



Goldfinch Gazette

The Newsletter of the Rockingham Bird Club

<https://rockinghambirdclub.com>

Volume XLVIII

Number 2

Oct 2023

DATE: Thursday, October 12, 2023

TIME: 7:00 PM

PLACE: Park View Mennonite Church, Fellowship Hall

PROGRAM: **The Second Virginia Breeding Bird Atlas: A bird conservation tool for the 21st century** presented by Sergio Harding

Sergio has worked as a Nongame Bird Conservation Biologist with the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources (DWR) since 2005. He oversees various avian projects and coordinates with other agencies on bird conservation issues.

The 2nd Virginia Breeding Bird Atlas is among the largest volunteer-based avian survey projects to take place in Virginia, with close to 1,500 people having contributed data between 2016 and 2020. Those data are currently being analyzed and will be published as a publicly accessible website in the fall of 2025. This presentation will introduce you to the Atlas, share some preliminary results, provide a peek at some of the forthcoming Atlas products, and discuss how the Atlas will contribute to bird conservation in Virginia by DWR and our partners.

FIELD TRIPS – Diane Lepkowski

Hillandale Bird Walk, Tuesday, October 10: 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. *Please note:* A section of S Dogwood Avenue is closed. If you are coming from the south on Rt. 42, turn left at Hillandale Ave.

Northern Saw-whet Owl banding – If we can arrange a trip to the banding station, it will likely be around the second week of November. Stay tuned! We'll announce via email.

Rockfish Gap Hawk Watch (on your own): While the push of Broad-wings Hawks has passed, it will soon be prime time for Golden Eagles and other raptors. Migration timing for each species can be viewed here: <https://www.rockfishgaphawkwatch.org/migration-timeframe2/>

**Additional trips that may be scheduled will be announced via email to members.*

TRIP REPORTS

September Hillandale Walks – *Tom Mizell*

How many warblers would be fun to see this last day of summer 2023? Eighteen folks showed up for Our Friday September 22 walk. It was a bit overcast and 52° when our walk began at 8:30 AM.

Wishlist birds for this last day of Summer included Sora (yep one was seen on our 12 September walk) and flycatchers along with “someone to identify them”. At the moment “someone to identify them” was spoken I saw Greg Moyers approaching. That wish for “someone to identify them” was immediately answered!

Blue Jay, Red-bellied Woodpecker, three “Northern birds”: Mockingbird, Flicker, and Cardinal along with Carolina Wren, Mourning Dove and American Robin were the first to be seen or heard. Initially the walk was somewhat quiet as we moved along the northwest corner. Then as we proceeded south along the golf course boundary we found Gray Catbird, American Redstart and Cedar Waxwing. A female Rose-breasted Grosbeak moved about in the treetops with the waxwings. A Great Blue Heron made its graceful glide over the trail and shortly thereafter a Cooper’s Hawk circled once or twice overhead. Where are the Broad-winged Hawks?

We reached the “still to be named” concrete slab about 9:20 AM. Some got fleeting glimpses of a warbler sporting rich yellow. It remained a mystery bird of the day.

Our large group, as it often does, dispersed into smaller flocks as we sought out the movement and bird song that beckoned us in varied directions. As we walked up the slight grade, some saw a Brown Thrasher down low, close to the trail. Others, a few hundred feet up the trail, saw Black-throated Green and Red-eyed Vireo along with the Eastern Wood Pewee. The Pewee gave us all a good show as it flitted from its bare branch perch and snared insects several times.

Carolina Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, and American Goldfinch brought our sightings to 22. An Eastern Towhee called and was seen. Then about 9:45 AM a Bald Eagle circled overhead. The sunlight and blue sky gave it a truly majestic appearance. We reached the fork in the trail near the “now-a-memory log cabin” site. By 10 AM there were 10 birders remaining. We were now along the bike trail. Randy Cline, dependable advance scout, was about a quarter mile ahead of us and picked up Song Sparrow and Chipping Sparrow. Black and Turkey Vultures made appearances on high. An American Kestrel presented itself in its standard balancing act on the top of a cedar tree in the field south of the bike trail. European Starlings, Field Sparrow, American Crow, and Downy Woodpecker pushed our total to 33 species by 10:30 AM.

Greg left the group for work around 10 and he later reported that he spotted Hairy Woodpecker, Common Grackle and Magnolia, Tennessee, and Parula Warblers before he reached the parking lot. That put the mornings count to 38 species. The walk concluded about 11:00 AM.

In addition to the species seen on 22 September, our 12 September walk included seven more species. Red-shouldered Hawk, Fish Crow, White-breasted Nuthatch, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, House Wren, Black-and-white Warbler along with the exciting exclamation point of that day, a Sora!

Come join us in October in Hillandale Park.

Rockfish Gap Hawk Watch- We've had many Club members enjoying the spectacle of Broad-winged Hawk migration through September; as of October 4, 28461 have been counted!! Other to-date species counts are 595 Sharp-shinned Hawks and 167 Bald Eagles.

BIRD SIGHTINGS

Greg Moyers reported a **Wilson's Warbler** at Hillandale Park on Sept. 2. Randy Cline reported another, or perhaps the same (?), **Wilson's** on Sept. 6.

Diane Lepkowski reported a **Cliff Swallow** at Silver Lake on Sept. 4.

Matt Gingerich reported an **Olive-sided Flycatcher** at Hillandale Park on Sept. 5.

Matt Gingerich reported two **Stilt Sandpipers**, along with the continuing **Sanderling**, at the Broadway Wastewater Plant on Sept. 8. Matt reported an **American Golden-Plover** and a **Baird's Sandpiper**, along with the continuing Stilt Sandpiper, at the same location on Sept. 17.

Greg Moyers reported a likely **Mourning Warbler** while birding at Hone Quarry with Diane Lepkowski on Sept. 10. The warbler had prominent eye arcs reminiscent of MacGillivray's Warbler. Eye arcs are occasionally seen on Mourning Warblers, which is the much more likely species in our area.

Mike Donaldson spotted an immature **Sora** on the Friendly City Trail during the RBC Hillandale walk on Sept. 12. Mike spotted the bird in the grasses along the fence row and was able to get pictures.

Diane Lepkowski reported four **Wild Turkeys** along Port Republic Rd on Sept. 17.

Greg Moyers reported a **Yellow-bellied Flycatcher** at Hillandale Park on Sept. 19.

William Leigh reported a **White-rumped Sandpiper** at the Broadway Wastewater Plant on Sept. 19. This bird, along with the **Baird's Sandpiper**, continues to be reported as of Oct. 3.

Mike Smith's yard sightings at his place near Elkton include **Magnolia** and **Black-throated Green Warblers** on Sept. 20, **Northern Parula**, **Cape May Warbler**, and first-of-season **Ruby-crowned Kinglet** on Sept. 30, and first-of-season **White-throated Sparrow** and new late record **Ruby-throated Hummingbird** on Oct. 1.

Cory Taylor reported an **Olive-sided Flycatcher** and a **Yellow-bellied Flycatcher** at Paul State Forest on Sept. 21.

Matt Gingerich relayed a report of two **Connecticut Warblers** at a campground just beyond Switzer Lake on Sept. 21.

Cory Taylor reported an immature **Golden Eagle** flying over the Broadway Wastewater Plant on Sept. 22.

Greg Moyers reported a **Philadelphia Vireo**, a **Great Horned Owl**, and numerous warblers at Hillandale Park during the remnants of Tropical Storm Ophelia on Sept. 23.

Mike Donaldson reported a **Lincoln's Sparrow** at Hone Quarry on Sept. 23.

Herb Myers had his first-of-season **Dark-eyed Junco** visit his feeder in Keezletown on Sept. 23.

Diane Holsinger reported two **Rose-breasted Grosbeaks** at her feeder in Timberville on Sept. 24.

Greg Moyers reported two **Gray-cheeked Thrushes**, **Swainson's Thrushes**, **Veery**, **White-eyed Vireo**, and 10 warbler species at Paul State Forest on Oct. 1. It was a 13-warbler day for Greg as he and Randy Cline reported **Nashville**, **Bay-breasted**, and **Yellow-rumped Warblers** earlier that morning at Hillandale Park. On the way to Paul Forest, Greg spotted six **Eurasian Collared-Doves** on the wires along Ottobine Rd near Montezuma.

Diane Lepkowski reported a **Swainson's Thrush** at her place near Harrisonburg and **Palm** and **Magnolia Warblers** at Lake Shenandoah on Oct. 1. On Sept 30, at the Lake, Diane and Dave Wendelken reported Tennessee, Black-throated Green and Black-and-white Warblers. Sadly, Diane's photos of the B&W showed a significant bill deformity (too long and crossed at the end.)

Cory Taylor reported and photographed a **Marsh Wren** at Silver Lake on Oct. 2. On Oct. 3, Cory reported a **Sanderling** and the continuing **White-rumped** and **Baird's Sandpipers** at the Broadway Wastewater Plant. The same day, Cory reported a **Clay-colored Sparrow** at his place in Singers Glen.

Diane Lepkowski reported over 400 **Chimney Swifts** feeding over Lake Shenandoah at sunrise on Oct. 3. Diane also reported returning **White-throated Sparrows** and a **Swamp Sparrow**.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Bird Club Book Club – *Elizabeth Ihle*: Will meet via zoom on Thursday November 16th, at 6:00 PM to discuss *Halcyon Journey, In Search of the Belted Kingfisher* by Marina Richie. Upcoming selections include *A World on the Wing* by Scott Weidensaul (Dec & Jan) and *Creatures of the Kingdom*, by James Michener (Feb). Last month's book, which everyone enjoyed immensely, was *The Owl Papers (1982)* by Jonathan Maslow. It's out-of-print, but readily available used. The Club usually meets every third Thursday of the month but will skip October. If interested in joining us, email Elizabeth Ihle at elizaihle@gmail.com.

Newly printed copies of *Birds of Rockingham County Virginia*, 2nd ed., available at October meeting (arrive early)

These copies from the second printing of the second edition of the book are identical to those of the first, with the same high-quality paper and sharp printing. This beautiful, informative book 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.)

We're pleased to announce a discount (below-cost) price of \$27.50 for current RBC members. The price will be \$30.00 for nonmembers, and both prices include sales tax. Sales will begin at 6:45 pm and will be by **cash or check only**.

Books may also be ordered by mail by downloading an order form at <https://rockinghambirdclub.com/birds-of-rockingham-county/>.

SECRETARY NEEDED

Our club needs a secretary as soon as possible! The Secretary's duties are primarily to take notes and transcribe the minutes of our monthly Club meetings and Executive Committee meetings (3 per year). As an officer of the Club, the secretary is a voting member of the Executive Committee and thus helps shape Club activities, policies, and initiatives.

Please contact Mike Donaldson (mike.donaldson@outlook.com) or any of our Executive Committee members if you are interested, or know someone else who may be interested, in helping the club in this important role.

TREASURER'S REPORT – *Audrey Shenk, Treasurer*

Important! To keep your membership in good standing, renew before **November 9**. 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 2023 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 Audit Volunteers Needed

If you can pay your own bills and balance a checkbook, this opportunity is for you! Our Club Bylaws (Article III, Section 5) state “. . . The club account shall be presented for audit once each year.”

We need a couple of non-Board Members to inspect our Treasurer’s records for 7/1/2022 through 6/30/2023. Please contact Treasurer, Audrey Shenk (ajshenk@gmail.com) ASAP. This is a short-term, one-time commitment.

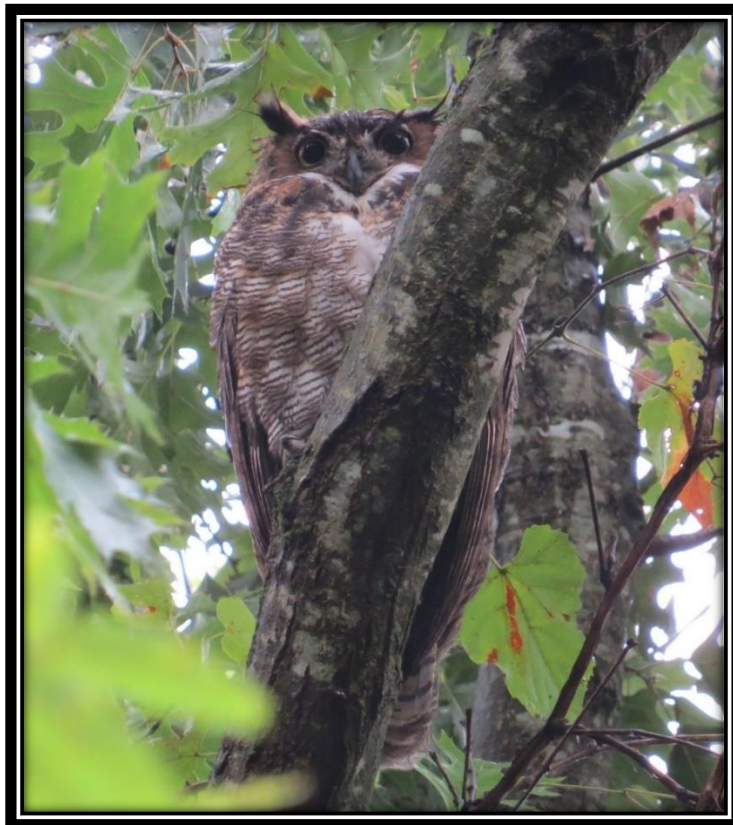
RBC Bird Seed Sale – *Kathy Byers*

Thank you to those that have already purchased bird seed. We are accepting orders through Thursday, October 12. If you have not received an order form, you can find it on the RBC website or contact Kathy Byers. Seed Pick Up will be **Saturday November 11, 8:00am-1:00pm** at the Poultry Exhibit Building at the Rockingham Fairgrounds, 4808 S Valley Pike, Harrisonburg, VA.

Contact Kathy Byers at kkbyers77@gmail.com or 540-820-6517 for more information or if you would like to help at the Fairgrounds.

Christmas Bird Count – *Bill Benish*

Please mark your calendar for Saturday, December 16, for this year’s Christmas Bird Count. If you may be able to join, contact Bill Benish at wcbenish@gmail.com or 540.908.7336.



Great Horned Owl – Hillendale Park, Sept 23, 2023

Photo credit: Greg Moyers



Norther Rough-winged Swallow – Happy Valley Rd, Keezletown
Photo credit: Herb Myers



Cape May Warbler checking out bird feeders.
Photo credit: Diane Lepkowski

Rockingham Bird Club
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Bridgewater, VA 22812



PRESIDENT: Mike Donaldson

VICE PRESIDENT: PROGRAMS – Kathy Byers

VICE PRESIDENT: FIELD TRIPS – Diane Lepkowski

SECRETARY: VACANT

TREASURER: Audrey Shenk

MEMBERS AT LARGE: Andrew Troyer, Herb Myers

GOLDFINCH GAZETTE – Denise Hoodock

HISTORIAN: Art Fovargue

EMAIL: info@rockinghambirdclub.com

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

