



Goldfinch Gazette

The Newsletter of the Rockingham Bird Club

<http://rockinghambirdclub.com>

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November 2017

NOVEMBER MEETING

DATE: Thursday, November 2, 2017

TIME: 7:00 PM

PLACE: Detwiler Auditorium, Virginia Mennonite Retirement Community, 1501 Virginia Avenue, Harrisonburg, VA 22802.

PROGRAM: *Birding in India* by Jeff Blalock

Birding India in the month of February allows one to escape the cold of winter of Virginia and enjoy the very mild and dry weather in India. The weather was very pleasant for 13 days visiting the subcontinent that is home to over 1.2 billion people. After a long drive from the Delhi airport, I was in Tal Chhappar Sanctuary which is a national forest. Over the next two weeks we visited the Jorbeer Carcass Dump at Bikaner to see vultures, the Khichan Bird Sanctuary, the Desert National Park, Akal Wood Fossil Park, and Fateh Sagar Lake. I also enjoyed the greatest birding spot I have ever been to, Keoladeo Ghana National Park near Bharatpur which is so large you have to rent a rickshaw to ride around in to bird watch. And we topped it off with a boat ride up the Chambal River and a special three day excursion for tigers, which were missed.

Jeff has been birding in Virginia for over 30 years and has participated in Breeding Birds Surveys, the VSO Atlas Project, lead the Halifax County VSO Foray and established and compiled for the Banister River WMA Christmas Bird Count. He has been to Texas, Maine, Idaho, California, both North and South Carolina and Alaska birding. Besides birding he enjoys all things in nature and loves being outdoors.

Join us for dinner with Jeff before the meeting: 5:30 PM at Capital Ale House, 41 Court Square, Harrisonburg 22801. Please contact Robyn Puffenbarger, [540-908-7335](tel:540-908-7335) or rpuffenb@bridgewater.edu, in advance if you plan to attend.

NOVEMBER FIELD TRIPS - *Diane Lepkowski*

Members and guests are welcome on all field trips. Minors under the age of 18 must be accompanied by a parent or adult who is responsible for the minor.

Hillandale Monthly Walk, Tuesday, November 7 with Tom Mizell: Meet at the Children's Playground parking lot at 8:00 AM. If anyone spots a Turkey in Hillandale Park that day you will very likely be featured in the December Goldfinch Gazette.

Northern Saw-whet Owl Banding: TENTATIVE DATE Wednesday November 8, (weather & banding schedule permitting) with Debbie Harrison: Banding at Highland Retreat will be only on a very limited schedule this year, with probably no mountain-top nets. Contact Debbie for details and to sign up (woodshar@aol.com or 540-856-3058.) Meet 6:45 - 7:00 PM at the Broadway Supermarket (241 W. Lee Street.) The group will leave promptly at 7 PM. Bring a flashlight or headlamp. **Please contact Debbie in advance; rain, wind or banding schedule conflicts may mean last minute cancellation.** Tentative alternate dates are Thursday November 9, and Friday November 10.

TRIP REPORTS

Lake Shenandoah – *Greg Moyers*

Seven members of the RBC enjoyed a beautiful morning at Lake Shenandoah on Oct 21. We were fortunate enough to see several species on their way out of the area and welcome several new arriving winter residents. On the lake we spotted four American Coots, three Ruddy Ducks, three Pied-billed Grebes, and an early Ring-necked Duck. As we walked around the lake we were treated to a consistent amount of bird activity in the trees and bushes with Cedar Waxwings, Yellow-rumped Warblers, and Ruby-crowned and Golden-crowned Kinglets well represented. We were pleased to find summer residents such as Brown Thrasher, Gray Catbird, and Eastern Phoebe still hanging around while a flock of 50 or more Tree Swallows zipped around over the lake. A migrating Blue-headed Vireo provided nice, if brief, looks and a Great Blue Heron was seen fishing in the stream running through the golf course. Sparrows were also in good numbers. White-throated and Song Sparrows were most numerous but were joined by smaller numbers of Chipping and Field Sparrows and a lone Swamp Sparrow. Woodpeckers were represented by Pileated, Northern Flicker, Downy, and Red-bellied. As we started back from the dam, Don Perkuchin got a brief look at an unidentified thrush eating a grub. Near the end of the walk, Diane Lepkowski spotted a probable Coopers Hawk. As we returned to our vehicles, a pair of circling Red-tailed Hawks bid us farewell. The trip tally was a very respectable 46 species.

Hillandale Park – *Tom Mizell*

The colorful little bird's spectacles were spectacular as we all enjoyed excellent looks at Blue-headed Vireos on a beautiful fall morning. The Vireos seemingly begged to be seen at Hillandale Park on Friday, October 20, 2017. Several gave us a couple shows in the early hour initially chasing and feeding high and then at eye level by the time we passed the log cabin. For one member of the group it was their first ever sighting of a Blue-headed Vireo on their first walk in Hillandale Park!

Now back to the beginning. It was about 40 degrees as the group gathered in the parking lot around 8 AM. The wish list included Winter Wren, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Red-breasted Nuthatch and both Kinglet species. Across the stream, as the sun struck a tall tree, a Northern Mockingbird perched atop making sure it was one of the first to be seen this day. The early birders got the birds early as 8 members of the Rockingham Bird Club walked the trail and encountered immediate activity. Red-bellied Woodpeckers and White-breasted Nuthatches sounded off as the Blue Jays once again squawked and flew in all directions without ceasing. Mourning Doves, American Robins, Carolina Chickadees along with Eastern Phoebe and Eastern Towhee were near the cabin. Small brown birds moved quickly in the brush along the trail as we slowly proceeded past the cabin. Welcome back

White-throated Sparrows! Good to see you again. Up in the treetops a flock of Cedar Waxwings perched closely together before moving in mass to the cedar trees and feeding on the berries. A Carolina Wren sang with the volume turned up high.

By 8:50 AM we were still close to the cabin and tallied 25 species! Such a flurry with birds to the left, to the right, high in the treetops and low in the brush. They gave us much practice in “finding and focusing”. We added Grackles, Northern Cardinal, Downy Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker, Fish Crow, Yellow-rumped Warbler, and American Goldfinch. Ruby-crowned Kinglets hovered about closely and gave almost as good a show as the Blue-headed Vireos. We got fleeting glimpses of a Nashville Warbler as it moved overhead with the vireos for a short while. By 9:08 AM Golden-crowned Kinglets checked into our 'fields of view' pushing our species list to 29.

After the fast start, the bird activity slowed down considerably. However, we enjoyed a few other birds including Song Sparrow, Northern Flicker, European Starling, and Black-poll Warbler. By the time we reached the northwest corner pedestrian bridge at 10:05, only three of the original 8 remained. The final three pushed onward adding Turkey Vulture and Canada Goose. Although we did not see many more species, we were rewarded with a very close flyby of an accipiter in the southwest corner. It zipped through and Dan Perkuchin said it almost took Emory Yoder's hat off. Species total for the day was 35 and we concluded the walk at about 11:30 AM. Let's find and “ID” that accipiter in November.

BIRD SIGHTINGS

Bob Eggleston reported five **American Golden-Plovers** on Cannery Woods Drive near Bridgewater on Sept. 27.

Greg Moyers and Dave Wendelken found two **Gray-cheeked Thrushes**, **Wood Thrush**, **Rose-breasted Grosbeak**, and a large mixed flock of warblers, including several **Tennessee** and **Bay-breasted Warblers** at Hone Quarry on Sept. 28. They also reported a **Wilson's Warbler** and a **Lincoln's Sparrow** on the Bother Knob Road on the same date.

Diane Holsinger has had several nice yard birds at her place in Timberville including **Scarlet Tanager**, **Red-headed Woodpecker**, and **American Redstart** on Sept. 28, **Black-throated Blue** and **Tennessee Warblers**, **Northern Parula**, and **Wood Thrush** on Sept. 29, a **Black-throated Green Warbler** on Oct. 2, and **Yellow-rumped Warbler** and **Ruby-crowned Kinglets** on Oct. 16. Diane's **White-crowned Sparrows** returned on Oct. 16 and the **White-throated Sparrows** returned two days later on Oct. 18.

Greg Moyers and Diane Lepkowski reported a **Philadelphia Vireo**, **Pied-billed Grebe**, **Swamp Sparrow**, and three **Lincoln's Sparrows** at Hone Quarry on Sept. 30. On Oct. 1 at Switzer Dam, Greg and Diane found **Gray-cheeked** and **Swainson's Thrushes**, **Rose-breasted Grosbeak**, **Scarlet Tanager**, **Red-breasted Nuthatches**, and several warblers, including **Magnolia** and **Black-throated Blue**.

John Pancake reported a couple of **American Golden-Plovers** and a **Pectoral Sandpiper** at the Oakwood Drive pond near Mt. Crawford on Oct. 3. William Leigh reported three **Golden-Plovers** at the pond on Oct. 7. On Oct. 8, William found a **Golden-Plover**, several **Pectoral Sandpipers**, **Semipalmated Sandpiper**, **Wilson's Snipe**, and a possible **White-rumped Sandpiper**. Greg Moyers reported a pair of **American Golden-Plovers** at the same site on Oct. 12.

Diane Lepkowski heard an **Eastern Screech-Owl** in her yard near Harrisonburg on Oct. 6.

Diane Lepkowski and Greg Moyers reported several warblers, including **Blackpoll** and **Tennessee** at Hone Quarry on Oct. 7.

Bill Benish reported **Ruby-crowned Kinglets** and a **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** at Hillandale Park on Oct. 7.

Shaphan Shank reported four **Bald Eagles** at his home at Union Springs on Oct. 14.

Robyn Puffenbarger reported that she and Bill Benish had a **Rusty Blackbird** visit their bird bath in Bridgewater on Oct. 21.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Bird Seed Pick Up Day

Please pick up your bird seed on Saturday, November 11th, 8:00 AM - 11:30 AM at BFG Supply Company, 961 N Liberty St, Harrisonburg. Please note the **shortened hours** for pick up. Volunteers are always welcome! Call Kathy at 820-6517 for more information or if you have any questions.

118th Christmas Bird Count, Saturday, December 16, 2017

Please mark your calendar to join the international citizen-science effort in this 118th year of the Christmas Bird Count. We plan our count date this year to be on Saturday, December 16, 2017, for the VARC CBC - Rockingham County, VA circle. Generally, we set our date as the first Saturday within the yearly date range (12/14 – 1/5).

Our 'VARC' circle is sponsored officially by the Rockingham Bird Club which has contributed both financially and through the dedication and skills of many members. Much of the count circle also extends into Augusta County, and some of us are members of both the RBC and the Augusta (County) Bird Club. There is no longer a fee to participate. We participate in the field in coordination with a sector leader or from home as a "feeder watcher" if your house location is within the circle. As the compiler for the count, contact Bill Benish for the details about what data needs to be collected by "feeder watchers" to fit the count criteria.

Reminder: A camera is nearly essential as an important resource to help document less common birds, but we should also make notes about the details we notice for birds that require documentation. It can be fun to try describing plumage, sound and behavioral details we detect even for the more common species that we see most often.

Look for other years' results by clicking on the CBC Results > "Current year and historical data" link in one of the sections of the web page: <http://birds.audubon.org/christmas-bird-count>

Our VARC circle is a 7.5 mile radius from the intersection of Ottobine Rd and Clover Hill Road. Generally, we divide the area into six sectors and some subsectors. We hope to have most of the same sectors leaders serving yearly, so please start making your plans with them directly and soon. If you need help connecting with a sector leader or have any questions, please contact Bill Benish. If you think you already know who you'll be joining, please advise both your sector leader and Bill Benish.

We'll also try firming up more connections at the next couple meetings. Thanks again in advance for your contribution of effort!

Bill Benish C: 540.908.7336 wcbenish@gmail.com

(PLEASE NOTE- Although, the same as last year, this is a fairly NEW EMAIL address. If you email me and don't hear back within a couple days, please call me.)

Project Feeder Watch 2017-2018, Saturday, November 11 to Friday, April 13: Consider participating! Contribute your feeder observations to this annual citizen science project. New participants will be able to log into online data entry and set up their count site on November 1. The last day to start a two-day count is Thursday, April 12. Information at: <https://feederwatch.org/>

Monticello Bird Club Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel Islands Birding Boat Trip, January 13, 2018.

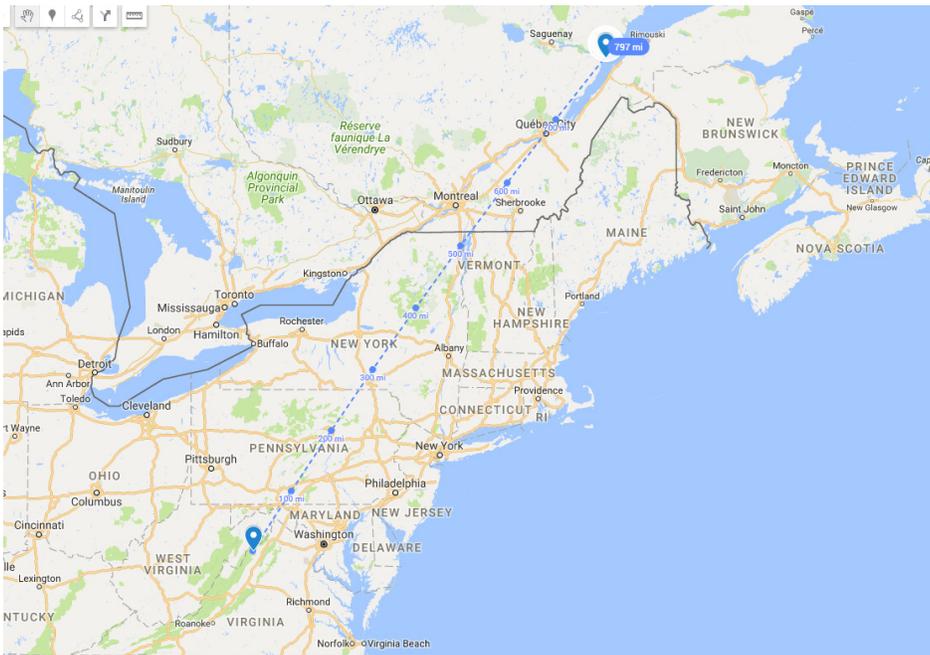
Cost: \$35.00 per person. A tip for the mate is included in your \$35.00 fee. Please make all checks payable to Monticello Bird Club. P.O. Box 4362 Charlottesville, VA 22905

To reserve your spot on the boat, please make your reservation now. I will need to have your money by Monday January 8, 2018. I will be able to give refunds for last-minute cancellations up until Thursday January 11, 2018. *Space is limited so please make your reservation early.*

To register, please contact Doug Rogers: doug5996@gmail.com or 434.409.8156 or the Club email at: birders@monticellobirdclub.org.



Owl News: A Northern Saw-whet Owl banded last fall (November 6, 2016) at Highland Retreat was recaptured last month (September 21, 2017) near Moulin-a-Baude in Quebec, Canada -- 800 miles distant! (Reported by Charles "Zig" Ziegenfus)



Rockingham Bird Club
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