



# Goldfinch Gazette

The Newsletter of the Rockingham Bird Club

<https://rockinghambirdclub.com>

Volume XLVII

Number 5

Jan 2022

---

## THE JANUARY 2022 CLUB MEETING IS CANCELLED

VIRTUAL CLUB MEETINGS, via ZOOM, WILL CONTINUE AT LEAST FOR THE FORSEEABLE FUTURE.

**Here is what you can look forward to in February and March:**

**February 3, 2022** - RBC Zoom meeting with Matt Bright of Earth Sanga - a non-profit public charity based in the DC area focused on ecological restoration (<https://www.earthsangha.org/>). He will talk to us about the value of native plants.

**March 3, 2022** - RBC Zoom meeting with Dr. Sarah Karpanty from Virginia Tech. One part of her research is the tracking the seabird nesting colonies that were disturbed as part of the Hampton Roads bridge-tunnel repairs/upgrades. Many of us wrote letters to VDOT and the Corps of Engineers in favor of the barges that helped replace or augment the artificial islands the seabirds used for nesting.

### **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 12<sup>th</sup>**

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**

Diane Lepkowski reported **Rusty Blackbirds** at Lake Shenandoah on Nov. 25.

Randy Cline reported a **Ross's Goose** at Heritage Oaks golf course on Nov. 27. The bird had an injured leg.

Robyn Puffenbarger reported 11 **Rusty Blackbirds**, a **Fox Sparrow**, and two **Purple Finches** in her yard in Verona on Nov. 27.

Greg Moyers reported a **Merlin** on Bluewater Rd on Dec. 3.

On Dec. 5, a **White-crowned Sparrow** returning to Diane Lepkowski's yard was, per Charles "Zig" Ziegenfus, the oldest returning bird he'd ever banded! He originally banded it there on March 20, 2016 (later recaptured in Dec. 2018), and determined it born in 2015, making it **seven years old** by bird-banding aging protocol.

Mike Smith had several good yard sightings at his place near Elkton, including **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker**, **Brown Creeper**, and an **Eastern Phoebe** (which attempted to land on a windowsill) on Nov. 30, a **Fox Sparrow** on Dec. 7, and a **Hermit Thrush** on Dec. 8. Mike spotted a **Bald Eagle** flying over Elkton on Dec. 8.

Diane Lepkowski reported a **Peregrine Falcon** at her home near Harrisonburg on Dec. 8. Diane reported a **Double-crested Cormorant**, **Bufflehead**, and three **scaup** at Lake Shenandoah on the same date.

Herb and Sarah Myers heard a **Great Horned Owl** calling at Keezletown on Dec. 11 and Dec. 13.

Karen Shank reported three white geese, one smaller than the other two, at Nazarene Church Rd Wetland on Dec. 12. Subsequent photographs and reports confirmed two **Snow Geese** and one **Ross's Goose**. The birds were recorded on the CBC and continued through Dec. 18.

Diane Lepkowski reported a **Long-tailed Duck** at Lake Shenandoah on Dec. 15.

Robyn Puffenbarger and Bill Benish reported a **Winter Wren** near Mossy Creek Rd and nine **Wilson's Snipe**, as well as the above-mentioned white geese, at the Nazarene Wetland on Dec. 15.

Mike Smith reported a male **Common Merganser** at Lake Shenandoah on Dec. 17. On the same date, Mike had four **Palm Warblers** and a **Peregrine Falcon** while covering CBC area two south of Rt. 33. Mike also reported two **Black-crowned Night-Herons** at the Dayton Cargill plant and saw two **Great Horned Owls** and heard an **Eastern Screech-Owl** on Wise Hollow Rd.

Diane Lepkowski reported a **Peregrine Falcon** in Harrisonburg on Dec. 17.

Peter Norment reported a **Common Loon** on Lake Terrace on Dec. 18.

Diane Lepkowski and Dave Wendelken reported nine **Tundra Swans** on Lake Shenandoah on Dec. 18. The swans were chased off the lake by a man in a paramotor aircraft. Diane and Dave had 188 **Ring-billed Gulls** at the lake on Dec. 19, and Diane added a **Bonaparte's Gull** at the same location on Dec. 20.

Herb and Sarah Myers reported two **Brown Creepers** while on a walk to Hensley's Pond on the west side of Massanutten on Dec. 19.

Greg Moyers reported a **Short-eared Owl** on Grist Mill Rd on Dec. 22. Two owls have been seen in subsequent days.

Peter Norment reported two **Cackling Geese** at the Weavers Rd pond on Dec. 26.

William Leigh reported **Richardson's Cackling Geese** and a **Redhead** at the Broadway Wastewater Plant on Dec. 28.

Herb Myers reported a **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** at his Keezletown home on Jan. 1.

Diane Lepkowski and Dave Wendelken reported **Wild Turkeys**, **Great Horned Owl**, **Hermit Thrush**, **Winter Wren**, and **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** at Lake Shenandoah on Jan. 1.

Matt Gingerich was able to confirm a **Lark Sparrow** along Wengers Mill Rd on New Year's Day. Matt had seen a bird with white edges on the tail there on Dec. 29 but was unable to relocate and confirm ID then. Matt put out the word and numerous birders have been able to see this rare visitor.

Diane Lepkowski reported another **Long-tailed Duck** at Lake Shenandoah on Jan. 3.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

**Christmas Bird Count:** We held our Rockingham Christmas Bird Count on Friday, December 17, 2021, again under pandemic protocols. Vaccination, masking, and distancing helped mitigate risk while social pods seem to be changing. Somewhat surprisingly, we may have had our highest number of participants ever. Holding our count on a Friday allowed us to add participants such as a Harrisonburg High School class. Also, people who want to join our count and the neighboring Augusta CBC often are unable since both counts usually prefer running on the first Saturday during the window of potential count dates.

The full data is not yet in and will require vetting by our next level regional editor - Rexanne Bruno. Our preliminary reporting shows at least one new species - a Ross's Goose - which had only reached "Count Week" status in one other year. The Ross's has been with a couple Snow Geese at Nazarene Church wetlands. Some other nice birds included Barn Owl, Great Horned Owl, Eastern Screech-Owl, Black-crowned Night-Heron, Merlin, Palm Warblers (including Western type), Gray Catbird, Ruffed Grouse, and more than 40 Wilson's Snipe. In a non-irruption year, we were also fortunate to have Red-breasted Nuthatch.

The extremely warm weather and low wind made walking very easy in the field. Thank you to everyone who led afield in one of this year's approximately 11 subsectors, as well as to our Feeder Watchers, spotters, drivers, and to those who helped me organize even if they could not participate this year. -- Bill Benish, VARC CBC Compiler

### **Arctic Geese Species add cheer to the RBC 2021 Christmas Bird Count**

In an article dated December 21, 2021, Eric Gorton, senior contributor for The Citizen, a Harrisonburg independent publication, wrote a wonderful article about the sighting of a pair of Snow Geese and a Ross's Goose, natives of the arctic, during this year's Christmas Bird Count. You can read the entire article here: <https://hburgcitizen.com/2021/12/21/snow-goose-rosss-goose-make-rockingham-debuts-for-annual-bird-census/>

### **VSO's Outer Banks Field Trip, Feb 4-6, 2022**

Make plans to attend the VSO's Winter field trip at the Outer Banks of North Carolina February 4-6! The weekend's leaders include Bill Akers and Jerry Via, as well as VSO field trip co-chairs Lee Adams and Meredith Bell. We always have a great variety of birds—and often a few surprise species, too—no matter what the weather.

COVID GUIDELINES – VSO is committed to ensuring the health and safety of all participants. We encourage every participant to be vaccinated, if at all possible. By registering for this event, you agree to abide by all guidance provided by individual field trip leaders, the Comfort Inn, and local businesses. North Carolina's guidelines are not the same as Virginia's. For example, our host hotel encourages guests to wear masks but does not require them.

For more information and to register for this trip, visit <https://www.virginiabirds.org/vso-events/obx-field-trip-kfwn>

**Correction:** Photo credit for the Cattle Egret in the December Gazette should have been to Diane Lepkowski.



Ross's Goose with Snow Goose, Dec 16, Nazarene Wetlands

Photo credit: Diane Lepkowski

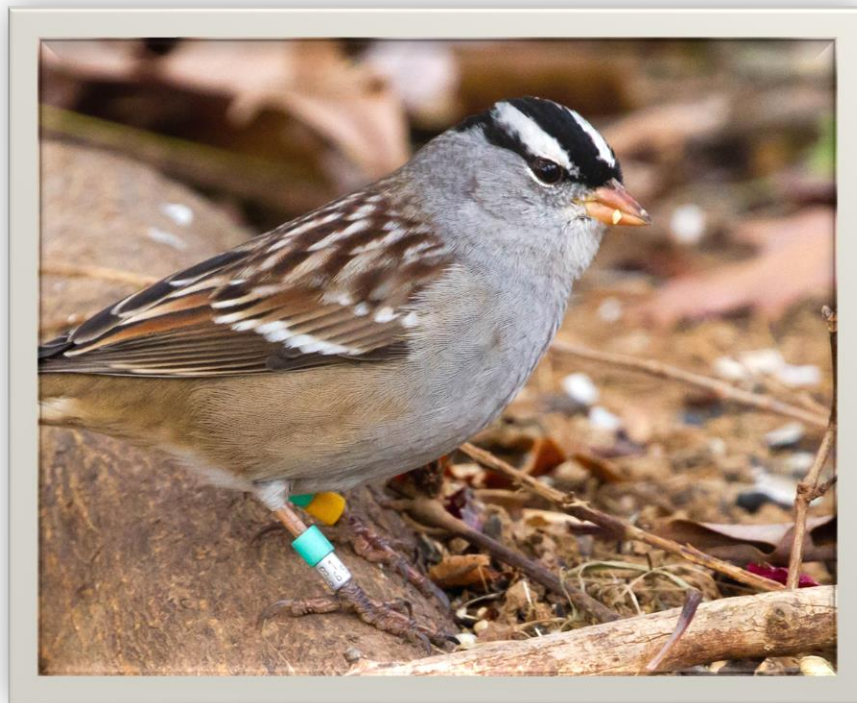


Lark Sparrow on Wengers Mill Rd – January 1, 2022

Photo credit: Greg Moyers



# HAPPY NEW YEAR!!



Northern Cardinal pair (top)  
Seven-year-old, White-crowned Sparrow, December 5, 2021

Photos 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>

