



Goldfinch Gazette

The Newsletter of the Rockingham Bird Club

<https://rockinghambirdclub.com>

Volume L

Number 3

Nov 2024

DATE: Thursday, November 14, 2024

TIME: 7:00 PM

PLACE: Park View Mennonite Church, Fellowship Hall

PROGRAM: **Discovering Golden Eagles in Virginia** presented by Jeff Cooper

Jeff Cooper is returning to our club to share the findings of a group of biologists and wildlife managers in their quest to learn more about Eastern Golden Eagles. Jeff has worked as a Wildlife Biologist for the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resource (DWR) for 24 years. He coordinates avian research, management and conservation programs focusing on eagles and other raptors. He will cover Bald and Golden Eagle populations in Virginia, including status, identification, ecology, and recent research.

Audio Aides will be available for use. The church is also equipped for anyone using T-coil technology devices.

FIELD TRIPS – Diane Lepkowski

Hillandale Bird Walk, Tuesday, November 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.

TRIP REPORTS

Virginia Wildlife Center Field Trip – Kathy Byers

On Saturday October 12, sixteen club members enjoyed a visit to the Wildlife Center of VA in Waynesboro, VA. It was a lovely fall morning in a beautiful woodland setting. The tour began inside with our guide, Alison. As we waited for everyone to arrive, we were able to check out a few small residents which included Box Turtles and a Hognose Snake. Before heading outside, Alison explained the center's history, purpose and daily operations. It's rather incredible that this world-class animal hospital is a non-profit, fully funded by individual, corporate and organization donors. We are proud to say that the center is one of the organizations our fundraising helps support. The center has 30-40 employees and admitted over 4,000 animals last year. The center's [Annual Report](#) is an interesting and easy to understand summary of its operations.

Our tour outside focused on the avian ambassadors which included Red-tailed Hawks, a Barred Owl and a mature Bald Eagle. Alison shared each bird's personal story and interesting facts about their species. It was abundantly clear how well-cared for and appreciated each individual was. The trip was a good reminder that humans can have some very negative effects on wildlife. It was heart-warming to visit this amazing hospital that is dedicated to wildlife's well-being.

September Hillandale Walk – Tom Mizelle

Tuesday, October 8, 2024, was a blue-sky day. It was 42 degrees as 12 gathered at Hillandale Park shelter number 12. Our wish list was very "over the top" with Bald Eagle, Mississippi Kite, Peregrine Falcon, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Kirtland's Warbler, Brown Creeper, cuckoo, American Kestrel and Steller's Sea-Eagle. Venture a guess as to which one we actually saw? Before we left the shelter, we listed Red-bellied Woodpecker, Bluejay, Carolina Chickadee, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Carolina Wren, Downy Woodpecker, White-breasted Nuthatch, Northern Flicker, American Robin, Eastern Towhee and Tufted Titmouse.

By the time we reached the Northwest pedestrian bridge at 9 AM we added two more birders, a Ruby-crowned Kinglet and Northern Cardinal. Greg Moyers joined us and contributed Cape May Warbler and Cedar Waxwing.

Mike Donaldson spotted a Swainson's Thrush near the slab at around 9:20. Most of us got pretty good looks at the thrush. A few minutes later we saw our only wish-list bird, a Brown Creeper. About this time a Gray Catbird announced its presence.

Wait! What did I see? An Eastern Wood-Pewee gifted me with my first viewing of a bird eating a Yellow Jacket. I didn't quite believe it when I first saw it with that tasty insect in its bill! However, my eyes weren't fooling me as Dan Getman took a photo of the Pewee eating yet another Yellow Jacket. How many would enjoy that for breakfast? That interested me so I did a little searching and learned that wasps and Yellow Jackets are a favorite food of Tanagers.

Our list climbed to 24 as we added Chipping Sparrow, Common Raven, Turkey Vulture, White-throated Sparrow and Mourning Dove. We reached the bike trail at 10:10 and promptly saw a European Starling on the major powerline. In the meantime, Zack Perdue and a few others took a side trail and their exploration around the old log cabin site added Northern Mockingbird and Yellow-bellied Sapsucker.

Walking along the bike trail we caught some highfliers as Black Vulture, Red-tailed Hawk and Monarch butterfly soared. By 10:45 we added House Finch, Eastern Bluebirds and Eastern Phoebe. A Blue-headed Vireo and Common Grackle entered our list somewhere along the walk as well. I had to leave around 11 o'clock. The temperature was now 58 degrees. Six folks remained and by the time the walk ended they added an accipiter, Broad-winged Hawk, Hairy Woodpecker, Brown Thrasher, House Sparrow, American Goldfinch, and White-throated Sparrow, pushing our total to 41.

Hope you can join us on November 12 at Hillandale!

BIRD SIGHTINGS

While we typically report sightings from Rockingham County, there were two mega-rarities outside the county during October, which warrant mention. A **Kirtland's Warbler** was found at Coyner Springs Park in Waynesboro on Oct. 4. This very cooperative bird entertained scores of visitors for

two days. On Oct. 26, a **Scissor-tailed Flycatcher** was reported along Rt. 340 just north of Luray in Page County. This bird was last reported on Oct. 30.

Greg Moyers reported a nice early-evening flock of warblers at Hillendale Park on Oct. 1 including **Bay-breasted, Cape May, Tennessee, Magnolia, Black-throated Green, Chestnut-sided, Northern Parula,** and **American Redstart.**

Mike Donaldson reported a **Common Gallinule** at Grottoes Town Park on Oct. 2. Later the same day, Huck Hutchens found an immature **Little Blue Heron** at the park. The Gallinule continued to be seen through Oct. 5 and the Little Blue Heron was last seen on Oct. 7. According to *Birds Of Rockingham County Virginia*, this is the first sighting of a Little Blue Heron in the county since 1984.

Diane Holsinger had numerous good birds at her place in Timberville on Oct. 3. Highlights included **Scarlet Tanager** and seven warblers - **Cape May, Black-and-white, Tennessee, Yellow-rumped, Magnolia, Common Yellowthroat,** and **American Redstart.**

Mike Smith had a **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Cape May Warbler, Ruby-crowned Kinglet,** and **Ruby-throated Hummingbird** at his place near Elkton on Oct. 3.

Greg Moyers photographed a late **Golden-winged Warbler** at Paul State Forest on Oct. 5.

Diane Lepkowski reported an **Orange-crowned Warbler** at Lake Shenandoah on Oct. 5.

Sharon and Jay Landis had five **Bald Eagles** around a deer carcass at their place in Linville on Oct. 5.

Cory Taylor reported a **Clay-colored Sparrow** at Slate Lick Fields on Oct. 6.

Huck Hutchens reported a pair of **Snow Geese**, one of which was a blue morph, at Leonard's Pond on Oct. 9.

Greg Moyers reported a **Lincoln's Sparrow** at Slate Lick Fields on Oct. 13.

Diane Lepkowski reported a **Lincoln's Sparrow** at Lake Shenandoah on Oct. 15.

Herb Myers had his first-of-season **Purple Finch** and **White-throated Sparrows** at his place in Keezletown on Oct. 17. **Dark-eyed Juncos** began arriving the following day.

Diane Lepkowski and Greg Moyers reported a **Forster's Tern** at Lake Shenandoah on Oct. 26.

Three **American Golden-Plovers** were reported by multiple birders at the Weavers Rd Pond over several days beginning on Oct. 28.

Bill Benish and Robyn Puffenbarger had a **Pine Siskin** visit their feeders in Verona on Nov. 1. They have also had a **Blue-headed Vireo** and **Purple Finches** at their place during the last week of October.

Mike Smith reported a **Rusty Blackbird, American Woodcock,** and **Bufflehead** at Lake Shenandoah on Nov. 2. On Nov. 3, Greg Moyers and Dave Wendelken heard a **Virginia Rail** calling at the same location.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Seed Sale News

A big "THANK YOU" to all who have supported the club with purchases of bird seed and our Jubilee Merchandise. Please remember to pick up purchases at the Rockingham Fairgrounds on Saturday,

November 16, 9:00 am-1:00 pm. Contact Kathy Byers with questions or concerns:
kkbers77@gamil.com, 540-820-6517

Christmas Bird Count Reminder – Saturday December 14, *Bill Benish, “VARC” Rockingham County Circle CBC Compiler*

If you are available to join a leader afield or if you live inside the circle and have time to contribute from home as a Feeder Watcher, **please contact Bill Benish** at wcbenish@gmail.com. Also, the Virginia Society of Ornithology maintains an excellent page with detailed CBC descriptions, local summary data links, and a link to the global CBC maps.
<https://www.virginiabirds.org/christmas-bird-count>

Bird Club Book Club

The BCBC will meet on Thursday, November 21 at 6:00 PM via Zoom to discuss the book *Birding Under the Influence* by Dorian Anderson. In December, we plan to discuss *Rattlesnake Granny*, authored by our own club member, Stephanie Gardner. If a particular month's book selection is of interest to you, feel free to attend that month's discussion. We maintain a list of nature-related books and welcome suggestions for future reading. The BCBC usually meets on the third Thursday of each month via Zoom. If interested in joining us, email Elizabeth Ihle at elizaihle@gmail.com



Eastern Wood Pewee eating a yellow jacket at Hillendale Park –
October 8, 2024

Photo credit: Dan Getman



Immature Little Blue Heron – John E. Painter Park, Grottoes, October 3, 2024
Photo credit: Diane Lepkowski



Purple Finch – Keezletown, October 28, 2024
Photo credit: Herb Myers

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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

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