



## September 2018 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 Piovano Room at Rockbridge Regional Library, in downtown Lexington.*

Fri., Sept. 7, 5 - 7 p.m.—art show opening: "In Flight" at Nelson Gallery \*

Weds., Sept. 12, 7 p.m.—Program: Dick Rowe on birding in Florida \*

Sat., Sept. 15, 8:00 a.m.—Boxerwood Bird Walk \*

Sat., Sept. 15, 10 a.m.- 3 p.m. Rockfish Gap Hawk Watch open house \*

Weds., Nov. 14, 7 p.m.—Program: Peg Sheridan, artist, with a demonstration of painting birds

Weds., Feb. 13, 7 p.m.—Program: TBA

Weds., Apr. 10, 7 p.m.—Program: Maureen Eiger, subject TBA

\*see article below

Migratory birds bind up the corners of this increasingly fragmented globe – uniting the poles and the tropics, forests and deserts, wilderness and cities. A planet that sustains them will sustain us; their fate is our fate.

– Scott Weidensaul, "Living on the Wind"

### Art Show Featuring Birds at Nelson Galley opening September 7

The Rockbridge Bird Club is excited to join Nelson Gallery in celebrating the "Year of the Bird" with an art show at the Gallery for the month of September: "In Flight," curated by artist and Bird Club member Laure Lubin-Stevens. An opening reception sponsored by our Club will be held from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m. Friday evening, September 7. Please join us!

Participating artists include Jessie Benson, Jennifer Cox, Barbara Crawford, Peg Sheridan, Nancy Spahr, Larry Stene, and Juliette Swenson. Jennifer Cox's work is already familiar to members – she created our beautiful club logo!

Nelson Gallery is located at 27 West Washington Street in Lexington. Gallery hours are Wed-Sat, 11 to 5 p.m.



## **September 12 Program: Dick Rowe on birding in Florida**

VMI biology professor Dick Rowe, the Club's ornithologist, will give us an account of his February, 2017, trip to Florida—illustrated with his beautiful photos of birds. The meeting starts at 7:00 p.m. and will be held in the Piovano Room of the Rockbridge Regional Library.

Dick visited the St. Petersburg/Tampa area, birding various hotspots there, on north to the Tarpon Springs area, and at a particular location near Gainesville. He notes: "I saw many birds that are very unusual—perhaps never seen here—for us in Rockbridge County, and in Virginia generally."



*Limpkin. Photo by Dick Rowe*

## **Birding at Boxerwood on Saturday, September 15**

I'm happy to announce that the popular Boxerwood Bird Walks, co-sponsored by the Rockbridge Bird Club and Boxerwood Gardens, will again be offered to Club members, friends, and the general public. The walks will occur quarterly, led by various knowledgeable birders. The first walk is scheduled for Saturday, September 15, at 8:00 a.m., with two or three Club officers sharing our knowledge of birds and bird behavior. All walks will begin in the parking lot at Boxerwood, 963 Ross Road, Lexington.

Kerry Kilday, initiator and former leader of these walks, compiled an impressive list of species that like to hang out in the varied bird-friendly habitats of Boxerwood. Grab your binoculars and sturdy shoes and join us for a couple of hours of looking and listening! For more information, contact me at richardsw@wlu.edu.

*—Wendy Richards, Field Trip Chair*



## "Where the Raptors Soar—A Day at the Hawk Watch"

### Rockfish Gap Hawk Watch open house Saturday, September 15

You can drop in on this event anytime between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. (you'll have time to go to Boxerwood first!). In addition to scanning the skies for migrating raptors, visitors can learn how to identify the species, try out assorted binoculars and spotting scopes, meet some live raptors courtesy of the Wildlife Center of Virginia, and more. Organizers suggest bringing a lawn chair, hat, sunscreen, and binoculars (but no pets, please). The Hawk Watch is located on Afton Mountain; for directions and more information see the "Raptors Soar" [website](#). Rain date is Sunday, September 16.



*Photo from [Rockfish Gap Hawk Watch website](#), where you'll also find photos of the 15 raptor species commonly seen by Rockfish Gap hawk-watchers during fall migration.*

### The Bird Club's executive committee needs YOU!

We'll have elections at our November Annual Meeting, and we're looking for new folks to join in shepherding the Club along. A small group has been trading various positions since our first election six years ago; your participation would spread the work around, and your fresh perspective and energy would be good for the Club. Please have a look at the job descriptions [here](#) and see what you'd like to do. To discuss options, you can [email](#) the Club or call Alexia at 460-0854. The executive committee meets about five times a year—and we enjoy getting together! Thank you.

### Bob's Perch:

The cycles of nature don't always correspond with the cycles of the seasons as we perceive them, and for me the month of August might be the best example. Birds are mostly shifting from breeding and feeding young to early migration or gaining the skills that will get them through when the seasons really do change. Dozens of juvenile

Indigo Buntings, for example, are in the fields feeding and learning to fly. The songs of Wood Thrushes have been replaced by Yellow-Billed Cuckoos nearby in the woods. In the evening there are distant Barred Owls I haven't heard since spring.

This year's breeding season in the yard was pretty successful, with the normal collection of Phoebe on ledges on the house, Song Sparrows and Gray Catbirds in the bushes, and Indigo Buntings at field edges. I was also able to watch a Blue Jay build a nest in the big maple tree next to the house before the leaves completely blocked the view.

A pair of Eastern Bluebirds did double duty this year. First they fledged four young from a new box. The fledglings had some second thoughts after they moved to a redbud tree near the box. They spent at least an hour flying (well, fluttering) up to the box, but they could never figure out how to get back into the hole. The adults then moved on to a different "cavity" for a second clutch.

We have a garden sculpture in front of the house, the focus of which is a copper teakettle. It isn't very big, and the hole cut in the side is larger than it should be for Bluebirds, and it's facing the wrong direction (north). It's fairly close to the house and it sits in the sun in the middle of summer, which makes it pretty toasty during the day.



In spite of all that, the female decided she could make it work, and a loosely woven nest began to appear. A couple of weeks later she hatched two more young ones, and we watched as mom and dad faithfully delivered food and pulled waste from this oven for the next couple of weeks. It was nearly the end of July when two gangly chicks decided they were ready for the outside world. We know from scientific reports that the widespread use of carefully designed bluebird boxes has had a significant impact on populations for this beautiful species; but it seems they're still willing and able to be a little creative when it comes to housing.

And so another season of bird life turns, well in advance of our calendar, and even further from the seasonal turn as it gradually shifts with climate change, maybe still a couple of months away. Will birds adjust? Should they?

—Bob Biersack





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](http://www.rockbridgebirdclub.org) and find us on Facebook.

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

### Club Officers

President, Alexia Smith  
Vice President, Laura Neale  
Secretary, Bob Biersack  
Treasurer, Betty Besal  
Program Chair, Sarah Burleson

Field Trip Chair, Wendy Richards  
Publicity Chair, Bonnie Bernstein  
Membership Chair, Adrienne Bodie  
Club Ornithologist, Dick Rowe

Newsletter edited by Alexia Smith. Logo by Jennifer Cox

Website managed by Bob Biersack

Facebook page managed by Becky McKenzie

*Do you know this bird? Come to Dick Rowe's talk on September 12 to learn out about its presence in Florida. The photo is, of course, by Dick.*

