



November 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, and field trips generally meet at the Lexington Food Lion parking lot.

Weds., Nov. 14, 7 p.m.—Program: Peg Sheridan, Appreciating Birds Through Art *

Tues., Nov. 27, 8 a.m.—Field trip: local wetlands (rain date Thurs., Nov. 29) *

Weds., Feb. 13, 7 p.m.—Program: Dr. Daniel Klem, Bird-Window Collisions

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

*see article below

When you have seen one ant, one bird, one tree, you have not seen them all.
—E. O. Wilson, biologist, naturalist, & author, b. 1929



**Program: Appreciating Birds
Through Art, 7 p.m. Nov. 14**

Peg Sheridan will be joining us for a fun, unique opportunity. As Peg explains, we'll get to watch as she draws an owl on her watercolor paper and develops a painting. She'll show us the techniques she uses to make the bird's vibrant eyes, soft feathers, and alert expression, then to create the feel of a forest in the background. Come see a painting emerge before your eyes!

Peg has a background in Wildlife Biology and worked in the field for several years. Her experiences included studying ruffed grouse and woodcock in northern Minnesota and surveying Spotted Owls in Washington state.

"Wren Song"

Peg's career switched to art when she was staying at home to raise a young family. Ever since then she's been painting watercolors and selling them in many venues in the region, winning several awards. She teaches watercolor painting as well. Her love of the outdoors and wildlife continues, and she enjoys painting outside and from her own photographs of wildlife.

Peg will have some of her wildlife art on display.

The program will be preceded by announcements and...

The Rockbridge Bird Club's 2018 Annual Meeting

There are just two items on the agenda. For the election of officers, a slate will be presented, as listed in the October newsletter: for President, Laura Neale; Vice President, Bob Biersack; Secretary, Sue LaRue; and Treasurer, Jan Smith. And outgoing Treasurer Betty Besal will present her annual report.



Swamp Sparrow. Photo by Dick Rowe

Field Trip: Visiting local wetlands on Tuesday morning, November 27

When daylight shortens and temperatures drop we spend more time inside watching birds from windows, but it's also good to get outside and see what species are beyond window views. There may be ducks and other waterfowl sheltering at local ponds, streams, and wetlands that visit our area only in the colder months. And late November is a good time to scout for the Christmas Bird Count.

I hope you can join a group of enthusiastic birders on the morning of Tuesday, November 27th, as we visit local wetlands such as the Locher Tract, near Natural Bridge Station, and the flood wall and Glen Maury Park, in Buena Vista.

We'll meet, as usual, at **8:00 a.m. at the Lexington Food Lion parking lot** and carpool to our destinations, returning close to noon. Bring binoculars, water,

and a snack if needed. Wear clothes appropriate for cold and damp conditions. The rain date is Thursday, Nov. 29th. For more information or with questions, contact me at 463-5214 or richardsw@wlu.edu.

—Wendy Richards
Field Trip Chair

*On the Blue Ridge Parkway,
October 7 "Hot Spots" field trip.
Photo by Wendy Richards*



2018 Bird Seed & Suet Sale

Thanks to more than 50 customers who participated in the Rockbridge Bird Club's 2016 Seed & Suet Sale, the Club, in cooperation with Rockbridge Farmers Co-op, sold 3,520 pounds of bird seed and 233 pounds of suet, raising more than \$1200 for Boxerwood. As in past years, proceeds from the sale go to support conservation of the nature center's diverse wildlife habitats.

A heads-up for folks who find themselves running out of supplies well before the spring migration brings more hungry birds our way: the Bird Club may offer a second opportunity to order black oil sunflower seed in early February, from a local producer in Buchanan. We'll let you know.

—Bonnie Bernstein, Sale coordinator

Two Animals in a Tree

Ron Dudley is a bird photographer who lives in Utah and spends lots of time in a very special place for birds, the [Farmington Bay Waterfowl Management Area](#). His daily blog posts feature beautiful images, photography notes, and/or photos of fascinating bird "behaviors."

But here's an unusual post, one worth reading all the way through even if it makes you uncomfortable: [two animals](#). After that, you may well be drawn into exploring the website's other images and topics!

—Alexia Smith

Bob's Perch

A dark, cold, rainy day is one of the sure signs of fall. It's the beginning of "birding by window" season when the search for local birds involves moving from window to window rather than place to place. It's also more about what you can see now, since the sounds are muted by walls and (hopefully) insulation that help us stay warm and dry.

It wasn't completely silent this morning, though, as I heard the song of a White-throated Sparrow for the first time this year. It's one of the dominant sounds of winter for us, and as time goes on I find I'm almost as happy to hear the first one as I am hearing the first Wood Thrush in the spring. Cornell describes the song as "oh sweet Canada Canada," but it must have been a New Englander who first gave me the description "old Sam Peabody Peabody," and that still comes to mind when I hear them.



White-throated Sparrow. Photo by Dick Rowe

I'm also seeing Song Sparrows today, moving along the gravel drive collecting grit to help with their digestion. They've grown silent in the last several weeks after dominating the yard, singing through most of the summer. There are also small groups of Goldfinches around today, their faded coloring making them much less obvious than they were earlier.

The leaves have thinned in the maple tree, so the remnants of the Blue Jay nest is visible again for the first time since the female completed construction last spring. I hope she was successful and that some of the gang hanging around now will think of this as home.

I like these transition times. The hummingbird feeders need to come in, as it's been a week or so since the last Ruby-throat was seen, but there are still plenty of natural seeds around to keep everyone happy till the seed sale supplies arrive later this month. (Hope everyone got their orders in as we help the birds and Boxerwood again this year.)

The winter birds are arriving, with the possibility that different species will also spend some time here in the next few months. So it's time to make sure the windows are clean — and made [safe for birds](#) as needed — and the feeders are close, as this new "season" of birding begins.

—Bob Biersack

Bird feeders: how far from windows?

Placing feeders close makes it easier to see the birds — but 3 feet or closer is also best for the birds, reducing the risk of window strikes. This is what the Cornell Lab of Ornithology recommends, because "if a bird takes off from the feeder and hits the window, it won't be going at top speed and has a better chance of surviving." The quote is from [this article](#) on Cornell's All About Birds website, where you'll find more information on where best to site a feeder.

Note that birds and window collisions is the topic our February 13 program. The presenter will be Dr. Daniel Klem, one of the top experts on this subject.

—Alexia Smith



Ruby-crowned Kinglet. Photo by Dick Rowe



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.

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



"Wishing I Could Fly" by Peg Sheridan