



Goldfinch Gazette

The Newsletter of the Rockingham Bird Club

<https://rockinghambirdclub.com>

Volume L

Number 4

Dec 2024

DATE: Thursday, December 12, 2024

TIME: 7:00 PM

PLACE: Park View Mennonite Church, Fellowship Hall

PROGRAM: **Unforgettable Falconry** presented by Jennifer Westhoff

Jennifer Westhoff, the owner of Raptor Hill Falconry, will discuss the conservation of these amazing predators and preserving the ancient sport of Falconry, combined with modern behavioral science training methods.

Jennifer is a Master Falconer, Scientific Illustrator (BFA) and CPBT-KA (Certified professional bird trainer), a professional status established in 2012 by the IATCB (International Avian Trainers Certification Board) and the IAATE (International Association of Avian Trainers and Educators) which involves a deep understanding of applied behavior analysis in animal training. As a falconer and professional bird trainer, she combines her knowledge of applied behavior analysis and falconry skills to train her birds forming strong trust bonds and relationships.

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, December 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.

Hillandale “Last day of Fall” Bird Walk, Friday, December 20: Meet at Shelter 12 at 8:30 AM.

TRIP REPORTS

November Hillandale Walk – *Tom Mizelle*

It was 48° and sunny on November 12, 2024, as 18 gathered at Hillandale Park. This month’s wish list included Brown Creeper, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Hairy Woodpecker, and Ruby-crowned and Golden-crowned Kinglets. Guess which “one” we did not see today. Go ahead and guess before reading further.

Early birds seen were an American Robin, Turkey Vulture, Northern Flicker, Carolina Wren, and Yellow-rumped Warbler. A group of Eastern Bluebirds entertained us for several minutes before we reached the northwest pedestrian bridge. They sang and flitted about extensively and enjoyed a breakfast of cedar berries. We all were afforded good looks at the Bluebirds. Other early birds included Common Grackle and Dark-eyed Junco. A White-breasted Nuthatch, for some reason was roaming the asphalt pavement at the park road turn around and a Pileated Woodpecker flew over, headed east. A solitary Monarch bounced along in its flight and headed south.

After enjoying the Nuthatch I looked towards the group. See photos as Richard Halpern points to the crowd in one of their strategic bird locating formations. Today's textbook searching pattern was "seven look left and seven look right"! Birds had the group surrounded.

As we approached the stream channel Northern Cardinal, White-throated Sparrow and Purple Finch appeared to be eating Japanese honeysuckle fruits. It was 9:05 as we crossed the pedestrian bridge. By 9:15 we added American Goldfinch, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Carolina Chickadee, Downy Woodpecker, and Hermit Thrush. Cedar Waxwings, Red-bellied Woodpecker and Hairy Woodpecker were seen in the vicinity of the Eastern Screech owl nest. See Zack Perdue's Hairy Woodpecker photo. Before reaching the bike trail we added Brown Creeper, Black Vulture, European Starling, Tufted Titmouse, and Ruby-crowned Kinglet. Twenty-six species so far.

We reached the Bike Trail around 10 AM. Our reliable Northern Mockingbird patrols this area and was found across the golf course fairway. Song Sparrow, House Finch, White-crowned Sparrow, American Crow, Red-tailed Hawk and Field Sparrow took our species count to 33

As we passed near the remote end of the golf course driving range a raptor was seen perched on a fence. It was distant and we tried to ID it. It was cooperative as before we left the area it flew directly at three of us and perched in a very near tree where we could clearly see it! See Mike Donaldson's photo. Nice show of a juvenile, Red-shouldered Hawk!

I had to leave about 11:00 AM but 5 others carried on. It was about 58 degrees as the remaining birders concluded the walk around 11:30 AM. Our species count was 34.

Before COVID we occasionally included some anonymous quotes on our Hillandale reports. I always enjoy what others experience on our walks and here is one for today: "Having the opportunity to bird with some of the most experienced birders in the area was a privilege and I learned a lot. My highlights were the Yellow-bellied Sapsucker and the close views of the juvenile, Red-shouldered Hawk."

Hope to see you at Hillandale at 8:30 AM Tuesday 10 December. Also, we will offer a walk at 8:30 AM on Friday, 20 December, the last full day of Fall!

BIRD SIGHTINGS

Taylor Mizzi reported a **Lincoln's Sparrow** at Grottoes Town Park and **Purple Finches** at Hillandale Park on Nov. 3.

Diane Lepkowski reported a late **Osprey** at Lake Shenandoah on Nov. 7 and again on Nov. 8.

Matt Gingerich reported 30 **Tundra Swans** flying over his property in Linville on Nov. 9. Later the same day, Diane Lepkowski and Greg Moyers photographed a **Tundra Swan** flying around, but not landing, at Silver Lake.

Mike Smith reported **Fox Sparrows** at Switzer Lake and a **Fox Sparrow** and a **Winter Wren** at Riven Rock Park on Nov. 9.

Justin Carter reported three **Tundra Swans** at Lake Shenandoah on Nov. 14.

One of the two big rarities in the area in Nov. was a very tame **Snow Bunting** at Franklin Cliffs Overlook on Skyline Drive. This overlook is in neighboring Page County. Numerous birders got up-close looks at this bird from Nov. 14-18.

The other rarity, and highlight of the month in our county, was a **Snowy Owl**, which local residents reported on Lumber Mill Rd on Nov. 15. The owl spent the day sitting on a fence and on a barrel at the edge of a yard! Many birders from around the region came to see the owl. There was a report from Henry Hawkins that the bird was seen along Koogler Rd the following morning.

Herb Myers reported an **Orange-crowned Warbler** at the Edith J. Carrier Arboretum at JMU on Nov. 16.

Diane Lepkowski reported a **Peregrine Falcon** on N. Main St. in Harrisonburg on Nov. 16.

Mike Smith reported seven **Rusty Blackbirds** on Model Rd in Elkton on Nov. 19.

Greg Moyers reported an adult, **Black-crowned Night-Heron** in the stream near Hair Corral in Dayton on Nov. 21.

Greg Moyers reported a late **Palm Warbler** on Linhoss Rd on Nov. 24.

Herb Myers reported a pair of **Great Horned Owls** dueting at his place in Keezletown on Thanksgiving morning, Nov. 28.

As many as three **Short-eared Owls** are being seen along Grist Mill Rd as of the last week in November.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Bird Seed Sale Update

Our sincere thanks to everyone who supported the sale this year. From purchasers to helpers on Pick Up Day, it truly takes a team to make it all happen. The funds we raised help the club offer monthly programs and contribute to several conservation organizations.

We have the following extras for sale:

- 5lb White Proso Millet @ \$8 each (2)
- 50lb White Proso Millet @ \$25 each (1)
- 10lb Nyjer @ \$25 each (2)
- 20lb Gourmet Mix @ \$22 each (1)
- 40lb Gourmet Mix @ \$35 each (2)
- 10lb Safflower @ \$17 each (1)
- 5lb Safflower @ \$8 each (3)
- 4lb Peanut Splits @ \$5 each (4)

Contact Kathy Byers at 540-820-6517 or kkbyers77@gmail.com to arrange getting the seed.

Christmas Bird Count Reminder – Saturday December 14, 2024

If you live inside the circle and have time to count birds at home as a Feeder Watcher, **please contact Bill Benish** at wcbenish@gmail.com to coordinate and review details needed to contribute data from your own yard list.

Bird Club Book Club

The BCBC will meet on Thursday, December 19 at 6:00 PM via Zoom to discuss the book *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

Lost hat

A light green baseball cap with a Friendly City Food Co-op logo was left at the November RBC meeting. If this item is yours, you may collect it at the December 12 meeting or contact Mike Donaldson at mike.donaldson@outlook.com for other retrieval options.



Burrowing Owl – Marco Island, Florida, November 15, 2024

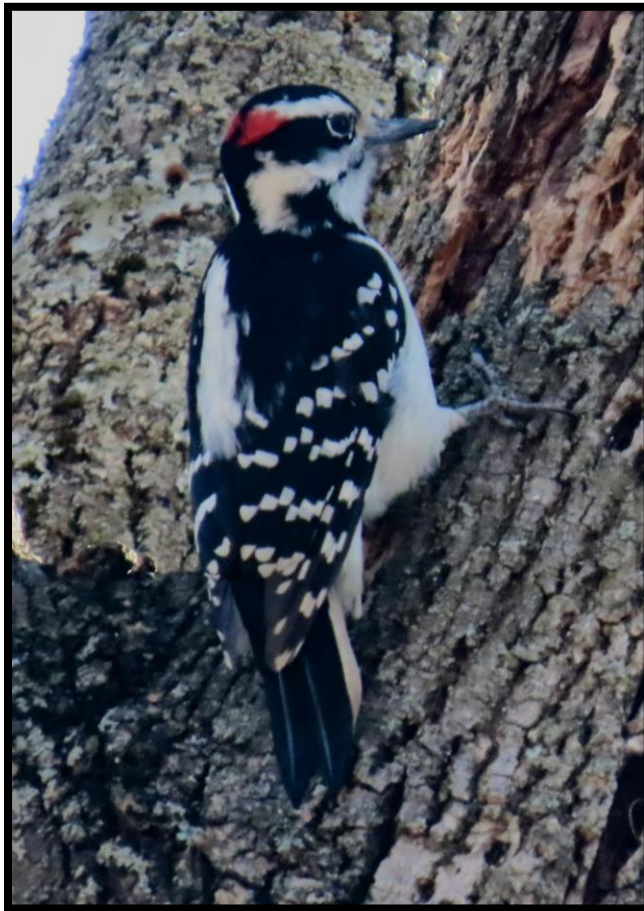
Photo credit: Audrey Shenk



Snow Bunting – Franklin Cliffs Overlook on Skyline Drive, November 17, 2024
Photo credit: Greg Moyers



Red-shouldered Hawk – Hillendale Park, November 12, 2024
Photo credit: Mike Donaldson



Hairy Woodpecker – Hillandale Park, November 12, 2024

Photo credit: Zach Perdue



Richard Halpern points to the [Hillandale] crowd in one of their strategic bird locating formations on November 12, 2024.



Textbook searching pattern was “seven look left and seven look right”
at Hillendale Park on November 12, 2024.

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VICE PRESIDENT: PROGRAMS – Kathy Byers

VICE PRESIDENT: FIELD TRIPS – Diane Lepkowski

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GOLDFINCH GAZETTE – Denise Hoodock

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