



October 2022 Newsletter
of the
Rockbridge Bird Club,
encouraging
the enjoyment, knowledge, &
conservation of birds in the Rockbridge Area

Calendar

Mon., Oct. 10, 7:30 a.m. - mid-afternoon — Field Trip: Scenic Road on North Mountain, led by John Pancake *

Later in October — Order seed & suet — details in article *

Sat., Oct. 22, 8 a.m - ca. 7 p.m. — All-day Field Trip: Hanging Rock Hawk Watch *

Thurs., Nov. 10 — Seed & suet order pick-up at Farmers Coop, hours TBA *

* see article below

How beautifully leaves grow old. How full of light and color are their last days.
— John Burroughs, American naturalist (1837 - 1921)

Field Trip: North Mountain's Scenic Road, Monday 10 Oct

This is a time when leaves are indeed colorful — and migrating birds are heading south along ridge tops! Scenic Drive is the gravel road that runs along the ridge above Lake Robertson. It's identified as [Top Drive](#) on the Virginia Birding and Wildlife Trail's Allegheny Highlands Loop, with an elevation above 3,000 feet and spectacular views of the Allegheny Mountains to the west and the Blue Ridge to the east.

We'll caravan along the ridge top, making frequent stops to look and listen in hopes of spotting Ruffed Grouse, Wild Turkeys, Red-tailed Hawks, and mixed flocks of migrants such as warblers, vireos, and thrushes; and we'll be alert for the bright red and black of a Scarlet Tanager. John Pancake, our leader, has developed his extensive knowledge of birds over decades of birding, much of the time here in the Rockbridge area.

We'll meet at the Tractor Supply parking lot at 7:30 am and carpool to I-64 W, exiting at Goshen to head up North Mountain. Wear warm clothes and sturdy footwear, and bring binoculars, water, and a packed lunch. We should return to Lexington by mid-afternoon. In the event of heavy rain the trip will be canceled. For more information contact me at richardsw@wlu.edu or 540-319-0318. I hope you can join the trip!

—Wendy Richards, Field Trip Chair

All-day Field Trip: Hanging Rock Hawk Watch in WV, Saturday 22 Oct

October is a great time to visit the Hanging Rock Raptor Migration Observatory on Peter's Mountain in Monroe County, West Virginia. Bald Eagles, Sharp-shinned and Red-tailed Hawks, and American Kestrels are often sighted there at this time of year.

The Observatory is located in a former fire lookout on a very rocky ridge line at 3,812 feet in elevation, with a 360-degree view. The walk from the parking lot to the fire tower is one mile. More info about the observatory can be found [here](#).



Hang Rock Raptor Migration Observatory. Photo by Wendy Richards

We'll meet at 8:00 a.m. at the Lexington Food Lion parking lot to carpool to the site, a trip of about an hour and a half. Bring a packed lunch and water, and wear comfortable hiking shoes for the moderate-to-steep walk from the parking lot up to the observatory tower. Also, bring layered clothing, as it will be cold and windy at that high elevation.

On our return trip we may stop for an early supper, around 4 p.m., at The Swinging Bridge Restaurant in Paint Bank, Virginia. Their specialty is bison burgers. This should put us back in Lexington around 7 p.m.

For more information, or in case of inclement weather, please contact me at 540-319-0318 or richardsw@wlu.edu.

—Wendy Richards, Field Trip Chair

Try Listening for Migrating Birds at Night

Raptors (and some other strong flyers) migrate during the day to take advantage of thermals, masses of air sent upwards by the uneven heating of earth's surface by the sun. Hence hawk watches!

But the majority of land birds migrate at night; during the day they rest and feed in woods and other sheltered habitats, thus avoiding bird predators. Other advantages of nocturnal migration for these smaller, slower, less-agile birds include nighttime's less-turbulent air (thermals *not* helpful), and cooler temperatures that dissipate the excess heat that long strenuous flights generate.

You'll find more about nocturnal migration in a [nice article](#) by Professor Herb Wilson at Colby College in Maine. And he encourages us bird lovers to go out at night and listen: "Nocturnal migrants are noisy, regularly emitting short flight notes."

Another website will be helpful here: [BirdCast](#), where Bird migration forecast maps show predicted nocturnal migration for the US overall — or for a city you select. This evening, the prediction for Lexington is [high intensity migration](#). Check it out.

— Alexia Smith

Boxerwood Seed & Suet Fundraiser is back – and better!

Bonnie Bernstein, our seed sale organizer, The Club is once again able to sponsor a Fall bird seed and suet sale to benefit Boxerwood, our go-to hot spot for local birding.

And, once again, the Rockbridge Farmers Co-op is our generous co-sponsor. They will receive and store our seed and provide space in their parking lot for a drive-through pick-up.

A flyer with product information and an order form will be forthcoming via email. The online store on Boxerwood's website will open for orders beginning October 17. You may also mail in an order form with a check to Boxerwood. All prepaid orders must be received by Monday, October 31. Orders will be ready for pick-up at the Co-op on Thursday, November 10.

From farm to backyard feeder

More good news! The Augusta Bird Club has helped us to identify new sources for our seed that guarantee premium quality and availability. This year we will acquire freshly harvested black oil sunflower seed directly from a local Rockingham farmer. All our other backyard bird feeding products will come from Lizzie Mae's Birdseed, an Amish family-owned supplier in Ohio. Lizzie Mae purchases high quality seed from Midwest farms and crafts their own mixes. In fact, they'll supply us with a blend specifically formulated for songbirds in our area.

Not-so-great news – prices are up

The price of bird seed has soared over the past two years as a result of many factors, including fires, floods, a decrease in planted acreage of sunflowers, and a surge of interest in bird watching and feeding since Covid. But you'll find our better-quality seed is competitively priced compared to local retailers.

We hope those of you who had been ordering the bulk of your seed for late fall and winter feeding from our fundraiser will plan to do it again this year. It's a great way to support both the birds and Boxerwood!



Photo by Bonnie Bernstein

Dues-&Donations Season

It's time to renew or begin your membership! You can pay your dues (\$15 per household) any time now for the Club's 2023 fiscal year, which began in September. Extra donations are always welcome. Your contributions make our public programs possible and enable the Club to support the best bird conservation efforts. Please scroll down to find out where to send your check. Thank you!



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 Jan Smith, 564 Big Hill Road, 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 Laura Neale, 540-261-1909.

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