



Goldfinch Gazette

The Newsletter of the Rockingham Bird Club

<https://rockinghambirdclub.com>

Volume XLVIII

Number 9

May 2023

DATE: Thursday, May 11, 2023

TIME: 7:00 PM

PLACE: Park View Mennonite Church, Fellowship Hall

PROGRAM: "Eagles in Virginia" *presented by Jeff Cooper*

Jeff is a wildlife biologist and is the non-game bird project coordinator for the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources.

FIELD TRIPS – *Diane Lepkowski*

Hillandale Bird Walk, Thursday, May 11: We will meet at Shelter 12 at **8:30 AM**. Contact Tom Mizell at ztomvaz@cs.com or 540-810-5898, or Kathy Byers at kkbyers77@gmail.com or 540-820-6517 for questions or more info.

Starry Meadows, Saturday May 13, with Jay and Sharon Landis, 8:00 AM: Join Jay and Sharon at their farm for Global Big Day, an annual worldwide celebration of birds. This walk will include some up-and-down walking through meadows, woodland, and along a stream. Expect to see Red-headed Woodpeckers, Meadowlarks, Tree Swallows, sparrows, and other meadow/woodland birds. Sharon especially enjoys working with kids and beginners, but experts are very welcome too! Please sign up by contacting Sharon at spiritsong.sl@gmail.com or text 717-587-5329. Starry Meadows is north of Singers Glen at [10547 Turleytown Road](#).

TRIP REPORTS

Hillandale April Walks – *Tom Mizell*

On a blue-sky Wednesday, April 19, ten members of the Rockingham Bird Club made the rounds in Hillandale Park. Our wish list included Blue-headed Vireo, any "good" warbler, Screech Owl, Pileated and Red-headed Woodpeckers and Ruby-crowned Kinglet. It was a beautiful morning and temperatures were in the 50s. Not surprisingly Blue Jays were among the first to be seen and heard. They were followed by Red-bellied Woodpeckers, American Robins, White-throated Sparrows, Brown Thrasher, Mourning Dove and "talk to Tedd" mouse. Initially I dictated this article, and it seems my saying Tufted Titmouse was interpreted as "talk to Ted Mouse". I laughed out loud and just couldn't let it go without sharing it with the readers. Hope you enjoy a laugh like I enjoyed.

Moving on we reached the northwest corner bridge 9 a.m. and added Carolina Wren, American

Goldfinch and American Crow. Randy Cline shouted Chimney Swift as one sped overhead. A Fish Crow called in the distance. Quite a few Purple Finches fed in the treetops. The group was spread along the trail, and some saw a Red-headed Woodpecker pair and others focused on a Ruby-crowned Kinglet in the very Northwest corner of the trail. Brown-headed Cowbirds were out planning mischief, and Northern Cardinals and Tree Swallows pushed our list to 18.

The red morph Screech Owl was spotted and that brought the group of ten all back together again. This very striking Screech gave us all a great show. Sitting in the bright sunlight, it entertained us for several minutes. As we moved on, we added Rufous-sided Towhee and Chipping Sparrow. We had 21 species by the time we reached the concrete slab at 9:30 am.

Finally, in the second hour, we added our first warbler as Mike Donaldson spotted a Palm Warbler flitting in the treetop. Before we reached the fork in the trail near the old log cabin site, Don Perkuchin spied a Blue-headed Vireo and that was enjoyable. We added White-breasted Nuthatch, Northern Flicker, Common Grackle and Eastern Bluebird.

Around 10 o'clock, seven of us remained and we walked on the bike trail headed west towards the schools. A pair of Red-tailed Hawks circled overhead, a Field Sparrow called close by and a Broad-winged Hawk flapped and glided eastward over the fairways. Walking between the golf course and undeveloped open field, we added Northern Mockingbird, Eastern Meadowlark, Grasshopper Sparrow, Barn Swallow and Turkey Vulture. It was about 10:30 am when we turned around and headed back to the children's playground. Just east of the wood chip play area we found both a Pileated Woodpecker and Downy Woodpecker occupying holes in the same tree. The Pileated "Wood Chipper" was apparently doing some home improvements as it periodically stuck its bill out the nest hole and showered wood chippings to the ground below. We completed the walk around 11 o'clock with 37 species for the day. Based on observation time the Red Screech Owl was the crowd pleaser for the morning. Also, it was nice to welcome the Palm Warbler back from its trip south. Hopefully we will see many more warblers in May!

It is noted that 10 members of the club enjoyed 35 species the previous Wednesday on April 14, 2023. Birds seen on that day included Carolina Chickadee, House Finch, House Sparrow, Hairy Woodpecker, European Starling, Black Vulture, Junco and Cooper's Hawk. The species total for the two Wednesday trips was 45.

Madison Run Fire Road – Greg Moyers

Ten members of the RBC attended the walk at Madison Run Fire Rd on April 15. The rain broke just before we commenced and blue skies prevailed for much of the walk. We were treated to views of Pine Warblers, Blue-headed Vireos, and Blue-gray Gnatcatchers as we made our way up the road. We also heard Black-and-white Warbler and Black-throated Green Warbler and enjoyed the duet of a pair of Barred Owls. At our usual turnaround point, where the stream crosses under the path, the group was able to watch a pair of Louisiana Waterthrushes carrying nest material into a hole in the bank just off the trail. Some members of the group continued up the path and added a pair of Bald Eagles, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Ovenbird, and heard Wild Turkeys. The final tally was around 30 species.

BIRD SIGHTINGS

Mike Smith found 12 **Evening Grosbeaks** and 10 **Red Crossbills** at the VA/WV border on Rt. 33 on Shenandoah Mtn on March 31. On April 3, Mike had a singing **Louisiana Waterthrush** and a singing

Pine Warbler at his place near Elkton, along with **Fox Sparrow**, **Red-breasted Nuthatch**, and several of his other winter residents. That evening, Mike got **Barred Owls** and **American Woodcocks** at the Pocosin Cabin Trail on Skyline Drive.

Diane Lepkowski reported two **Bonaparte's Gulls** and a mixed group of **Greater** and **Lesser Scaup** at Lake Shenandoah on April 1.

Dave Wendelken and Greg Moyers reported a pair of calling **Barred Owls** and an **Eastern Whip-Poor-Will** at Madison Run Fire Rd on April 4.

Matt Gingerich had a productive morning on Shenandoah Mtn along Briery Branch Rd and the Bother Knob Rd on April 14. Highlights included a **Cooper's Hawk** chasing a **Barred Owl**, **Ruffed Grouse**, singing **Hermit Thrushes**, **Louisiana Waterthrush**, **Prairie**, **Pine**, **Black-and-white**, and **Black-throated Green Warblers**, and **Broad-winged Hawks**. Matt found a pair of **Golden-crowned Kinglets** building a nest in the spruces on the Bother Knob Rd and a **Red-breasted Nuthatch** excavating a hole in the same area. Over 40 **Red Crossbills** were seen at the crossroads.

Mike Smith reported a calling **Red-breasted Nuthatch** at Runkle's Gap off Cub Run Rd on April 16 and **Hermit Thrushes** and a singing **Purple Finch** at the Edith J. Carrier Arboretum at JMU on April 19. On April 20, Mike reported a **Spotted Sandpiper** and a singing **Orchard Oriole** at Riverside Park in Elkton.

Several birders reported **Greater** and **Lesser Yellowlegs**, **Solitary Sandpipers**, **Pectoral Sandpipers**, and **Spotted Sandpipers** at the Oakwood Drive farm pond beginning April 17.

A **White-winged Dove** spent several days at a residence on Park Rd in Harrisonburg beginning on April 20.

Mike Donaldson reported two **Black-crowned Night-Herons** at Purcell Park on April 21.

Cory Taylor reported at least three, and possibly five, **Virginia Rails** at Lake Shenandoah on April 21.

Herb and Sarah Myers reported their first **Ruby-throated Hummingbird** of the season at their Keezletown residence on April 22.

Diane Lepkowski and Dixie Sommers were surprised to hear a **Northern Bobwhite** calling on the Bother Knob Rd on April 27.

Karen, Everette, and Annie Shank continue to host **Evening Grosbeaks** at their place in Spring Creek as of April 27.

Sharon Landis reported the first **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** of the season at the Landis' feeders in Linville on April 29.

William Leigh reported a **Blue-winged Warbler** on the Bother Knob Rd on April 30.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Report of the Nominations Committee

The following persons have been nominated as Candidates for the fiscal year 2023–2024, to be voted on in the election at the May meeting:

One-year Terms:

President	Mike Donaldson
First Vice-President (programs)	Kathy Byers
Second Vice-President (field trips)	Diane Lepkowski
Secretary	_____
Treasurer	Audrey Shenk

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

Our club has 2 Members-at-Large positions:

Our currently serving Member-at-Large is Herb Myers, whose term ends next May.

In nomination for Member-at-Large is Andrew Troyer

Andrew is a recent graduate from Eastern Mennonite University with a degree in computer science. He works as a web developer and lives in Harrisonburg. In his free time, he likes to get outside and immerse himself in nature. A casual birder growing up in Ohio, he is getting more serious about birding since joining our Club!

Secretary Needed ASAP

I regret to announce that our current Secretary, Stephani Moore, is stepping down. A replacement is needed ASAP. The duties of the Secretary are primarily to take notes and transcribe the Minutes of our general meetings and Executive Committee meetings (3 per year).

Please let me know if you are interested or know someone else who may be interested in helping the club in this important role.

Thank you,
Debbie Harrison, Nominating Committee Chair

Shenandoah Valley Raptor Study Area, First update April 15, 2023 – Lance & Jill Morrow

This is the 16th year of our kestrel nest box program in the Shenandoah Valley Raptor Study Area (SVRSA). Since its founding in 2008 with just 4 kestrel nest boxes, we have banded over 3000 American Kestrels to date! We also give bird bands to Eastern Bluebirds, Tree Swallows, Wrens, and Chickadees using our 66 bluebird nest boxes. In addition, young barn owls hatched inside abandoned silos are banded so we can follow them throughout their lives. However, in recent years only those barn owls that are accessible without climbing (i.e., nesting on the ground inside silos) are banded since we are too old to shimmy up chutes to our barn owl boxes near the tops of the silos.

Northern Saw-Whet Owl banding: Charles “Zig” Ziegenfus and Claire Mellinger began an owl banding station near Bergton in the NW corner of Rockingham County many years ago and Ben Spory has taken over the research program since both pioneers got too old to continue the grueling winter nighttime banding regimen. This past winter was very good for calling in (audio luring), capturing (mist net), and banding saw-whet owls. Ben and his helpers set up mist nets after dark to capture,

measure, age, and band these charismatic little owls over 21 nights between November 1 through December 4th, 2022. They banded a total of 142 new birds plus they recaptured 9 previously banded owls. Well done Ben and helpers!

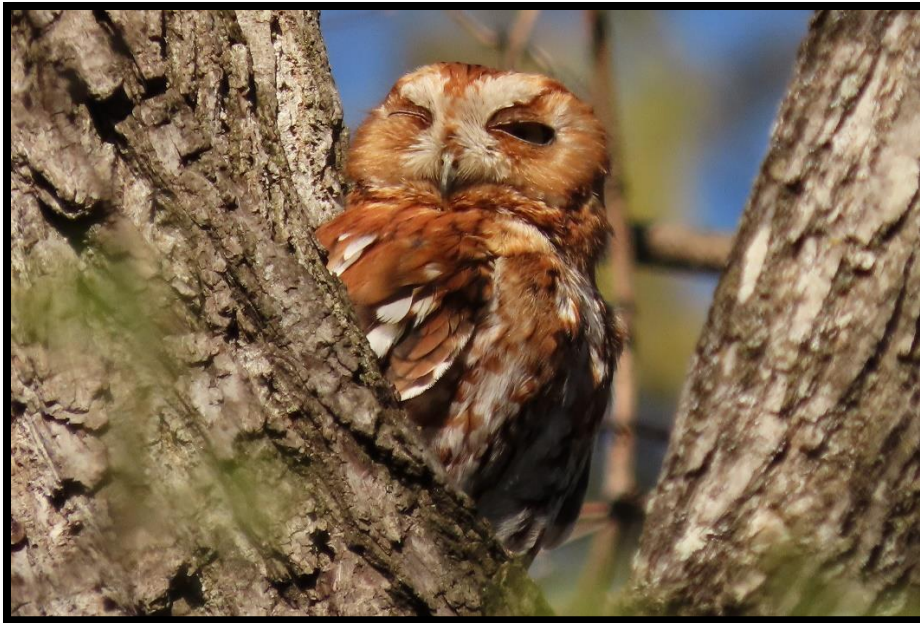
If you would like to be added to the SVRSA email list, please contact Lance & Jill Morrow at saltlick2003@gmail.com

Name Tags

Thank you to Bill and Martha Faw who have been creating much appreciated name tags for club members. They will be stepping back from this important function at the end of the program year. Therefore, the club needs someone to take over making them, starting in September. If this sounds like a job for YOU, please let one of the club officers know. Bill and Martha will be happy to provide training. Thanks in advance for your consideration.

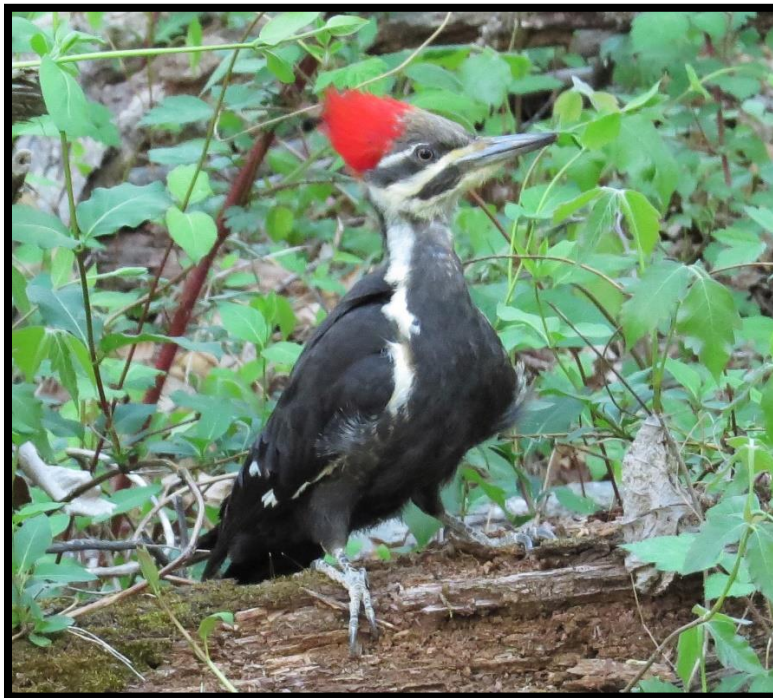


Mark your calendars now! Join us for a Potluck Dinner at our June 8th meeting. Diane Lepkowski and Greg Moyers will share their wonderful pics of birds of Rockingham County. Watch for more information in the next newsletter.



Eastern Screech Owl – Hillandale Park, April 19, 2023

Photo credit: Mike Donaldson



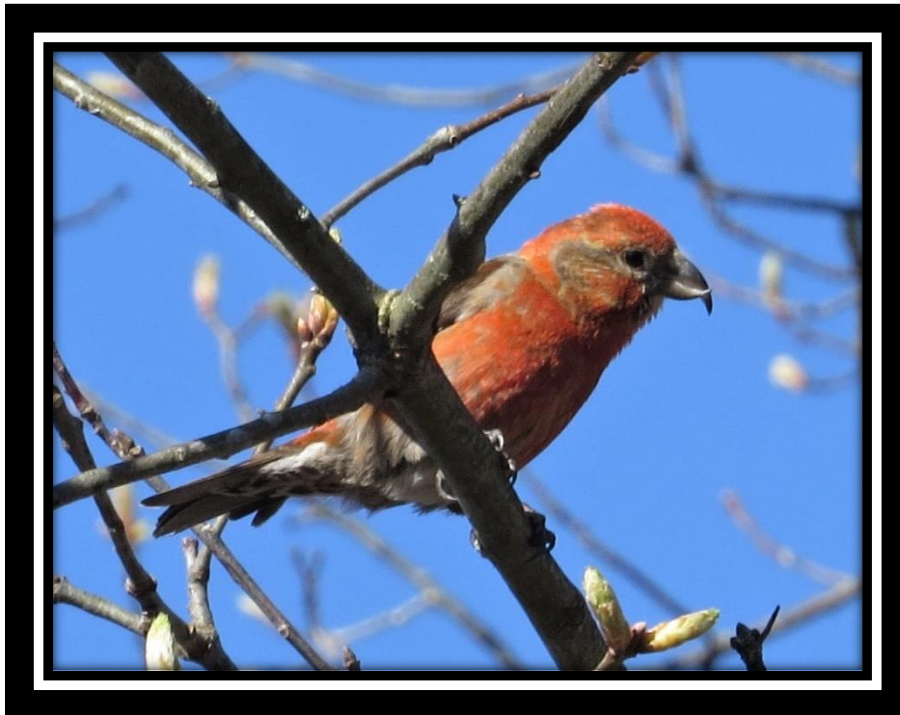
Pileated Woodpecker – JMU Arboretum, April 18, 2023

Photo credit: Greg Moyers



White-winged Dove – Park Road, Harrisonburg, VA, April 23, 2023

Photo credit: Greg Moyers



Red Crossbill – Switzer Dam, April 16, 2023

Photo credit: Greg Moyers

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

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