 2019

Photo credit: Greg Moyers



Great Egret at Leonard's Pond – June 2019

Photo credit: Greg Moyers



Rockingham Bird Club
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VICE PRESIDENT: FIELD TRIPS – Diane Lepkowski

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TREASURER: Audrey Shenk

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