



Goldfinch Gazette

The Newsletter of the Rockingham Bird Club

<https://rockinghambirdclub.com>

Volume XLVIII

Number 6

Feb 2023

DATE: Thursday, February 9, 2023

TIME: 7:00 PM

PLACE: Park View Mennonite Church, Fellowship Hall

PROGRAM: *“Birding in Brazil” presented by Sarah Swank*

Sarah will talk about birds and wildlife in Brazil including problems and solutions relating to deforestation. She will cover areas from the Amazonian North to the vast seasonal wetlands of the South known as the Pantanal.

FIELD TRIPS – *Diane Lepkowski*

2023 Raptor / Waterfowl Count, Saturday February 11: This long-standing, annual Rockingham Bird Club 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're in the process of securing sector leaders and helpers. Please contact Diane Lepkowski at dianelep1@yahoo.com with questions or if you're interested in participating. (Inclement weather date to be determined.)

Hillandale Bird and Brunch, Thursday, February 16: Meet at Shelter 12 in Hillandale Park at 8:30 am for a bit of birding. Then join us at Kathy's house (around 10:00 am) for coffee and bagels. Contact Tom at ztomvaz@cs.com or 540-810-5898. Contact Kathy at kkbyers77@gmail.com or 540-820-6517. Kathy's address is 521 Ridge Rd

TRIP REPORTS

Hillandale Park Walk – Tom Mizell

On January 20, around 8:30 AM, I pulled out of my driveway for the first Rockingham Bird Club Hillandale walk of 2023. Originally scheduled for the 19th, we postponed it a day due to inclement rainy weather. It was sunny but the wind surprised me when I walked out my door. I checked the weather app and the wind was 11 mph and there was a wind advisory. Gee would anyone show up for the walk? As I started my vehicle, a Raven flew from my backyard and made a pass right at me lifting up to clear my car roof. I didn't hear it quote “Never More”. On the drive to Harrisonburg, I saw an American Kestrel and the usual doves, house sparrows and starlings along route 42.

Fortunately, the wind didn't seem too bad. It was 43 degrees and I left from the main shelter at 8:53 AM. Before I caught up with the club members, I saw American Robin, Mourning Dove, Red-bellied Woodpecker and Turkey Vulture. I then heard the train whistle blow at 9:00 AM. Then I added Blue

Jay, American Crow, Northern Cardinal, White-breasted Nuthatch and Downy Woodpecker. I caught up with 7 members of the Club and a guest near the yet-to-be-named concrete slab. The group had seen Tufted Titmouse, Golden-crowned Kinglet and Brown Creeper. We added Dark-eyed Junco, Black Vulture and Hairy Woodpecker by 9:30 AM, giving us a total of 15 species.

We were now at the old log cabin site. We paused there to observe a new species. Included is a photo, taken by Zach Perdue, near the old cabin site. See if you can guess what species is in that tree. We will have a moment to share IDs when we gather at Hillandale in February.

At 9:46, just after we crossed the new bike trail bridge, some White-throated Sparrows were observed under the Osage Orange trees near the volleyball court. As we were looking to the ground, Art Fovargue spotted a Pileated Woodpecker as it tried to stealthily fly undetected directly overhead. It landed in a not-too-distant tree, and we all got a good look. By now the group of eight had dropped to four. As Don Perkuchin drove past us, he reported seeing a Coopers Hawk.



There were just two birders left. Randy Cline led me along the utility line and near the golf course, where we added a pair of Red-tailed Hawks soaring together and some Mallards. The walk ended at 10:36 AM and we listed 20 species.

See you in February. Let's see how many species we can enjoy in Hillandale in 2023.

Lost River, WV (Kimsey Run & Eagles) – Randy Cline

Eight hardy souls made the trip to WV to scout for Bald Eagles. The weather was pleasant but heavy coats were a comfort. The trip was a success, we saw just at 30 eagles in three different locations. Common Mergansers were in full view at the Kimsey Run lake. An added bonus was the wonderful chili lunch provided by Henry Hawkins at his Bergton property. Birding after chili was a treat; two Eastern Towhees were among the count. Please join us next year; the Golden Eagle is on our wish list.

BIRD SIGHTINGS

Diane Lepkowski reported a male **Common Goldeneye** at the Broadway Wastewater Treatment Plant on Jan. 10. Greg Moyers reported a **Canvasback** at the same location on Jan. 11. Other notables at this location in Jan. include **Tundra Swan, Greater Scaup, Horned Grebe, and Northern Pintail**. Mike Smith reported 27 **American Black Ducks**, along with an **American Wigeon** and a singing **Winter Wren**, at the Merck Swamp south of Elkton on Jan. 1. Mike found a **Ruby-crowned Kinglet** on nearby Ore Wash Rd on the same date. Mike saw an **Evening Grosbeak** at a private feeder in Fort Valley (Shenandoah Co.) on Jan. 4. On Jan. 8, Mike reported a **Bald Eagle** in Elkton and two singing **Winter Wrens, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Purple Finch, and Brown Creeper** at his place near Elkton. Mike added **Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, and Eastern Phoebe** to his yard list on Jan. 17. On Jan. 18, Mike spotted and heard a **Barred Owl** and later heard a **Great Horned Owl** calling at his place.

Diane Lepkowski reported a **Fox Sparrow** on the western slope of Massanutten Mtn on Jan. 12.

Greg Moyers reported a **Palm Warbler** on Mt. Clinton Pike in Harrisonburg on Jan. 14.

Greg Moyers and Diane Lepkowski heard a pair of **Great Horned Owls** calling in the pine woods at Lake Shenandoah on Jan. 17. **Virginia Rails** were heard calling in the marsh near the parking area at dusk.

Diane Lepkowski and Craig Tumer watched and photographed an immature **Bald Eagle** attacking a **Great Blue Heron** at Lake Shenandoah on Jan. 23. In the end, the attack was unsuccessful and the heron escaped.

Matt Gingerich reported seven flyover **Sandhill Cranes** near his place in Linville on Jan. 25 and saw the birds lifting off the following morning. Matt suspects they are part of the group of eight that he saw in Dec. Bridgett Brunea saw the group flying over Grist Mill Rd on Jan. 27. To date, the feeding and roosting locations of this group is unknown.

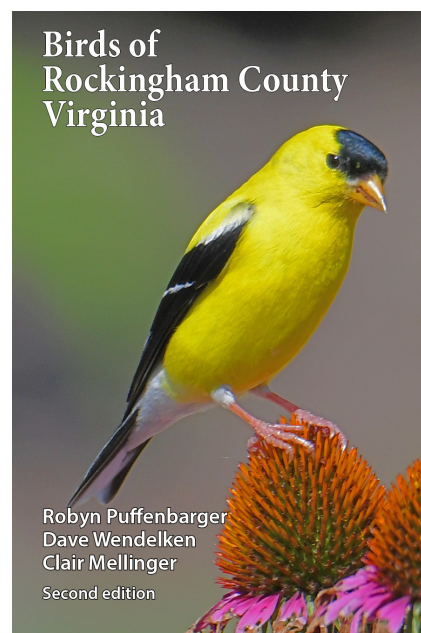
Cory Taylor reported a **Snow Goose**, along with the continuing immature **Ross's Goose**, at the Weavers Rd pond on Jan. 26. Two Snow Geese were spotted there later that same day.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

EXCITING NEWS! Birds of Rockingham County, 2nd Edition, will be available at the February meeting!

This beautiful updated version contains separate accounts for each of the 314 reported species and is illustrated by more than 90 crisp color photos. The book follows the format of Editor Clair Mellinger's 1998 first edition and will be a valuable resource for birders interested in detailed information about birding in the County along with when, where, and which species to expect; and which to be surprised by!

The book describes current information on 21 popular birding locations, how to access them, and species occurrence at each. It also provides interesting information on the geography and geology of the County and describes frequency and population trends of species using a host of data sources and the knowledge of our experienced birders. The data includes local and digital (eBird) reports, Christmas Bird Counts, *Goldfinch Gazette* reports, and data comparisons between the first (1985–1989) Virginia Breeding Bird Atlas and eBird field reports for the 2nd Breeding Bird Atlas project (2016–2020.) (Please note that this book is not a field guide and does not delve into details of species identification, although it does frequently touch on suitable habitat.)



The book will be available for purchase at upcoming meetings (via check or cash only). We're pleased to announce a discount (below-cost) price of \$24.95 for current RBC members. The price will be \$29.95 for nonmembers, and both prices include sales tax.

Christmas Bird Count Additional Details – *Bill Benish*

As an update to the report appearing in the January 2023 issue of the *Goldfinch Gazette*, we lost Tundra Swan as it was corrected to a Mute Swan. With that adjustment and the addition of one more list, our final totals stand at 74 species and 10,458 individual birds counted.

We had six "All Time High" species counts (new/previous records) including Bald Eagle (17/12), Red-

headed Woodpecker (11/9), Red-bellied Woodpecker (89/77), Common Raven (39/37), White-breasted Nuthatch (77/71) and Eastern Towhee (9/8). Three others tied previous highs- Red-shouldered Hawk (7), Peregrine Falcon (1), and Winter Wren (8 -although the records are somewhat inconsistent for this species as we may have had 11 in 1984). Species found this year and not last year include Ring-necked Duck, Black Vulture, Fish Crow, Eastern Towhee, Chipping Sparrow, Eastern Meadowlark, Brown-headed Cowbird and Evening Grosbeak.

Although several of the following are not found every year, these were found last year and not this year: Snow Goose (White form), Ross's Goose, Gadwall, Ruffed Grouse, Wild Turkey, Northern Harrier, Merlin, Eurasian Collared-Dove, Gray Catbird and Cedar Waxwing. This is also our second year in a row with no Common Grackles.

I provided a PDF copy of the results details to all participants for whom I have email addresses. Feel free to email me at wcbenish@gmail.com if you would like a copy.

Thank you!

A big THANK YOU to Robyn Puffenbarger for her excellent program on birding in South Africa last month. The program was greatly enjoyed by the club.

Treasurer's Report – *Audrey Shenk*

At the latest RBC Executive Committee meeting in late January, the committee agreed to make donations to the following organizations using the proceeds from our annual Bird Seed Sale and funds we had saved over the last few years due to fewer program expenses during the pandemic:

The Wildlife Center of Virginia (the organization that cares for sick or injured wildlife in our area), the American Bird Conservancy (conserving native birds and their habitats throughout the Americas), the Coastal Virginia Wildlife Observatory (protecting migrating birds), the Center for Conservation Biology at The College of William & Mary (preparing future ornithologists), the National Audubon Society in recognition of their support for our local Christmas Bird Count, Massanutten Regional Library, the Avian Conservation Center of Appalachia (promoting conservation of our local birds and their habitats), the Community Cloud Forest Conservation (working in Guatemala to alleviate poverty and protect the cloud forests where many of our local birds spend the winter), and the Virginia Society of Ornithology's *Breeding Bird Atlas 2* sponsor a species program. Appropriately, we are sponsoring our mascot bird, the American Goldfinch. Thank you for your support of our annual fundraiser. By purchasing bird seed and volunteering on distribution day, you make these donations possible. Happy, safe birding in 2023!

Bird-related events courtesy of JMU Arboretum

The Edith J. Carrier Arboretum is hosting a multi-day event, February 16–20, coinciding with the Great Backyard Bird Count (<https://www.birdcount.org/>), with programs designed to spur interest in birds and birding. Free registration is required for each program.

On Friday, February 24, at the Forbes Center for the Performing Arts – Recital Hall, the arboretum and the Litten Family will present the 2023 Litten Lecture, “Sound ecology: How soundscapes impact gray catbirds and their avian communities.” A reception at 5:45 pm precedes Dr. Dana Moseley's lecture, which features a piano and electroacoustics performance by Anna Showalter that incorporates bird sounds collected locally. Free registration is required, and donations are appreciated.

For full details about these events and to register for programs, visit <https://www.jmu.edu/arboretum/events/general-events.shtml>.



Immature Bald Eagle making an unsuccessful attempt at a Great Blue Heron meal - Lake Shenandoah, Jan 23, 2023

Photo credit: Diane Lepkowski

Rockingham Bird Club
9 Louise Drive
Bridgewater, VA 22812



PRESIDENT: Mike Donaldson

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

HISTORIAN: Art Fovargue

EMAIL: info@rockinghambirdclub.com

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

