



Goldfinch Gazette

The Newsletter of the Rockingham Bird Club

<https://rockinghambirdclub.com>

Volume XLVIII

Number 3

Nov 2022

NOVEMBER MEETING

DATE: Thursday, November 10, 2022

TIME: 7:00 PM

PLACE: Park View Mennonite Church, Fellowship Hall

PROGRAM: “Northern Saw-whet Owls in western Virginia”

Our November program will welcome back our beloved club member, Clair Mellinger. He will share his experiences documenting the migration and wintering status of Northern Saw-whet Owls in western Virginia.

Clair’s strong interest in birds began on excursions with his older brother in Lancaster County. His graduate training is in plant ecology, and he has taught Ecology, Environmental Science, botany, and ornithology courses at EMU for over 35 years. Over the years Clair has served as President of the Virginia Society of Ornithology, held various positions in the Rockingham Bird Club, and been involved with many bird surveys. Clair and Charles Ziegenfus banded over 2000 Northern Saw-whet Owls and recaptured many birds banded at other stations in northeastern North America.

FIELD TRIPS - *Diane Lepkowski*

Hillandale Monthly Walk, Thursday, November 17, with Tom Mizell: Meet at the Main shelter parking lot at 8:30 AM. Questions? Contact Tom - ztomvaz@cs.com 540-810-5898 or Kathy - kkbyers77@gmail.com 540-820-6517

Northern Saw-whet Owl Banding: We hope to arrange a November date for a club-member visit to the banding station and will make an announcement via email.

Birding at Starry Meadows: Jay and Sharon Landis manage pollinator plots, and bird/wildlife habitats on their 62-acre farm, Starry Meadows, near Singer’s Glen. “On Oct 13, we saw 22 species and 216 birds! Our specialties are all woodpeckers, especially the Red-headed Woodpeckers. Because we love birds and sharing the joy, we are doing a trial run of opening our farm to birders in the Rockingham Bird Club until the end of November. Every Tuesday – by appointment only – we’ll make our farm available to individuals, couples, small groups of birders. We will meet and direct you if you haven’t been here before, but otherwise, you’ll be on your own. Except for the following dates. We’ll lead a group to our best birding spots, and all will ID and learn together: **Nov 8th and 29th**. Our limit for leading a bird walk is 15 people so you must **RSVP** to join.

We have a bright blue shanty (aka The Sugar Shack) with a compostable toilet, in the main birding meadow, plus a picnic table and a deck beside the creek with chairs to sit and watch birds if you are not able to stand. You may bring your own lawn chairs and go to another spot where all the sparrows feed.

We ask you to be respectful of our property, leave no trace, and don't wander close to our house or onto neighboring properties. If you want, leave a small donation for wildflower seed or mower gas; put tips in a bright blue donation box near the Sugar Shack. Jay mows many birding paths through the meadows, so no one gets ticks! Please come and enjoy our efforts whether or not you put a tip in the box. We hope this is a wonderful experience for all.” -Sharon and Jay Landis

Sharon's cell, texts only 717-587-5329

Jay's cell, calls, and texts 717-587-5328

10547 Turleytown Rd Linville, VA 22824

You may also email the farm to make appointments to bird on your own or to join one of our groups. starrymeadow15@gmail.com

TRIP REPORTS

Hillandale Park Monthly Walk, Thursday, October 20 – *Tom Mizell*

Twelve members of the Rockingham bird club, along with a visitor from St. George, Utah, gathered at the main shelter at Hillandale Park at 8:30 AM on Thursday October 20, 2022. The temperature was a chilly 30° and it was a sunny morning. A list of target birds included Red-headed Woodpecker, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Palm Warbler, Blue-headed Vireo, Brown Creeper, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker and Red-breasted Nuthatch. The Red-bellied Woodpecker was added to the list because Kathy Byers had the good fortune of having seen a juvenile in her yard just a few days before.

During the first 20 minutes we listed American Crow, Red-bellied Woodpecker, American Robin, and White-breasted Nuthatch. The Nuthatch was on a utility wire. I'm not sure I've seen one perched on a wire before. Also, Mourning Dove, Eastern Towhee, Turkey Vulture, Canada Goose and Blue Jay were among the early birds.

We spent a good deal of time near the next shelter to the north as the treetops were being warmed by the sun and the birds were active. Carolina Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, Carolina Wren, a flock of Cedar Waxwings, European Starlings, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Blue-headed Vireo, Golden-crowned Kinglet and Yellow-rumped Warbler were enjoyed.

By 9:15 AM we were at the Northwest pedestrian bridge. A Northern Flicker was working in one of the walnut trees and it flew away as we were getting focused on it. It flew directly away from us in that bouncy flight with the white signal spot showing quite clearly. We had a White-throated Sparrow and a Northern Cardinal too.

As we are headed South from the Northwest corner a Great Blue Heron launched itself from one of the golf course trees and flew southward. Some thought we heard the wingbeats. A fleeting glimpse. By 9:30 AM we had tallied 22 species. Not a bad first hour.

Within the next 200 yards activity picked up again and most of us started to feel the strain of warbler

neck. These birds were working the treetops and there were lots. We enjoyed Black-throated Green, Downy Woodpecker, Purple Finches, and both Kinglets. Kathy heard a Red-breasted Nuthatch at 9:50 AM and soon it was spotted. We spent several minutes in this area and saw numerous Blue-headed Vireos and Purple Finches. At least 4 Great Blue Herons surprised us, and their show elicited some “Ahhhs” from the crowd.

We passed the concrete slab next to the golf course boundary and at 10:14 AM Dan Perkuchin spotted a Brown Creeper on a large Sycamore Tree. We now had 4 of our 7 target birds. I think we need to name the concrete slab. I seem to refer to it in most field trip write ups and since there are notable bird sightings in its surroundings it is certainly worthy of a special name. Feel free to share your suggestions for “name that slab.” At a future bird walk we may even vote on a name.

Great Blue Herons continued to take wing from the golf course trees and they gave us at least three or four flybys. To me it was very entertaining. They seemed to want to be seen. They had heard the group enjoying the Black-throated Greens, the Blue-headed Vireos, and the Purple Finch flocks and perhaps they wanted to say, “Hey we’re a flock too.” Their multiple flight appearances were enjoyed. Did someone whisper Pterodactyls?

By 10:44 AM we had seen or heard 28 species. There were six of us remaining as we started the Southwest Loop. Black Vulture was added and by now a light breeze was blowing and the temperature had climbed 14 degrees to 44°. Somewhere in the walk we added Eastern Phoebe and House Finch. So, our total count for this fine October morning was 31 species.

Greg Moyers and Mike Donaldson headed West on the bike trail and added: Song and Fox Sparrow, Eastern Bluebird, and American Goldfinch.

Hope you join us on Thursday 17 November. Let’s see if we can make three months in a row of Red-breasted Nuthatch sightings.

BIRD SIGHTINGS

Herb Myers reported **American Redstart**, **Magnolia Warbler**, **Tennessee Warbler**, and **Red-breasted Nuthatch** at his place in Keezletown during the last week in September. Herb reported that he still had a **Ruby-throated Hummingbird** coming to his feeder on Oct. 3 and spotted **House Wren**, **Ruby-crowned Kinglet**, and **White-throated Sparrow** on Oct. 4.

Greg Moyers reported a **Philadelphia Vireo** at Hillandale Park on Sept. 30.

William Leigh reported 40 **American Golden-Plovers** at the Shenandoah Valley Produce Auction fields on Lumber Mill Rd on Oct. 1. Plovers were still being seen as of Oct. 29.

Diane Holsinger reported four **Red-necked Phalaropes** at the Broadway Wastewater Treatment Plant on Oct. 3.

Mike Smith spotted a bird flying over I-81 north of Harrisonburg on Oct. 5. The bird was backlit, but Mike stated it had black wing tips, a long neck, long legs, and a long, decurved bill like a **Flamingo**.

Elaine Carwile and Nancy Lawler reported six **American Avocets** at the Oakwood Drive farm pond on Oct. 7.

Mike Smith has had some good birds at his home near Elkton, including **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker**, **Cape May Warbler**, **Red-breasted Nuthatches**, and 12 **Chipping Sparrows** on Oct. 11, **Blue-headed Vireo**, **Pine Warblers**, **Ruby-crowned Kinglets**, and **White-throated Sparrow** on Oct. 12, and **Purple Finches** on Oct. 24.

Matt Gingerich had both a **Yellow-billed** and a late, **Black-billed Cuckoo** at his place in Linville on Oct. 13. The same evening at the Broadway Wastewater Treatment Plant, Matt reported a **Horned Grebe**, the continuing **White-rumped Sandpiper**, and a duck which may have been a **Green-winged x Blue-winged Teal** hybrid.

Sharon and Jay Landis reported **Grasshopper Sparrow**, **Yellow-rumped Warbler**, 50 **Cedar Waxwings**, **Red-headed Woodpeckers** and more at their Linville property on Oct. 13. Sharon added **Lincoln's Sparrow** on Oct. 14. On a walk with other RBC members on Oct. 24, they spotted a **Swamp Sparrow**, along with many other birds, getting the sparrow list on their property up to nine.

Matt Gingerich reported a **Sedge Wren** at his place in Linville on Oct. 16. Several other birders got to see this local rarity over the next two days.

Greg Moyers reported an **Orange-crowned Warbler** at Hillandale Park on Oct. 17.

Diane Holsinger reported a **Hermit Thrush** at her bird bath and an **Eastern Towhee** in her yard in Timberville on Oct. 24. Also on Oct. 24, Diane discovered a **Magnolia Warbler** caught in a Burdock burr at Leonard's Pond. The bird managed to get it itself free just as Diane moved in to help.

Diane Lepkowski reported a **Rusty Blackbird** at Lake Shenandoah on Oct. 26.

Greg Moyers and Diane Lepkowski watched and photographed an adult **Bald Eagle** feeding on a deer carcass in a field along Osceola Springs Rd on Oct. 26.

Matt Gingerich reported an **Eared Grebe** at the Broadway Wastewater Treatment Plant on Oct. 27.

Be on the lookout for **Purple Finches** and **Red-breasted Nuthatches**. Both species are showing up all over the area!

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Big News!

The club will have an actual acting president as of Jan 1, 2023. Mike Donaldson has generously agreed to fill this year's vacancy and hopes to be re-elected this spring for the following year. For those members that haven't had a chance to meet him yet, here is a brief introduction from Mike.

“When my wife, Linda Plitt Donaldson, took a new job at JMU in 2019, we moved here from Silver Spring, Maryland, where we had lived for 27 years and raised our three children. I work remotely as a part-time copyeditor for Mathematica, a public policy research firm. My enthusiasm for birding derives from a lifetime of camping, fishing, and hiking, often with binoculars near at hand. I decided to take birding more seriously when we moved here and have enjoyed exploring the gorgeous local scenery while learning how to find and identify birds. I am thankful for the opportunity to serve the club and look forward to meeting members I have not yet met.” – Mike Donaldson

From our Treasurer – Audrey Shenk

Important! To keep your membership in good standing, renew on or before November 10. The 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 the November 2022 meeting 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 bring a check or cash to the monthly meeting. Alternatively, you can mail a check made out to “RBC” to:

Audrey Shenk, RBC Treasurer
949 Northfield Ct.
Harrisonburg, VA 22802

RBC Bird Seed Sale 2022

A big “thank you” to all our supporters! Please remember that our **Pick Up Day is Saturday, November 12, 9:00 am - 1:00 pm** at the Rockingham Fairgrounds’ Poultry Exhibit Building. Contact Kathy Byers with any questions or concerns: 540-820-6517, kkbyers77@gmail.com

Christmas Bird Count Season Approaches!

The date is planned for our “VARC” count on **Saturday, December 17, 2022**. The date is subject to change depending on weather safety, etc. I am still making arrangements with potential leaders. As participation must be organized and pre-arranged to be included in the count data, please reach out to me to advise me if you are interested in contributing to the effort.

The CBC admins advise again this year that we should adhere to pandemic protocols. As everyone’s idea of pods and comfort varies, each leader will be able to determine what works for them. Be prepared to wear a mask depending on arrangements with your leader. Depending on the number of leaders and their preferences about accommodations, the number of spaces available for field participants may be small this year.

Last year, the count was during a school weekday and about 60 students contributed on their high school grounds led by their teacher. Also, several families living within the count circle territory contributed by watching from their homes as Feeder Watchers. Please reach out to me, CBC Compiler Bill Benish wcbenish@gmail.com 540.908.7336, if you may be able to participate in the field or as a Feeder Watcher at your home if living within the circle boundary.

Want to support the Rockingham Bird Club while you shop?

Visit AmazonSmile and select the Rockingham Bird Club as your charity of choice. Remember to go to <https://smile.amazon.com/> to do your Amazon shopping. The Rockingham Bird Club will earn a percentage from the purchases you make. It’s FREE to you and does not increase the cost of what you buy in any way.



Purple Finch – Hillandale Park – October 2022

Photo credit: Greg Moyers



Cooper's Hawk – Friendly City Trail – October 2022

Photo credit: Greg Moyers



Merlin, eating breakfast – Eastern Shore NWR – October 2022

Photo credit: Art Fovargue



Lincoln's Sparrow – Hone Quarry – October 2022

Photo credit: Greg Moyers

Rockingham Bird Club
9 Louise Drive
Bridgewater, VA 22812



PRESIDENT: Mike Donaldson, effective 1/1/2023

VICE PRESIDENT: PROGRAMS – Kathy Byers

VICE PRESIDENT: FIELD TRIPS – Diane Lepkowski

SECRETARY: Stephani Moore

TREASURER: Audrey Shenk

MEMBERS AT LARGE: Kathy Fovargue, Herb Myers

GOLDFINCH GAZETTE – Denise Hoodock

EMAIL: info@rockinghambirdclub.com

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

