



ROCKBRIDGE BIRD CLUB

Encouraging the enjoyment, knowledge and conservation of birds in the Rockbridge Area

Spring 2026 Newsletter

CLUB CALENDAR

- Mar 28, 8:00 am – Birding on the Buena Vista River Walk
- Apr 11, 8:00 am – 2nd Saturday Birding at Boxerwood
- Apr 18, 7:00 am – Birding on North Mountain
- Apr 21, 7:00 pm – Wild Turkeys talk by Mike Dye at MRMS Library
- May 2, 7:30 am – Warbler Walk on Apple Orchard Mountain
- May 3, 9:00 am – Master Naturalists bioblitz at Green Pastures
- May 9, 8:00 am – 2nd Saturday Birding at Boxerwood

You must hear the bird's song without attempting to render it into nouns and verbs.

— RALPH WALDO EMERSON, *Society and Solitude*, 1870.

Buena Vista River Walk on March 28

Last month's plans to revisit the Buena Vista River Walk were thwarted by winter weather. Now that Winter has finally yielded to Spring, we're planning to return to this "very birdy" location to see what migrant birds might be returning as well.

We'll be looking for a variety of waterfowl, including Green and Great Blue Herons, Wood Ducks, and Canada Geese. We'll also explore the riparian buffer for Eastern Wood-pewee, Pileated Woodpeckers, Belted Kingfishers, and wood warblers.

A well-maintained up-and-back gravel path runs atop the flood wall overlooking the Maury and offers lovely views of the river. We'll also bird along the riparian buffer.

Walkers will meet at 8 am at the Glen Maury Park entrance. The outing will be canceled for rain. Check our Facebook page for a weather update or call/text John Maluski (304-488-0037).



*Wood Duck observed along the Maury River.
Photo by Dick Rowe.*

Birding at Boxerwood on April 11 and May 9



Tree Swallows vie for territory in the field at Boxerwood. Photo by Julia Robinson.

Boxerwood walks will continue on the second Saturday of the month through May. Our April walk falls during the spring migration, when we hope to greet songbirds returning to breed in Rockbridge. Tree Swallows already spotted!

Birders will meet in the parking lot at 8 am for two-hour stroll through the field and woodlands on April 11 and May 9. For both outings, bring binoculars, wear sturdy shoes, and dress for weather. Walks are canceled for rain. Check our Facebook page for a weather update or call/text Bonnie (540-460-9147).

North Mountain Outing on April 18

by Wendy Richards, Field Trips

Join the stellar team of John Pancake and Bob Epperson for a driving trip along the ridge of North Mountain!

Birders will meet in the Tractor Supply parking lot at 7 am to carpool. From there we'll drive west on I-64 to the Goshen exit and head up to the top of North Mountain. Our caravan will make its way slowly along the ridge, stopping frequently to investigate. Ruffed Grouse have been heard at this location, and in mid-April we are likely to find Blue-headed Vireos, Black-and-white Warblers, Ovenbirds and Eastern Towhees.



An Ovenbird captured in full song along the Blue Ridge Parkway. Photo by Dick Rowe.

We plan to return to Lexington by mid-day, depending on how birdy we find the route. Dress for the high elevation (3,400 ft), bring binoculars, water and a snack. In the event of heavy rain, the trip will be canceled. For more information contact Wendy Richards at 540-319-0318 or richardsw@wlu.edu.

DWR's Mike Dye Talking Wild Turkey on April 21



Wildlife biologist Mike Dye will give a talk on a bird that has come back from near extinction: the Wild Turkey.

Mike is the Forest Gamebird Biologist for the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources, covering statewide management of wild turkey and ruffed grouse. Last fall, DWR released the Virginia Wild Turkey Management Plan 2025-2034, outlining goals and strategies for regulated hunting and habitat management. As the technical lead, Mike coordinated DWR efforts to update the previous 2013–2022 plan in collaboration with a committee of citizen stakeholders.



Mike's presentation will cover basic turkey biology, history of the bird's restoration, sustainable management practices, and what people can do to promote turkeys.

A Louisa County resident, Mike enjoys bow-hunting, upland bird hunting, and the challenge of keeping deer and squirrels out of his garden. He also teaches archery through the Centershot outreach program at his church.

Warbler Walk on Apple Orchard Mountain with Dick Rowe on May 2

by Wendy Richards, Field Trips

Retired VMI biology professor and nature photographer Dick Rowe will lead a half-day excursion to Apple Orchard Mountain to welcome back wood warblers and other spring migrants. The outing is scheduled for Saturday morning, May 2.

Birders will meet at the Lexington Food Lion parking lot at 6:30 am, then caravan to the Blue Ridge Parkway. Alternatively, participants may meet the group at 7:30 am at the Sunset Fields pull-off (MM 78.4). From there, birders will follow a two-mile-long access road on foot to the top of Apple Orchard Mountain and back, returning Lexington by mid-afternoon.



A Scarlet Tanager scores lunch. Photo by Dick Rowe.

In addition to hearing a variety of wood warblers and catching glimpses of them as they flit through the trees, participants are likely to see returning Vireos, Tanagers, and Rose-breasted Grosbeaks.

Walkers are reminded to wear sturdy footwear and bring binoculars. For more information or weather updates, check Rockbridge Bird Club on Facebook or send email to Wendy Richards (richardsw@wlu.edu).

VMN Bioblitz at Green Pastures on May 3

Bob Biersack, Community Liaison



The Alleghany Highlands chapter of Virginia Master Naturalists will hold its third "bioblitz" on Sunday, May 3 at the Green Pastures Recreation Area in Longdale Furnace to take inventory of wildlife and wild plants at this historic site. One part of the annual effort is a bird walk in the morning, and Bird Club members are welcome to participate.

Green Pastures opened in 1940 as an outdoor haven for Black families during Jim Crow, with a lake, sand beach, hiking trails, picnic shelter, and bathhouse. It was desegregated in 1950 and remained open as Longdale Recreation Area until 2017, when the Forest Service closed it for lack of funding. The area reopened as Green Pastures again in 2021 as a satellite location of Douthat State Park under the stewardship of Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation and the Forest Service.

Green Pastures features a mix of habitats – early successional and mature forest, mountain stream, a manmade lake, open fields, and vacant buildings – attracting a rich diversity of birds. We've moved the bioblitz date back two weeks from past years with the hope that more of the breeding and migrating birds will be in the area in early May. In addition to warblers and thrushes, including Louisiana Waterthrush, we hope to sight vireos and Eastern Wood-pewees as they begin to arrive.

Birders are planning to meet at the parking area in Green Pastures at 9 am to walk several of the trails for approximately two hours. Folks can meet at the Tractor Supply at 8:15 am to carpool from there; the drive is about 30 minutes. If you have questions, contact Bob Biersack (bob.biersack@gmail.com).

Nature Sketching at MRMS Library

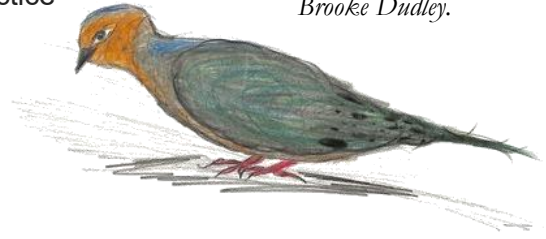
Lisa Gay-Milliken, MRMS Librarian

The Maury River Middle School library's Nature Sketching Station offers students a serene escape, centered around a tall table positioned perfectly by the window. This vantage point provides a clear view of the school's outdoor classroom, where birdfeeders attract various local species.

To help students bridge the gap between observation and art, the station is equipped with binoculars and detailed bird identification guides, allowing them to spot the subtle markings of a House Finch or a Ruby-throated Hummingbird before putting pencil to paper.

The station also serves as a dedicated "quiet zone" where students can decompress from their academic schedules, blending scientific inquiry with the calming, meditative practice of nature sketching. We hope to feature one student's completed sketch in each upcoming Bird Club newsletter, connecting these quiet observations to our wider community of bird enthusiasts!

*A Mourning Dove drawn by
MRMS eighth grader,
Brooke Dudley.*



Rollback of the Roadless Rule

Laura Neale, Conservation

The 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule is an administrative regulation that places limits on the building of new roads and commercial logging, but does not preclude management activities.

According to the preamble, "Inventoried Roadless Areas (IRAs) provide clean drinking water and function as biological strongholds for populations of threatened and endangered species. They provide large, relatively undisturbed landscapes that are important to biological diversity and the long-term survival of many at risk species. IRAs provide opportunities for dispersed outdoor recreation, opportunities that diminish as open space and natural settings are developed elsewhere. They also serve as bulwarks against the spread of non-native invasive plant species and provide reference areas for study and research."

IRAs in Virginia's George Washington and Jefferson National Forests comprise 385,000 acres of the forest's nearly 1.8 million acres.

Last summer, the U.S. Department of Agriculture announced its intention to rescind the Roadless Rule, maintaining that it unnecessarily hinders forest management in areas prone to wildfires and that the areas should be opened to logging. However, most wildfires are human caused and start within a half-mile of roads, and national forest timber sales are underwritten by the government, as receipts do not cover associated costs. For the more than 386,000 miles of authorized roads already in the Forest Transportation System, there exists a backlog of about \$8.4 billion in deferred maintenance and reconstruction. According to Mike Dombeck, a former Chief of the U.S. Forest Service, "there is no constituency pushing for the rollback of the rule."

We birders are passionate about neotropical birds whose migration routes follow the ridges of national forest bordering the east and west mountains of Rockbridge. As our natural landscapes continue to shrink, it is imperative that we speak up on behalf of wildlife and advocate for protection of their habitats.

Please write a note to your representatives expressing your support of the Roadless Rule and advocating for the passage of a Roadless Area Conservation Act. When the public comment period opens for the proposed rescission of the Roadless Rule a message will be sent with guidelines for submitting personal comments.

FIELD NOTES

January Bird Walks a Bust, but February/March Offered Blue Skies

The bird club was finally able to hold two walks in February after cancelling what we had planned for January because of ice and frigid temperatures. We offered our regular Second Saturday Boxerwood Walk and on the last day of the month we headed to the Botetourt Center at Greenfield in Daleville to join the Roanoke Valley Bird Club for a Pond walk. Both events brought out a nice crowd of folks ready to get a chance to see what was around.

At Greenfield, our guides were Alyce and Tim Quinn from the Roanoke club. We shared sightings, birding advice and up-close scope views of a good variety of ducks, woodpeckers, winter residents and recently-arrived migrants. A Greater White-fronted Goose was spotted hanging out with the Canada Geese. Scope views of Green-winged Teal, Ring-necked Duck and Gadwall revealed identifying markings. It was a great morning of birding and learning together.

At Boxerwood we had to maneuver around the ice but we still managed to record 19 species. We especially enjoyed looking up at the blue sky where a Red-shouldered Hawk circled amid a large group of kettling Turkey Vultures.

Our March 14 walk at Boxerwood was equally rewarding. The 14 birders (our numbers are growing!) were startled to see a Cormorant circling overhead, and also spotted a Brown Creeper.

Overheard... at Boxerwood

At the end of our March walk, Laura Neale took off after a posse of noisy crows she thought might be mobbing a hawk. She returned exasperated, not a hawk in sight. Kit Huffman sympathized, borrowing from Shakespeare: *"Life's ... a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing."*



For more information about the Rockbridge Bird Club, visit www.rockbridgebirdclub.org and find us on [Facebook](#). Contact the Club by email at rockbridgebirdclub@gmail.com, or call John Maluski (304-488-0037).

RBC COORDINATING COMMITTEE

John Maluski, Chair & Membership
Kip Brooks, Secretary
Jan Smith, Treasurer
Dick Rowe, Club Ornithologist
Wendy Richards, Field Trips

Laura Neale, Conservation
Bob Biersack, Community Liaison
Bonnie Bernstein, Publicity
Lisa Gay-Milliken, Social Media
Baron Schwartz, Webpage