

Rockingham Bird Club Meeting Minutes

Meeting date: 2/12/26

RBC President Mike Donaldson: Call to Order: The in-person February meeting of RBC will please come to order [7:04pm] 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:

- Heather lives in the city and was visiting.
- Paige French and Marty Barlow were visiting together and are both from Waynesboro.
- Linda Hamlin and Steven Hamlin were visiting for their first time.
- David Shickel from Montezuma and Ralph Rohrer from Clover Hill are friends of Tom Mizell who were visiting.

Recent Bird Sightings:

- Henry Hawkins on Sunday had left Massanetta and Shen Lake intersection in the open field, saw something dead, and watched an adult Bald Eagle swoop onto it.
- Elizabeth Miller sighted a Merlin at Broadway Community Park on February 5.
- Mike Smith saw a Lapland Longspur at Lumbers Mill.
- Bill Benish spotted a Yellow-headed Blackbird amongst a flock of Red-winged Blackbirds.
- Kathy Byers went to see the swans at Silver Lake and was trying to photograph all three of them when saw an adult Bald Eagle swoop into her frame.
- Zachary Peters, while working outside on his truck, heard a Common Raven fly overhead and it took him by surprise because he's not accustomed to them.

Reports from Executive Committee:

Mike Donaldson (President):

- Nothing to report

Kathy Byers (Vice President of Programs):

- Andrew Rapp will present on warblers in March.
- Steven Johnson will present on the Shenandoah River and biodiversity in April.
- VSO's journal (The Raven) is available online and paper copies are available if a member. The very first article caught Kathy's attention when she saw our own Robyn Puffenbarger's name listed as a corresponding author. The project took the notes of retired special collections librarian and freelance writer, Chris Bolgiano (also a Club member) and used Google's AI program, Gemini, to create Google

Sheets, which could then be added to the eBird database. The data came from over 300 handwritten index cards that amounted to 3,000 observations that Chris made over 40 years. Kathy loved the intriguing challenge of bringing old school and new tech together. Kathy then saw the Virginia Avian Records Committee report for 2025, where she once again found Club members making contributions:

- Greg Moyers reported a Eurasian Wigeon
 - William Leigh reported a Ruff
 - Diane Lepkowski reported a Franklin's Gull
 - Matt Gingerich reported a Crested Caracara
 - Karen Seward reported a Western Tanager
 - She wondered if the Inca Dove at the Shank's is still under review because she did not see it on the list.
- A summary of the VA CBC was also included in the issue. Kathy invited members to consider supporting VSO and passed around a copy of the journal for members to page through.
 - Kathy then introduced Paige French who started a non-profit program, Blue Ridge Packs and Tracks, that is interested in increasing access to off-road adventures. One of the ways they achieve that goal is through the use of all-terrain track chairs that will go for about 5 hours or 5 miles. Last year was their first full year of operating and they have acquired 2 track chairs. They have developed partnerships with a handful of organizations in the Blue Ridge area, including Nelson County Parks and Recreation, Virginia Wheelin' Sportsmen, Therapeutic Adventures, Wintergreen Adaptive Sports, and Wilson Workforce and Rehabilitation Center. They are looking to expand to other partnerships. They want to create accessible bird outings, so we came to mind as a potential partner. They serve anyone who can't ambulate the distance they'd like to go and the track chairs are fairly quiet. The cost is about \$16,000-\$20,000 per machine. They want to provide as much access as possible because of the steep cost constraints. Paige joined RBC members on the Hillandale walk and loved how nice everyone was. She then passed things back over to Kathy, who added that the Hillandale walks seem perfect for this. Kathy invited Club members to reach out if you know of anyone who would want to be out and enjoying trails but the distance is a barrier.

Matt Gingerich (Vice President of Field Trips):

- On February 19 in the evening, there's a trip to Bells Lane for Short-eared Owls. Contact Matt if interested, there's still room for a few more.
- The Kimsey Run West Virginia trip to look for Bald Eagles will be on February 21.

Allie Sawyer (Secretary):

- Mike recognized Allie

Audrey Shenk (Treasurer):

- No reports

Art Fovargue (Club Historian):

- Art Fovargue was unable to attend so on his behalf, Mike mentioned that Art is chair for the nominating committee and is looking for people who would be interested in joining that committee. Please see the newsletter for more information or go to the RBC Contact page to notify Art if you'd be interested in joining the committee. The goal is to prepare a slate of nominees for the upcoming RBC election of officers.

Bill Benish (Christmas Bird Count Coordinator):

- Bill Benish put a printed copy of the CBC results to circulate amongst the Club.

Denise Hoodock (Newsletter Editor):

- Mike recognized her great work on the newsletter.

Members at Large:

- Recognized Herb Myers and Andrew Troyer
- Good people to talk to if you have questions or concerns

New Business/Announcements:

- Kate Komorous announced that the Backyard Bird Count starts tomorrow. She encouraged people to get out for 15 minutes during the day and that there are various outings associated with it for those interested.
- Mike announced the cancellation of an event he is leading at the J. Edith Carrier Arboretum and that they are still looking to reschedule but do not have a date yet. That will be posted on both our and their websites once a date is selected.

Meeting Adjourned @ 7:26

Kathy Byers introduced the presentation on Amazon Adventures by Club Member Dave Wendelken.

Total Participants: 58
Minutes recorder: Allie Sawyer
Date of Meeting: 2/12/2026