



November 2017 Newsletter

of the

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

Calendar

Unless otherwise noted, program meetings are held at 7 pm in the Old Courthouse meeting room, in downtown Lexington. Field trips are half day, and the meeting place is the Lexington Food Lion parking lot.

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 *

Fri., Nov. 10, 10 to noon and 4 to 5:30 — Seed Sale pick-up *

Sat., Nov. 11—Project FeederWatch begins *

Sat., Dec. 2—First-Saturday bird walk at Boxerwood

December—Christmas Bird Count (date to be announced)

*see article below

Birds matter not least because amazing migrations remind us what an interconnected web we live in, from pole to pole.

—Bill McKibben, author & environmental advocate

Monthly Birding at Boxerwood: November 2

Meet at 8:00 a.m. in the parking lot for the first-Saturday Boxerwood bird walk, lasting about two hours, with Kerry Kilday. If you have questions, or in case of doubtful weather, please call Kerry at (561) 389-9612. Directions are at www.boxerwood.org.

Program on Purple Martins by Mixon Darracott Wednesday, Nov. 8

In retirement, Fishersville physician Mixon Darracott has been hosting a colony of Martins at his home for the ten years now, providing more than 40 nesting sites. He estimates that 180 Martins were born in his colony this past spring! His talk will cover the species' natural history as well as ongoing research concerning their migration between North and South America. He'll also have suggestions for those interested in attracting Martins and starting a colony at home. The meeting will take place at 7 pm in the Old Courthouse meeting room in downtown Lexington.

Seed & Suet Pick-up on Friday, November 10

Seed and suet orders 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.



Mixon Darracott with his granddaughter, Grace Melvin, and Purple Martin houses.
Photo courtesy of Dr. Darracott

Citizen Science: FeederWatch begins November 11

You can contribute to the monitoring of bird populations just by counting the birds outside your window! FeederWatch season lasts from November 11 to April 13; you can count birds as often as every week, or as infrequently as you like. At the [Project website](#) you'll find lots of information, including instructions, downloadable identification tools, and explanations of how your data get used. For your fee of \$18, which provides the Project's primary support, you'll get a Research Kit that includes instructions, a bird ID poster, and other goodies — plus the satisfaction of contributing to research at The Cornell Lab, a world leader in the study and conservation of birds. From the Project website: "FeederWatch data are important because they provide information about bird population biology that cannot be detected by any other available method."

Birds Hitting Windows - Now You Can Do Something!

The Conservation Management Institute (CMI) at Virginia Tech has launched a regional monitoring project and they are asking for our help. It is estimated that a billion birds a year die or are injured as a result of hitting windows in the US. I know many of you have witnessed this sad occurrence in your homes and work places. Now if you see this happen you can contribute a record of the incident. Your participation will aid CMI's effort to understand where and under what conditions bird-glass collisions occur so that hopefully more can be done to address this serious threat to birds.

You can read more about this important initiative at the CMI's [Bird-Window Collision Project website](#). Here you can also click on "Report a Collision" to submit a simple report via email. You'll be prompted for the following information: date, address (or other location data), species (if known), whether the collision was fatal, and the side of the building where the bird strike happened (North, South, East or West). You're also asked to include other information that you feel is important and to attach a photograph if you have one. Alternatively, you can email reportawindowcollision-g@vt.edu directly, including the information requested above in your message.

— Wendy Richards, Field Trip Chair

Editor's note — look for an article in a future newsletter about what you can do at home to lessen the likelihood of window collisions.



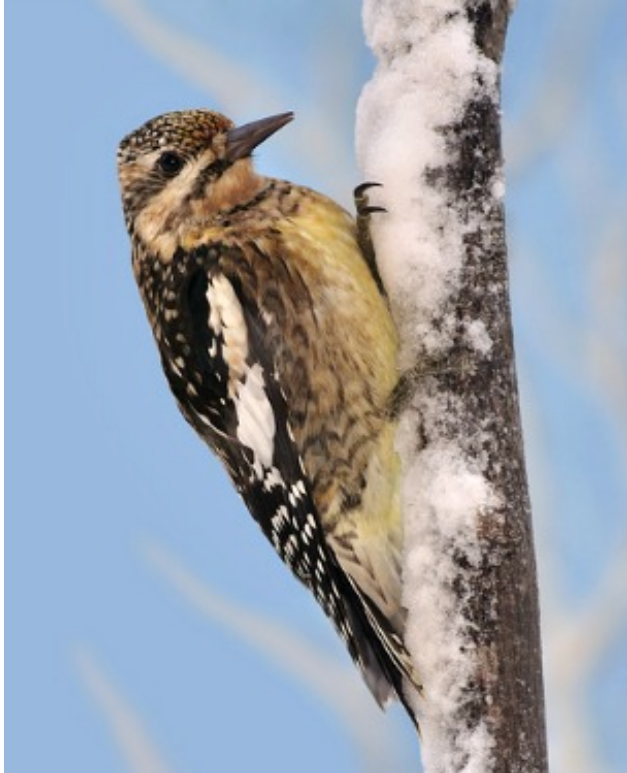
Are these windows bird-safe?

Bob's Perch: Seasonal Impressions

As the temperature drops and the darkness lingers, I have often thought of autumn in terms of endings. The life-giving warmth that began in spring is ending, with most plants and some mammals and other creatures heading into dormancy. Human culture follows this rhythm with commemorations of All Souls and All Saints or el Dia de Muertos, while Halloween centers on ghosts and goblins.

Other aspects of nature, and the way we experience them, can be different and more hopeful even in this time of decline. In the last couple of weeks some familiar sights and sounds have returned after being absent for many months. White-throated Sparrows are calling again for 'Old Sam Peabody Peabody Peabody.' It won't be long before I'll be wishing he'd just show himself so these birds could relax, but for now their return is kind of exciting and reassuring.

Last week I was surprised by lots of movement and crying in the maple trees around the house. There were three Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers chasing each other from branch to branch, circling and fussing but seemingly enjoying the chase. I hadn't seen several together this way before, and when I checked the guides they all appeared to be juveniles. So now I've decided that these three are actually this year's siblings, sticking together as they move to a place that will suit them through winter, a season they have yet to experience.



These rhythms of coming and going, decline and renewal are felt much more here than in the cities in which I've spent most of my years. The three young birds, along with the return of old friends from feeders past, have offered some unexpected warmth toward the end of a challenging year. Transitions help to bring us together and remind us of hopeful things to come.

—Bob Biersack

*Juvenile Yellow-bellied Sapsucker.
Photo by Stephen Russell 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.

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.

(cont'd. on next page)

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Birdwatchers all in a row.
Photographed by Wendy Richards at Kendal, on the October 17th bird walk.