



# Goldfinch Gazette

## The Newsletter of the Rockingham Bird Club

<https://rockinghambirdclub.com>

Volume XLVIII

Number 9

May 2024

DATE: Thursday, May 9, 2024

TIME: 7:00 PM

PLACE: Park View Mennonite Church, Fellowship Hall

PROGRAM: **Birds of England and Scotland** presented by Dr. Marshall Faintich

In addition to the historical and cultural value of visiting the United Kingdom, many Eurasian bird species can be seen there. Dr. Faintich has made seven trips to England/Scotland between April 2008 and May 2017. This presentation covers bird species that can be seen in suburban London and at the London Wetlands Centre, as well as in the Scottish Highlands. His UK bird list includes 101 species.

Dr. Faintich is a past birding activity manager for the Rockfish Valley Trail and the author of "A Photographic Guide to the Birds of Wintergreen." His wildlife photos have appeared in newspapers, magazines, web sites, government reports and presentations, and on wildlife and birding trail signs in Virginia and Maryland. His own web site contains more than 8,000 of his wildlife photos and gets about 3 million hits per year from visitors in more than 80 countries around the world.

His work history includes satellite system studies, astrodynamics, remote sensing, digital cartography, and digital information analysis. He was a member of several NASA working groups and is a past National Director of the American Cartographic Association. He is the author of more than sixty technical papers, several magazine articles, and two books.

### FIELD TRIPS – *Diane Lepkowski*

**Paul State Forest, Saturday, May 11:** Join Greg Moyers at this hotspot, west of Dayton, for warblers and other spring migrants. This is about four miles round-trip over hilly terrain with no facilities. Parking is limited and carpooling is encouraged. Please DO NOT block the gate. Meet at the parking area at 8:15 AM. Please contact Greg with questions and to sign up if you plan to attend (include email, phone number, number in your party) at [gwmoyers@msn.com](mailto:gwmoyers@msn.com) or 540-434-3029.

**Hillandale Bird Walk, Tuesday, May 14:** We will meet at Shelter 12 at 8:30 AM. Contact Tom Mizell at [ztomvaz@cs.com](mailto:ztomvaz@cs.com) or 540-810-5898, or Kathy Byers at [kkbyers77@gmail.com](mailto:kkbyers77@gmail.com) or 540-820-6517 for questions or more info.

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

# TRIP REPORTS

## Madison Run / Browns Gap Fire Road – *Greg Moyers*

Seven members of the RBC attended the walk at Madison Run Fire Rd on April 6. After hearing, but not seeing, Louisiana Waterthrushes at a couple of spots along the walk, we were finally rewarded with great looks at a waterthrush feeding on a rock in the stream at close range. Of course, it did require a bit of off-trail work to get this nice view! Near our turn-around point, the group got looks at a Hermit Thrush. Other notable sightings included Pine Warbler and Yellow-bellied Sapsucker. On the way back down the path, Mike Donaldson spotted a Blue-headed Vireo working on a nest. Soon we got on a second Blue-headed Vireo and watched the pair working on the nest for several minutes. While we netted only 17 species, quality over quantity was the order of day on this trip!

## April Hillandale Walk – *Tom Mizell*

The sky was blue, and the temperature was 51° as we gathered for our 9 April Hillandale Park walk. That's about 20° warmer than our "last day of Winter" 19 March walk. The wish list for 12 folks included: Hummingbird, White-crowned Sparrow, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Chimney Swift, and Screech Owl. We later found two of them.

Eighteen species showed up in the first 23 minutes: American Robin, European Starling, Northern Flicker, Tufted Titmouse, Northern Cardinal, Blue Jay, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Carolina Chickadee, Downy Woodpecker, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Dark-eyed Junco, and Red-tailed Hawk. We all enjoyed a Mourning Dove pair in the cedar tree as one sat on the nest and the other sat on an adjacent branch.

At about 8:53 Linda Halpern spotted a Blue-gray Gnatcatcher our "first sighted" wish list bird. A Hermit Thrush was seen by some of us while a part of our group lingered to enjoy a group of Downy Woodpeckers. A Blue-headed Vireo appeared. As we drew near the Northwest corner pedestrian bridge, we spent a great deal of time looking along the stream channel as birds were plentiful and actively bathing and feeding. We all got very good looks and thoroughly enjoyed the Ruby-crowned Kinglet show. Accompanying birds were American Goldfinches, White-throated Sparrows, and Cedar Waxwings. We spent 15+ minutes watching the stream channel bird activity. For many of us this spot (near the gate just east of the pedestrian bridge) likely became a favorite spot. Then more fun as a Pileated Woodpecker did its bouncy flight through this area. For future viewing opportunities find the manhole structure numbered 1019 near the stream. This active area held our attention for a good while and elicited much active tweeting by the birders. Conversation included:

"Oh, I see his red."

"Is that a molting Goldfinch?" And

"There is a bird up there, apparently!"

We have all been in those conversations, haven't we? We enjoyed Purple Finches. We did not enjoy Brown-headed Cowbirds. A Blue Jay nest was spotted. Then both the song of a Carolina Wren along with Canada Goose calls resonated loudly.

Our friend Screech did not make an appearance today. In the general area around the concrete slab, we added Eastern Towhee, Song Sparrow, Field Sparrow, Fish Crow, and Turkey Vulture. A Brown Thrasher entertained us at the fork in the trail near the old cabin site. Bill Benish spotted a female Cardinal carrying nesting material. This raised our nest related sightings to three.

We were on the bike trail around 10:12 AM and proceeded toward the school. Cooper's Hawk, Black Vulture, Common Grackles, Eastern Meadowlark, American Crow, Northern Mockingbird and

Chipping Sparrow were seen. Some of us had to leave and on the way out, Bob Eggleston and I added White-breasted Nuthatch around 10:50 AM. Mike Donaldson and Bill Benish continued the search and added White-crowned Sparrow, our second wish list bird, House Sparrow and Tree Swallow for a total species count of 42. Today's anonymous Quote: "It was the first time I've really gotten to see up close and, for an extended period of time, a Ruby-crowned Kinglet so I could really, really look at him and see everything that there is to see about him including the ruby crown". We will walk again on May 14 at Hillandale Park. Please join us! What might you see?

## BIRD SIGHTINGS

Mike Smith has had many good birds in and around his place east of Elkton including **Louisiana Waterthrush**, **Ruby-crowned Kinglet**, and **Purple Finches** on April 1, **Fox Sparrow** and **Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers** on April 3, **Ruby-throated Hummingbird** on April 19, and **Rose-breasted Grosbeak**, **Blue-headed Vireo**, and **Pine Siskin** on April 26.

Cory Taylor reported two **Common Loons**, 11 female **Red-breasted Mergansers**, **Double-crested Cormorant**, **Horned Grebe**, and **Bonaparte's** and **Ring-billed Gulls** at the Broadway Wastewater Plant on April 2. On the same date, Diane Lepkowski reported a **Common Loon** and **Double-crested Cormorant** at Lake Shenandoah and Justin Carter had a **Bonaparte's Gull** at Leonard's Pond. Justin also reported a **Bonaparte's Gull** at Lake Shenandoah the following day.

Tom Mizell reported an early **Northern Waterthrush** in the little backwater area at Wildwood Park on April 4.

There were multiple reports of a **Great Egret** at Lake Shenandoah on April 4. Justin Carter had a fly-over egret at the same location on April 11.

Randy Cline reported **Blue-winged Teal** at the Heritage Oaks Golf Course Pond, viewable from Hillandale Park, on April 12.

Ben Spory reported seven **Bonaparte's Gulls** and two **Spotted Sandpipers** at Silver Lake on April 15. He also spotted a **Black-crowned Night-Heron** at the stream near Silver Lake.

Diane Lepkowski reported **Greater Yellowlegs** and **Solitary Sandpiper** at Nazarene Church Rd Wetland on April 15.

Bob Eggleston reported an **Osprey** and **Spotted Sandpiper** at Silver Lake on April 16.

Diane Lepkowski reported that the **Virginia Rail(s)** at Lake Shenandoah were still present on April 16. Justin Carter reported **Red-headed Woodpecker** and **Great Egret** at the lake on April 18.

Sharon Landis reported a **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** coming to her feeder at the Landis' farm in Linville on April 19.

Diane Lepkowski reported **Eastern Whip-Poor-Wills** calling along Ore Bank Rd and a singing **Wood Thrush** at Deep Run Ponds on April 19.

Ken Ranck reported **Yellow-throated Warblers** and **Warbling Vireos** along North River near the railroad bridge east of Mt. Crawford on April 20.

Greg Moyers and Diane Lepkowski reported four **Forster's Terns**, **Ring-billed Gulls**, **Lesser Yellowlegs**, and a **Northern Harrier** at Silver Lake on April 20. Greg and Diane reported **Pine Siskins**, **Yellow-throated Vireo**, and several warblers, including **Blackburnian**, **Hooded**, **Black-and-White**, **American Redstart**, **Northern Parula**, **Worm-eating**, **Pine**, and **Prairie** along Briery Branch Rd later that morning.

Herb Myers reported **Louisiana Waterthrush** at the parking area for the Western Slope of Massanutten Mtn on April 20. Herb got his first **Ruby-throated Hummingbird** of the year at his place in Keezletown on April 22 and heard his first **Wood Thrush** of the year on April 23.

Diane Lepkowski reported **Yellow Warbler** and **Orchard Oriole** along the North River east of Mt. Crawford on April 23.

William Leigh reported **Greater** and **Lesser Yellowlegs**, **Solitary Sandpiper**, and **Blue-winged Teal** at Nazarene Church Rd Wetland on April 24.

Mike Donaldson reported three **Forster's Terns** at Silver Lake on April 24.

Peter Norment reported a **Prairie Warbler** at his place in Harrisonburg on April 24.

Doug Ruby reported a **Great Egret**, along with **Greater** and **Lesser Yellowlegs**, **Spotted Sandpiper**, and **Wood Duck** at the Oakwood Drive farm pond near Mt. Crawford on April 24. William Leigh also reported a **Great Egret** at this location on April 27.

At the Edith J. Carrier Arboretum at JMU on April 27, Mike Donaldson and Greg Moyers reported a **Blue-winged Warbler**, Greg got looks at a singing **Tennessee Warbler**, and Greg and Diane Lepkowski spotted a **Lincoln's Sparrow**.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### Election reminder

The Club will hold its annual elections at the May meeting. The slate of six nominees will consist of the following positions:

- Officers: President, First Vice President, Second Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer (These officers serve one-year terms.)
- Member-at-large (This position has a two-year term. The Club has two Members-at-large, whose terms are staggered; one is voted on each year.)

The five current Club officers—President **Mike Donaldson**, First Vice President **Kathy Byers**, Second Vice President **Diane Lepkowski**, Secretary **Allie Sawyer**, and Treasurer **Audrey Shenk**—have all agreed to serve another term, as has Member-at-large **Herb Myers**. Therefore, this is the slate of nominees that will be presented at the May meeting.

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

## ***Birds of Rockingham County Virginia, 2nd ed., for sale at May 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/>.

## **Library Bird Watching Program – Stephani Moore Tusing**

On Monday April 8th, Rockingham County Bird Club member, Stephani Moore Tusing, led a bird watching story time at the Hawksbill Greenway in Luray. This program was launched from the Page Branch of the Massanutten Regional Library system. Stephani was accompanied by one of the story tellers from the Harrisonburg branch, Charlie Resnick. Both sang bird related songs including "Rockin' Robin", "Two Little Blackbirds" and "Old McDonald Had a Farm" (with all birds). Charlie played the banjo as the group sang along. Stephani and Charlie read three books: "Bird Watch" by Christie Matheson, "Crow, Not Crow" by Jane Yolen, and "Noisy Bird Sing Along" by John Himmelman.

After the story time, the kids did a variety of activities, including bird watching bingo, making a pair of mini binoculars, and coloring paper birds to be placed in a forest landscape. The forest landscape now hangs in the Page Public Library. Over 40 kids and adults attended the program, with enthusiastic participation. The children and adults spotted several bird species including Mallards, American Robins, American Goldfinches, Rock Pigeons, Tree Swallows, and a Great Blue Heron. Stephani and Charlie are very pleased with the success of this event, considering making it an annual library event

## **Bird Club Book Club – Maureen Gallagher-McLeod**

There will not be a book club discussion in May. The BCBC will meet via Zoom on Thursday, June 20, 2024, at 6:00 PM to discuss the book *An Immense World* by Ed Yong. In July, we will discuss *Better Living Through Birding: Notes from a Black Man in The Natural World* by Christian Cooper. 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](mailto:elizaihle@gmail.com)





Blue-winged Warbler – Paul State Forest, on April 28, 2024

Photo credit: Diane Lepkowski



Eastern Towhee – Paul State Forest, on April 24, 2024

Photo credit: Mike Donaldson

Rockingham Bird Club  
9 Louise Drive  
Bridgewater, VA 22812



**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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