



October 2017 Newsletter

of the

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

Calendar

Sat., Oct. 7, 8:00 a.m.—First-Saturday bird walk at Boxerwood *

Sat., Oct. 14, 9:00 a.m.—Bird walk at Kendal led by Kerry Kilday
(rain date Sat., Oct. 21) *

Mon., Oct. 16—Bird Seed & Suet Sale: deadline for ordering *

Sat., Nov. 4, 8:00 a.m.—First-Saturday bird walk at Boxerwood *

Weds., Nov. 8, 7:00 p.m.—Program: Mixon Darracott on Purple Martins

*see article below

Birds are important because they keep systems in balance: they pollinate plants, disperse seeds, scavenge carcasses and recycle nutrients back into the earth. But they also feed our spirits, marking for us the passage of the seasons, moving us to create art and poetry, inspiring us to flight, and reminding us that we are not only on, but of, this earth. —Melanie Driscoll, National Audubon Society

Monthly Birding at Boxerwood: October 7...

Meet at 8:00 a.m. in the parking lot for the first-Saturday Boxerwood bird walk, lasting about two hours. Bonnie Bernstein & Wendy Richards will be our guides this week. If you have questions, or in case of doubtful weather, please contact Wendy at 540-463-5214 or richardsw@wlu.edu. Directions are at www.boxerwood.org.

Kendal Bird Walk Saturday, October 14, at 9:00 a.m.

Our Bird Club is fortunate to have a number of members who are Kendal residents. These folks have been birding for many years, both here in Rockbridge and in other places. In collaboration with our Kendal members the Club is offering an opportunity to take a walk with them in their community — where, I've heard, birds like to hang out.

Please join Kerry Kilday, an excellent birder and generous teacher, as he takes us on a stroll around the Kendal campus. We'll meet at 9 a.m. in front of Anderson Hall, the main building at Kendal, where there is ample parking. The walk will last a few hours, on easy paths, though sturdy footwear is recommended. Remember to bring your binoculars; if you don't have them, there will be a few pairs to lend.

This event is open to the general public, and the rain date is Saturday, October 21. If you have any questions, please contact me at 540-463-5214 or richardsw@wlu.edu.

—Wendy Richards, Field Trip Chair

Seed & Suet Sale: order by October 16!

Bonnie Bernstein is again organizing the Club's annual Bird Seed and Suet Sale, a fundraiser for Boxerwood co-sponsored with the Rockbridge Farmers Co-op. Order your winter supplies now, and you'll benefit both the birds and Boxerwood!

Items include black-oil sunflower seed, nyjer, safflower, gourmet mixes, and suet cakes. You'll find product information and order forms on the [Boxerwood webpage](#). This year you can order online or mail your order to Boxerwood. Orders must be received no later than Monday, October 16 and will be available for pick-up at the Rockbridge Farmers Co-op on Friday, November 10, from 10 a.m. to noon and 4 to 5:30 p.m.

If you have questions, please email bonnie.Bernstein@gmail.com.



Support the Club that sells the seeds that feed the birds...

Dues are due!

— and additional donations are always welcome. Dues are only \$15 per household, so perhaps you'll want to put in a little extra. You'll be helping to pay for our public programs and other educational, outreach, and conservation activities. Please mail payment (and new contact information, if any) to Treasurer Betty Besal: see address at the bottom of page 4. Thank you for your support!

Bob's Perch: Migration Season

As in most years, I've felt some disappointment this fall as reports have described the migration of warblers and raptors through our area. I had resigned myself to the idea that the movement is mostly along the Blue Ridge, and those of us to the west just don't have the same experience. But one of the general themes of birding is just to wait – that patience is sometimes rewarded. So this morning, while walking the dog, I noticed that the walnut and sycamore trees along the stream were full of small birds. They were moving quietly and could easily have been missed, but as I was standing still for a minute or two the trees came alive with movement.

I didn't have my binoculars, and the faded colors make identification really hard (for me, impossible), but you could compare the sizes and shapes with Titmice and Phoebes nearby and know that they were warblers, proving again that the stream of migration is widespread in our area.

Though the weather has ignored the calendar's signal of fall, other parts of nature are facing the inevitable changes that come with earth's orbital journey and the angle of the sun. Among the changes we watch for most is the migration of songbirds and others through our area on their way south. They are joined on the trip by some of our summer residents that also choose to head for more hospitable climes.

The importance and difficulty of the trip for these birds reminds us that the relationship between people and birds is complicated. We want to try to help as much as we can, but we also sometimes wonder if our help could actually cause problems. A lot of us feed birds all year long because we know we'll be able to see them better and also make their lives a little easier.

These days we wonder, though, if our efforts might cause problems. There has been some discussion on listserves, for example, about whether feeders for hummingbirds might keep them around too long. If they don't leave when the time is right they might encounter bad weather and food shortages that might make survival more difficult. There has actually been a lot of research on this question, though, and the answer is reassuring. We now know that the trigger for movement in the migration season isn't related to the availability of food. It turns out that a much more consistent indicator of change – the amount of sunshine during each day – dictates when the birds leave.



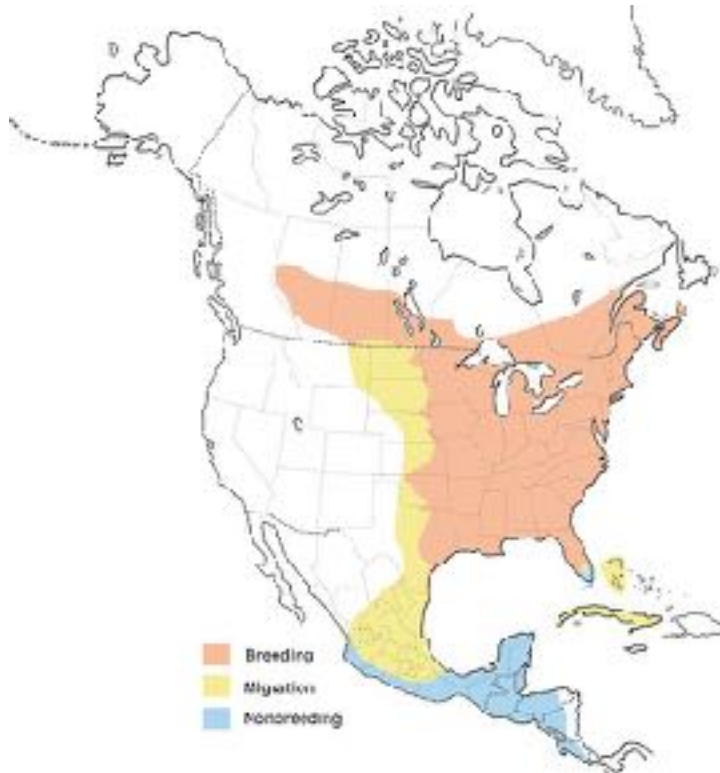
Young migrating Ruby-throated Hummingbirds stop at a feeder. Photo by Harlen Aschen.

Everything in nature interacts with everything else, and we know we have effects on bird behavior in many ways (they know that we're watching, and I think they try to put themselves between us and the sun, just to be difficult). It's comforting to know that the process of evolution hasn't relied on such fickle factors as the willingness of people to offer food.

— Bob Biersack

A bit more about hummingbirds: feeders & migration

Male Ruby-throated Hummingbirds go south first, and the juveniles of both sexes may lag behind the adult females (see [Birds of North America](#), BNA, whose map of the species' range you see below).



Here in Rockbridge, during these fall days, our flowers and feeders help the migrants along their way to their Central American wintering grounds. But, as BNA notes, hummingbird feeders "may contribute to predation by domestic cats and to increased incidence of window collisions" — so be careful where you put them!

See the Annenberg Learner website for a nice simplified [account](#) of the the Ruby-throat's annual cycle of migration & activities, complete with a great photo for each month.

— Alexia Smith



JOIN THE CLUB by making out a check for \$15 or more per household to Rockbridge Bird Club and sending it, along with your address, email address, and phone number, to Betty Besal, 120 Chavis Avenue, Lexington, VA 24450. Thank you.

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For more information about the Club, visit our website at www.rockbridgebirdclub.org and find us on Facebook.

Contact the Club by email at rockbridgebirdclub@gmail.com or call Alexia Smith, 540-463-4010, or Laura Neale, 540-261-1909.

Club Officers

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Ruby-throated Hummingbird in winter. Photo by Bud Hensley