



February 2014 Newsletter

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

Calendar

Program meetings are held at 7 pm in the Old Courthouse meeting room, in downtown Lexington. Informal gatherings are held at 5 pm in Munger Lodge at Boxerwood, on Ross Road. Field trips are half day unless otherwise noted.

Saturday February 8th 10:00 to noon – Meet at Lime Kiln Park *

Wednesday February 12th at 7 pm - Program: Kerry Kilday, "Spreading Your Wings...trips away from Rockbridge County" *

Wednesday March 12th at 5 pm - Informal gathering

Wednesday April 9th at 7 pm – Program, topic to be determined

Wednesday May 14th at 5 pm - Informal gathering

**See article below*

*** *Bluebird Conservation Field session, Saturday, February 8, 10 a.m. to noon***

Steve Kvech, Rockbridge County Coordinator for the Virginia Bluebird Society, will lead a field session on the Woods Creek Trail to demonstrate how to site, maintain, and monitor bluebird nesting boxes. Participants will meet at Lime Kiln Bridge Park (corner of Enfield and Lime Kiln Roads) at 10 a.m.

Steve gave an earlier presentation on bluebird conservation and nest box monitoring to kick off the Bluebird Conservation Project, a joint undertaking by the Rockbridge Bird Club, Master Naturalists, Boxerwood, and the City of Lexington. The project's purpose is to recruit and train volunteers to help maintain and monitor nesting boxes along the Woods Creek Trail and other paths in our community. Homeowners who would like to install and monitor nesting boxes on their own property are also encouraged to participate in the field session years. For more information, contact Bonnie Bernstein (bonnie.bernstein@gmail.com or 460-9147).

--- *Bonnie Bernstein*

*** Meeting, Wednesday, February 12, 7 p.m. at the Old Courthouse meeting room**

Kerry Kilday will present a program entitled "Spreading your Wings—Birding Away from Rockbridge County." He'll talk about birding festivals, professional tours, and self-guided field trips to parks and preserves, showing photos of locales and birds and noting the pros and cons of different travel options.

Kerry is our Field Trip Chair and leads field trips for the Club. He lives part-time in Lexington and part-time in West Palm Beach, Florida, where he is a landscape architect by profession and birder by avocation.

Please note: The meeting room will be occupied by another group right up until 7:00 p.m., so we'll have to hustle to set up the chairs and tables, and we'll start a little late. We appreciate your patience and will welcome help.

Bird Watching Blitz, Friday through Monday, February 14 - 17

Would you like to contribute to a dynamic citizen science effort from the comfort of your home? Anyone anywhere in the world is invited to participate in the 17th annual Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC). This annual bird census became an international event in 2013 when tens of thousands of volunteers from more than 100 countries contributed data.

To participate in this valuable volunteer effort you will need to set up a free GBBC account through eBird. If you already participate in one of Cornell's citizen science programs such as Project Feeder Watch, you can submit your sightings through that account. Once you have an account, all that is required is that you commit to counting birds for at least 15 minutes on one or more days of the four-day count and enter your sightings. For more information see: www.BirdCount.org/gbbc

The information gathered during the GBBC helps track the locations and health of bird populations at a scale that would not otherwise be possible. The GBBC is a joint project of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society with partner Bird Studies Canada. Let's put Rockbridge County on the bird-watching map and log our wonderful birds for the world to see!

—Wendy Richards

In search of field trip coordinators (we all qualify)

Any of us can do this, whether expert or novice. Do you have in mind a place where you'd like some company for birding? It might even be your own property. Just pick a date, time, and meeting place (we can help with that). Whoever shows up will pool their knowledge and enjoy one another's company watching birds. If interested, please contact Alexia at 463-4010 or alexia@rockbridge.net.

2014 Membership reminder

Have you renewed your membership? Or perhaps you haven't yet joined the Club? Dues are just \$15 per household and help to defray expenses for speakers, field trips, and educational materials. See how to renew or join by scrolling to the end of this newsletter. Thank you!

Report: Highland County Field Trip, February 1

We saw just two eagles, and briefly, but nevertheless had a glorious day! Nine of us carpoled Friday night to the friendly, old-timey Highland Inn in Monterey for a delicious supper and cozy overnight: Bob Biersack and Jan Smith, Adrienne Bodie, Judy Hinch, Laura Neale and Chris Wise, Wendy and Steve Richards, and Alexia Smith. Patti Reum, guide for our trip, joined us for supper. In the morning, Diane Holsinger (our tenth group member) arrived and reported an exciting find on a nearby pond: a white-winged scoter. So that became our first stop on a wonderful day of adventuring by car caravan in the northwestern highlands of Highland County. The day was winter-mild and clear, and the vistas of mountains, their contours outlined by snow, were breathtaking. Chris and Laura spotted our eagle of the day, probably a juvenile golden, soon out of sight over the horizon.

At day's end, eight of us drove to the Swoope area, in Augusta County, in search of short-eared owls. In the failing light, we scanned the fields in vain. Then Bob spotted a low-flying shape: it looked and acted like those owls -- but all too quickly disappeared over a rise. Just then, who should appear but expert local birder Alan Larner, who led us along a dirt road and over the rise: there again that shape lifted & flew, from one fencepost to another! Alan quickly set up a scope, with just time for a few viewings before the owl flew off into the dark.

It was a great ending to a great day. And, perhaps typically of such adventures, we went expecting eagles, and Mother Nature gave us a good look at a sea-going duck on an inland mountain pond, and a last-minute thrilling glimpse of a special owl.

—*Alexia Smith*

Highland trip species: Wood Duck, Mallard, White-winged Scoter, Cooper's Hawk, Red-shouldered Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, probable juvenile Golden Eagle, Bald Eagle, American Kestrel, Mourning Dove, Rock Pigeon, Short-eared Owl (at Swoope), Eastern Screech-Owl, Belted Kingfisher, Blue Jay, Common Raven, American Crow, Tufted Titmouse, Carolina Chickadee, White-breasted Nuthatch, Carolina Wren, Eastern Bluebird, American Robin, Northern Mockingbird, European Starling, Northern Cardinal, Song Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, House Sparrow.

—*Scribe: Jan Smith*



Club Officers

President, Wendy Richards
Secretary, Alexia Smith
Program Chair, Sarah Burleson
Publicity Chair, Bonnie Bernstein

Vice President, Laura Neale
Treasurer, Betty Besal
Field Trip Chair, Kerry Kilday
Club Ornithologist, Dick Rowe

For more information about the Club,
please contact Wendy Richards, 540-463-5214,
or Laura Neale, 540-261-1909.

Join the Club by making out a check for \$15 or more to Rockbridge Bird Club and sending it, along with your address, email address, and phone number, to Betty Besal, 104 Shake Rag Road, Lexington, VA 24450. Thank you.