



June 2015 Newsletter

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

Calendar

Unless otherwise noted, program meetings are held at 7 pm in the Old Courthouse meeting room, in downtown Lexington, and informal gatherings are held in the Munger Lodge at Boxerwood, on Ross Road.

Saturday, June 6th, 7:30 a.m. – Birding at Boxerwood *

Sunday, June 7th, 6:30 a.m. -- Field trip to North Mountain *

Fall speakers have not yet been finalized, but save these dates for programs:

Wednesday, September 9th, 7:00 p.m.

Wednesday, October 14th, 7:00 p.m.

Wednesday, November 11th, 7:00 p.m.

* *See article below*

Field Trips and Programs

*** *Saturday, June 7: Boxerwood Bird Walk***

Meet Kerry Kilday at 7:30 a.m. in the parking lot for the regular first-Saturday Boxerwood bird walk, lasting about two hours. If you have questions, or in case of doubtful weather, please call Kerry at (561) 389-9612. Directions are at www.boxerwood.org.

*** *Sunday, June 8: Field Trip to North Mountain***

We'll spend the morning driving along the ridge top on the Highlands Scenic Byway, on the border with Alleghany County, stopping often to listen and look and occasionally walking a short distance. This is an area the Club hasn't visited, with some fairly high elevations -- so who knows what birds we'll find there! Meet in the Lexington Food Lion parking lot at 6:30 a.m. to carpool, and bring an extra layer in case temperatures are cooler up on the mountain.



A lively grape vine, photographed by Lad Sessions on the Club's May 16 field trip to Cold Mountain and Wiggins Spring Road. Other sightings included several warbler species and a willow flycatcher seen and heard up close. Bruce and Nancy Summers provided gracious hospitality at their mountain home.

Impromptu Field Trips?

Watch for emails from the Club about these. And if you'd like to instigate a birding expedition, please send date, meeting time, and itinerary to rockbridgebirdclub@gmail.com for forwarding to Club friends and members.

Newsflash!



With this abbreviated edition, **the Club newsletter goes on summer vacation.** Please send us your summer bird stories and/or photos for possible inclusion in the September issue! Thank you.

—Alexia Smith, Editor

The President's Perch

I was happily (well, almost happily) trimming one of the Spiraea in the front of our house this morning, thinking mostly about how the bush didn't really belong in this increasingly native landscape, when I stopped short. I had exposed a nest, hidden concealed a few inches from the

top of the bush. Hoping the birds had fledged; I climbed the ladder and looked in, only to find two pale spotted eggs – probably a song sparrow. Another likely-failed nesting attempt, thwarted by the interaction between birds and people.

It took me back to a conversation we had last Friday as we walked along the gravel road up to Apple Orchard Mountain. There was some displeasure in the group as a couple of cars passed us. Would they stress the birds ahead, causing them to move away? When we reached the first pair of car-bound birders they were searching for a warbler they thought they had heard and decided to play the song from a phone app to see if they could get a reaction – another cause for concern as we intentionally disturb the natural world so that it might please us. About the same time, we moved too slowly past a pair of Juncos guarding their nest. They fussed and chipped and called as they moved among the trees and understory trying to get rid of us. We did move on (though not right away, as there were other songs nearby we were trying to verify), and I assume they returned to their parenting duties.

On the way down from the radar tower, we got great looks at one of the many Cerulean Warblers we heard and sometimes saw along the way. This guy was singing from exposed branches just above us, and the sun wasn't even in the way of the view. We stopped and watched him for a while, and he soon stopped singing and moved a little from side to side as he looked down at us. Clearly we affected this bird, but had we stressed it or just aroused its curiosity? And does the question itself assume a level of anthropomorphism that is just silly? Shortly after, shots rang out as three park rangers brushed up on their skills at the range along the road – now that had to be stress-inducing, no?



Cerulean warbler. Photo by Dick Rowe

I like to think of myself as a (mostly) silent observer, leaving only footprints and taking only photos, as they say—reducing consumption of everything from water to fossil fuels. So where do I fall on the scale of unfortunate interactions between people and nature in general, and birds in particular? Does this interaction, including winter-feeding and buying bird-friendly coffee, sometimes help or always just distort what would otherwise be the natural order of things? And what does the natural order actually mean after these many thousands of years of human

activity, driven often by the notion that nothing is quite right unless we've touched it in some important way?

I don't have useful answers to any of these questions, but that surely was a beautiful bird looking down at me.

—Bob Biersack, President



For more information about the Club visit our website at www.rockbridgebirdclub.org

Contact the Club by email at rockbridgebirdclub@gmail.com or call Bob Biersack, 540-463-1942, or Laura Neale, 540-261-1909.

Join the Club by making out a check for \$15 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.

Club Officers

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Club Ornithologist, Dick Rowe

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