



## Goldfinch Gazette

The Newsletter of the Rockingham Bird Club

<https://rockinghambirdclub.com>

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**VIRTUAL CLUB MEETINGS, via ZOOM, WILL NOW TAKE THE PLACE OF IN-PERSON CLUB MEETINGS, AT LEAST THROUGH THE END OF THE YEAR. SEE MORE INFORMATION ON PAGE 2 OF THIS NEWSLETTER.**

### **SECRETARY NEEDED IMMEDIATELY!!**

We need a volunteer to step into the role of Secretary for the club. Please contact Debbie Harrison at 540-856-3058 or [woodshar@aol.com](mailto:woodshar@aol.com) if you are willing to help the club in this capacity.

### **Vice President for Programs Needed**

Robyn Puffenbarger completed her 2-year commitment as VP of Programs in June. However, she has graciously continued to provide programs through Zoom meetings for the remainder of 2020.

The club needs a volunteer to step forward and fill this role. Please consider giving your time to this important and necessary roll in our club. There may be some programs already scheduled for 2021.

### **MEMBERSHIP DUES**

While we are being very careful and protecting ourselves from the ongoing threat due to the pandemic, our club needs to stay “in business” and membership dues are important. Please remember 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 1, 2020 will be dropped from the Club roster and mailing lists.

**DUES: Individual: \$20, Family: \$30, Student: \$10** Pay for your membership online at <https://rockinghambirdclub.com/join-or-renew/> using a credit card via PayPal or mail a check made out to “RBC” to: Audrey Shenk, RBC Treasurer, 949 Northfield Ct., Harrisonburg, VA 22802

## VIRTUAL CLUB MEETING via ZOOM

**DATE:** Thursday, September 3, 2020

**TIME:** 7:00 PM

**PLACE:** VIRTUAL via ZOOM

**PROGRAM:** Rockingham Bird Club Test of ZOOM

Please plan to join us virtually on Thursday September 3rd at 7 PM to ZOOM! We are testing our ability to have speakers come to us live via technology, as we will not be able to meet face-to-face until at least 2021. Click on the link below and join the meeting using the Meeting ID listed. No passcode is needed. We will take a few minutes to try to get everyone comfortable with Zooming. If you have any questions or need assistance, please contact Robyn Puffenbarger at [rpuffenb@bridgewater.edu](mailto:rpuffenb@bridgewater.edu) or 540-908-7335.

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://bridgewatercollege.zoom.us/j/96188684518>

**Meeting ID: 961 8868 4518**

If you would like to join the meeting using your smart phone, tap on one of the mobile numbers listed below. You will have audio but no video unless you have the Zoom mobile app, in which case you will have audio and video.

One tap mobile

+19294362866,,96188684518# US (New York)

+13017158592,,96188684518# US (Germantown)

If you know how to Zoom and just want to pop in, please do! It will be nice to see faces again! If you have never used Zoom, take a few minutes to check out this information from Zoom:

<https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/201362193-Joining-a-meeting>

### **FIELD TRIPS - *Diane Lepkowski***

**\*\* Field trips have been postponed for the foreseeable future due to concerns regarding the coronavirus pandemic.**

### **BIRD SIGHTINGS**

Mike Smith had a singing **Kentucky Warbler** below the dam at Slate Lick on May 31. Mike also heard a **Red-breasted Nuthatch** at nearby Green Knob on the same date.

Huck Hutchens reported a **Greater Yellowlegs** at Leonard's Pond on June 1.

Greg Moyers reported a **Blue-winged Teal** and a **Green-winged Teal** at the Oakwood Drive farm pond on June 1.

Diane Holsinger had a **Scarlet Tanager** singing at her place in Timberville on June 2.

Bill Benish and Robyn Puffenbarger made a trip up Shenandoah Mountain on Briery Branch Rd on June 19. In addition to seeing **Indigo Buntings**, **Louisiana Waterthrushes**, **Blackburnian Warbler**, and an **Acadian Flycatcher** on a nest, Bill flushed two **Ruffed Grouse**.

Herb Myers reported an **Eastern Phoebe** nest with young, **Blue Grosbeak**, **Wood Thrush**, **Indigo Bunting**, and **Yellow-billed Cuckoo** at his place in Keezletown on June 21.

**Red Crossbills** have been all over the western mountains this summer. In addition to the usual spot at the crossroads at the top of Briery Branch Rd, Crossbills have been seen along FR 539 – Hone Quarry Ridge Rd, Hone Quarry, at the intersection of Rt. 33 and Switzer Lake Rd, several locations along and behind Switzer Lake, and at Dry Run Rd and Skidmore Fork Rd at the base of the mountain along Rt. 33 west of Harrisonburg.

William Leigh, Greg Moyers, Clair Mellinger and others reported as many as two **Common Loons** at Switzer Lake from early spring until at least July 1.

Clair Mellinger received a report of a **Lesser Scaup** on a private pond on Mt. Clinton Pike on July 2.

Betty Gatewood reported two **American Avocets** at partially drained Lake Shenandoah on July 12.

In addition to some of the usual suspects, Diane Holsinger had several more exciting visitors to her bird bath in Timberville on Aug. 11 including a **Worm-eating Warbler**, a **Great Crested Flycatcher**, and three **Baltimore Orioles**.

Diane Lepkowski's yard reports included **American Redstart** Aug 13, 15 & 19; **Canada Warbler** on Aug 15 & 19; and also, on Aug 19, a **Black-and-white Warbler**.

Robyn Puffenbarger and Bill Benish reported six **Common Nighthawks** at their new place in Verona (Augusta Co.) on Aug. 22.

On Aug. 22, Ken Ranck reported that friends of his, Roland and Lois Horst, have been sporadically seeing an immature **White Ibis** at their pond at Fulks Run. A photo confirmed the ID.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### **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 7/1/2019 thru 6/30/2020. Please contact Treasurer, Audrey Shenk (ajshenk@gmail.com) or President, Debbie Harrison (woodshar@aol.com) ASAP. This is a short-term commitment.

### **2020 Seed Sale CANCELLED**

As the pandemic has affected our club meetings and field trips, it has also made it necessary to cancel our seed sale this year. Kathy Byers, Audrey Shenk, Kathy and Art Fovargue, spent a good bit of time investigating several options to try and make the sale possible. In the end, we could not find a way to hold it without possibly putting club members' health at risk.

The seed sale is the club's only fundraiser outside of membership dues. This money was mostly used to contribute to several organizations whose missions were consistent with the club's. It saddens us to withhold or reduce our support this year. If there is interest, we may share the list of organizations later in the fall for any members who might want to make personal contributions.

On the bright side, some new options, and venues for a sale in 2021 were investigated and give us something to look forward to! Thank you for all your support in past years. Stay safe and we will hope to bring the sale to you in 2021.

## **Donations Needed as Virginia Breeding Bird Atlas 2 Transitions to Next Stage!**

The second Virginia Breeding Bird Atlas, known as VABBA2, is one of the largest citizen science projects in Virginia's history. Over the last five years, more than 1,400 volunteer birders, including many RBC members, have gathered data on breeding activity of over 200 species throughout the Commonwealth, resulting in over 6 million records.

The VABBA2 is a joint effort of the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources (formerly Game and Inland Fisheries), Virginia Tech and the Virginia Society of Ornithology (VSO).

In speaking of the field collection work, Dr. Ashley Peele of Virginia Tech and VABBA2 Coordinator said "We've ended our final year very strongly, despite constraints presented by Covid-19. This means that after five years of intense data collection, we are in an excellent position for moving forward with the next stage – data cleanup, review, and analysis for the Atlas datasets." This second stage will compile the raw data into readily useable information.

Although its final form is still being determined, the VABBA2 will provide accessible science-based information on avian population and habitat distributions; species maps and accounts; and a range of other topics. This data, and its comparison to the first VA Breeding Bird Atlas of 30 years ago, will support positive environmental regulation, species conservation, rural land preservation, public lands acquisition and management, climate change actions and much more. You can learn more about the atlas project [here](#).

As a member chapter of the Virginia Society of Ornithology, Rockingham Bird Club is pleased to support the next phase of VABBA2. We invite you to join us in helping launch the final stage of the Atlas project through your donation, either [online](#) or by sending a check to the VSO at P.O. Box 5994, Williamsburg, VA 23188. Thank you!

## **Black Birders Week - by Chris Bolgiano, June 18, 2020**

Like birds, birders come in many colors. But black birders are uncommon, though not difficult to see. Reasons include the less-than-welcoming attitude of some environmental organizations, media portrayals of whites only in the outdoors, and the racism many black naturalists know through ugly experience that they risk in natural areas.

"We've decided to change that narrative," said Corina Newsome, a black graduate student in biology at Georgia Southern University, in an interview with the journal *Inside Higher Ed*. After a video showing a white woman in Central Park falsely accusing a black male birder of threatening her, and in the context of unprecedented national outrage over racial injustice, Newsome and more than 30 fellow black naturalists established the first Black Birders Week, beginning May 31. Her 62.2K Twitter followers (@hood\_naturalist) made it viral, and media from CNN to the august Cornell Lab of Ornithology made it a widespread headline.

The response from many scientists and environmentalists has been resounding support. But a frequent objection was that birding should not be politicized. In response, a page on Cornell's [www.allaboutbirds.org/news/](http://www.allaboutbirds.org/news/) website states: "Please Don't Dismiss Talk About The Black Birding Experience As 'Political' ...it is dismissive ... because you don't want to see it anymore. 'Political' is just a cop-out." That page also advises on how to be anti-racist in the woods:

- Acknowledge, smile, and be friendly.

- Strike up a sincere conversation, as one birder to another.
- Don't make assumptions about a birder's skill based on appearance.
- Speak up for Black birders in the field if you witness others being disrespectful or intolerant.
- Expand your flock: invite others to join your bird walk.

Dr. J. Drew Lanham is a Clemson University Master Teacher and Alumni Distinguished Professor in Wildlife Ecology and the author of *The Home Place: Memoirs of a Colored Man's Love Affair with Nature*, a 2017 Southern Book Prize winner. A few years earlier, he published "Nine Rules for The Black Birdwatcher," in *Orion Magazine*. These rules are famous for their bittersweet humor; for ex. rule #3: "Don't bird in a hoodie. Ever." You can find the other 8 rules on the magazine's website.

Lanham has said that "conserving birds and their habitat is a moral mission that needs the broadest and most diverse audience possible to be successful." The Virginia Society of Ornithology agrees, recently posting on its website [www.virginiabirds.org/](http://www.virginiabirds.org/): "Through diversity we are stronger, wiser and better able to face the challenges of declining bird populations and environmental degradation."

Love of birds can bring us together, and together we can better protect what we love.

## *In Memoriam*



Mary Elizabeth Williams Smith, age 94, passed away peacefully on June 25, 2020, at the Virginia Mennonite Retirement Community in Harrisonburg, Va., where she had lived since January 2016. Mary graduated from Christiansburg High School in 1943 and from Virginia Tech in 1947. While at Tech she met Richard Holladay Smith Jr. and they married in 1948. She and Dick moved to Harrisonburg, Va. in 1954. They were married for 65 years and raised five children.

Mary loved all aspects of nature. She was a wildflower enthusiast and she and Dick were avid birders. She was a charter member and past president of the Rockingham Bird Club and a charter member of the Rockingham Wildlife Alliance. Mary passed her love of nature, birds, flower arranging, and gardening on to her children who engage in similar activities in their own lives. She surrounded her family with books and beauty in the form of her many collections of treasures found in nature, Valley antiques, bird nests, eggs, artwork, and vases filled with her lovely flower arrangements. She was also a fine photographer and enjoyed photographing both birds and wildflowers.

Mary will be lovingly remembered by her friends and family. She will be greatly missed by all. It is hoped that when you think of Mary you will remember her with a pair of binoculars slung around her neck and flower pruners in each hand!





Red-headed Woodpecker – Singers  
Glen, August 2020

Photo credit: Stephen White

American Avocet – Lake Shenandoah  
August 2020

Photo credit: Diane Lepkowski





Anne Nielsen monitoring the Bluebird Box trail at the Rockingham County Fairgrounds – July 2020

*Autumn  
in just  
around  
the  
corner!*



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: VACANT**

**TREASURER:** Audrey Shenk

**MEMBERS AT LARGE:** Kathy Fovargue, Martha Faw

**GOLDFINCH GAZETTE –** Denise Hoodock

**EMAIL:** [info@rockinghambirdclub.com](mailto:info@rockinghambirdclub.com)



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On the Web: <https://rockinghambirdclub.com>