



Goldfinch Gazette

The Newsletter of the Rockingham Bird Club

<https://rockinghambirdclub.com>

Volume XLVIII

Number 8

Apr 2023

DATE: Thursday, April 13, 2023

TIME: 7:00 PM

PLACE: Park View Mennonite Church, Fellowship Hall

PROGRAM: "Birding in Florida" *presented by Richard A. Rowe*

Dr. Rowe, Professor of Biology and Director of Research at VMI, will present a program on his birding experiences in Florida. Sites will include Sweetwater Wetlands Preserve near Gainesville, Fort De Soto Park at the mouth of Tampa Bay, and various county and state parks. His program will focus on overwintering birds, occasional rarities, and the species that are beginning to migrate.

FIELD TRIPS – *Diane Lepkowski*

Madison Run Fire Road, Saturday, April 15, with Greg Moyers: Greg Moyers will lead a walk along the Madison Run Fire Rd near Grottoes on Sat., April 15. 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 at 8:30 AM. We should conclude around noon. This is a fairly easy walk. Bring water. Note there are no facilities available. Please contact Greg at gwmoyers@msn.com or 434-3029 if you plan to attend or need directions.

Hillandale Bird Walk, Wednesday, April 12 & Wednesday, April 19: We will meet at Shelter 12 at 8:30 AM. Contact Tom Mizell at tomvaz@cs.com or 540-810-5898, or Kathy Byers at kkbyers77@gmail.com or 540-820-6517 for questions or more info.

TRIP REPORTS

Hillandale March Winter/Spring Walk – Tom Mizell

On Monday, March 20 over 22 people gathered at Hillandale Park for our Winter-through-Spring Walk. It was a beautiful day. The sun was shining, and the temperature was 51° at 4:30. With some new faces, our introductions circle runneth over. Wish-list birds included Blue-headed Vireo, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Chipping Sparrow, and the one we actually saw, Hairy Woodpecker.

As we gathered at the shelter, Blue Jays chattered as usual. Wish I knew what they were talking about! Also, a Cooper's Hawk heralded spring with an enjoyable flyover. Early on we had Common Grackle, Carolina Chickadee, and White-breasted Nuthatch. The group headed towards the northwest corner. American Robins were bob-bob-bobbing along under the cedar trees and along the stream. A

Red-bellied Woodpecker sat nearly motionless in one of the walnut trees. A Red-headed Woodpecker made an early showing. By the time we approached the still-to-be-named concrete slab, we added Hairy Woodpecker, Northern Cardinal, Tufted Titmouse and Mourning Dove.

It was 5:10 PM and spring was officially 10 minutes away. The last bird sighting of winter was a Northern Flicker spotted by Judith Purdue.

With 22 people in the group, it was easy for small groups of two and three to linger at various places along the trail and in so doing, Greg Moyers spotted a Screech Owl in the northwest corner. This happened while much of the group was near the fork in the trail just west of the old log cabin site.

Spring arrived and about half of the group departed. About 12 remained in two smaller groups. We all made our way to the bike path and there joined forces. Depending upon which group one was in, the last bird of winter was either a Northern Flicker or a Robin. Incidentally, if I recall correctly, robins were the last bird of fall and first bird of winter to be seen in December. So, I'm not surprised the robins were again bobbing, singing and clamoring about seeking recognition.

Now Springtime birds: Northern Cardinal, White-throated Sparrow, American Crow, Northern Mockingbird, Mourning Dove, Blue Jay, Fish Crow, Tufted Titmouse, Song Sparrow, Junco, Downy Woodpecker, and White-breasted Nuthatch rounded out both the repeats from winter and additions to spring.

The total species seen or heard for the walk was 25 with woodpeckers leading the count. The beauty of nature, arrival of spring, and camaraderie of the group lifted everyone's spirits. Hope to see you in April!

BIRD SIGHTINGS

There was an unconfirmed report that a **Snowy Owl** made a brief stop at the Food Lion shopping center in Elkton sometime in early March.

Mike Smith reported a singing **Pine Warbler** at his place east of Elkton on March 2. Throughout the month, Mike has added **Fox Sparrow, Eastern Towhee, Chipping Sparrow, Eastern Phoebe, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Purple Finches**, and has had **Brown Creepers, Pine Warblers, Ruby-crowned Kinglets, Red-Breasted Nuthatches**, and **Pileated Woodpeckers** visiting his suet and feeders. Mike also got three **Pine Siskins** at his feeder on March 30, one of the very few reports of siskins in the area this winter/spring. Mike reports that the **Great Blue Heron** at the Merck Swamp was standing on the nest on March 9.

Karen, Everette, and Annie Shank have been hosting **Evening Grosbeaks** at their place in Spring Creek. Three females were spotted on March 6. A few birds were routinely seen over the following weeks before the Shanks counted 35 Grosbeaks on March 30! The birds continue as of this writing, with 21 seen on April 4.

Herb Myers had a **Ruby-crowned Kinglet** visit his suet feeder in Keezletown on March 9. Herb finally got his yard **Pine Warbler**, coming to suet, on March 10. Herb saw as many as two Pine Warblers at his place over the next six days.

Sharon Landis reported **Purple Finches** coming to her feeder near Singers Glen on March 10. Sharon also spent several minutes watching a **Downy Woodpecker** and a **Hairy Woodpecker** posturing on

the same tree trunk. On March 21, Sharon reported a flock of **Chipping Sparrows** and more **Red-headed Woodpeckers** and **Eastern Meadowlarks** arriving.

Ken Rank had a **Bald Eagle** perched in a tree at his place along North River in Mt. Crawford on March 16.

Annie Shank found a **Black Vulture** with eggs in an old barn on the Shank's property in Spring Creek on March 18.

Greg Moyers reported **Red-breasted Mergansers**, **Horned Grebes**, and 11 **Bonaparte's Gulls** at the Broadway Wastewater Plant on March 25.

Tom Mizell reported an **Osprey**, **Brown Thrasher**, **Brown Creeper**, and **Tree Swallows** at Wildwood Park in Bridgewater on March 28.

Diane Lepkowski found an early **Common Yellowthroat** at Lake Shenandoah on March 28.

Greg Moyers reported a **Black-crowned Night-Heron** at the usual spot near the poultry plant on Rt. 42 in Dayton on March 28.

Cory Taylor reported three **Tundra Swans** at the Broadway Wastewater Plant on March 29.

Diane Lepkowski reported three **Vesper Sparrows**, as well as two **Northern Pintails**, **Gadwalls**, and **Northern Shovelers**, on Western View Rd on March 29.

Greg Moyers reported a breeding-plumage **Common Loon** on the Stone Port retention pond off Stone Spring Rd on March 31.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Charles "Zig" Ziegenfus Receives VSO Award - announcement from the VSO:

"The Virginia Society of Ornithology (VSO) is pleased to announce that Charles "Zig" Ziegenfus, of Harrisonburg, Virginia, is the distinguished recipient of the 2023 Mitchell A. Byrd Award for exceptional academic achievement in ornithology.

Zig's work in ornithology and bird conservation has spanned more than 50 years and has run the gamut. Dan Cristol, Chancellor Professor of Biology at William and Mary, nominated Zig and has known him since 1987. Dan praised him as a mentor and as a "major contributor to the seminal research on reproductive biology and evolution of [Dark-eyed Juncos] that was carried out by Ellen Ketterson and Val Nolan of Indiana University at Mountain Lake Biological Station." Supporting this nomination were letters from Elizabeth Ihle, long-time VSO and Rockingham Bird Club member; Diane Lepkowski, long-time friend, Rockingham Bird Club Vice President, and current VSO Vice President; and Clair Mellinger, Professor Emeritus of Eastern Mennonite University, and bander of Saw-whet Owls at Highland Retreat Camp.



From Zig's field research with juncos at Mountain Lake, to teaching a popular ornithology class at James Madison University, and as a founding member of the Rockingham Bird Club in 1974, Zig was tireless in those efforts. A true educator, he promoted bird conservation, helping anyone who was interested in doing the same. He installed and maintained countless nest boxes benefiting bluebirds, Tree Swallows, and kestrels. Zig assisted Dr. John Spahr and Patti Reum with the VSO's American Kestrel conservation project in Highland County.

Volunteering at banding stations including Dolly Sods in West Virginia and Highland Retreat Camp in Rockingham County for Saw-whet Owls, Zig also operated a banding station on a Rockingham County farm and banded wintering sparrows on several other private properties. He was always on hand for local bird counts, including the Rockingham Christmas Bird Count since the 1970's, and he ran several breeding bird survey routes over the years.

Zig's encouragement, his effort, and his generosity in sharing his knowledge and enthusiasm has been a gift beyond words to birders in the Shenandoah Valley and across the Commonwealth. He inspired many of his JMU students to pursue ornithological or conservation-related careers or to embrace birding as an avocation. A long-time VSO Life member, Zig often took students to the VSO's February Outer Banks field trips.

As Dan Cristol wrote, after detailing personal recollections and Zig's many achievements: "And the amazing thing is that he was a math professor and an electrician first, and all of these contributions to science, bird conservation, and ornithological education were not even his 'day job.'"

Prepared by Diane Lepkowski, Vice President, VSO, and Patti Reum, Conservation Chair, VSO"

<https://www.virginiabirds.org/vso-news/ziegenfus-byrd-award>

Clair Mellinger and I were honored to present Zig with the VSO's Mitchell A. Byrd Award on March 17. Sadly, Zig passed away on March 29. A celebration of his life will be held sometime this summer.

<https://www.kygers.com/obituary/charles-ziegenfus> - Diane Lepkowski

New book sells out

The second edition of *Birds of Rockingham County Virginia* has sold out. Many thanks to all who purchased copies, and thanks once again to the three editors and all who contributed to the production of such an excellent (and popular) work. If you missed getting a copy of the book, there are 4 books at the library for checkout and one in the reference section that can be viewed on-site at the Central Library.

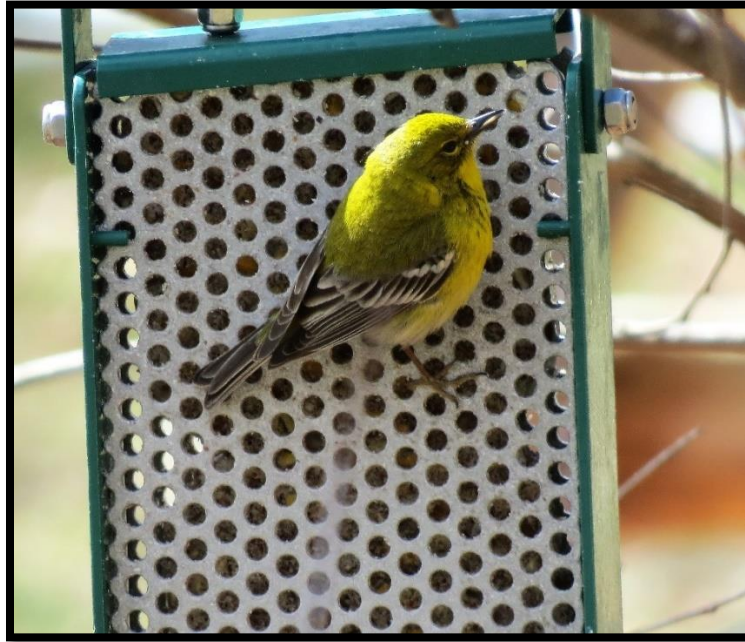
Election reminder

The Club will hold its annual elections at the May meeting. A Nominating Committee consisting of immediate past president Debbie Harrison as chair and two volunteer Club members will prepare a slate of one nominee for each of the following positions:

- Officers: President, First Vice President, Second Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer (these officers serve one-year terms)
- Two Members-at-large, who serve two-year terms and may serve one successive term

Additional information about the elections and duties of the officers can be found within the [Club's Constitution and By-laws](#).

Debbie Harrison still needs help with the Nominating Committee. Please help the Club move forward by volunteering to serve on this important committee. To do so, or to express your interest in one of the leadership positions, please contact Debbie Harrison at woodshar@aol.com or Mike Donaldson at mike.donaldson@outlook.com. You may also express your interest in person at the April meeting.



**Pine Warbler, above & Ruby-crowned Kinglet, below
Keezletown, VA – March 2023**

Photo credit: Herb Myers



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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

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