



Goldfinch Gazette

The Newsletter of the Rockingham Bird Club

<https://rockinghambirdclub.com>

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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, April 7, 2022

TIME: 7:00 PM

PLACE: VIRTUAL via ZOOM

PROGRAM: “The Kirtland’s Warbler: From the brink of extinction to a new model for endangered species conservation” by William Rapai.

The Kirtland’s Warbler is an iconic species in Michigan, nesting primarily in the jack pine forests of the northern Lower Peninsula. As recently as 1987 there were fewer 400 birds in the entire population. Today, there are more than 4,000 birds, and the population continues to grow to a point where the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has determined its population is now at a level to be considered “recovered.” In October 2019, the Kirtland’s Warbler was removed from the Endangered Species List.

That’s a reason to celebrate, but it doesn’t mean we can wash our hands and walk away because conservation of the Kirtland’s Warbler has special challenges. Unlike every other animal that has been removed from the Endangered Species List, the Kirtland’s Warbler will require continued human intervention to ensure its survival.

William Rapai is author of “The Kirtland’s Warbler: The story of a bird’s fight for survival and the people who saved it.” He is the executive director of the Kirtland’s Warbler Alliance, a nonprofit created to support Kirtland’s Warbler conservation.



Singing male Kirtland’s Warbler

photo credit: US Fish and Wildlife Service.

Join Zoom Meeting:

<https://bridgewatercollege.zoom.us/j/99467234247?pwd=ZGZhMXh0Qm9VQlhjT1gyQTRXb2J5UT09>

Meeting ID: 994 6723 4247

Passcode: 980704

One tap mobile

+13017158592,,99467234247#,,,,*980704# US (Washington DC)

If you have any questions or need assistance, please contact Robyn Puffenbarger at 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

Hillandale Monthly Walk, Thursday, April 7, with Tom Mizell: Meet at the Children's Playground parking lot at 8:30 AM.

Madison Run Fire Rd, Shenandoah National Park, Saturday, April 9: Greg Moyers will lead a walk along the Madison Run Fire Rd near Grottoes. This is a great spot to see Louisiana Waterthrushes and other early-returning birds such as Pine Warbler, Blue-headed Vireo, and Black-and-white Warbler. Meet at the fire road trailhead at 9:00 AM. We should conclude around noon. *Please contact Greg at gwmoyers@msn.com or 434-3029 if you plan to attend.* (From H'burg, follow Port Republic Road SE to the end, turn left on Browns Gap Rd then continue straight at Ore Bank Rd intersection onto the fire road (roadside parking just beyond the intersection.)

TRIP REPORTS

Hillandale Park Monthly Walk, Thursday, March 10, 2022– *Tom Mizell*

I arrived in Hillandale Park as a group of 19 were gathered for our monthly walk. Kathy Byers welcomed the group and by the time I walked from my car they were in a large circle. Kathy had just given them a safety message. We introduced ourselves and were happy to welcome two first timers to the walk. I was a bit embarrassed by being a bit late, but the mass of smiling faces was ready to set forth. We put together a wish list that included the following: Mississippi Kite, Eastern Bluebird, Pileated Woodpecker, Brown Creeper, Eastern Towhee and Fox Sparrow

It was a bit overcast and among the first birds to be seen as we left the parking lot were Blue Jay, Carolina Wren, Black Vultures, Northern Cardinal, American Robin and Mourning Dove.

By the time we reached the fork in the trail along the golf course boundary we added Red-bellied Woodpecker, Brown-headed Cowbird, and Downy Woodpecker.

About 9 AM we were headed north, and we added American Crow, Fish crow, Tufted Titmouse and White-breasted Nuthatch.

Soon we were at the concrete slab and added Starlings and White-throated Sparrows along with a Red-tailed Hawk. Along the stream channel before reaching the northwest pedestrian bridge, Greg Moyers spotted a Fox Sparrow and American Goldfinches chatted as they flew over.

After we crossed the bridge, around 9:40 Mike Donaldson spotted an Eastern Phoebe. We then spent some time between the bridge and the shelter as there was considerable activity throughout the walnut and cedar trees. We were entertained by Red-bellied and Downy Woodpeckers and at least two Hairy Woodpeckers (males) made for good sightings. A Cooper's Hawk soared high overhead and more folks got to see a Yellow-rumped Warbler as it flitted about in warbler fashion. This was a productive area, and with all the bird activity it was hard to leave. But it was time to move on. Perhaps a good location for some future lawn chair birding. Anyone interested?

Around 10:15 AM we crossed the new bike trail bridge a second time, and by then over half the original group had left for the day. Eight of us walked the bike trail towards the Elementary School for a bit. We added Turkey Vulture, Common Grackles and Northern Mockingbird. In our two walks this year, this trail seemed to be under heavy surveillance by Mockingbirds. As we headed back towards the parking lot we enjoyed a Red-tailed Hawk flyby and quite an accompaniment of cardinals. We finished up at 11:15. It was an enjoyable walk, and it was good to sense that we were getting back into the routine of monthly walks. But wait, the following early departers shared phone messages on their sightings as they left the park. Greg Moyers: Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Fletcher Bingham: Carolina Chickadee, Kathy Byers: Red-shouldered Hawk and Hermit Thrush, Dan Perkuchin: Song Sparrow. Including these 5 our species count for this day was 31. Migratory birds are on the way, and I look forward to seeing you in April.

BIRD SIGHTINGS

William Leigh reported 67 **Redheads**, eight **Common Goldeneyes**, 23 **Cackling Geese**, 20 **Tundra Swans**, two **Mute Swans**, and 13 **Ring-billed Gulls** at the Broadway Wastewater Plant on Feb. 28.

Jay Landis reported an **Eastern Meadowlark** at Starry Meadow Farm on March 3 and an **Eastern Phoebe** at the same location during the first week of March.

Sarah Alice Coleman reported her first-of-year **Tree Swallows** at her place outside of Elkton on March 5.

Herb Myers reported a **Brown Thrasher** at his place in Keezletown on March 5.

Mike Smith reported his first-of-Spring **Pine Warblers** at his place near Elkton on March 5 and first **Brown Thrasher** on March 24. Mike had six **Fox Sparrows** and an **Eastern Phoebe** on March 6 and continues to host **Brown Creepers** and **Purple Finches** at his feeders.

Diane Holsinger reported **Tree Swallows** on March 7 and has had **Purple Finches** visiting her feeder in Timberville.

Madison Run Fire Rd continues to be a good location for early-returning migrants. Diane Lepkowski and Dave Wendelken reported **Pine Warblers** on March 10, Greg Moyers and Dave Wendelken reported a **Blue-headed Vireo** on March 19, and Diane Lepkowski reported **Louisiana Waterthrush** on March 22.

Mike Smith reported three **Wild Turkeys** in a corn field east of Chestnut Ridge near Rt. 33 in Harrisonburg on March 15. Mike got his first-of-season **Northern Rough-winged Swallows** at the Elkton boat landing on March 19. On March 21, Mike reported **Tree Swallows** at nest boxes in Joliet Hollow at Naked Creek. Mike spotted five **Common Mergansers** on the Shenandoah River near Elkton on March 22.

Greg Moyers reported a **Bonaparte's Gull** at Silver Lake on March 23.

Diane Lepkowski reported a **Bonaparte's Gull** at Lake Shenandoah on March 24. On March 26 at the lake, Diane reported her first-of-year **Purple Martins**, along with a **Red-Breasted Merganser**, **Blue-winged Teal**, **Northern Rough-winged Swallow**, and a **Rusty Blackbird**.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

President's Message:

I would love to have our May meeting in person. The President of the Virginia Bluebird Society, Valerie Gaffney, has agreed to come speak to us about the current state of our Virginia bluebirds and also about why and how to monitor bluebird houses.

We have 10 nest boxes at the Rockingham County Fairgrounds and are arranging for us to meet there, in the Horticulture Building. I'd like to get an idea of how many would be interested in meeting there, so it will be discussed at the April (zoom) meeting. Or feel free to contact me directly.

For future consideration:

Elections are held at the May meeting.

An Audit committee will be needed (after June 30th) to review the Treasurer's records and is usually appointed at the June meeting (2 people). The audit report is due to the Treasurer in August.

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) of the Nominations Committee, I'd like to report that a candidate has presented himself for the Member-at-Large position. Other positions are still open, and I'm waiting to hear from you!

One-year terms:

President _____

VP – Programs _____

VP – Field trips Diane Lepkowski

Secretary Stephani Moore

Treasurer Audrey Shenk

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

2 Members-at-Large

Our current Members-at-Large are:

Kathy Fovargue, thru June 2023, Kathy Fovargue

and

Martha Faw, thru June 2022, (her last year) _____

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 2022-2023 to ‘shadow’ anyone on this Executive Committee.

Window Strikes and Native Plants by Jim Cubie – <https://birdfriendlyyards.net/>

A two-packs-per-day smoker visits his doctor. The patient asks, "what can I do to extend my life." His doctor will tell him that he should eat right, exercise, and take his blood pressure medicine, but "if you don't stop smoking nothing else you do will really matter. The other good things cannot make up for the deadly consequences of smoking."

Bird organizations do the opposite. They give homeowners a list of “ten good things to do for birds.” They should say "stop killing birds in your yard – control cats and prevent window collisions. All the other "good things for birds" cannot make up for 1.25 billion bird deaths caused by cats and home windows." (2-6 per home annually.)

The typical advice to homeowners listing "good things for birds"— such as installing a nest box, providing water and cover, counting birds, buying shade grown coffee - will do little or nothing to increase bird populations as long as the yard is killing birds.

There are only two steps we can take in our backyards that really will save birds: control cats and prevent window collisions. A yard includes a home's windows.

Even if the list of “good things for birds" includes "prevent window collisions," a list delivers the false message that all of these "good things for birds" are equally effective. In fact, only two, controlling cats and preventing window collisions, will prevent bird deaths. Very few lists even mention controlling cats and preventing window collisions.

Doing something is not better than nothing. Promoting "participation" instead of preventing bird deaths undermines the very mission of bird organizations. If bird clubs offer easy options to their

members, they will choose them -- instead of controlling their beloved cats and or spending \$50 to prevent window collisions. It is infinitely more important to save birds than to make members happy.

The authors of a major study on bird mortality finished with a call for ecologists to "demonstrate leadership" in preventing bird deaths. "Leadership" means telling our members and the public the truth – we have to start and premise all our yard management on stopping bird deaths caused by our cats and windows.

Like the smoker's doctor we must deliver the blunt message – "first of all, control cats and prevent window collisions. Nothing else you do will make any real difference." A yard that kills birds cannot be "bird friendly" no matter what else is done in the yard. Homeowners must start by preventing bird deaths. To work together to develop a new model of pro-bird yard management, join the "Bird Safe Working Group." Reply to jimcubie1@gmail.com. Questions welcome.

[For more information on strike prevention, visit <https://birdfriendlyyards.net/consumerguide/> and <https://homegrownnationalpark.org/guest-posts/window-strikes-and-native-plants-guest-contributor> and <https://muhlenberg.edu/academics/biology/faculty/klem/aco/Bird-window.html>]

Blacks Run Clean Up Day and Arbor Day – April 9, 2022

The Clean Up Day Committee would like to invite you and your organization to participate in this exciting event as a part of the Green Scene. The Green Scene is an opportunity to set up an informative display about your organization in a “science fair” format – we would like to encourage interactive displays and at least one person from each organization representing their display to speak to Blacks Run Clean Up Day participants.

The event is Saturday, April 9th and will be staged at Lucy Simms Center (620 Simms Ave). This is where event sign-in and kick-off will occur as well as the event check out. The Green Scene will be located on the sidewalk around the circle and front of the Simms building.

There is no registration fee to participate in the Green Scene. Any cancellation or weather update will be posted on the website www.cleanstream.org.

Green Scene Registration: To register your organization, please fill out this Form no later than April 5th – although sooner is preferred so your name can be posted on marketing information: <https://arcg.is/059m5v0>

For more information on Clean Up Day, check out our [Facebook event](#). If you know of other organizations that might be interested, feel free to pass this information on. Please let me know if you have any questions, and I look forward to hearing from everyone!

KEITH THOMAS | Sustainability and Environmental Manager
City of Harrisonburg | Department of Public Works
320 East Mosby Road Harrisonburg, VA 22801
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VSO Annual Meeting – April 29 – May 1, 2022

The Cape Henry Audubon Society and the Friends of Dismal Swamp National Wildlife Refuge are planning a modified VSO Annual Meeting and Dismal Swamp Birding Festival the weekend of April 29-May 1, 2022. Events such as the banquet, vendor sales, and local chapter displays will have to wait until the shadow of covid has passed. The business meeting, research paper presentations, and a program speaker will be held virtually a few days ahead of the weekend field trips. Register at <https://www.virginiabirds.org/vso-events/vso-annual-meeting-2022>. Note that each participant needs to complete a unique registration form (cannot register more than one person per form).

Field trips: Offered Friday, Saturday, and Sunday morning to Jericho Ditch, Washington Ditch, and Railroad Ditch, all prime areas of the Great Dismal Swamp NWR. The birds expected to be seen are essentially the same on these three routes. Jericho and Washington Ditches are bird walks of up to three miles total. The Railroad Ditch route is by car with frequent birding stops along the way. Reservations are required since space is limited. Information for afternoon birding will be available to guide birders to sites such as Back Bay NWR, First Landing State Park, and Pleasure House Point Natural Area in Virginia Beach. Information about birding sites in Chesapeake like the Dismal Swamp Canal Trail and the Northwest River Park will also be available. The Dismal Swamp Birding Festival will schedule additional trips and activities on Saturday which will be available for registration at this website:

<https://signup.com/client/invitation2/secure/337022900434564040/false#/invitation>

For more details on field trips and virtual field trips, visit <https://www.virginiabirds.org/vso-events/vso-annual-meeting-2022>

Warblers and Wildflowers – Spend Time with Mother Nature, May 7, 2022, 11:00 AM Until 3:00 PM – Hosted by Headwaters Chapter, Virginia Master Naturalists and Friends of Shenandoah Mountain

What better way to spend Mother's Day weekend than to explore the tremendous biodiversity in the George Washington & Jefferson National Forest with your family. Participants will visit one of the Virginia Birding and Wildlife Trail sites listed below. Each Virginia Birding & Wildlife site will have a table with an information display and Master Naturalists available to lead small group hikes every 15 minutes. This event will be held in light rain or shine. No registration necessary. Restrooms available. Covid Safe: Please bring a mask to wear in the table area. No need for masks when families are exploring on their own.

Braley Pond – Meet at Picnic Area, .5-mile hike to top of dam and around beautiful pond surrounded by upland hardwood forests and riparian woodlands. View birds (hardwood breeders, migrants, hawks), wildflowers, salamanders, tadpoles, butterflies, dragonflies, and snakes. Scenic view of surrounding mountains. Trail is narrow with steep banks. Location Coordinates: 38.28611, -79.30194, West Augusta, Va.

Augusta Springs Wetlands – Meet at Picnic Area, easy .8-mile hike on boardwalk trail that meanders through wetland habitats surrounded by hardwood forest interspersed with pines. Two large ponds are home to nesting and migrant birds, snakes, salamanders, butterflies and more. Location coordinates: N 38.10313. W -79.336261, 2735 Little Calf Pasture Hwy, Augusta Springs, Va. Wheelchair accessible.

Visit <https://www.friendsofshenandoahmountain.org/celebrate-mother-nature.html>

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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

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