



March 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.

Wednesday March 12th at 5 pm - Program: Kerry Kilday, "Spreading Your Wings...trips away from Rockbridge County"

(postponed from February due to weather) *

Saturday, March 15th at 7:30 am - Field trip: Augusta Springs Wetlands*

Wednesday April 9th at 7 pm – Program, Donna Finnegan, "Birding by Ear 101"

Saturday April 19th at 7 am – Field Trip: Brushy Hills

Wednesday May 14th at 5 pm - Informal gathering

Saturday May 14th time TBA – Appalachian Trail birding hike

**See article below*

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

Kerry Kilday's long-anticipated talk will cover birding festivals, professional tours, and self-guided field trips to parks and preserves, complete with photos of birds and locales and including the pros and cons of different travel options.

The meeting will also include a brief lesson in how to identify Rusty Blackbirds, to encourage participation in the Rusty Blackbird Blitz (see article below).

*** Field Trip, Saturday, March 15, 7:30 a.m. carpool to Augusta Springs Wetlands**

Meet at the old KMart/Food Lion parking lot for this trip led by Kerry Kilday, with return planned for about 2:30. The Wetlands, located about 8 miles northeast of Goshen, features a boardwalk trail about 0.6 miles long and is described on the Virginia Birding Trail website:

<http://www.dgif.virginia.gov/vbwt/site.asp?trail=2&loop=MFT&site=MFT03>

For more information about the trip, please contact Kerry: kjkilday@gmail.com

Rusty Blackbird Spring Migration Blitz: March 1 - 31



Male Rusty Blackbird, Port Clinton, OH, 4 April.
from <http://bna.birds.cornell.edu/bna/>

Have you met the beautiful Rusty Blackbird? Perhaps not lately: its numbers have declined by 85-95% since the 1970s. March is when Rusties migrate through Virginia from the southeastern U.S. to northern forests; and so this is the month to contribute to an understanding of this least-known part of Rusty life -- and ultimately to efforts towards the bird's conservation.

To take part in the Spring Migration Blitz, polish up your Rusty ID skills, go looking for Rusties any time during March, and report your sightings as a Rusty Blackbird Blitz survey on eBird.org. You'll find more information at

rustyblackbird.org/outreach/migration-blitz, including guides to identification and habitat and an optional protocol for recording data.

Bluebird Conservation Project Update

The Rockbridge Bluebird Conservation Project is off to a strong start. Last month, the fledgling project drew 38 participants for a field session on the Woods Creek Trail led by Master Naturalist Catherine Gardener, who monitors nest boxes on the Vista Links golf course for the Virginia Bluebird Society. Participants walked to nearby Wilson Hall at Washington and Lee University for a follow-up presentation on bluebirds and other cavity-nesters by W&L biologist Paul Cabe.

As the nesting season nears, Bonnie Bernstein will continue to coordinate activities for volunteers who want to monitor nests on local trails or on their own property as members of a new Rockbridge NestWatch Community. NestWatch is a nationwide monitoring program run by Cornell Lab of Ornithology that is designed to track status and trends in the reproductive biology of birds (e.g., when nesting occurs, number of eggs laid, how many eggs hatch, and how many hatchlings survive). The NestWatch database is used to study the current condition of breeding bird populations and how they may be changing over time as a result of climate change, habitat degradation and loss, urban development, and the introduction of non-native plants and animals. As members of a Rockbridge NestWatch “Community,” local monitors will use the NestWatch platform to submit their own nest-watching data online and link it to others in the community. Their data will also be submitted to the Virginia Bluebird Society.

Two participants have volunteered to construct new bluebird nesting boxes that will go to create a new bluebird trail at Boxerwood and to replace boxes in disrepair along existing trails, and that will be made available to project volunteers who want to install them on their property. A workshop is planned for early March (date TBA) to construct predator guards and baffles. Project participants are also encouraged to locate and monitor open cup nests (nests found outside of nesting boxes).

Bird club members are welcome to join the Rockbridge NestWatch Community even if they were not able to attend last month’s presentations. For more information, please contact Bonnie (bonnie.bernstein@gmail.com).

—*Bonnie Bernstein*



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

Newsletter edited by Alexia Smith & produced by Jan Smith. Please send feedback & news items to alexia@rockbridge.net

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.