



Goldfinch Gazette

The Newsletter of the Rockingham Bird Club

<https://rockinghambirdclub.com>

Volume XLVIII

Number 3

Nov 2023

DATE: Thursday, November 9, 2023

TIME: 7:00 PM

PLACE: Park View Mennonite Church, Fellowship Hall

PROGRAM: **Creating a Bird Friendly Environment at Home** presented by Scott Karr

Scott's presentation focuses on how we can support birds through offering food, water, and shelter. He will talk about the different kinds of food and how to look for quality, the variety of feeders and their respective advantages, and the kinds of boxes that can attract nesting pairs of birds to your yard. He will also provide guidance on how to tackle the most common frustrations associated with feeding the birds.

Scott is the owner of Wild Birds Unlimited in Charlottesville and serves on the Board of Ivy Creek Natural Area and River View Farm, an important natural, historical, and cultural site near his store.

FIELD TRIPS – Diane Lepkowski

Hillandale Bird Walk, Tuesday, November 14: 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 – Debbie Harrison hopes to arrange a Club visit during the second or third week of November. Please contact her early if interested in getting on the list, as the number of attendees will be limited. Email Debbie at woodshar@aol.com with your phone # and email address and whether you will have one, or at most two, in your party. She will provide further details later to those who have registered. As always, this trip is weather-dependent, and we hope it works out!

Rockfish Gap Hawk Watch (on your own) – The Hawk watch continues through November 30. November is often the best month for Golden Eagles. Some days may not have official coverage – check the website for the coverage calendar and other information: <https://www.rockfishgaphawkwatch.org/>

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

TRIP REPORTS

October Hillandale Walk – *Tom Mizell*

As I pulled out of my driveway on 10 October 2023, I could not help but to be excited as I heard a Great Horned Owl calling from the woods across the field: “hoo-h’HOO-hoo-hoo.” Absolutely nothing quite like that call. It was sunny and 38° when I arrived at Hillandale Park at 8:30 AM. Twelve members of the Rockingham Bird Club composed a wish list of 8 species: White-throated Sparrow, Cape May Warbler, Great Horned Owl, Swamp Sparrow, Blue-headed Vireo, Red-breasted Nuthatch and Yellow-bellied Sapsucker. Guess the two we saw. Our moment for safety touched on hazards of both falling and stationary (on the ground) walnuts.

In the first 20 minutes near the shelter, we gloried in observing Cedar Waxwings, American Robins, Blue Jays, Eastern Bluebirds, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Yellow-rumped Warbler and Mourning Dove.

We digressed from the usual northwest corner direction by going northeast to a fenced area next to the dirt bike trail. Here we found lots of little birds feeding and we added Carolina Chickadee and American Goldfinch.

Still in the same general area but beginning to head towards the northwest corner, we added Turkey Vulture, White-breasted Nuthatch, Tufted Titmouse and heard a Red-shouldered Hawk. The hawk gave us a special performance a bit later as it circled above the trail (where it parallels the golf course boundary) 4-5 times.

Mike Donaldson spotted a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker as the first wish list bird of the day. It was a crowd-pleaser too -- perching atop a snag in clear view. (See Richard Whelden’s photo on page 6.)

Between the northwest corner and the fork near the old cabin site we enjoyed Carolina Wren, Brown Thrasher, Downy Woodpecker, Eastern Towhee, Northern Cardinal, Gray Catbird, and a White-throated Sparrow (which was our second wish list bird sighting). Randy Cline spotted a Ruby-crowned Kinglet. Species total at 23.

A hotspot between the fork and the Bike Trail caused us to linger for about 20 minutes. House Finch, Tennessee Warbler, American Crow, Scarlet Tanager, Hairy Woodpecker, Eastern Phoebe and Pileated Woodpecker made appearances.

The temperature was a comfortable 53 degrees when we arrived at the Bike Trail at 10:20 AM. Eight birders remained. By the time we arrived at the southwest corner we added Black Vulture, Northern Mockingbird, and White-crowned Sparrow. A Palm Warbler treated us to multiple feeding flights at about 10:45 AM. I left at 11:00 AM, but the remaining birders continued until about 11:30. Fish Crow and Field Sparrow pushed our species to 36.

My goodness the year has flown! Please join us in November. We may see a Turkey!

BIRD SIGHTINGS

Herb Myers heard a pair of **Great Horned Owls** dueting at his place in Keezletown on Oct. 3. Herb also reported that he still had **Ruby-throated Hummingbirds** visiting his feeder on the same date.

Mike Smith had two **Cape May Warblers** in his yard near Elkton on Oct. 6.

Sharon and Jay Landis reported **Red-headed Woodpeckers, Winter Wren, Purple Finches, Swamp Sparrow,** and **Yellow-rumped Warblers,** among others, at their place on Oct. 20.

The Broadway Wastewater Treatment Plant has been a hotbed of activity over the past month. Highlights included thousands of swallows, including **Bank, Cliff,** and reports of two or more **Cave Swallows** on 10/21. Cory Taylor reported the continuing **White-rumped Sandpiper** and **Baird's Sandpiper** on Oct. 8. William Leigh reported the continuing **Stilt Sandpiper** on Oct. 11. **Pectoral Sandpipers, Semipalmated Sandpipers,** and **Lesser Yellowlegs** were also routinely reported through the middle of October. Waterfowl numbers are also increasing, with early reports of two **Snow Geese** and four **Northern Pintails** on Oct. 18. Later that day, Diane Holsinger reported a pair of **Canvasbacks** and Greg Moyers added a female **Redhead.** Huck Hutchens reported two **Bonaparte's Gulls** on Oct. 23 and William Leigh reported two **Peregrine Falcons** and a **Stilt Sandpiper** on Oct. 27.

Diane Holsinger reported an **American Golden-Plover** on Weavers Rd on Oct. 9.

Diane Lepkowski and Dave Wendelken reported a **Marsh Wren** at Lake Shenandoah on Oct. 12. Dave reported the bird again the following day.

Allen Lerner reported four **American Golden-Plovers** at the Shenandoah Valley Produce Auction fields on Lumber Mill Rd on Oct. 14. Greg Moyers reported 31 **American Golden-Plovers** along W. Dry River Rd at the intersection with Lumber Mill Rd on Oct. 16.

Greg Moyers found an **Orange-crowned Warbler** feeding with a group of **Ruby-crowned Kinglets** at Hillandale Park on Oct. 15.

Peter Norment reported an early **American Tree Sparrow** at Slate Lick Fields on Oct. 15.

A **Bonaparte's Gull** was reported at Silver Lake on Oct. 22.

Cory Taylor reported a **Golden Eagle** on Turleytown Rd on Oct. 24.

Photos of what appears to be a **Northern Saw-whet Owl** were obtained by a non-birder while she was walking in Fulks Run on Oct. 26. The bird flew across the path in front of her and perched in a nearby tree.

Greg Moyers reported **Pine Siskins, Lincoln's Sparrow, Blue-headed Vireo,** and **Ruffed Grouse** at Hone Quarry on Oct. 28.

Diane Lepkowski has observed at least two "Zig"-banded, returning **White-throated Sparrows** in her yard just outside Harrisonburg as of Oct 30, the first seen on Oct. 27.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Bird Club Book Club – Maureen Gallagher-McLeod: The BCBC 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. Anyone is welcome to join a book discussion if the month's selection is of interest to you. We maintain a list of nature-related books and welcome suggestions for future reading. We meet using Zoom every third Thursday of the month. 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 November meeting (arrive early)

The second printing of the book is identical to the first, with the same high-quality paper and sharp printing. This beautiful, informative book contains accounts for each of 314 reported species and includes more than 90 crisp, color photos. The book follows the format of Editor Clair Mellinger's 1998 first edition and is 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, detailing access 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 are pleased to announce a discount (below-cost) price of \$27.50 for current RBC members. The non-member price is \$30. 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://rocking-hambirdclub.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 on or 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 Bird Seed Sale News – *Kathy Byers*

We are so very pleased with the amount of support for the seed sale this year. Thank you!

Please remember that Pick Up Day is **Saturday November 11, 9:00 am-1:00 pm** at the Poultry Exhibit building at the Rockingham County Fairgrounds, 4808 S Valley Pike, Harrisonburg, Va. Please follow the RBC signs and drive up for curbside service! You will enter Gate 5 and exit through Gate 4.

Kathy Byers will email or call the wonderful folks that volunteered to help at the fairgrounds approximately a week before November 11.

Contact Kathy (kkbyers77@gmail.com or 540-820-6517) for questions or assistance.

Christmas Bird Count (CBC) – *Bill Benish*

The CBC is scheduled for **Saturday, December 16, 2023**. We are fortunate to again have excellent field party leaders lined up. Some parties are full, and a few leaders may need assistance. My hope is that we can accommodate everyone who signs up expressing interest in joining. As we continue to match leaders with as many participants as possible, please contact me if you want to be on a list in case any spaces remain or become open. Some years we’ve had to postpone due to the weather, which can change availability for people around holiday times.

If you live within the boundary of our circle, please let me know if you may be able to contribute by watching birds at your home. There is always room for Feeder Watchers. It is important for you to contact me in advance in order for us to incorporate your count data.

Contact details: VARC CBC Compiler - Bill Benish wcbenish@gmail.com.

Virginia Society of Ornithology (VSO)

Many of us are already VSO members and appreciate the organization’s conservation efforts and the many membership benefits. These benefits include the VSO’s ever-popular State-wide field trips, which are free to members, along with several informative publications.

The Rockingham Bird Club is a member chapter of the VSO and has been a strong supporter of the

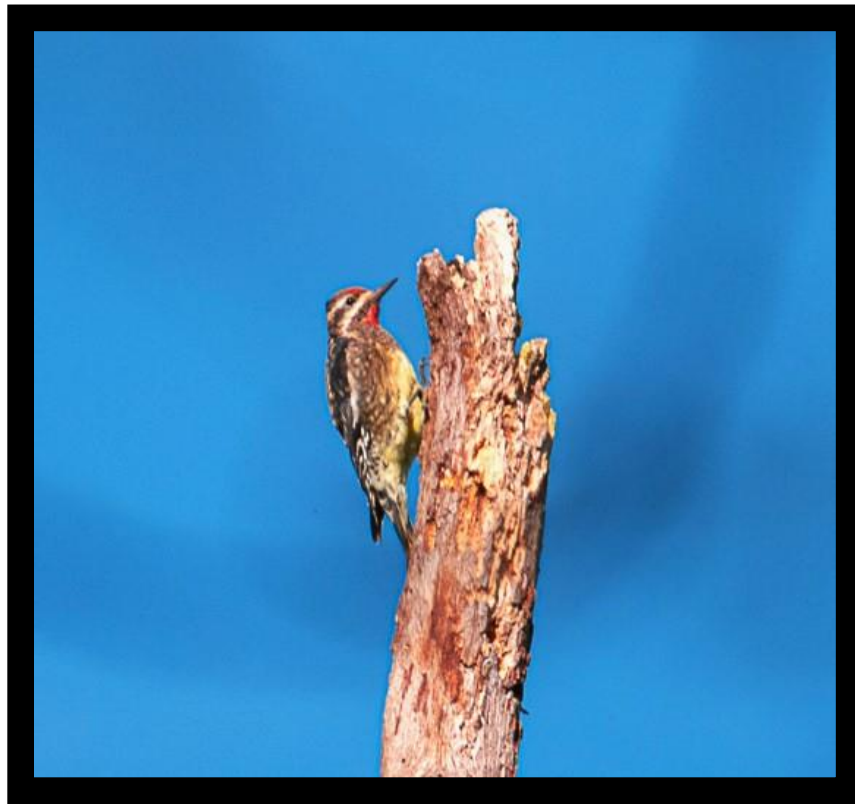
Organization's conservation work over the years. This has included our RBC organizing and hosting the VSO's annual meeting in 2011 and assisting again with the next Harrisonburg-based meeting in 2018.

Most recently, the RBC committed to supporting the upcoming, VSO-sponsored publication of the 2nd Virginia Breeding Bird Atlas by donating to the "Sponsor-a-species" fundraiser. The RBC first committed to sponsoring our "mascot" species, the American Goldfinch. Then last year, the Club joined with Diane Lepkowski to sponsor the Dark-eyed Junco in honor/memory of our beloved Charles Ziegenfus, who had contributed endless hours and efforts to research on the species.

- **Learn** about the VSO here – the mission, activities, conservation efforts and more: <https://www.virginiabirds.org/>
- **Join!** The benefits are awesome!
- **Consider sponsoring a species** or otherwise donating to the VSO for the publication of the 2nd Breeding Bird Atlas! (Each species will have just one sponsor, which can be in honor or memory of someone if you wish. With your permission, you (and honoree if applicable) will be acknowledged with the species account on the website. See available species and more information here: <https://www.virginiabirds.org/species-selection>

Diane Lepkowski – your RBC Vice-president of Field Trips and VSO President

Side note: Sergio Harding, VA Department of Wildlife Resources, our October presenter, requested the RBC direct his speaker honorarium as a donation to the 2nd VA Breeding Bird Atlas.



Yellow-bellied Sapsucker – Hillendale Park, Oct 10, 2023

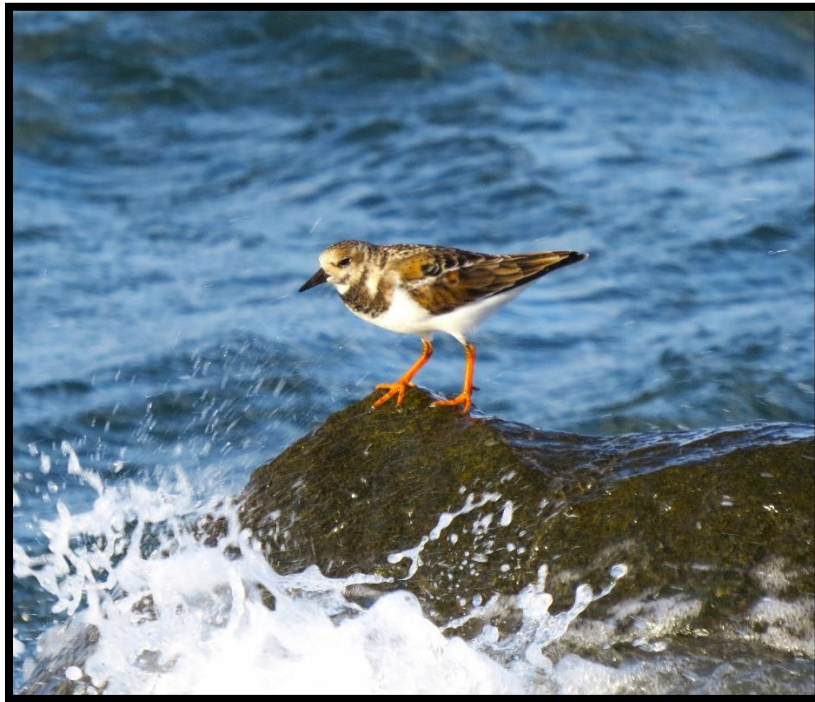
Photo credit: Richard Whelden



Nashville Warbler – Harrisonburg, Oct 25, 2023
Photo credit: Art Fovargue



Hermit Thrush – Hillandale Park, Oct 15, 2023
Photo credit: Mike Donaldson



Ruddy Turnstone – Indian River Inlet, Delaware, Oct 21, 2023
Photo credit: Herb Myers

Rockingham Bird Club
9 Louise Drive
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>

