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## Goldfinch Gazette

### The Newsletter of the Rockingham Bird Club

<http://rockinghambirdclub.com>

Volume XLI

Number 8

April 2016

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#### APRIL MEETING

**DATE:** Thursday, April 7, 2016

**TIME:** 7:00 PM

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

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#### **PROGRAM - *Denise Hoodock***

Our speaker this month is Peter Nebel. He is a life-long birder trained in Biology/Ecology. While he has not worked much in pure Biology, his career has generally had biological components – fish culture, irrigation, environmental consulting, and environmental management – all used his training to some degree. Before retiring, he spent 10 years as an environmental manager on US air bases in Honduras, South Korea and Qatar. His presentation will focus on the time he spent in Korea.

Before the meeting, we will host Peter for dinner at Taste of India, 498 University Blvd in Harrisonburg at 5:30 PM. Please contact Denise Hoodock at 540-828-2595, 703-216-5499 or [dhooock@gmail.com](mailto:dhooock@gmail.com) if you'll join us for dinner.

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#### **UPCOMING FIELD TRIPS - *Diane Lepkowski***

**Hillandale Park, Friday, April 8 with Tom Mizell** – Meet at the Children's playground parking lot at 8:00 AM for our monthly walk.

**Madison Run, Saturday, April 9 with Greg Moyers** – Greg will lead a walk along the Madison Run Fire Road near Grottoes. This is a great spot to see Louisiana Waterthrushes and other early-returning birds such as Blue-headed Vireo and Black-and-white Warbler. Meet at the Fire Road at 8:30 AM. We should conclude around noon. Please contact Greg at [gwmoyers@msn.com](mailto:gwmoyers@msn.com) or 434-3029 if you plan to attend or need directions.

**Bridgewater Parks, Thursday, April 21 with Tom Mizell** – Let's see what's happening in Bridgewater. Meet at Wildwood Park at 8:00 AM on Thursday 21 April. Depending upon how the morning progresses we will likely make stops at other parks such as the Cooks Creek Arboretum and

along the North River near the Sandy Bottom Golf Course. Bring water and snacks as this outing often carries over into the lunch hour.

## **OTHER EVENTS:**

Edith J. Carrier Arboretum Program: Greg Moyers will be leading a birding walk on Saturday April 23, 8:00 AM for the Arboretum. Info at, and sign up through, the Arboretum's website: <http://www.jmu.edu/arboretum/> (this is not an RBC trip.)

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## **TRIP REPORTS**

### **February Hillandale Walk – *Tom Mizell***

Twelve Rockingham Bird Club members took advantage of the gift of an extra day in February and enjoyed the winter birds of Hillandale Park on the 29<sup>th</sup>. It was a balmy 55 degrees under a warm sun. The wish-list included Kinglet, Red-shouldered Hawk, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Brown Creeper, Purple Finch and Brown Thrasher. Guess how many of these we might see this day.

The birds were waiting for us and we listed 8 species before leaving the parking lot: American Crow, American Robin, Northern Mockingbird, 3 Downy Woodpeckers, Mallards just across the road in the stream, Red-bellied Woodpecker, White-breasted Nuthatch and Blue Jay were seen from the parking lot. Between the lot and the cabin bridge we added European Starling, Tufted Titmouse, Northern Cardinal and Carolina Wren giving us an average of almost 1 bird per minute for the first 14 minutes of the walk. Sightings slowed down and the next 50 minutes we only added 6 species with Mourning Dove, Hairy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Canada Geese, Carolina Chickadee and Hermit Thrush providing a good assortment.

We crossed the Northwest corner bridge and headed south. Before we passed the shelters and hoping to pick up more sightings, we split into groups. One headed down the ravine to the stream and the other walked between the road and the wooded section between the bridge and shelter #12. This strategy helped as we added Grackle, Black Vulture and Red-tailed Hawk overhead and Yellow-rumped Warbler and Brown Creeper close to the stream.

Along the stream we added Eastern Towhee, Fish Crow, Turkey Vulture, Song Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, American Goldfinch and House Finch. We paused for a good while and watched Kinglet, Sparrows and Yellow-rumped Warblers and several other species as they drank water and bathed in the stream.

We enjoyed the repeated flyover of a vocalizing Sharp-shinned Hawk around 9:40 AM. Within the next half hour we were treated to a "Sharpie" show as one circled a couple times then landed in a tree nearby affording us some extensive looks. I had to leave early so I wish "Thank you!" to Fletcher Bingham, and Don and Dan Perkuchin for completing the walk on this special day with thirty-two species and 3 of the 6 wish-list birds. Let's do this again in February 2020.

### **Lake Shenandoah – *Greg Moyers***

Sixteen people, including former RBC member Craig Tumer, attended the walk at Lake Shenandoah on March 12. Prior to the start of the walk, a few “early birders” tallied Great Blue Heron, Eastern Towhee, and a Sharp-Shinned Hawk carrying a blackbird breakfast. As the group started around the lake, we spotted several Tree Swallows and a pair of Wood Ducks flying overhead. On the lake we saw Gadwalls, Pied-billed Grebes, and American Black Ducks. The walk back to the dam was fairly slow with the highlight being a pair of Golden-crowned Kinglets, but things picked up nicely for the latter part of the walk. On the return trip, the group got looks at a Brown Creeper. We then decided to try our luck along the path across the road from the lake. Here we found several Pine Siskins, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Eastern Phoebe, Red-winged Blackbird, Field Sparrow, and Yellow-rumped Warbler. We ended the morning with 44 species.

### **March Hillandale Walk – *Tom Mizell***

The Ides of March found seven Rockingham Bird Club members knifing through fog and mist to Hillandale Park for our last park walk of winter. The temperature was 48 degrees at 8 AM. Almost an inch of rain had fallen in the previous 24 hours so to show up on such a damp morning reflected a special optimism. Our just compiled wish-list of Eastern Phoebe, Wood Duck, Pine Siskin and Yellow-rump Warbler got its first “check” in record time. Within moments, at least a half dozen Yellow-rumped Warblers flitted about in the trees just west of the parking lot. Other birds seen or heard at the parking lot included: Red-bellied Woodpecker (taking nourishment from a walnut tree knothole), Mourning Dove, Northern Cardinal, and American Robins. A pair of Mallards walked about the cabin grounds. European Starling, Downy Woodpecker, Eastern Phoebe (another wish list bird sighted!), Blue Jays and Dark-eyed Juncos greeted us before we crossed the pedestrian bridge at the cabin. Cardinal and Robin song permeated the fog and the coo of the Mourning Dove softly accompanied the crisp notes of Cardinals.

We saw an occupied Dove nest in a cedar tree and several pairs flying by throughout the walk. This confirmed the notation on the Virginia Wildlife Calendar for 15 March “Doves begin nesting.” By 8:30 AM we were pleased as a Fox Sparrow was heard, then seen adjacent to the cabin. A Carolina Wren call added more shrill notes to the foggy mist. Grackle, Tufted Titmouse, White-breasted Nuthatch, White-throated Sparrow, Song Sparrow, accipiter (species) and American Crow gave us 20 species in the first hour.

Greg Moyers’ walking pace accelerated as he was the first to reach the northernmost pedestrian bridge. His keen sight and hearing had detected a Brown Creeper and he did his best to make sure it didn't get away. As the rest of us caught up we found at least 3 Brown Creepers. All were afforded good looks at this entertaining bird. Northern Flickers announced their presence near the NW corner of the park and dozens of vocalizing Fish Crows flew overhead.

Tom Lord joined the group and within moments of his arrival we added Pine Warbler and Yellow-bellied Sapsucker. The Sapsucker was working vigorously in one of the cedar trees that was peppered with Sapsucker drill holes. These two species also gave us close-up views. Heading south towards the main shelter, Bob Eggleston spied more Fox Sparrows. On a parallel route in the woods, Don

Perkuchin spied at least one. There was a moment when we had 4 Fox Sparrows in our field of view. We remarked that this was quite a treat to see so many at one time.

The southern loop of the trail added Carolina Chickadee, Northern Mockingbird and Field Sparrow. Looking up at an incoming flyer we saw a Cowbird land atop a tall power pole. It peered around from its lofty perch looking for what Cowbirds look for. By 11:30 we tallied 30 species. Our number of birders was 4 and, as we scanned the skies before getting back into our cars to leave, those Yellow-rumped Warblers were still flitting about. Indeed we saw them continuously flitting, darting and feeding during much of the morning. Hope to see you in April. Anonymous Quote: *“I have never seen this many Yellow-rumped Warblers, nor have I seen so many Fox Sparrows in my binoculars field of view at one time.”*

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### **BIRD SIGHTINGS:**

Mike Smith reported several good birds at his place in Elkton. Mike had 30 **Pine Siskins** on Feb. 25, a **Pine Warbler** on Feb. 29, and **Purple Finch** on March 7.

Charles “Zig” Ziegenfus reported **Wood Ducks, Green-winged Teal, American Wigeon, and Wilson’s Snipe** at the pond across from the Green Valley Book Fair on Feb. 23. On the same date, Zig found **Wood Ducks, Gadwall, Ring-necked Duck, American Wigeon, and Wilson’s Snipe** at the intermittent pond on the Rockingham/Augusta County border on Mossy Creek Rd. Jonathan Todd reported that **Wood Ducks, Green-Winged Teal, and American Wigeon** were still present at the book fair pond on Feb. 28.

The **Ross’s Goose** that was previously reported at Lake Terrace in Harrisonburg was seen at various spots through the middle of March. Numerous birders reported seeing the bird at the Innovation Village ponds on Rt.11, Newman Lake, Cook’s Creek Rd, Weavers Rd, and Silver Lake.

Matt Gingerich reported a **Merlin** perched atop the steeple at Park View Mennonite Church in Harrisonburg on Feb. 28. The bird was spotted at least two other times at the same location.

Teri Holland found and photographed a **Townsend’s Solitaire** along Rt. 924 on Shenandoah Mountain on Feb. 28.

Greg Moyers found four **Greater White-fronted Geese** in a field on Cold Spring Rd on Feb. 28.

Fletcher Bingham saw four **Tundra Swans** at Silver Lake on Feb. 29.

Diane Lepkowski saw a **Ring-billed Gull** on Port Republic Rd on Feb. 29.

Shaphan Shank reported an **American Woodcock** and a **Bald Eagle** at Union Springs on March 3.

Greg Moyers and Diane Lepkowski found a **Bald Eagle** on a nest on Chrisman Rd on March 5.

Mike Smith heard a **Barred Owl** calling repeatedly near South River Picnic Area on March 6.

Greg Moyers reported a **Eurasian Collared Dove** on W. Dry River Rd on March 6.

Ken Hinkle reported seeing his first **Tree Swallow** of the year on Gardner Lane on March 9. On the same date, Ken had a **Red-winged Blackbird** at his feeder and reported that his yard **Brown Thrasher** has successfully made it through the winter!

Bret Hart reported a likely **Eastern Phoebe** just across the county line at Hearthstone Lake on March 9.

The immature **Trumpeter Swan** on Silver Lake was last reported on March 11 and appeared to have left, though an immature Trumpeter was reported at Cooks Creek Pond on March 27.

Diane Lepkowski reported a pair of **Horned Grebes**, 28 **Lesser Scaup**, 8 **Wood Ducks**, **American Wigeons**, **Gadwall**, **Ruddy Duck**, and four **Ring-billed Gulls** at Lake Shenandoah on March 11.

Greg Moyers and Diane Lepkowski found several **Pine Warblers** and a calling **Barred Owl** at Madison Run Fire Rd on March 12.

Diane Lepkowski reported an **Eastern Towhee** at her place east of Harrisonburg on March 12. Other good yard birds included **Brown Thrasher** and **Great Horned Owl**.

Craig Tumer and Diane Lepkowski found four **Eurasian Collared Doves** on W. Dry River Rd on March 13. At the Nazarene Church Rd Wetland, they found **Lesser Yellowlegs**, **Wilson's Snipe**, **Green-winged Teal**, **American Coot**, **Wood Ducks**, and **American Black Ducks**.

Diane Holsinger reported an **Eastern Towhee** at her place in Timberville on March 14.

Diane Lepkowski reported 30 **Ring-billed Gulls** on Stone Spring Rd on March 14. Bret Hart also reported a gull at the VEC parking lot in Harrisonburg that day.

On March 15, a pair of **Surf Scoters** spent the day with a raft of 26 **Lesser Scaup** at Lake Shenandoah. Zig and his ornithology class found birds early that morning.



**Surf Scoter, adult male, at Lake Shenandoah**

*Photo: Diane Lepkowski*

A male **Red-breasted Merganser** was seen by several birders on March 15 at Silver Lake.

John Shea and Greg Moyers saw an early **Osprey** at Lake Shenandoah on March 15.

Diane Lepkowski reported a pair of **Tundra Swans** at Lake Shenandoah on March 19. Later that morning at the same location, Greg Moyers found some early returning birds including **Blue-headed**

**Vireo**, **Barn Swallow**, and **Northern Rough-winged Swallow**. Diane and Greg then found an early **Pectoral Sandpiper** and at least 81 **Wilson's Snipe** at the Nazarene Wetland.

Ken Hinkle reported six sparrows at his feeders in Bridgewater on March 19. A **Chipping Sparrow** and a **Field Sparrow** joined the usual assortment of **Song**, **House**, **White-crowned**, and **White-throated Sparrows**.

On March 26, Charles Ziegenfus found six **Pectoral Sandpipers** at Leonard's Pond and a **Barred Owl** while bird-banding in Diane Lepkowski's yard (near Harrisonburg) later that day.

Diane Lepkowski and Greg Moyers returned to Madison Run Fire Road on March 26, and found **Louisiana Waterthrushes** had returned for the breeding season.



**Dickcissel, dining in Don Perkuchin's yard**

Don Perkuchin is still seeing the male **Dickcissel** at his place in Bridgewater as of this writing (March 27.)

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#### **BIRD CLUB BOOK CLUB - Maureen Gallagher-McLeod**

The B.C.B.C. will meet at 6:30 PM on Thursday, April 14, 2016, at the home of Martha and Bill Faw for a carry-in dinner and to discuss the book *Bird Sense* by Tim Birkhead. Anyone interested in joining a book discussion may contact Maureen Gallagher-McLeod at [famcleod@earthlink.net](mailto:famcleod@earthlink.net) or 896-9541.

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**BIRDS OF THE 'BURG: Season 2** - Guided bird walks for children and their families.

8:30-10:30 AM at Hillendale Park - First Saturday of each month April-October (except July)

Meet at shelter #12 parking area. Walk the trails and learn about the surprising variety of birds right here in our city park. School-age children and their families are welcome. Bring binoculars if you have them. All children (under 18) must be accompanied by a parent or legal guardian.

Led by Kathy Byers of the Rockingham Bird Club; sponsored by Sierra Club Shenandoah Group.

For more information, contact Kathy Byers ([540\) 820-6517](tel:5408206517) or Ralph Grove ([540\) 478-3677](tel:5404783677)

### **Virginia Breeding Bird Atlas – Volunteers needed!**

This year marks the beginning of the 2nd Virginia Breeding Bird Atlas study period. The last Atlas was completed in 1985-1989. Breeding Bird Atlases are collaborative efforts among wildlife agencies, ornithological organizations, and "citizen scientists" to create a census of the state's breeding bird populations. The resulting data set is a great birding guide, but more importantly a valuable conservation tool. The Atlas relies heavily upon volunteer involvement. Our 5-county region has two volunteer coordinators, Lisa Perry and John Spahr. For more information about the project, and to learn how you can get involved, please visit the website, [vabba2.org](http://vabba2.org), or contact Lisa at [koerner.lisa@gmail.com](mailto:koerner.lisa@gmail.com) or 540-455-3601.

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### **Sparrow Swap**

We are writing to request your help in spreading the word about a new citizen science project that makes use of house sparrow eggs. The North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences seeks the help of bluebird monitors in building our collection of house sparrow eggs for research purposes. Participants in the Sparrow Swap send house sparrow eggs to the Museum and report on subsequent details from each nest box where eggs were removed. Participants can also opt to receive replicas of house sparrow eggs to swap into nests to occupy female house sparrows with a fake nest attempt. Could you please forward the attached interest flier and information to members who may be interested in taking part in this project? Please feel free to email us if you have any questions.

Best,

Mariah Patton (Project Manager), Sparrow Swap Staff

Website: [bit.do/sparrowswap](http://bit.do/sparrowswap)

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### **Canaan Valley Birding Festival**

When: Thursday, June 2 - Sunday, June 5th

Where: Canaan Valley Resort State Park near Davis, WV  
What: We are a small volunteer festival in an area known for its scenic beauty, cool temperatures, high elevation (3500 to 4500 feet), grasslands, hardwood and conifer forests, wetlands and our diversity of birds including nesting boreal birds.

More information: [www.canaanresort.com](http://www.canaanresort.com) and pull down the events menu.

Come and enjoy our Bobolinks, Henslow's and Clay-colored Sparrows, Warblers, Northern Harriers and many more (see complete list on website.)

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**Please note:** Jill and Lance Morrow have a new email address. It is [lance@landjmorrow.com](mailto:lance@landjmorrow.com).

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**VICE PRESIDENT: FIELD TRIPS - Diane Lepkowski**

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**GOLDFINCH GAZETTE - Denise Hoodock**

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