



November 2023 Newsletter
of the
Rockbridge Bird Club,
encouraging
the enjoyment, knowledge, &
conservation of birds in the Rockbridge Area

Calendar

Thurs., Nov. 9 — Seed and Suet Sale pick-up *

Sat., Nov. 11, 8:30 a.m. — Second Saturday Birding at Boxerwood *

Mon., Nov. 13 — Annual Meeting with program: "Painting Birds: A Step-by-Step Process" by artist Lucinda Rowe, in the Piovano Room at the downtown Lexington library *

Sunday, Dec. 17 — Christmas Bird Count, followed by tally potluck at Boxerwood

* see article below

A Fly can't bird, but a bird can fly.

– A. A. Milne (1882–1956), of Winnie-the-Pooh fame

November's Second Saturday Bird Walk Returns To Boxerwood

On Saturday, November 11th, at 8:30 a.m. we'll meet at the Boxerwood parking lot and spend a couple of hours checking out the variety of species that are attracted to its bird-friendly habitats. This monthly event is open to everyone, beginning and experienced birders; we wander the trails and share the joy of finding who's here. We'll likely encounter species that have returned from farther north, such as White-throated Sparrows, Dark-eyed Juncos, and maybe a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker.

As always, wear appropriate footwear and bring binoculars. In the event of a heavy rain the walk will be canceled. For more information, including weather updates, contact Wendy Richards at richardsw@wlu.edu or mobile: 540-319-0318.

— Wendy Richards, Field Trip Chair

Record-Breaking Seed Sale!

More than 100 customers purchased 8,210 pounds of bird seed and 502 pounds of suet during last month's fundraiser – that's more buyers and more product than ever before. The Bird Club donates all the proceeds – this year, more than \$2,700 – to Boxerwood, one of our favorite local hot spots for birding year-round.

Remember to pick up your seed! Orders will be available for pick-up in the Rockbridge Farmers Co-op parking lot on Thursday (November 9) from 10 am to noon and again from 4 to 6 pm. Volunteers will be on hand to load the seed into your vehicle. All you have to do is drive up and give us your name.

If you are unable to pick up your order on Thursday, please contact Bonnie Bernstein (bonnie.bernstein@gmail.com or 540-460-9147) to make alternate plans.

Thanks to all who placed orders and made this year's sale a win-win for Boxerwood and the birds!

**Monday 13 November meeting: 6:30 p.m.
in the Piovano Room at the downtown library**

We'll gather for some social time at 6:30, followed at about 7:00 by the program:

**Painting Birds: A Step-by-Step Process
*a talk and watercolor demo by wildlife artist Lucinda Rowe***

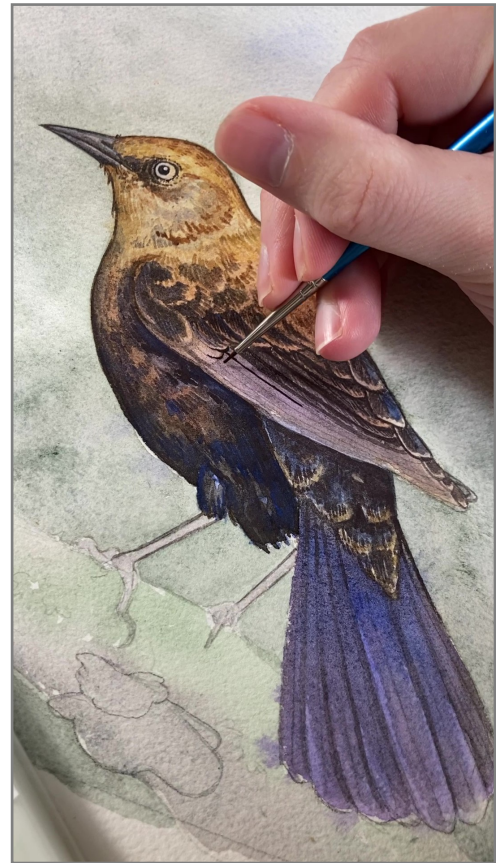
Lucinda will describe how she paints birds in a PowerPoint presentation combined with a live demonstration: "I'll show the basics of drawing a bird from a good reference and then painting that bird with watercolor, building up layers of color."

The artist also makes prints of her paintings in a variety of formats, and some of her ornaments, cards, and tea towels will be available to purchase on Monday.

Lucinda says she has loved bird-watching since she was a kid. She notes that while birds will always be her first love, she is "inspired by all things in nature."

Lucinda grew up in Lexington, the daughter of Club ornithologist Dick Rowe — who has often mentioned being accompanied on his birding trips by his daughter Lucy!

The program will be preceded by a short annual meeting (no elections this year).



Project Feeder Watch is Fun and Helps Birds

As we enter the time of year when birding opportunities seem less exciting, with breeding and migration over, along comes a chance to take part in a citizen science project that can be rewarding and fun. This will be my 15th year taking part in Project FeederWatch, a winter-long survey of birds that are recorded throughout North America. This historic project, operated by Cornell Lab of Ornithology and Birds Canada, provides a detailed picture of the distribution and abundance of species based on weekly observations — and you can contribute. Check out the website [here](http://www.birds.org/feederwatch).

Counting species and inputting them into a website may sound daunting, but it really isn't. Taking as little as 15 minutes or as much time as you want over a two-day period once a week from November 1st to April 30th will only enhance your knowledge

and enjoyment of birds, and you can skip weeks when you want to. The website clearly explains how you can contribute and how, if you do, you are helping birds.

As a result of spending time concentrating on the birds in my feeding areas, I've identified 64 species in my 203 total counts. From the comfort of my kitchen, I look out at my bird-feeding area and tally the species that are hanging out there. Over the years this wintertime focus on birds has provided me with much enjoyment and has taught me so much about the prevalence, behavior, and interactions that happen in my yard. Every once in awhile I see a new species or a familiar species doing unusual things.

And taking part in FeederWatch provides excellent teaching and sharing moments for children. It's a great family-oriented activity — even on a dreary winter day.

— Wendy Richards



*Yellow-rumped Warbler, a possible sighting at Boxerwood — or outside your window!
Photo by Dick Rowe*

The 25th Annual Winter Finch Forecast

Beginning in 1999, the Finch Research Network has been forecasting finch movements south every autumn, based on the availability of winter forage in their breeding grounds. So, for instance, the "big story" this year is that Pine Siskins are likely to head southward in relatively large numbers:

Significant numbers of siskins have started to leave the boreal forest in mid-September, with 1000s reported daily at migration monitoring stations from Duluth, Minnesota eastward to Tadoussac Quebec. With the poor White Spruce crop in much of the boreal forest, there should be a moderate to possibly strong flight of siskins southward this fall. This entertaining species prefers nyjer® seeds in silo or sock feeders.

As you can see, the forecast includes a note on what food each species prefers, so you can stock up!



Pine Siskins. Photo by Annette McClellan, from the Macaulay Library.

The Winter Finch Forecast covers members of the Fringillidae, or "true finch" family, whose members all have compact bodies, conical bills, and short necks with large jaw muscles; they're mostly seed-eaters. They include crossbills, Evening and Pine Grosbeaks, redpolls, and siskins. Click [here](#) for the whole 2023 forecast.

And for more on the "true finches," see

The Science of Birds: Fringillidae

The Science of Birds website is "a distilled, curated presentation of nerdy information about birds," according to its creator, Ivan Phillipsen. His [podcast on the Fringillidae](#) is a good example of what he puts out, and he writes an occasional blog as well. The topics covered are wide-ranging, from individual species to flocking behavior and how bird feathers get their colors. Ivan has a PhD in Zoology and co-owns a birding ecotour company called Wild Latitudes.

Want to get emails from the local Google Group about Rockbridge bird sightings?

Maybe you already do! But in case you don't, and if you're not familiar with how it works: group members send messages to one email address, which then distributes them to every person on the list. Recently, people have been reporting the arrival locally of first-of-season juncos. And if, for instance, a swallow-tailed kite shows up in Rockbridge County, you'd be among the first to know about it!

To subscribe, send an email to Dick Rowe at RoweRA@vmi.edu, telling him you'd like to join the Rockbridge Birds Google Group.

[One more bird photo, on page 5]



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.

Club Officers

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Joyce Cambron, Secretary
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Wendy Richards, Field Trip Chair

Laura Neale, Conservation Chair
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John Maluski, Member-at-large
Dick Rowe, Club Ornithologist

Newsletter edited by Alexia Smith. Logo by Jennifer Cox
Website managed by Bob Biersack
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Yellow-bellied Sapsucker. Photo by Dick Rowe