



January 2014 Newsletter

of the Rockbridge Bird Club, encouraging the enjoyment, knowledge, and conservation of birds in the Rockbridge Area.

Calendar

Program meetings are held at 7 pm in the Old Courthouse meeting room, on Main Street in downtown Lexington. Informal gatherings are held at 5 pm in Munger Lodge at Boxerwood (for directions, see see <http://boxerwood.org/visit/index.asp>). Field trips are half day unless otherwise noted.

Wednesday January 8th at 5 pm - Informal gathering*

Tuesday January 21 at 7 pm, at Boxerwood - Presentation: Steve Kvech, bluebird conservation*

Saturday January 25th - All-day field trip to Highland County*; *snow date Saturday February 1st*

Friday to Sunday February 7 to 9 - VSO Winter Field Trip, Outer Banks of North Carolina*

Wednesday February 12th at 7 pm - Program: Kerry Kilday, "Spreading Your Wings:...trips away from Rockbridge County"

Wednesday March 12th at 5 pm - Informal gathering

Wednesday April 9th at 7 pm – Program, topic to be determined

Wednesday May 14th at 5 pm - Informal gathering

**see article below*

Informal gathering, Wednesday, January 8, 5 to 7 p.m., at Boxerwood

As always, we'll have a light supper (suggested donation \$5) and talk about both recent bird sightings and hoped-for upcoming sightings. Please bring any bird-related Christmas booty to share with the group!
—Laura Neale

Bluebird Conservation talk, Tuesday, January 21, 7 p.m., at Boxerwood

The local 2014 Bluebird Conservation Project will launch on this date! Steve Kvech, Rockbridge County Coordinator for the Virginia Bluebird Society (VBS), will talk about successful efforts to reverse the Eastern Bluebird's recent decline, breeding behavior, nest box construction, and protocols for monitoring bluebirds and other cavity

nesters during the breeding season. A February 8 field session on the Woods Creek Trail will follow.

The Project is jointly sponsored by our Club, the Master Naturalists, and the City of Lexington, with the purpose of recruiting and training volunteers to help maintain and monitor bluebird nesting boxes in the Rockbridge area. Bonnie Bernstein is coordinator; to get involved, call her at 460-9147 or email bonnie.bernstein@gmail.com. And look for an article with more information in an upcoming issue of the News-Gazette.

Highland County Field Trip, Saturday, January 25 (snow date Saturday, February 1)

Join us for the Rockbridge Bird Club's first trip to Highland County! We'll travel to the mountainous northwestern quadrant, where we hope to find wintering golden eagles and rough-legged hawks. Wildlife biologists are excited about the relatively recent recognition that a small and isolated population of Golden Eagles that breeds in Eastern Canada is thought to winter in Virginia, West Virginia, and neighboring states (see <http://www.dgif.virginia.gov/wildlife/birds/golden-eagle>).

We're fortunate to have as our guide Patti Reum, Highland County resident, wildlife biologist, and Conservation Chair for the Virginia Society of Ornithology. She led a grassroots project that raised money to track eagle movements; you can learn more, and see a picture of Patti helping tag the golden eagle "Virgil Caine," here: <http://www.ccbirds.org/2013/07/15/untimely-death-of-an-appalachian-golden-eagle/>

To facilitate Patti's planning and our carpooling, **registration is required!** This will be an all-day trip, starting early in the morning and returning by way of Swoope (Augusta County) around dusk to look for short-eared owls. For a delightful overnight stay and more leisurely morning, you may prefer to stay Friday night at the Highland Inn or Montvallee Motel in Monterey. For more information, and to register, please go to the very last page of this newsletter, after the Club information; or contact Alexia Smith at 463-4010 or alexia@rockbridge.net.

VSO Winter Field Trip to the Outer Banks, February 7 - 9

You can join any of the Virginia Society of Ornithology's regular quarterly field trips whether you're a member or not! You'll have knowledgeable guides to the areas visited and meet bird lovers from around the state.

The traditional winter trip to the Outer Banks starts with an optional Friday visit to Lake Mattamuskeet, where last year the group spotted 95 species, including Black-crowned Night Herons, 6 warbler species, 6 woodpeckers species, and an assortment of ducks. Saturday all day is spent visiting the impoundments of Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge and the beaches of Cape Hatteras National Seashore, where one can see wintering waterfowl, shorebirds, ocean birds, and sometimes whales. Sunday morning may include exploration of Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge.

Advance registration is required, free to VSO members and \$20 for non-members (fee applied to 2014 VSO membership). Reservations at the trip headquarters motel in Nags Head must be made by January 23, 2012 to get the special VSO rate. For more information on the trip, the motel, and how to register, go to http://virginiabirds.net/f_trips.html And if you decide to go and are interested in carpooling, contact our Club: rockbridgebirdclub@gmail.com

Solstice Christmas Bird Count Sets A Record

The 88th annual Lexington Christmas Bird Count broke a record as well as a tradition. On the 21st of December about 40 volunteers spent an unusually warm count day tallying a record 80 species (the previous high count was 79 species in 1979). Dick Rowe, the compiler and coordinator of the event, moved the count day forward from December 26th, the date it has traditionally been held. Since 1974 the count has been centered on Big Spring, located along Rt. 60 west of Lexington.

The unusual species identified this year were a Merlin, spotted in the Rockbridge Baths area; a Common Goldeneye at Big Spring; and 7 Bald Eagles seen at Lake Merriweather. Also of note, there was a large flock of Rusty Blackbirds seen near South River. This species is one that has experienced a notable decline in recent years. You can read Dick's full report on the Count in the December 31st issue of the News-Gazette.

—Wendy Richards

2013 Bird Seed Sale—Our First

Our Club held its first-ever bird seed and suet sale last month and donated the entire net proceeds of \$1,700 to the Boxerwood Nature Center, to support maintenance of bird habitat in the woodland garden. Bonnie Bernstein did a stellar job of coordinating this project, and many others contributed help: Spencer's Home Center accepted delivery of nearly 5,000 pounds of seed off a tractor trailer and conveyed it in a smaller truck to Boxerwood. There, volunteers unloaded the seed and helped customers as they arrived at the Nature Center to pick up their orders. Congratulations and thanks to all!



Club Officers

President, Wendy Richards

Secretary, Alexia Smith

Program Chair, Sarah Burleson

Publicity Chair, Bonnie Bernstein

Vice President, Laura Neale

Treasurer, Betty Besal

Field Trip Chair, Kerry Kilday

Club Ornithologist, Dick Rowe

Newsletter edited by Alexia Smith & produced by Jan Smith.

Please send feedback & news items to alexia@rockbridge.net

For more information about the Club,
please contact Wendy Richards, 540-463-5214,
or Laura Neale, 540-261-1909.

Join the Club by making out a check for \$15 or more to Rockbridge Bird Club and sending it, along with your address, email address, and phone number, to Betty Besal, 104 Shake Rag Road, Lexington, VA 24450. Thank you.

**REGISTRATION INFORMATION for
Highland County Field Trip, Saturday, January 25
(snow date Saturday, February 1)**

trip coordinator: Alexia Smith, 463-4010, alexia@rockbridge.com

This is an all-day trip to Highland County in search of golden eagles and rough-legged hawks, with guidance by Patti Reum. We'll leave Rockbridge County at 7 or 7:30 a.m. (exact time and meeting place to be determined). We'll return by way of Swoope, in Augusta County, to look for short-eared owls at around dusk.

Registration is required! To register, please provide the following information by close of business on Monday, January 20, to Alexia at 463-4010 or alexia@rockbridge.com:

Name, phone number, cell phone number, and email address

Number of people in your party

Can you provide transportation by 4WD or AWD?

If so, for how many additional people?

Do you plan to go to Highland County Friday to stay overnight (see below)?

* * *

Overnight option: Club President Wendy Richards recommends an overnight stay at Monterey's picturesque Highland Inn, a Virginia historic landmark. She provides the following information on this option for Friday evening, Jan. 24th:

Website: <http://www.highland-inn.com/>

email: info@highland-inn.com

ph # 888-466-4682 or 540-468-2143

Mention the Rockbridge Bird Club for a 10% discount; our prices are as follows:

king-size bed: \$116.10

queen-size bed: \$107.10

"full double" (one full-size bed): \$89.10

"double double" (2 double beds): \$107.10

Rates include complimentary continental breakfast (coffee, tea, juice, hard-boiled eggs, quick breads, cereal, milk)

Check-in time: anytime after 2 pm

Half a block away and under the same management is the Montvallee Motel:

<http://www.montvalleemotel.com/index.htm>

If you have questions about accommodations, please call Wendy at 540-463-5214.

If the trip has to be postponed due to weather, the Club will notify you in time for you to cancel your reservations. Reservations and cancellations are your responsibility.