

# Rockingham Bird Club Meeting Minutes

Meeting date: 9/11/2025

RBC President Mike Donaldson: Call to Order: Mike did not strike the gavel to commence the meeting but began the business portion at 7:03pm. The in-person September meeting of RBC took place at the Park View Mennonite Church Fellowship Hall.

There being no objections, they dispensed with the reading of the minutes. A copy is available on our website.

## **New members/visitors:**

- Jonathan Mikolin has lived in Harrisonburg for around 10 years and is a new member. He saw RBC's booth during the Massanutten Regional Library's Trailblazers Fest which led him to join.
- Joy Martin is a friend of Cindy and LeVon Smoker and was impressed by Matt Gingerich's birding knowledge of Chimney Swifts.

## **Recent Bird Sightings:**

- Mike Donaldson started us off with a fun behavioral observation at the top of the maple tree in his driveway. He watched a Cedar Waxwing trying to get a spider but it kept bouncing off the web. After a few tries (at least that he saw), it was finally rewarded with a large meal.
- Tim Hulings while with Nancy Hulings at Silver Lake saw an Osprey, as they often do, and then about a dozen flycatchers that looked a lot like Say's Phoebe but that hadn't made sense to him with their range. He was curious if anyone had guesses. Club members threw out a few potential options that hadn't seemed like the one to Tim but without a photo no one was able to give him more than a guess.
- Bill Howe had a packet to pass around with a list from the Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge on the status of 277 birds that have been identified on the refuge since 2008.
- Tom Mizell spotted a solitary Double-crested Cormorant at North River below the dam. He saw it swimming and then it came up with a fish which he applauded.
- Matt Gingerich was out near Ottobine driving around when he saw a Ruff! He was able to notify a few people who were able to make it out to observe the rare find. The next evening he was watching Common Nighthawks and spotted a leucistic one. Kathy Byers bestowed a golden feather to him for the Ruff sighting.

## **Reports from Executive Committee:**

### **Mike Donaldson (President):**

- Before moving to his announcements, Mike wanted to remind everyone that the Bird Seed Sale is upon us. He gave the floor over to Cindy Smoker, the Club's new Bird Seed Sale director.
  - Cindy started out with a thanks to Kathy Byers and Audrey Shenk for all their help getting her stabilized in her role. She notified the Club about the

change in our seed vendor and gave a little overview of them. They aim to purchase the best ingredients and don't sell to big companies. The deadline for orders is October 11 and pickup is November 8. Audrey prepared an online store for anyone interested in ordering there. Cindy then passed the floor back to Mike.

- Mike notified everyone that the Club's Executive Committee gathered on August 18 for a regularly scheduled meeting. Discussion centered on planning for the upcoming Club year and the Club's current financial picture. Minutes are available upon request.
- Mike took a moment to highlight the Golden-winged Warblers Working Lands for Wildlife Project. The USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is partnering with private landowners to create or enhance young forests and old fields. It's important to note that properties best suited to the program will be above 2,000 feet in elevation, at least 10 to 20 acres in size, be forested or old fields adjacent to forest, and be in western Virginia. I understand that most of us don't have a property that fits these requirements, but it seems likely that some of us know folks who do. So please spread the word about this so more early successional habitats that the Golden-wings prefer can be created. The announcement in this month's newsletter about this program has contact information for the program managers, and they've sent us some printed informational materials and business cards, which are on the table in the back, and I'll pass around the two flyers right now. Mike then passed the mic over to Henry Hawkins so that he could share with the Club how his recent consultation with State Program Coordinator Moriah Owen went.
  - Henry started out saying that Moriah and Jesse enjoyed *Birds of Rockingham County, 2nd Edition* so much that they took one home. Henry and Loretta did enroll so someone from NRCS will come back after deer season. He welcomed the opportunity for Club members to come look in the summer once the work is done.
- Mike then passed the floor to Kathy Byers.

**Kathy Byers (Vice President of Programs):**

- Kathy informed the Club that many of the months for this year are booked but she is always happy to have people send her recommendations.
- Next month will feature Mary Keith, the past president of Tampa Audubon Society. She will present on her travels to Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan.
- She announced that the Club will have a booth at the Farmers Market on the upcoming Saturday.
- She then thanked Cindy and Audrey for their work on the seed sale and encouraged everyone to check out the options. Kathy already ordered one of everything.

**Matt Gingerich (Vice President of Field Trips):**

- Matt expressed that because he is new to the role, he is trying to get a feel for what Club members want and that he welcomes suggestions.
- He announced a trip on Saturday 9/13 to Switzer Lake. The meeting point will be at Food Maxx at 7:15am.
- He informed everyone on another upcoming trip that will be shorter notice at the Shenandoah Valley Produce Auction. Migrating shorebirds often stop by when they're harvesting so he will be keeping an eye out for when it seems likely to be a successful outing. There will be a notification via email.
- He also notified the Club that Diane Lepkowski will be counting at the Rockfish Gap Hawk Watch in Afton, VA on September 18th. It will be a good opportunity to see migrating Broad-winged Hawks.
- On September 22nd, there will be a walk at Hillandale for the equinox.
- Matt then gave everyone a helpful tidbit on migrating Swainson's Thrushes. Around 6:15am, early risers should be able to hear them calling out to each other as they hunker down after migrating all night.

**Allie Sawyer (Secretary):**

- Mike recognized Allie

**Audrey Shenk (Treasurer):**

- Audrey reminded everyone that Club dues are due. They can be paid online or in person via cash or check. Someone asked how much the membership brackets are and she informed everyone that they are \$10 for students, \$20 for individuals, and \$30 for family plans. She also notified everyone that bird seed forms are available. Mike added onto the Club dues note that it is very quick and easy to do it online.

**Art Fovargue (Club Historian):**

- Art joked that there was no history this month. He had no announcements.

**Bill Benish (Christmas Bird Count Coordinator):**

- Bill Benish explained that this year's count will happen at a different time than usual since there isn't a first Saturday. The options are December 20th, December 27th, or January 3rd. He is shooting for the 20th and the 3rd is his backup. Anyone interested in leading or participating should reach out to him.

**Denise Hoodock (Newsletter Editor):**

- Mike recognized Denise Hoodock's great work on the newsletter.

**Members at Large:**

- Mike recognized Herb Myers and Andrew Troyer.
- They are good people to talk to if Club members have questions or concerns.

**New Business/Announcements:**

- Mike announced that the next Club meeting is at 7pm on Thursday, October 9 at the same location.
- Barbara Colson announced that she brought a free deck hanging arm for a birdfeeder for anyone interested.

With no objections or additional announcements Mike adjourned the meeting at 7:30pm.

Kathy Byers introduced Bill Draper from Richmond, VA as the evening's presenter.

Total Participants: 56

Minutes recorder: Allie Sawyer

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