



**Goldfinch Gazette**  
**The Newsletter of the Rockingham Bird Club**  
<https://rockinghambirdclub.com>

**Volume XLVII**

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**Feb 2022**

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**VIRTUAL CLUB MEETINGS, via ZOOM, WILL CONTINUE TO TAKE THE PLACE OF IN-PERSON CLUB MEETINGS, AT LEAST FOR THE FORSEEABLE FUTURE.**

**VIRTUAL CLUB MEETING via ZOOM**

**DATE:** Thursday, February 3, 2022

**TIME:** 7:00 PM

**PLACE:** VIRTUAL via ZOOM

**PROGRAM:** “Native Plant Conservation is for the Birds” by Matt Bright, Conservation Manager at Earth Sangha

Earth Sangha works to conserve native plant communities and rare plant species both in the Northern Virginia region and in the rural Dominican Republic. Matt will talk about the many ecological connections between our native birds and native plants. Increasingly, we understand how human disturbance and climate change is upsetting those relationships in ways that are detrimental to both flora and fauna. Matt will wrap up with some practical advice about how to better manage human landscapes in ways that maximize ecological benefits for birds. Matt Bright is the conservation manager at Earth Sangha where he has worked since 2011. He helps operate the Wild Plant Nursery, the DC region's largest collection of exclusively local-ecotype native plants for restoration purposes. Matt and the team at Earth Sangha work closely with ecologists and park managers to conserve and restore native plants across the Northern Virginia region.

Join Zoom Meeting:

<https://bridgewatercollege.zoom.us/j/91327510563?pwd=bWpIZEl4cThpWUVaR2NqQUpWNTIPZz09>

**Meeting ID:** 913 2751 0563

**Passcode:** 923617

One tap mobile

+13017158592,,91327510563#,,,,\*923617# US

If you have any questions or need assistance, please contact Robyn Puffenbarger at [rpuffenb@bridgewater.edu](mailto:rpuffenb@bridgewater.edu) or 540-908-7335.

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***

We hope to resume field trips this spring to sites that won't require carpooling.

### **2022 Raptor / Waterfowl Count, Saturday, February 12th**

This long-standing, annual RBC count surveys the entire County, including Harrisonburg City. We tally waterfowl on area lakes and rivers along with raptors, including vultures. We also include other predatory birds such as shrikes and kingfishers, along with shorebirds we might encounter. The methodology is mainly car-birding with survey stops. We are in the process of securing sector leaders; as with the Christmas Count's protocol, due to limited carpooling for Covid-19 safety, participation will be restricted. **Please contact Diane Lepkowski at [dianelep1@yahoo.com](mailto:dianelep1@yahoo.com) with questions.**

## **BIRD SIGHTINGS**

Mike Smith reported a **Bald Eagle**, a **Red-shouldered Hawk**, and 50 **Horned Larks** on Nicholson Rd and two **Redheads** on Honeysuckle Rd near Elkton on Jan. 4. Mike added 53 **American Pipits** on Nicholson Rd on Jan. 7 and found an **Eastern Phoebe** on Mill Lane Rd on Jan. 19. Yard birds at Mike's place included a **Hermit Thrush** on Jan. 16 and **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** and **Brown Creeper** on Jan. 20. The creeper was coming to suet.

William Leigh reported an **American Black Duck**, **Northern Pintail**, and **Hooded** and **Common Mergansers**, along with the usual suspects, at the Broadway Wastewater Treatment Plant on Jan. 6. Diane Holsinger and William reported a **Common Goldeneye** at the same location on Jan. 14.

Herb Myers reported a **Fox Sparrow** on Wengers Mill Rd on Jan. 8.

Greg Moyers reported an adult **Peregrine Falcon** on Honey Run Rd west of Dayton on Jan. 8. A week later, on Jan. 15, Greg watched another adult **Peregrine** feeding on unidentified prey on Model Rd near Elkton.

Diane Lepkowski reported a flock of **Savannah Sparrow** at the intersection of Amberly and Skidmore Rds on Jan. 8.

The January snowstorms produced several **Lapland Longspur** sightings. Matt Gingerich found two on Long Meadow Drive near Timberville on Jan. 8. Greg Moyers reported one along Lumber Mill Rd on the same date. Matt found at least four longspurs with a flock of over 600 **Horned Larks** on a patch of freshly spread manure on the snow along Old Bridgewater Rd and Dinkle Avenue at Mt. Crawford on Jan. 18. Several birders were able to see the longspurs over the following days.

A **Ross's Goose** at Massanutten Resort was reported to eBird on Jan. 12. The bird continues to be seen as of Jan. 16.

Matt Gingerich saw a white goose (likely a **Ross's Goose**) flying with Canada Geese near Grist Mill Rd on Jan. 14. On Jan. 18, Matt reported two Ross's Geese and a **Horned Grebe** at the Broadway Wastewater Plant. Later that day, Diane Lepkowski reported two Horned Grebes there.

January reports from Silver Lake include **Gadwalls, Northern Shovelers, Northern Pintails, American Wigeon,** and a **Cackling Goose**.

Greg Moyers reported a **Merlin** on Cromer Rd. on Jan. 16.

Mae & Stanley Houff reported a wing-tagged **Trumpeter Swan** on the North River, which borders their property, north of Weyers Cave on Jan 21. They spotted it again on Jan 25, and photos of the tag show Z53, black on yellow. The banding lab reported that the bander has not submitted tagging details yet, and that they will request the information.

Diane Lepkowski reported 14 **Redheads** at Lake Campbell on Jan 25.

A **Greater White-fronted Goose** was reported on eBird at Silver Lake on January 25 and seen by several birders later that day.

**Short-eared Owls** continue to be seen along Grist Mill Rd.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### Christmas Bird Count

The Christmas Bird Count results are nearly finalized. We ended up with 8,176 individual birds and 75 species, which is only 7 species less than our All Time High (ATH) of 82 species four years ago. Last year we had 76 species and entirely different weather. At 68F, we broke our high temperature from 1984 by one degree. Wild Turkey was our only Count Week (CW) species. CW species do not add to our species and individuals totals but are still of interest. Last year, we had a record high number of Feeder Watcher (FW) participants of 13. Due to this year's weekday early count date and the effort of a teacher and 60 high school students, we had an amazing 71 FW participants! Our 25 field participants covered about 380 miles by car and foot.

ATH species include Snow Goose (2), Northern Shoveler (51), Black-crowned Night-Heron (2), Red-shouldered Hawk (7), Wilson's Snipe (42), Red-bellied Woodpecker (77), Carolina Wren (135), Hermit Thrush (9), Palm Warbler (6 - including at least two identified as Western). Gray Catbird and Peregrine Falcon tied previous high counts with single individuals. Ross's Goose (1) is new since it was only a CW bird when first recorded in 2012.

We found the following species this year and not last year: Snow Goose, Ross's Goose, Green-winged Teal (American), Ruffed Grouse, Black-crowned Night-Heron, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Peregrine Falcon, Red-headed Woodpecker, and Cedar Waxwing.

Species we found last year but not this year follow: American Wigeon, Bufflehead, Black Vulture, Eastern Towhee, Lapland Longspur, Eastern Meadowlark, Common Grackle, Brown-headed Cowbird, Red Crossbill, Pine Siskin, and Evening Grosbeak.

My thanks goes out to the many people who participated directly or with their logistical help.

-Bill Benish, VARC (Rockingham County) CBC Compiler

## **Bluebird Awareness for Children** - Dr. Bernie Daniel, President, North American Bluebird Society

The North American Bluebird Society (NABS) is proud to announce the publication of *Get to Know Bluebirds: A Guide for Young Nature Lovers*. The book, which is aimed at a younger audience, has been written by Myrna Pearman, retired biologist, and nature writer/photographer, with the able assistance of Bet Zimmerman Smith and other members of the NABS Education Committee. Its pages are graced with beautiful photographs donated by bluebirders from across North America, and it has been designed to make learning about bluebirds a fun and appealing adventure. With this book, NABS hopes to kindle a fire and a love for bluebirds in young people across this continent.

[Get to Know Bluebirds: A Guide for Young Nature Lovers is available at this link](#) as a downloadable (27 MB) PDF file. We encourage you to download the book and share it as widely as possible! Our plan is to get the book printed as soon as the necessary funds can be raised.

## **Bird Song and Music**

Anna Showalter is a doctoral candidate in piano at the JMU School of Music. She has a music project that might be of interest to the members of the Rockingham Bird Club.

In her own words: “A colleague and I are working to create a musical performance that aims to depict the way that sound creates an ecological community. Our project is based on the research of Dana Mosley, professor of biology at JMU, who studies the impact of urban noise on the song of the Gray Catbird. Mosley collects her data from parks within Harrisonburg, national forests nearby and urban locations in the DC area. Mosley's research has found that Catbirds who live in habitats with large amounts of human generated noise are forced to adapt by changing elements of their song. The primary impact is on the song frequency range but also impacts other aspects of the bird's vocal performance. As a musician, I would like to use the art of listening and creating sound to share this story with audiences and promote greater awareness of the soundscape that humans share with birds. My colleague, Ashkan Fakhrtabatabaie, is composing a piece for piano and electroacoustics that draws from the audio data that Dana Mosley has collected.”

Please contact Anna if you are interested in this project and would be willing to brainstorm ideas with her. Her email address is [annashowalterpiano@gmail.com](mailto:annashowalterpiano@gmail.com)

## **Land Trust Bird Conservation Initiative**

2022 Request for Small-Grant Proposals: The [Land Trust Bird Conservation Initiative](#) will award \$230,000 to as many as 14 projects throughout the country. Deadline is March 1. Please read more about the primary and secondary evaluation criteria on the website by clicking on the link above.

## **Reminder**

You can view our club's constitution, by-laws, policies, and previous newsletters, on our website! Additionally, you can download the 1<sup>st</sup> edition of *The Birds of Rockingham County* and the VSO's *Principles of Birding Ethics*.



Trumpeter Swan (top) – North River  
Greater White-fronted Goose (bottom) – Silver Lake  
January 25, 2022  
Photo credit: Diane Lepkowski



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:** Stephani Moore

**TREASURER:** Audrey Shenk

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

**GOLDFINCH GAZETTE –** Denise Hoodock

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

**ON THE WEB:** <https://rockinghambirdclub.com>

