



Goldfinch Gazette

The Newsletter of the Rockingham Bird Club

Volume XXXVI

Number 2

October 2010

OCTOBER MEETING

DATE: Thursday, October 7, 2010

TIME: 7:00 PM

PLACE: Virginia Mennonite Retirement Community - Rt. 42 North, Harrisonburg, VA

PROGRAM: What is as cute as a kitten and worthy of scientific study? It's a Northern Saw-whet Owl, of course! We are going to learn a lot about them at the October meeting when Clair Mellinger, Ph.D., professor emeritus of biology at Eastern Mennonite University, shares his research on these cute creatures' fall migration and longevity. His program will be in preparation for the club's annual November field trip to Highland Retreat to watch Clair weigh, measure, and band the owls. The meeting will be in the Detweiler Auditorium at the Virginia Mennonite Retirement Center. **Beforehand we will be meeting Clair for dinner at 5:30 at Taste of Thai on South High Street. All members are welcome to join us. Please call Elizabeth Ihle at 234 8296 to make a reservation.**

October Field Trips – Diane Lepkowski

Tuesday, October 5 - Smoke Hole, WV - Diane Holsinger will lead us to Smoke Hole WV with hopes of catching late migrant warblers, vireos, sparrows, Bald Eagles, and possibly some fall-blooming flowers and more. **Meet at the former Food Lion parking lot (Waterman Square) on Rt. 33 West at 8:00 AM.** Bring water, snacks and dress warmly. In the event of rain, the trip will be cancelled. Call 540-896-7132 or dhworkout@yahoo.com if you plan to attend or have any questions.

Tuesday, October 12: Hike to High Knob Fire Tower, GW National Forest - Clair Mellinger will lead a birding hike to **High Knob Fire Tower** in the George Washington National Forest. The tower is an old stone masonry structure, the hike is mildly strenuous (uphill then down upon return, less than two miles round trip) and beautiful. Hoped-for birds are late migrant warblers and perhaps migrating hawks. **Meet at 8:30 AM at Waterman Square Shopping Center** (the old Food Lion on Rt. 33 West.) **Bring water and snacks.** We plan to return around lunchtime. For more info, and if you plan to attend contact Clair at 540- 433-1752 or mellinac@emu.edu.

Monday October 18 – Monthly Hillandale Walk Meet **8:00 AM** at the parking lot next to the playground.

Saturday, October 23 - Lake Shenandoah - Greg Moyers will lead a walk around Lake Shenandoah. We hope to find some late warblers, early waterfowl and fall migrants. Time permitting, we may also stop at Lake Campbell and Leonard's Pond. We will **meet in the parking lot at the lake at 8:30AM**. Contact Greg at gwmoyers@msn.com or **434-3029** if you plan to attend.

Christmas Bird Count - Saturday, December 18, 2010 - Our Christmas Bird Count (CBC) for the Rockingham Count circle is planned this year for Saturday, December 18. Please add the date to your calendars, and plan to celebrate the week before Christmas by getting out to enjoy birding and helping with this important survey. For those unable to get into the field with the more official organized groups, feeder watching reports can be helpful too if you live inside the count area. Since the circle is divided into six sectors, please let me know if you need to know to which sector leader to report feeder watching information.

Scouting prior to the count for unusual species can be fun and helpful too. Even after the count, unusual species may be noted for 'Count Week' reporting if not seen during the count day itself. Please be sure to alert me as the compiler or a group / sector leader about any particular birds and areas for special attention.

Please contact me at **828-7126** or wcbenish@verizon.net to help me know if you hope to participate. - **Bill Benish**

Bird Seed Sale - Saturday, October 9

The bird seed order for Rockingham Bird Club was submitted to John Manning at Wetsel Seed company on September 30. Your orders will be waiting to be picked up at **Wetsel's warehouse, 961 N. Liberty St. on Saturday, October 9, from 8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.** Bird Club volunteers working on the loading dock will collect your orders and help load them into your vehicles. If you are unable to pick up your order be sure to make other arrangements for your seed. We must have the loading dock cleared before the day's end. I will need a minimum of six volunteers to help on BSSD. Tasks will include pulling orders, (an important secretarial task), collecting the orders, (requires accurate counting), loading vehicles, (a bit of muscle work), and telephoning persons who forget to show. To date I have three confirmed volunteers. This will be my last year to be in charge of BSSD. Someone within our group must step forward and tell Kay Gibson that you are willing to take on the task. That message would be like music to her ears. - **Cliff Lind**

Bird Club Book Club -Maureen Gallagher-McLeod

The BCBC will meet at 6:00 PM, October 21, at the home of Pat Churchman in Bridgewater. We will discuss the young reader's book *Hoot* by Carl Hiaasen which won a Newberry Award. We

will have a carry-in dinner followed by the book discussion. If you are interested in more information about BCBC, contact Maureen at famcleod@earthlink.net or 896-9541.

Treasurer's Report – Steve White

We began the club's 2010-2011 fiscal year with a combined balance in savings and checking accounts of \$18,796.00, right about where we've been in past years at this time. That amount will increase with revenue from the annual bird seed sales and as member dues come in. Our website is now accessible at the address www.rockinghambirdclub.com and we are working with a new designer, so there may be some minor modifications and upgrades. We still invite photo enthusiasts to send your favorite shots for inclusion in the sites photo album. Send photos as digital files to Cheryl Chancellor at this address: cheryl@coppermooncreative.com. Please submit your member dues as soon as possible. Either contact me at upcoming meetings (I generally sit at the table at the back of the auditorium) or mail a check to Steve White; 7738 Sparkling Springs Road; Singers Glen, VA 22850. Individual membership is \$15.00, family membership is \$20.00. Sustaining memberships can be \$30.00 and above, and remember that any donation amount in excess of \$35.00 may be claimed as a charitable donation on your tax returns. A \$30.00 donation will qualify you to receive a free copy of Clair Mellinger's book Birds of Rockingham County, Virginia and a club patch.

Special thanks and a "virtual gold star" to all of the following who made my job easier by paying this year's dues early, before our fall season even began: Kate Neckowitz, Gerald & Carolyn Beam, Marty Hurst, Eugene Moyers, Barbara Paulson, Herbert & Sarah Myers, Dr. & Mrs. Raymond Rapp.

Trip Reports

Skyline Drive – September 11 - Six members of the RBC made the trip to Skyline Drive on Saturday, September 11. In contrast to the previous weeks, things at Pocosin Cabin were pretty slow despite the gorgeous weather. Prior to the arrival of the rest of the group, William Leigh found Magnolia and Tennessee Warblers as well as a Common Yellowthroat. The rest of the group arrived and found Ovenbird, American Redstart, Chestnut-sided, Hooded, and Black-throated Blue Warblers. We also heard a late Cerulean Warbler singing. Other good birds included Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Indigo Bunting and Swainson's Thrush.

We then stopped at South River Picnic Area. Best birds found here were Ovenbird, Blackpoll, Hooded, Chestnut-sided, and Black-throated Blue Warblers as well as Swainson's Thrush, Scarlet Tanagers, Red-eyed Vireo and Yellow-throated Vireo. - **Greg Moyers**

Switzer Dam – September 20 - Five of us ran onto a couple of feeding frenzies of warblers on the Switzer trip. They included N. Parula, Cape May, Black & White, Black-throated Blue, Chestnut-sided, Blackpoll, Pine, Redstart, Magnolia and loads of Black-throated Green. Other good sightings were Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Red-breasted Nuthatches, Wood Pewee, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, Blue-headed Vireo, Scarlet Tanager and Cooper's

Hawk. We were glad to have Herb Myers, a new member of the RBC from Harmon, WV join us. -
Ken Hinkle

Hillandale Walk – September 21 - Twelve members of the RBC enjoyed the last summer walk at Hillandale Park. It was a blue-sky morning with temps in the 60s. Things got off to an early start as we were greeted by seven species before we even left the parking lot. Moments later as we crossed the pedestrian bridge near the cabin two accipiters flew overhead a bit too quickly for clear identification. The show continued in some trees just to the left of the gravel trail adjacent to the cabin area. Many birds were feeding and chasing and their activity held our attention for about a half-hour. Black-throated Green, Magnolia and Nashville Warblers fed in the hardwood tree as well as an adjacent cedar tree. A Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Red-eyed Vireo, Ruby-crowned Kinglet and American Goldfinch provided additional color to the early part of walk with a Wood Pewee enjoying the breakfast feast as well. One member commented “usually the best is saved for last.” We thought it would be a challenge to top this flurry of activity.

Moving along the trail next to the golf course things quieted down quickly for about ten minutes and we wondered if we had left the "breakfast trees" too soon. American Crows and Fish Crows were heard calling in the distance and many Chimney Swifts flew high overhead. A Towhee and a Catbird called and gave us glimpses as they hopped about in the brush along the golf course fence. A Common Yellowthroat made a brief appearance as well. One member that had lingered at the "breakfast trees" rejoined the group and reported their lingering had been rewarded with a Blackpoll Warbler. Blue headed Vireos, and more Blackpolls were seen at the far shelter and as we completed the first loop of our normal figure-eight walk we got excellent looks at Black-throated Blue Warblers. Some of us walked the second loop and picked up five more species to run our total for the morning to 42. We were also pleased to see a Warbling Vireo plus Cooper's, Sharp-shinned and Red-tailed Hawks. As the walk ended at 10:40 AM and as the remaining five members were opening car doors to leave one member shouted “look up!” Overhead was a kettle of at least six Broad-winged Hawks that gained height and then glided southward no doubt to visit the raptor counters at Afton. What a neat way to end our summer walks watching the Broadwings streaming southward. – **Tom Mizell**

Bird Sightings – Ken Hinkle

In early September William Leigh and Greg Moyers had some good warbler sightings at Pocosin Cabin in Shenandoah National Park including Bay-breasted, Cape May, Nashville and Tennessee.

More recently on September 18 Greg watched a pair of Philadelphia Vireos struggle with a large chunk prey before subduing it on Rt. 610 near the Blue Ridge Parkway. Other sightings there by Greg included several species of warblers and three Scarlet Tanagers.

Diane Holsinger saw an immature Yellow-headed Blackbird in a flock of Red-winged Blackbirds at the Franklin, WV town sewage treatment plant on September 22. She said she watched the bird for about five minutes before a truck scared it away. In a nearby cornfield were a dozen Indigo

Buntings. On an earlier September 5th trip to the Blue Grass Valley of Highland County, Diane had reported a Loggerhead Shrike and an immature Bald Eagle eating a road-kill rabbit.

While Diane was in Franklin, Charles Ziegenfus closer to home observed a lot of activity at Leonard's Pond including a Short-billed Dowitcher, Least Sandpiper, two Solitary Sandpipers, 17 Killdeer, two Vesper Sparrows and three Savannah Sparrows. He says that for the past few weeks countless Tree and Northern Rough-winged Swallows and a few Barn Swallows have covered the utility wires along the roads near this pond.

Zig has also been busy at the Dolly Sods Banding Station on Allegheny Front in WV. He said as of September 22 some 7,000 birds had been banded there including a first ever Common Nighthawk.

On a nice overcast cool-down September 26, Bill Benish and Robyn Puffenbarger had some "fun birds" in their yard including Blue-headed Vireo (a first yard bird), Cape May Warbler, Magnolia Warbler, two Common Yellowthroats and a Purple Finch. Bill said the warblers are the most typical/reliable ones in their yard in both spring and fall.

William Leigh had a great day at Switzer Dam on a drizzly September 26 logging a total of 53 species with 18 species of warblers including Nashville, Tennessee and Ovenbird along with Lincoln's Sparrows, Swainson's Thrush, Veery, Winter Wren, Red-breasted Nuthatch, both kinglets, Bald Eagle and a Great Horned Owl.

I was delighted to see an immature Red-headed Woodpecker up my road a week or so ago. I don't know if this is one that might have fledged in our yard or elsewhere, but nevertheless a good sign for the future.

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