



# Goldfinch Gazette

## The Newsletter of the Rockingham Bird Club

<https://rockinghambirdclub.com>

Volume XLVIII

Number 10

June 2024

DATE: Thursday, June 13, 2024

TIME: 6:00 PM

PLACE: Park View Mennonite Church, Fellowship Hall

We look forward to everyone joining us for our last meeting of the season. We will begin at **6:00 pm with a Potluck Dinner**. Please bring a dish to share. It will be helpful to have your name on all serving utensils and dishes. Iced Tea, Lemonade and water will be provided. Important Note: Park View Mennonite Church is a Nut-free Facility. Please be certain that your food does not contain nuts. Compostable plates, cups, napkins, and utensils will also be provided, but if you want to be even more green, bring your own reusable plates, cups and/or utensils. The meeting and program will begin at 7:00 pm.

**PROGRAM: Butterfly Journeys, Near & Far** presented by Mark Adams

The program will feature many of Mark's photographs from Peru, Colombia, Ghana, Thailand, and Virginia, and will explore and compare the numerous spectacular butterflies that inhabit these varied ecosystems.

Mark Adams is a professional astronomer, recently retired, who led the National Radio Astronomy Observatory's Science Communications Office for more than a decade. Mark was born in Baltimore and was raised in Maryland and Pennsylvania. He received a B.S. in astronomy from the Pennsylvania State University, then earned his Ph.D., also in astronomy, at the University of Arizona. He was the Assistant Director for West Texas Operations for the University of Texas–McDonald Observatory for a decade prior to his January 2004 move to Charlottesville.

### FIELD TRIPS – *Diane Lepkowski*

**Hillandale Bird Walk, Tuesday, June 11:** 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.

**Hillandale "Spring to Summer" Solstice Bird Walk, Thursday, June 20:** We will meet at Shelter 12\* at 4:00 PM. 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. \*Note: Summer can be a busy time in the afternoons, so if the shelter is occupied by others, we will meet in one of the many nearby parking areas.

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

# TRIP REPORTS

## **Paul State Forest – *Greg Moyers***

Fifteen members of the RBC attended the walk at Paul State Forest on May 11. The morning started out cloudy and chilly and birds were initially hard to come by. Some of the early highlights were a pair of male Scarlet Tanagers, a Wood Thrush perched along the path, a pair of Great Crested Flycatchers, Indigo Bunting, Common Yellowthroat, and Ovenbird. Meadowlarks were seen along the back stretch in the field adjacent to the path. As we made it to the top of the hill at the back of the forest, a brief song elicited an exclamation of “Kentucky Warbler!” from the trip leader. The rest of the group arrived in short order but try as we might, only one member of the group got a fleeting glimpse of the warbler. The bird briefly sang a few more times but that would be all we would get. At this point, the group split, with many heading back and a smaller group lingering.

As the smaller group started back down the hill, we heard Grasshopper Sparrows singing in the field. The sun then came out and we hit our first good group of birds, which was foraging in and around a hemlock. We added Baltimore Oriole, Black-throated Green Warbler, Blackburnian Warbler, American Redstart, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Black-and-white Warbler, Blackpoll Warbler, and Northern Parula. Continuing our walk, we heard a Yellow-billed Cuckoo and watched a Magnolia Warbler foraging in the trees above us. As we neared the parking area, we got another good group of birds. Here we added Swainson’s Thrush, Yellow-rumped Warbler, and finally got views of a pair of Bay-breasted Warblers. Some members in the larger group got a Tennessee Warbler on the way out.

What began as a slow birding morning really finished with a flurry! We ended up with approximately 56 species and 14 species of warblers.

## **May Hillandale Walk – *Tom Mizell***

Rain forecast and rain falling. No problem! Undaunted, 16 optimistic members of the Rockingham Bird Club showed up at Hillandale Park on a misty Tuesday morning on May 14, 2024. It was lightly raining as we assembled in the main shelter contemplating a walk in the rain. One of the members mentioned that 1.3 million migratory birds flew over Rockingham County the previous night. Our wish list included Blue Grosbeak, Red-eyed Vireo, Least Flycatcher, Blackpoll Warbler, Kirkland’s Warbler, any warbler and Wood Thrush. William Leigh heard a Blackpoll Warbler to the East of the main road and that was all it took to help us decide the walk was on!

Without hesitation, we headed in the direction of the warbler. We were not disappointed as we promptly found the Blackpoll Warbler, one of our wish list birds. Great Crested Flycatchers “wheeped” often from the tops of the Oaks. An America Crow called as it passed overhead. Bob Eggleston spied a Scarlet Tanager in the canopy and so we spent the first half hour trying to get good looks at the Blackpoll, the Tanager and the Great Crested. Our group was abuzz and called back to the birds with “Ooohs”, “Aahs” and other appreciative exclamations. Chimney Swifts viewed the birdy canopy from overhead, and we added American Robin, Blue Jay, Northern Cardinal, Carolina Wren, Eastern Towhee and Tufted Titmouse.

After this excellent start we headed in our usual direction to the North reaching the Pedestrian Bridge by 9:30 AM. We added Mourning Dove, American Goldfinch and Red-eyed Vireo. 14 species.

Other first-hour birds included Common Grackle, White-throated Sparrow, and Red-bellied

Woodpecker by the time we reached the concrete slab at 9:35 AM. A Wood Thrush's melodic call beckoned from across the stream.

We were soon on the Bike Trail and our species total grew with Eastern Bluebird, Indigo Bunting, Field Sparrow, European Starling, House Wren, Northern Mockingbird, Eastern Meadowlark and Chipping Sparrow. We shared the Bike Trail with a sizable class of middle school bikers as they whizzed by and reminded us of the need to be watchful and vigilant of fellow trail travelers.

Other birds included Red-tailed Hawk, Downy Woodpecker, Gray Catbird, Fish Crow, Carolina Chickadee, Northern Flicker and Eastern Meadowlark. I left the group around 11:15 AM and five birders remained.

They added Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Barn Swallow, Grasshopper Sparrow, House Finch, Eastern Kingbird, Brown-headed Cowbird, Brown Thrasher, Tree Swallow and Eastern Wood Peewee. A Cooper's Hawk appeared before I reached my van. We concluded the walk around 11:30 AM having enjoyed 43 species.

Come join us Tuesday, 11 June, 8:30 AM and Thursday, June 20, at 4:00 PM for our Summer Solstice walks at Hillandale Park!

## BIRD SIGHTINGS

Karen Shank reported a **Common Loon** flying north along the ridge line near her home west of Bridgewater on April 20.

Greg Moyers and Diane Lepkowski reported a **Blue-winged Warbler** at Paul State Forest on April 28.

Mike Smith heard an **Eastern Whip-Poor-Will** calling at his place east of Elkton on April 30. On May 1, Mike reported a **Yellow-breasted Chat** at Loft Mtn and a **Red Crossbill** at Rocky Mount Overlook on Skyline Drive.

Diane Lepkowski reported **Bobolinks**, **Pectoral Sandpiper**, and **Greater** and **Lesser Yellowlegs** at the Nazarene Church Rd Wetland on May 1.

Mike Donaldson reported a **Lincoln's Sparrow** on the Friendly City Trail in Harrisonburg on May 2.

Greg Moyers reported a **Kentucky Warbler** singing at the Edith J. Carrier Arboretum at JMU on May 2. Many birders have been able to see this bird over the past month. The bird, surprisingly, is still being reported as of May 28. Greg reported a **Wilson's Warbler** on May 4 and a **Gray-cheeked Thrush** on May 8 at the same location.

Mike Smith reported a singing **Kentucky Warbler** at the west entrance to Shenandoah National Park at the base of the mountain just off Rt. 33 on May 5. This is the same location where Mike found a Kentucky Warbler last year. Mike also reports at least six fledgling **Great Blue Herons** from the heronry at the Merck swamp south of Elkton. Mike had several yard warblers at his place east of Elkton on May 7, including **Magnolia**, **Worm-eating**, **American Redstart**, and **Louisiana Waterthrush**.

William Leigh reported a **Blackpoll Warbler** at Oakdale Park in Bridgewater on May 7. On May 9, William found a **Northern Waterthrush** at a small pond on Lambert Town Rd and a **Tennessee Warbler** at Paul State Forest.

Herb and Sarah Myers have had several good birds at their place in Keezletown, including **Scarlet Tanager**, **Baltimore Oriole**, and **Indigo Bunting**.

Ken Ranck reported an **Eastern Whip-Poor-Will** calling in the middle of the morning at Switzer Lake on May 10. Ken also reported **Cerulean Warblers** at the same location.

Matt Gingerich reported a **Black Tern** at the Broadway Wastewater Plant on May 10. Greg Moyers photographed a **Common Tern** at the same location later the same evening.

Diane Holsinger reported an **American Bittern** at the Weavers Rd pond on May 11.

Matt Gingerich and Peter Norment had several **Black-billed Cuckoos** along Flagpole Rd on Shenandoah Mtn on May 11. Matt Lott found a singing **Mourning Warbler** just below Briery Branch Gap on the same morning. This bird continues to be reported. Another **Mourning Warbler** is also being seen just below Reddish Knob in Augusta Co.

William Leigh reported five **Short-billed Dowitchers**, along with a **Red-breasted Merganser**, **Semipalmated Plovers**, **Least Sandpipers**, and a **Semipalmated Sandpiper** at the Broadway Wastewater Plant on May 12.

Greg Moyers and Dave Wendelken reported a **Gray-cheeked Thrush** at Hillandale Park on May 12.

Mike Smith reported 18 **Red Crossbills** on Rt. 33 at the state line on May 13.

Cory Taylor reported a **Cerulean Warbler** on Briery Branch Rd on May 13.

Janelle Donaldson reported three **White-rumped Sandpipers** at Leonard's Pond on 5/16.

Mike Donaldson reported two **Dunlins** at the Weavers Rd pond on May 18.

Greg Moyers reported a **Least Flycatcher** on Flagpole Rd on May 19.

Cory Taylor reported a singing **Mourning Warbler** at the Edith J. Carrier Arboretum on May 21.

James Fox reported two **Black Terns** at the Broadway Wastewater Plant on May 29.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### **Donation to the Virginia Society of Ornithology's fund for the 2nd Breeding Bird Atlas, in honor of the Rockingham Bird Club – *Diane Lepkowski***

Thank you to Bob Ake of the Cape Henry Audubon Society for his generous donation to the Virginia Society of Ornithology for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Virginia Breeding Bird Atlas, in honor of the Rockingham Bird Club! This was in appreciation for our help with planning and leading his group's field trip to Harrisonburg May 3-5.

In March, Bob contacted Greg Moyers and me, seeking field trip advice for a Cape Henry trip to "our" mountains. Bob had joined us here in Harrisonburg for the VSO's 2011 Annual Meeting, which the RBC hosted. That May weekend, Greg led a field trip to Switzer, and I to Pocosin Cabin/ Shenandoah National Park. After several weeks of email "conversation," Bob chose a weekend & asked us if we would each lead one of the trips.

Mike Donaldson was able to lead their Switzer trip on Saturday May 4, and they were treated to many of their target birds, including Cerulean and Blackburnian Warblers. The next day, I (and later Greg)

joined them for the Pocosin trip, where, despite gloomy weather, the birds were quite active. Surprises at Pocosin included a Kentucky Warbler singing near the parking lot and a Wild Turkey heard calling from the hollow below. Kentucky Warbler was one of their best treats, and amazingly they enjoyed not one but two that weekend! On Friday evening, Mike, Greg, and I met them at the Edith J. Carrier Arboretum where the Kentucky that had been there put on a wonderful show, keeping everyone entertained for half an hour or more!

## **Treasurer's Report – *Audrey Shenk***

The Bird Club has had another successful year financially. Our current balances stand at \$2,312.22 in checking, \$106.05 in savings, and \$5,378.80 in a Certificate of Deposit. Our club membership stands at 105 members broken down as follows: 4 free memberships (those who purchased over \$300 in seed at the annual bird seed sale), 9 lifetime members, 35 family memberships, 55 individual memberships, and 2 student memberships. Our total membership has returned to the level we maintained prior to Covid-19. We were able to donate \$2,650 to 11 different organizations that are dedicated to bird or wildlife conservation. Enjoy a wonderful summer of birding and hope to see you again in September!

## **Bird Seed Sale Director Needed**

Kathy Byers, our First Vice President for Programs, has been directing the Club's Bird Seed Sale for the past seven years. She has informed the Executive Committee that the 2024-2025 Club year will be the last year that she will oversee the Bird Seed Sale. Consequently, we are putting out an open call for someone to fill the role of directing the sale.

The sale is the Club's primary fundraiser each year. Kathy has offered to serve as a mentor for someone during the fall 2024 Bird Seed Sale, so we are hoping to find a volunteer as soon as possible. The sale itself typically happens around the second Saturday in November, so soliciting orders from the public and ordering the seeds from the seed company happen significantly prior to November.

This is an important job, and our appreciation will be genuine and deep toward whoever steps up to fill this role. Please contact Kathy or anyone on the executive committee to express your interest in this position.

## **50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration 2025**

A committee is being formed to help with planning the celebration of the club's 50th anniversary in 2025. Please contact Kathy Byers, [kkbyers77@gmail.com](mailto:kkbyers77@gmail.com) or 540-820-6517, if you would be interested in working with this committee.

## ***Birds of Rockingham County Virginia, 2nd ed., for sale at June 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, June 27, 2024, at 6:00 PM to discuss the book *An Im-mense World* by Ed Yong. For June only, we moved from the third Thursday to the fourth Thursday. 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)

### **Free bird feeders!**

Take any or all of those pictured below. Four new or slightly used birdfeeders and one well-loved but still functional feeder. Also (not pictured), a thistle seed sock feeder. Contact Milla Sue Wisecarver, [wisecams@gmail.com](mailto:wisecams@gmail.com) to arrange for pickup. The feeders can also be brought to the June Bird Club meeting for pickup there.





Black-crowned Night Heron – Silver Lake, on May 18, 2024

Photo credit: Tom Mizell



Kentucky Warbler – Edith J. Carrier Arboretum, on May 21, 2024

Photo credit: Greg Moyers



Blackburnian Warbler – Hone Quarry Ridge Rd, on May 19, 2024  
Photo credit: Greg Moyers



William Leigh and Mike Smith find a seat while birding Paul State Forest.  
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: Allie Sawyer**

**TREASURER: Audrey Shenk**

**MEMBERS AT LARGE: Andrew Troyer, Herb Myers**

**GOLDFINCH GAZETTE – Denise Hoodock**

**HISTORIAN: Art Fovargue**

**EMAIL: [info@rockinghambirdclub.com](mailto:info@rockinghambirdclub.com)**

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