



Goldfinch Gazette

The Newsletter of the Rockingham Bird Club

<https://rockinghambirdclub.com>

Volume L

Number 1

Sept 2024

DATE: Thursday, September 12, 2024

TIME: 7:00 PM

PLACE: Park View Mennonite Church, Fellowship Hall

PROGRAM: **Exploring the Birds and Islands of New Zealand** presented by Dixie Sommers

Dixie Sommers joined a Field Guides tour of New Zealand in November 2022 and observed 134 bird species including 53 endemics. Iconic species such as Kiwi and penguins plus plenty of seabirds, shore birds and waterfowl made for a spectacular trip. Dixie visited the North and South Islands and Stewart and Tiritiri Matangi Islands. Dixie will tell the stories to go with some of her best photos, and the complete photos are in her New Zealand gallery at www.ddpix.smugmug.com.

Dixie last presented to RBC about her visit to Cuba in 2016. She has now birded all over the world including all 7 continents. Her volunteer activities have also grown as she is currently the Treasurer of the Virginia Society of Ornithology as well as editor of their newsletter. She leads bird walks for Northern Virginia Bird Club, Audubon Society of Northern Virginia, and Friends of Dyke Marsh. Dixie's efforts have been and continue to be very important in our efforts to help get the 2nd Virginia Breeding Atlas fully funded and published. She lives in Alexandria.

FIELD TRIPS – *Diane Lepkowski*

Hillendale Bird Walk, Tuesday, September 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.

Rockfish Gap Hawk Watch, Friday, September 20, weather permitting: Anyone interested can meet by around 10 AM outside the long-closed Inn at Afton (at the intersections of Rt 250 and Howardsville Turnpike, uphill from where Skyline Drive and Blue Ridge Parkway meet.) This will be around peak Broad-winged Hawk migration. Peak day in the past has fallen between Sept 16 and 22 or so, with thousands of Broad-wings tallied in a single day. No need to sign up. Rain will cancel. Please contact Diane Lepkowski with questions at dianelep1@yahoo.com. For more information, visit <http://www.rockfishgaphawkwatch.org/> and/or find them on Facebook.

Virginia Wildlife Center Field Trip, Saturday, October 12 (registration required) – Kathy Byers
How to Sign Up: Reserve your space by calling, texting, or emailing Kathy at 540-820-6517, kkbyers77@gmail.com no later than **Monday, October 7**. Our group will be limited to 30 participants. Reserve your spot soon!

How Much: The trip will cost \$5 per person. Please bring cash or a check made out to Rockingham Bird Club.

When: **Saturday October 12, 2024, 9:45 am (our tour starts at 10:00 am).**

Where: We will meet at the Virginia Wildlife Center, 1800 S Delphine Ave, Waynesboro, VA. We strongly encourage carpooling if possible.

Who: Kathy Byers will be coordinating this trip. Members and their guests are welcome to join us. This trip is not designed for young children. Please be aware that we will be walking around outside on uneven ground.

What We Will See: The center's guide(s) will focus our tour on avian ambassadors and patients.

***Participants might want to stop by the [Rockfish Gap Hawk Watch](#) that day as well.

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

TRIP REPORTS

August Hillendale Walk – Tom Mizell

On Tuesday, 13 August, 10 members of the Rockingham Bird Club and two visitors enjoyed our walk. It was 64° at 8:30 AM. Our wish list birds included American Redstart, Worm-eating Warbler, Black-and-white Warbler, Eastern Kingbird and Great Crested Flycatcher.

As we gathered at shelter 12 our listing began with the ever-reliable Blue Jays, Mourning Dove, Tufted Titmouse, Carolina Wren, Northern Cardinal, American Robin and Carolina Chickadee. We also had Eastern Wood-Pewee and Northern Flicker. As we drew close to the northwest pedestrian bridge at 9:00 AM, American Goldfinches and Northern Mockingbird made their presence known. It was unusually quiet that first 30 minutes.

As we walked past the nest tree of our Screech Owl friends, Mary Dame sighted a bird quietly preening. It took us some searching but eventually we all found her sighting and we then realized our first “wish list” bird of the morning. A Great Crested Flycatcher was preening quietly to its hearts content! Prior months we had enjoyed its weeps and other calls but no such sounds today. We all were afforded good looks as it preened!

We then paralleled closely to the stream channel and added White-breasted Nuthatch, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Tree Swallow, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, flycatcher species, Gray Catbird, House Finch, Hairy Woodpecker and Downy Woodpecker. Mike Donaldson discovered a Cardinal nest in a Cedar tree and a young cardinal captured our attention. Kathy Fovargue joined us near the Cardinal nest. Our list grew as she added Brown Thrasher. Wait! What was that noise? As we were walking along the golf course boundary, west of the old log cabin site and just prior to intersection with the new bike trail, we were surprised by the “rattle” of a Kingfisher! For a moment it shared its presence with us and then slipped away unseen. Let the records show that one of today's highlights was an “unseen” bird! I'm not sure if an unseen bird made highlight status before. Someone let me know if it has. We were at 24 species by 10:00 AM.

We continued walking on the Bike Trail, the remaining 6 birders added Fish Crow, Barn Swallow, Turkey Vulture, House Sparrow, and American Crow. Along the open field to the south, we added Field Sparrow, Cooper's Hawk, and European Starlings. We enjoyed watching an Eastern Kingbird

feasting on pokeweed berries. This second of the day's wish list birds struck a pretty pose as it dined elegantly beside the trail.

I would be remiss if I did not mention that the remaining 6 birders took full advantage of the bumper crop of Osage Orange fruits that grew along the trail. Without exception each birder willingly launched at least one of the bowling ball sized fruits down the pathway. We did not measure distances but it's very likely an "Olympic like" distance record was established! The unique delivery style of each participant rivaled styles displayed at Olympic field events, as the photo included below will bear out. We enjoyed 33 species on our 3-hour walk.

See you Tuesday, 10 September. I note the Fall Equinox occurs at 8:44 AM on Sunday 22 September. I have a prior commitment that morning but if someone would like to lead a walk to capture this changing Seasons/Summer to Fall happening, just let us know. Thank you!

Summer Hillandale Walks – Tom Mizell

During the summer we had four Hillandale walks. A total of 27 different folks observed over 50 bird species. We walked in temperatures ranging from 60 degrees in June to "feels like 95" in July. Thank you, RBC members and visitors, for joining us! A few notes for the June and July walks follow:

On June 11, nineteen birders enjoyed 42 species. Highlights along the bike trail included Orchard Oriole, thank you Randy Cline, and Grasshopper Sparrow, thank you William Leigh.

On June 20, Ruby-throated Hummingbirds finally showed up before Spring gave way to Summer. Nine folks showed up for the change of seasons. As we awaited the arrival of Summer, we enjoyed at least two Indigo Buntings perching and feeding on tall grass stems along the dry stream channel. They entertained us for several minutes as they fed on the swinging feeders. Thank you, Mike Donaldson.

July 9th treated six of us to 37 species. A few notes: We enjoyed a bright yellow Eastern Meadowlark along the Bike Trail. A Northern Mockingbird was seen chasing a Fish Crow over the row of birdhouses near the school. We also enjoyed watching young Chipping Sparrows fluttering their wings as they were being fed.

BIRD SIGHTINGS

Herb Myers reported a **Dunlin** at the Broadway Wastewater Treatment Plant on May 31. Later the same day, Cory Taylor reported a **White-rumped Sandpiper** at the same location.

Sharon Landis watched numerous birds of prey, including a **Bald Eagle**, a **Red-tailed Hawk**, a **Sharp-shinned Hawk**, a **Red-shouldered Hawk**, and **vultures**, all in the sky at once over their neighbor's freshly mowed hay field near Linville on June 6. Sharon suspects the birds were on the hunt for animals killed or displaced by the mowing.

Herb Myers reported an **Osprey**, **Warbling Vireo**, **Eastern Kingbird**, and **Baltimore and Orchard Orioles** at Lake Shanandoah on June 13.

Huck Hutchens reported an **American Avocet** at the Oakwood Drive farm pond near Mt. Crawford on June 1. Numerous birders from around the state came to see this bird. It remained until the pond dried up. It was last reported on June 15.

A large group of 26 **Semipalmated Sandpipers** was reported by multiple birders at Oakwood Drive Pond on June 10.

William Leigh reported a **Least Flycatcher** at Cook's Creek Arboretum in Bridgewater on June 12.

Matt Gingerich reported a **White-winged Dove** at his place near Linville on June 22.

Greg Moyers reported an **American Avocet** at the Broadway Wastewater Treatment Plant on June 26.

Elizabeth Ihle had a **Diamond Dove**, an Australian bird, visit her place in Harrisonburg on June 27. The bird was likely an escapee.

Matt Gingerich reported a **Dickcissel** singing in a grassy field on Acorn Drive in Harrisonburg on June 28. Several others reported the bird over the next few days.

William Leigh reported **Wild Turkey** and heard **Northern Bobwhite** calling at two spots on Forest Rd 539, Hone Quarry Ridge Trail, on Shenandoah Mtn on July 1. Greg Moyers flushed at least 20 **Ruffed Grouse** at this location on July 4 and reported **Red Crossbills, Veery, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Rose-breasted Grosbeak**, and 11 species of warblers, including **Canada, Prairie**, and **Yellow-rumped**.

Herb Myers reported two adult **Wood Thrushes** with what appeared to be two juveniles at the Edith J. Carrier Arboretum at JMU on July 4.

Ken Ranck reported six **Common Mergansers** on the river at North River Rd in Mt. Crawford on July 5. Diane Holsinger reported seeing this species with young during the summer along Rt. 259 near Fulks Run.

Greg Moyers reported a **Lesser Scaup** at the Broadway Wastewater Treatment Plant on July 21.

Cory Taylor reported two immature **White Ibis** and an immature, **Yellow-crowned Night Heron** on Plains Mill Road east of Timberville on July 31. The birds were seen on either side of the Rockingham/Shenandoah County line over the next few days. A third **White Ibis** showed up a few days after the first two were reported. Seven or more **Great Egrets** were reported along the same stretch of the river during this time as well.

Greg Moyers reported a **White-rumped Sandpiper** at the Broadway Wastewater Treatment Plant on Aug. 7. Cory Taylor photographed the bird on Aug. 8. On Aug. 9, Matt Gingerich reported two **Red-necked Phalaropes**, four **Sanderlings**, a **Semipalmated Plover**, the **White-rumped Sandpiper**, and a **Black Tern** at this location.

Diane Lepkowski had a **Mourning Warbler** visit her yard water feature near Harrisonburg on Aug. 15.

Greg Moyers reported two **Black Terns** at the Broadway Wastewater Treatment Plant on Aug. 16.

Herb Myers reported birds moving in mixed flocks on the Western Slope of Massanutten Mtn on Aug. 26, with Herb's first-ever **Canada Warbler** in VA being a highlight.

Mike Smith reported a flock of around 100 **Chimney Swifts** circling and entering the chimney at Elkton Elementary School on Aug. 26.

Dave Wendelken and William Leigh saw a **Virginia Rail** at the Nazarene Church Rd Wetland on Aug. 29.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Treasurer's Report – Audrey Shenk

Important! To keep your membership in good standing, renew before November 1. 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 November 2024 will be dropped from the Club roster and mailing lists. Also, for family memberships we are asking for the names of family members included in the household so that we can maintain a comprehensive list of all our members.

Dues are as follows: 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 7/1/2023 through 6/30/2024. Please contact Treasurer, Audrey Shenk (ajshenk@gmail.com) ASAP. This is a short-term commitment.

The 2024 Bird Seed Sale is Coming!

We are pleased to report that seed prices came down a bit this year. We will also be offering some "Goldfinch Jubilee" merchandise such as caps and t-shirts. Information and order forms will be sent out the third week of September. Join us in celebrating our 50th anniversary and supporting the club!

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.

Bird Club Book Club

The BCBC will meet at a member's home on Saturday, September 28th for a planned, carry-in brunch and discussion of the book *Nature's Best Hope* by Doug Tallamy. If you would like to join the Club and attend the September meeting, please email elizaihle@gmail.com by September 20 for more information. In October, we will meet via Zoom to discuss the book *Pests: How Humans Create Animal Villain* by Bethany Brookshire. 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 usually meets at 6:00 PM on the third Thursday of each month via Zoom. If interested in joining us, email Elizabeth Ihle at elizaihle@gmail.com



Blue Grosbeak – Northend Greenway, on June 16, 2024

Photo credit: Greg Moyers



Tree Swallow in nest with hatchlings – Nest box at Rockingham County Fairgrounds
Bluebird Trail, June 2024

Photo credit: Herb Myers



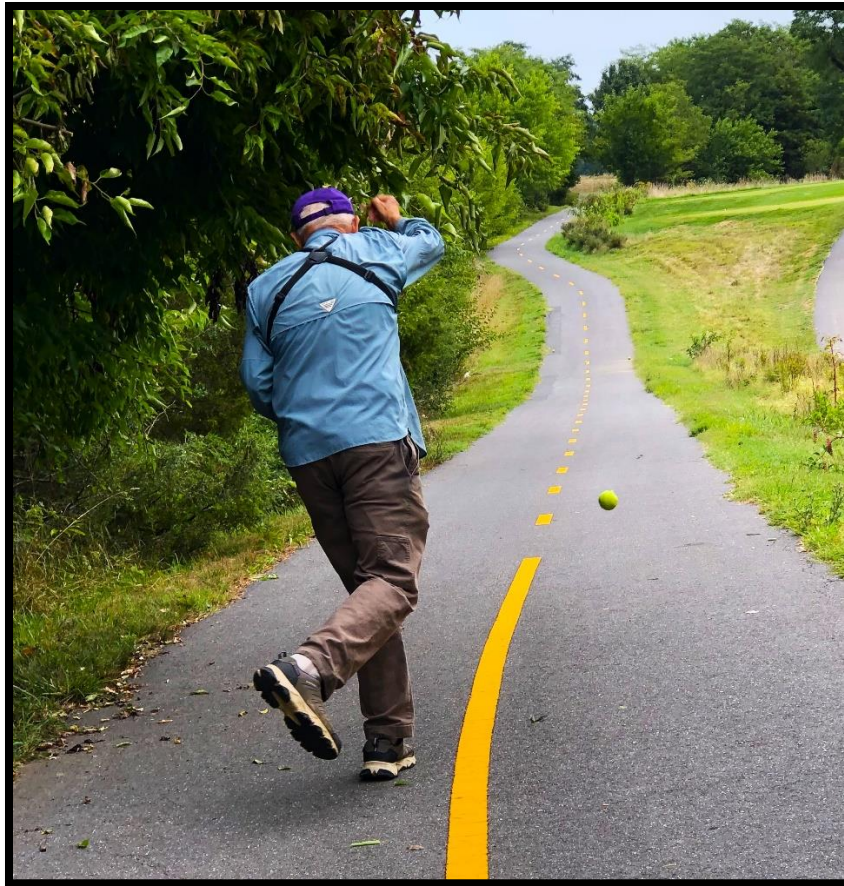
Diamond Dove – Harrisonburg, June 27, 2024

Photo credit: Greg Moyers



Black-billed Cuckoo – Switzer Dam on June 2, 2024

Photo credit: Greg Moyers



Osage Orange throwing at Hillandale Park, August 13, 2024
Photo credit: Kathy Byers



Happy Birders at Hillandale Park, June 20, 2024
Photo credit: Tom Mizelle

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

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