



Goldfinch Gazette

The Newsletter of the Rockingham Bird Club

<https://rockinghambirdclub.com>

Volume XLVI

Number 8

Apr 2021

VIRTUAL CLUB MEETING via ZOOM

DATE: Thursday, April 1, 2021

TIME: 7:00 PM

PLACE: VIRTUAL via ZOOM

PROGRAM: *In Search of the Great Gray Owl* presented by Kyle Dudgeon

Of all the birds and wildlife that call the forests and mountains of Montana home, one species in particular leaves an impression - the Great Gray Owl. Join us as Kyle takes us through his experiences with dozens of Great Gray Owls over two years in Montana, as well as the story of protecting a nest from logging interests. Kyle Dudgeon is a 23-year-old nature photographer and writer based in Bozeman, Montana. He spent several weeks studying, photographing, and advocating for a family of owls in the Bridger Mountains.

A New York native, photography has led Kyle's journeys across North America, capturing wild moments in incredible places. With his photographs and writing, Kyle strives to share the power and emotion that the natural world possesses, to encourage conservation of species and environments at risk. In 2019, Kyle Dudgeon Creative was founded on an idea to translate a passion for wild things and wild places into visual storytelling. A project involving Great Gray Owls in Montana was Kyle's first foray into what he hopes will be a long career in conservation.

Join us via Zoom:

<https://bridgewatercollege.zoom.us/j/91575633085?pwd=eFdiQ3BxdTJVdWY3MjFHNVJzaXhEQOT09>

Meeting ID: **915 7563 3085**

Passcode: **615517**

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FIELD TRIPS - *Diane Lepkowski*

****Field trips have been postponed due to concerns regarding the pandemic**

BIRD SIGHTINGS

William Leigh found an **Eared Grebe** at the Broadway Wastewater Treatment Plant on Feb. 12. The bird continues to be reported as of this writing.

Snow and ice storms throughout February brought numerous other good birds to the Broadway Wastewater Treatment Plant, including **Long-tailed Ducks, Red-breasted Mergansers, Tundra Swans, Herring Gull, Ring-billed Gull, Snow Geese, Ross's Goose (likely a hybrid), Cackling Goose, Greater White-fronted Goose, American Coot, Northern Pintails, and Common Goldeneyes.**

Short-eared Owls have been reported on Raders Church Rd near Timberville throughout the winter.

Herb Myers reported a **Hermit Thrush** and a **Common Raven** near Keezletown on Feb. 21.

Mike Smith reported a **Winter Wren, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, and Yellow-rumped Warblers** on the trails behind the Elkton Community Center on Feb. 21. On Feb. 22, Mike had **Hermit Thrush, Pine Siskins, Purple Finches, Red-breasted Nuthatch, and Brown Creeper** at his home near Elkton. On Feb. 25, Mike saw a pair of **Hooded Mergansers** and a **Red-shouldered Hawk** along Captain Yancey Rd near Elkton. On March 2, Mike added **Fox Sparrow** and **Winter Wren** to his yard list. On March 7, Mike had a number of birds visiting sap wells in his sugar maple, including **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Golden-crowned Kinglet, White-breasted Nuthatch, Carolina Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, and Brown Creeper.** He also saw a **Yellow-rumped Warbler** and a **Red-breasted Nuthatch** in the same tree.

Greg Moyers and Dave Wendelken had their first-of-year **Tree Swallow** at Lake Shenandoah on Feb. 25. Debbie Harrison also reported a **Tree Swallow** at the Rockingham County Fairgrounds.

One, and occasionally two, **Snow Geese** have been reported off-and-on at the Sentara RMH Pond throughout the winter.

Mike Smith reported **Hooded Merganser, Scaup, Great Blue Herons,** and 30 plus **Tree Swallows** on Honeysuckle Rd on March 5.

Greg Moyers and Diane Lepkowski reported a **Golden Eagle** at Switzer Dam on March 6. On the same date, William Leigh also had a **Golden Eagle** on Raders Church Rd near Timberville.

Richard Whelden and his wife reported eight **Northern Shovelers** at Silver Lake on March 8.

Herb Myers had a singing **Eastern Phoebe** and singing **Field Sparrows** at his place in Keezletown on March 8 and singing **Eastern Meadowlarks** along Happy Valley Rd on March 11.

Mike Smith counted 38 **Red Crossbills** at Briery Branch Gap, three **Hooded Mergansers** at Skidmore Lake, and had a **Bald Eagle, American Wigeons, Green-winged Teal,** and 30 plus **Tree Swallows** on Honeysuckle Rd near Elkton on March 12.

Greg Moyers reported **Pine Warblers, Eastern Phoebes, and Fox Sparrows** at Madison Run Fire Rd on March 12. Greg and Diane Lepkowski heard a calling **Barred Owl** at the same location on March 20.

Herb Myers had **Fox Sparrows** and a **Pine Warbler** on a hike to Hensley's Pond on the west side of Massanutten Mtn on March 13. On March 15, Herb reported a **Ruby-crowned Kinglet** and a **Yellow-rumped Warbler** at his place in Keezletown.

Mike Smith reported his first **Pine Warbler** of the year at his place on March 13.

Greg Moyers and Dave Wendelken reported **Red Crossbills, Ruffed Grouse, Pine Warblers, Fox Sparrows, Wood Ducks, Red-breasted Nuthatches, Eastern Phoebes,** and singing **Brown Creepers** at Switzer Dam on March 17.

A pair of **Blue-winged Teal**, the continuing **Wilson's Snipe**, and several **Ruddy Ducks** have been at Lake Shenandoah through mid-March.

Dave Wendelken and Greg Moyers reported **Northern Rough-winged Swallows, Horned Grebe, Buffleheads, Hooded Mergansers,** and **Red-breasted Mergansers** at Lake Shenandoah on March 19.

Everett, Karen, and Annie Shank continue to host **Evening Grosbeaks** at their place near Bridgewater with around 40 seen as late as March 20.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Highland Retreat Camp – Saturday, April 17, 24 and May 1 – 8 AM – Clair Mellinger

Highland Retreat Camp is extending a special invitation to RBC members and their friends to explore the bird life on the camp property. Several of you asked during the owls banding project whether you could bird at the camp, other than the middle of a November night. Highland is extending this special invitation for Saturday, April 17. They will also be inviting others to join in bird walks that will occur on Saturdays, April 24, and May 1. But April 17 will be specially set aside for the RBC. Vic Buckwalter, Herb Myers, and I will be there to help show you around the camp trails. Hikes will begin at 8:00 AM but someone will be around to point you in the right direction if you get there later than that. We will meet at the Tabernacle which is at the end of the Lower Highland Drive. It is the building where we band owls. *Please wear masks.* We will divide into small groups as much as possible to avoid unnecessary contact. If you stay until 11:30 AM, a light lunch will be available for purchase. For more information, questions or if you need complete directions, please contact me, Clair Mellinger, at mellinac@emu.edu and/or use the Highland Days link at the camp's website, <https://highlandretreat.org/highland-days/>

President's Message:

As you know, any Club needs leaders! We skipped elections last year due to COVID & the 2019-2020 Officers & Members-at-large agreed to stay on for another year, with the exception of our Secretary who physically moved away (no one has volunteered to be appointed to fill the position to serve out her term). The Executive Committee has always mentored the ones following them.

In the past words of a long-time member/former Officer: **The truth of the matter is that this club is amazingly easy to run because (1) There are no politics with everyone tries to help everyone else and (2) this club has no money worries. Few organizations can say that. However, this club is burning out its current officers. They can't serve forever. The rest of us just can't sit back and expect the club to function without each person's contribution. While it takes some (but not a lot) of specialized knowledge to organize field trips, other important posts—president, secretary, and program vice president—just need people with a modicum of organizational skills. None of these posts require past years of membership in the bird club.**

Report from the Nominations Committee:

- **ELECTIONS @ May meeting.** Please give this some consideration & ask me or other Board members for more information about “their job”.

“Teamwork makes the dream work,” (quote by John C. Maxwell, American Clergyman)

As Chair (& sole participant) the Nominations Committee, I report that all current Officers, plus Executive Committee members (2 Members-at-Large & all Standing Committee Chairs) have agreed to serve another year.

Additionally, we have had a volunteer to be placed in Nomination at Secretary.

The Slate is as follows:

One-year terms:

President	Debbie Harrison
VP – Programs	Robyn Puffenbarger
VP – Field trips	Diane Lepkowski
Secretary (Position currently vacant)	Stephani Moore
Treasurer	Audrey Shenk

Two-year terms (with 1 successive term allowed):

2 Members-at-Large Our current Members-at-Large are:

Kathy Fovarge, thru June 2021, [Kathy Fovarge](#)

and

Martha Faw, thru June 2022 (her last year) [Martha Faw](#)

My thanks to these people who have stepped up. Remember that we do this every year, so start thinking of how YOU can help this Club continue. You could use 2021-2022 to ‘shadow’ anyone on this Executive Committee.

Feeding Bluebirds (<https://www.virginiabluebirds.org/about-bluebirds/feeding-bluebirds/>)

Bluebirds love mealworms and can be fed year-round. It is easiest to start feeding them when they have babies in the nests. Bluebirds usually reject commercially sold bluebird feeders. We have devised a fix for these that seems to work. We take the Plexiglas out of these feeders and replace it with metal hardware cloth and expand the entrance holes. Often you need to put the mealworms in a shallow dish under a perch that they commonly uses and once they associate the dish with food you can begin to

move the dish until you move it inside your feeder. For more feeding information, check out this guide from the North American Bluebird Society.

Mealworms – Mealworms are available in bulk (1000 or more) from many birding supply stores or from various suppliers such as Grubco 800-222-3563, Nature’s Way 800-318-2611, or Sunshine Mealworms; Silverton OR, 1-800-322-1100 (www.sunshinemealworms.net). Mealworms can be stored in the refrigerator for over a month at a time in a container with air holes on the top. Keep them in oat bran meal and put a few slices of fresh apples in the container every week. As you need mealworms for feeding, use a coarse sifter of some sort to scoop up the mealworms and sift them out of the bran meal.

Vegetation to Attract Bluebirds – Bluebirds eat berries in the winter. Many types of berry producing plants will attract and nourish birds. This includes plants such as holly, dogwood, bayberry, winterberry, service berry, hawthorn, sumac, privet inkberry, and Virginia creeper. Learn more about plants that attract birds.

Suet For Bluebirds – 1 cup crunchy peanut butter, 1 cup lard, 2 cups quick oats, 2 cups cornmeal, 1 cup flour, 1/3 cup sugar, berries like currents optional. Mix dry ingredient. Melt peanut butter & lard together, and mix with dry ingredients. Press into pan, cool, cut into squares and freeze until needed.

Water – Water is key to attracting bluebirds. You can often attract more birds by providing water than food as it can be hard for them to find water sources. Baths should be located far enough from brush to protect birds from predators such as cats but close enough to a low tree or perch to make the birds feel secure and able to escape. Change the water frequently and limit the depth to around 1.5 inches to guard against newly fledged birds drowning. Heating coils are available for keeping the bath from freezing in the winter.



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PRESIDENT: Debbie Harrison
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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

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