



April 2022 Newsletter
of the
Rockbridge Bird Club,
encouraging
the enjoyment, knowledge, &
conservation of birds in the Rockbridge Area

Calendar

- Sat., Apr. 9, 8:00 a.m.** — Boxerwood Gardens bird walk *
- Mon, Apr. 11, 6:30 p.m.** — Program: "Our Wonderful Wood Warblers" by Bob Schamerhorn, at the Rockbridge Regional Library *
- Sat., Apr. 16, 6:45 a.m.** — Roadside Birding Along the Maury with Bob Epperson *
- Sun., Apr 24, 1:00 p.m.** — Informal "bioblitz" at Green Pastures Recreation Area, with possible bird watching earlier; details in Bob's Perch on page 4 *
- Sat., May 7** — Big Spring Day in the Peaks of Otter area *

April prepares her green traffic light and the world thinks Go.

— Christopher Morley (American novelist & poet, 1890 - 1957)

"Our Wonderful Wood Warblers" at 6:30 p.m Monday 11 April

Come to the Piovano Room of Rockbridge Regional Library in downtown Lexington for this program by national award-winning bird photographer Bob Schamerhorn! He'll be giving a multimedia presentation featuring his own photography, HD video clips, and accompanying birdsong: a great preview of the upcoming migration season, when warblers in colorful breeding plumage will be passing through our area — and a few species staying here to nest.



Prothonotary Warbler. Photo courtesy of www.iphotobirds.com

(cont'd next page)

A Virginia native and life-long birder, Bob attended Nature Camp in his youth and is a member of the Audubon Society and the Virginia Society of Ornithology. His [website](#) is a compilation of his nature photography and efforts as a nature enthusiast.

We ask that you bring masks, in case there's an uptick in the virus by the time of the program. For more information, contact Wendy Richards: 540-319-0318 or RichardsW@wlu.edu.

Field Trips

Spring Birding at Boxerwood, Saturday 9 April at 8 a.m.

We'll meet in the Nature Center parking lot (963 Ross Road) for a two-hour stroll. Everybody's welcome, including first-timers and families! Dress for the weather, wear sturdy footwear, and bring binoculars. In the event of rain, the walk will be cancelled. For more information, contact Bob Biersack: 703-772-9373 or bob.biersack@gmail.com.

Roadside Birding along the Maury, Saturday 16 April: 6:45 a.m. carpool

We'll meet in the parking lot of the Lexington Food Lion at that early hour, then carpool in 5 or 6 cars to meet our leader, Bob Epperson. Bob will take us on a half-day roadside birding trip along the Maury River, starting at the southern intersection of River Road and Glasgow Highway, near Glasgow. There will be multiple stops along the five-mile route, with limited walking.

Bob is a retired avian biologist and has led field trips locally for both the Lynchburg and Roanoke Valley Bird Clubs. Among the spring migrants he expects we'll see: Osprey, Broad-winged Hawk, Green Heron, Barn Swallow, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Yellow-throated Warbler, and Northern Parula. And he notes that Common Mergansers should be nesting along the river.

Bring binoculars, drinks, and snacks, and dress for possible cool weather. Since we need to limit the number of cars, and because the state of the pandemic in mid-April is unpredictable, please bring masks for sharing "indoor" car space. Note that there are no restroom facilities along the route. For more information, contact Wendy Richards: 540-319-0318 or RichardsW@wlu.edu.



Green Heron. Photo by Dick Rowe

Big Spring Day 2022 in the Peaks of Otter area, Saturday 7 May: an invitation from nearby bird clubs

Big Spring Day is a 50-year tradition of the Roanoke Valley and Lynchburg Bird Clubs, and Rockbridge Bird Club members are cordially invited to join us. This event is modeled on the Christmas Bird Count and is done by about 15 groups of birders, who cover designated areas within 7.5 miles of the Big Spring in the Peaks of Otter Picnic Area.

Birders of all experience levels are welcome! Schedule and tally-up plans will be determined closer to date, and we will follow whatever CDC guidelines may be in place on count day regarding indoor (carpooling) and outdoor gatherings. Please contact Donna at mateski@bu.edu or 434-546-3812, and she will match you up with a group looking for fresh eyes.

— Submitted by Donna Mateski de Sanchez
Big Spring Day Compiler/Co-Coordinator

Tucson Sojourn: Things heat up — a report from our Club president

My husband Steve and I are preparing to leave the sunny Southwest for our return trip to Virginia. It was clearly a good plan to spend the winter here, where the days have almost always been sunny with comfortable temperatures. Suddenly the heat has arrived, and we're heading home to enjoy early spring in Virginia.

Birdwatching in and around Tucson has also heated up, and reports of the first migrants are starting to appear in eBird. In hopes of seeing some for myself I traveled south of the city to Madera Canyon, 5,000 feet up in the Santa Rita Mountains, in the Coronado National Forest. It's a popular birding area because, like our Blue Ridge Mountains, the Santa Ritas are an important flyway for migrants from the south heading to their northern breeding grounds. Even migrant species like the Elegant Trogon, normally found in Central America, will travel north to Madera Canyon in the spring.



I didn't see an Elegant Trogon; but I did get several good looks at Painted Redstarts — which, like the Trogon, come only far enough north to visit far southwestern areas like Madera Canyon. This warbler is a striking sight with a black back, white wing patch, and red belly. It fans its tail, displaying white outer feathers, as it flits through the oak-pine forest. There is another species of the same family that breeds in Virginia, and it's one of my favorite warblers: the American Redstart, which also displays vibrant colors and exhibits similar behavior. Its range, however is much more extensive. Wintering as far south as South America and traveling as far north as Alaska to breed, it is a marvel!

*Male Elegant Trogon. Photo by Fernando Burgalin
Sequeria, from the Macauley Library*

At Madera Canyon I also observed Arizona Woodpeckers, a primarily Mexican species whose range, like those of the Elegant Trogon and Painted Redstart, extends only as far north as southern Arizona. Their solid brown back and brown-spotted underside make them distinctive among woodpeckers.



Arizona Woodpecker. Photo by Daniel Irons, from the Macaulay Library

It was still too early to see a wave of migrants at Madera Canyon, but I'm looking forward to catching that wave in the fields, forests, and mountains of western Virginia.

—Wendy Richards, Returning President

Bob's Perch

If March is a transition month, full of big winds and changes in temperature, where snow flurries obscure the early nesting activities of Bluebirds and other year-round residents, then April will establish once and for all that the new season is upon us. It can still be cool and blustery at the start, with first-of-the-season sightings of migrants mixed with lingering views of winter residents like Dark-eyed Juncos and White-throated Sparrows not quite ready for the trip north.

This year's April is special because it brings a return of birding experiences like in-person Club meetings with great presentations and more outings, at Boxerwood and elsewhere, where we can share the joy of recognition by sight and sound. We'll finish the month with a special opportunity to contribute to the newly opened Green Pastures Recreation Area near Longdale Furnace.

As many of you know, this long-neglected area of the George Washington National Forest has recently come under management of Douthat State Park. It was originally the African-American recreation area and swimming lake for this part of Virginia, from the 1930s, when it was built by the Depression-era federal Civilian Conservation Corps, well into the 1950s (and even 60s) when segregation practices in the state effectively prohibited Black Americans from using state park facilities. Now joint efforts by the U.S. Forest Service and Douthat State Park are restoring the facilities and reopening the area for public use.

The Allegheny Highlands Chapter of the Virginia Master Naturalists is helping with this reopening by conducting an informal "bioblitz" on Sunday April 24th. We'll be documenting plant species along some of the existing trails, counting and identifying macroinvertebrates in area streams – an important measure of water quality – and also

birding the area to establish a baseline of species and numbers of birds that people will be able to build on as they return to this special place.

While we're planning the other activities to begin at 1 p.m., I'd like to do some birding in the morning, perhaps starting at 9. If you'd like to join us please send me an email at bob.biersack@gmail.com and I'll fill you in on any other details.

—Bob Biersack

Editor's note: for more on the history and significance of Green Pastures, see this Virginia state parks [webpage](#) and this US Forest Service [webpage](#).

In Memoriam

Henry Eichelberger died on February 26. He was a great friend to the birds, to the bees, and to us. He was knowledgeable, curious, generous, slyly funny, and above all kind and compassionate. We miss him.

An apiary in Henry's memory will be maintained at Boxerwood, where Henry kept the bees for many years.

Memorial services will be held on Friday, May 6: graveside at Oak Grove Cemetery at 2 PM and at Grace Episcopal Church at 3 PM. Contributions in his memory may be made to [Boxerwood](#).



Blue-grey Gnatcatcher. Photo by Dick Rowe



JOIN THE CLUB OR RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP

(and see one more photo, on the next page)

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

President, Wendy Richards*
Vice President, Bob Biersack
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Field Trip Chair, Wendy Richards*
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Club Ornithologist, Dick Rowe

* returning from the southwest

Newsletter edited by Alexia Smith. Logo by Jennifer Cox
Website managed by Bob Biersack
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*Wendy didn't see an Elegant Trogon, but she did see a Painted Redstart.
Photo by Ad Konings, from the Macaulay Library*