



Goldfinch Gazette

The Newsletter of the Rockingham Bird Club

<https://rockinghambirdclub.com>

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Number 7

Mar 2024

DATE: Thursday, March 14, 2024

TIME: 7:00 PM

PLACE: Park View Mennonite Church, Fellowship Hall

PROGRAM: **Attracting Birds with Water** presented by Bob Schamerhorn

Birds, like all other animals, prefer environments that meet ALL their basic survival needs: food, shelter, and water. They depend on water for hydration, to maintain body temperature, and to condition their feathers for flight. Having a consistent, reliable, clean running water source in a garden will attract a greater assortment of birds than ever before. Each season throughout the year brings varying species and changed plumages. In one Richmond backyard alone, a single birdbath HAS ATTRACTED OVER 80 DIFFERENT SPECIES! This highly favored multimedia program presents proof of that diversity. Enjoy the view as the birds' drink, bathe, and splash in the simple water feature. Includes informative stories from thousands of hours of observation, displayed with award winning photography, supplemented with bird songs, and HD video clips. The program also reveals the bird fountain's simple design and a parts list, plus demonstrates step-by-step how to install one yourself. Come see how a little water can greatly improve both your garden and your enjoyment of nature, right in your own backyard.

Bob Schamerhorn is a three-time National Award-Winning Nature Photographer from Richmond, VA. Bob's photography has recently received three National Awards, along with numerous other recognitions from juried art shows and photography contests. His fine art nature photography is regularly exhibited at art festivals throughout the mid-Atlantic and shared through education programs at various clubs. Bob's hope is to educate and inspire the conservation of nature, by capturing and sharing its beauty. He considers himself, "An enthusiast, not an expert!"

Bob will bring some of his notecards and bird bath instruction booklets which will be available for purchase with cash or credit card. Feel free to preview some of Bob's amazing work at his website: iphotobirds.com

FIELD TRIPS – *Diane Lepkowski*

Hillendale Bird Walk, Tuesday, March 12: 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.

Hillendale "Last Walk of Winter" Bird Walk, Tuesday, March 19: 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.

Madison Run / Browns Gap Fire Road (Shenandoah National Park), Woodcock Trip -- Saturday evening, March 23, with Diane Lepkowski – Join Diane under the nearly-full moon as we aim to find American Woodcock males displaying to impress the ladies! We'll meet near the parking area about 7-7:15 PM. For anyone wishing to hike the fire road first, Diane may do so & will give details to those who sign up once the date gets closer. Drive on your own or let Diane know if you wish to connect with others interested in carpooling (20-minute drive from Harrisonburg.) Park alongside the Fire Rd, an extension of Browns Gap Rd, taking care not to block it. This is at the foot of the mountain, east of Grottoes, just inside SNP, and just east of the Browns Gap Rd/Ore Bank Rd intersection. Please sign up with Diane at dianelep1@yahoo.com if you plan to attend or have questions.

Madison Run / Browns Gap Fire Road (Shenandoah National Park), Saturday April 6, with Greg Moyers – Join Greg at 8:45 AM to seek some of our earliest returning warblers and more. Targets include Louisiana Waterthrush and Pine Warblers. Other new arrivals are possible, as are lingering wintering species and our year-round Barred Owl. This is a fairly easy walk alongside a lovely creek on a well-maintained gravel fire road with just a slight incline. Expect about a 3.5-4-mile round trip. There are no restroom facilities. Bring water, and snacks if you wish. We expect to return by 12-1 PM. Please contact Greg if you have questions and to sign up (gwmoyers@msn.com or 540-434-3029) and include the number in your party and your cell phone number, along with your email in case of changes or cancellation. *See the March 23 trip listing above for directions.*

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

TRIP REPORTS

February Hillandale Walk – Tom Mizell

On Tuesday, 13 February 2024, seven folks met at the main Hillandale shelter. It was 37° and overcast. The wish list birds included Brown Creeper, Screech Owl, Eastern Bluebirds, (the specific wish was that they be “sitting still”) and Yellow-bellied Sapsucker.

This day our first 10 species included American Robins, European Starlings, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Dark-eyed Junco, Mourning Doves, Eastern Bluebird, Bluejay, Carolina Chickadee, White-breasted Nuthatch and Yellow-rumped Warbler. We added American Goldfinch, Tufted Titmouse and Canada Geese by the time we reached the NW Corner Pedestrian Bridge.

We then proceeded west along the golf course boundary and added White-throated Sparrows. At about 9:00 we got great looks at the Eastern Screech Owl in its usual tree. It's always such a treat! Northern Cardinals sang and made their flighty appearances near the concrete slab as Mallards bathed and dabbled in standing water from recent high stream flows. We soon added Song Sparrow, Northern Flicker and Carolina Wren bringing our species total to 20. A Red-shouldered Hawk called and flew over. Wonder what it was calling about?

The sun shone brightly around 9:30 and we enjoyed an active flock of Cedar Waxwings as they circled, flitted about, and perched overhead on the leafless limbs doing an impressive job of reflecting the sun. Someone said, “That's pretty crazy” as others in the group voiced their approval of the Waxwing reflection show by “Oohs and aahs.”

This day Kathy Byers was hosting her February Brunch at 10:30 so we headed to her house around 10:15. Before leaving the park we added Downy Woodpecker, American Crow, and Turkey Vulture so our total for the walk was 25 species.

We had a grand time at Kathy's. Thank you, Kathy, for hosting the group and for a great February Brunch. Thank you, Randy Cline, for your classic casserole! No one left the Byers home without enjoying excellent food and fellowship! As Randy would say. "A good time was had by all." Come join us Tuesday March 12 for another "good time" on the bird trail at Hillandale. Also, be sure to join us on March 19 for our last day of Winter walk. Yes! Spring will soon arrive.

Eagle Trip to West Virginia – Randy Cline

On February 24, three souls explored Kimsey Run and Park Hollow reservoirs. We recorded 40 total species with 9 Bald Eagles. One mature eagle was tending nest eggs, and the rest were immature birds. Catch of the day was a Brown Creeper and an American Woodcock. It started raining as we were finishing up, participants were hardy but jovial.

BIRD SIGHTINGS

Doug Ruby reported four **Eurasian Collared-Doves** at the intersection of Lumber Mill and W. Dry River Rds on Jan. 30.

Greg Moyers reported a **Short-eared Owl** on Grist Mill Rd on Jan. 31.

Mike Smith reported a **Barred Owl** near Sandy Bottom Overlook on Skyline Drive on Feb. 4.

Randy Cline reported an **Eastern Screech-Owl** at Hillandale Park on Feb. 7. The bird has been seen with regularity at the same spot where it was frequently seen last year.

Justin Carter reported a **Palm Warbler** near Cooks Creek Arboretum on Feb. 7.

Karen Shank reported seven **Red Crossbills** at the Shanks' new place southwest of Bridgewater on Feb. 8. Karen reports that the birds were at and around the feeder but only the two adult males were opening the black oil sunflower seeds.

Kathy Fovargue reported two **Peregrine Falcons** circling over the Rose's parking lot in downtown Harrisonburg on Feb. 9.

William Leigh and Dave Wendelken reported a **Peregrine Falcon** on South River Rd near Port Republic on Feb. 10 while covering their sector for the raptor and waterfowl count.

Cory Taylor reported a **Ross's Goose** at the Broadway Wastewater Plant on Feb. 15.

Mike Donaldson reported a **Great Horned Owl** using an old, Red-shouldered Hawk nest at the Edith J. Carrier Arboretum at JMU on Feb. 15. In subsequent days, a second owl was reported near the nest. By the first days of March, the adults were tending to young in the nest.

Greg Moyers reported a **Palm Warbler**, along with the continuing **Common Yellowthroat**, at Silver Lake on Feb. 19. On Feb. 24, Greg photographed a **Merlin** at the RMH Wellness Center parking lot on Feb. 24.

William Leigh reported a **Herring Gull** flying over his place in Bridgewater on Feb. 25.

Diane Holsinger reported her first-of-year **Tree Swallow** on Feb. 26.

Mike Smith reported three **Common Mergansers** on the Shenandoah River in Elkton and a **Purple Finch** at his feeder east of Elkton on Feb. 26.

Allen Lerner reported a hybrid **Eurasian x American Green-winged Teal** at the Oakwood Drive farm pond on Feb. 27. Allen reports the bird had a very thin white line at the wing and a bold white line at the flank.

Cory Taylor reported at least two **Virginia Rails**, **Wilson's Snipe**, and **Lincoln's Sparrow** at Lake Shenandoah on Feb. 28.

Greg Moyers reported 2-3 **Rusty Blackbirds** at Lake Shenandoah on Feb. 29.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

New birding competition this spring

The Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources invites you to participate in the kickoff of our inaugural statewide birding competition—The Virginia Birding Classic! The Classic will run from April 15th, 2024, through May 15th, 2024, during which time teams of birders are asked to search the public lands of Virginia for as many species as they can find in 24 hours.

All registration proceeds will benefit the Virginia Wildlife Grant Program, which connects youth to the outdoors. Registration opens on March 1, 2024, and closes April 1, 2024. Learn more by visiting <http://dwr.virginia.gov/virginia-birding-classic>.

Volunteers sought for Nominating Committee

The Club will be holding its annual elections this May, and it is the duty of the Executive Committee to name a Nominating Committee of three members at the Club's March meeting. The Nominating Committee will consist of immediate past president Mike Donaldson as chair and two volunteer Club members. The committee 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](#). Please help the Club move forward by volunteering to serve on the Nominating Committee. To do so, or to express your interest in one of the leadership positions, please contact Mike Donaldson at mike.donaldson@outlook.com. You may also express your interest in person at the March meeting.

Birds of Rockingham County Virginia, 2nd ed., for sale at March meeting

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://rockinghambirdclub.com/birds-of-rockingham-county/>.

Bird Club Book Club – Maureen Gallagher-McLeod

The BCBC will meet via Zoom on Thursday, March 21, 2024, at 6:00 PM to discuss the book *In Defense of Plants* by Matt Candelas. In April, we will discuss *What An Owl Knows: The New Science of the World's Most Enigmatic Birds* by Jennifer Ackerman. If a particular month's book selection is of interest to you, feel free to join that month's discussion. We maintain a list of nature-related books and welcome suggestions for future reading. The BCBC meets, usually using Zoom, on every third Thursday of the month. If interested in joining us, email Elizabeth Ihle at elizaihle@gmail.com

Bluebird Trail at Fairgrounds – Joy Beaman

It's time to think of our Rockingham County Fairgrounds Bluebird Trail. We would love to have more monitors! It only requires about 1 hour per month, beginning April thru July. If interested contact Joy Beaman at jybeaman@gmail.com.

The Virginia Osprey Festival – Joanie Millward, President, Virginia Osprey Foundation

The Virginia Osprey Foundation, based in Colonial Beach, Virginia, will host the 6th Annual Virginia Osprey Festival in Colonial Beach on April 13, 2024 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Town Hill, Colonial Beach, located on the beautiful Potomac River. The festival celebrates the return of its Osprey from their wintering grounds in South America. The festival will offer educational presentations for young and old alike. Our keynote speaker is Dr. Paul Spitzer, a Conservation Biologist who earned his degree from Cornell University. Among our many exhibitors we are proud to host the Virginia Institute of Marine Science, Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources, Potomac Riverkeepers, and Rappahannock River Valley National Wildlife Refuge, and the Center for Conservation Biology. We will also have food vendors, artisans and a “nestlings’ corner” with fun and educational activities for children. Whether you choose a trolley ride or a golf cart tour, guides will show you the many nests that make up our “Osprey Garden” in Colonial Beach. You will also have an opportunity to be up close and personal with Vega, the Turkey Vulture and other wildlife ambassadors. Treat yourself to a variety of delicious food and shop at our many talented artisan booths. There is something for everyone. On Sunday, there will be guided bird walks by the Northern Neck Audubon Society and the Northern Neck Master Naturalists, and Colonial Beach Parks and Recreation will host “Fly Like an Osprey” kite flying on the beach. Please visit our website for the most up to date news about our festival and other activities we are involved in! <https://www.virginiaospreyfoundation.org>. You can check out our osprey nest cam at <https://www.youtube.com/@virginiaospreyfoundation>. The Virginia Osprey Foundation is a non-profit 501 (c)(3) organization.



Great Horned Owl – Edith J. Carrier Arboretum, Harrisonburg
Photo credit: Rich Whelden





Great Horned Owllet in nest – Edith J. Carrier Arboretum, Harrisonburg
Photo credit: Rich Whelden



Tundra Swans – Grottoes Town Park
Photo credit: Diane Lepkowski

Rockingham Bird Club
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PRESIDENT: Mike Donaldson

VICE PRESIDENT: PROGRAMS – Kathy Byers

VICE PRESIDENT: FIELD TRIPS – Diane Lepkowski

SECRETARY: Allie Sawyer

TREASURER: Audrey Shenk

MEMBERS AT LARGE: Andrew Troyer, Herb Myers

GOLDFINCH GAZETTE – Denise Hoodock

HISTORIAN: Art Fovargue

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