



September 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 and meeting place is the Lexington Food Lion parking lot.

2014

Saturday Sept. 6th at 7:30 am - meet at Boxerwood for a two-hour bird walk led by Kerry Kilday; first of a series of monthly first-Saturday bird walks at Boxerwood *

Wednesday Sept. 10th at 7 pm - Program: Dick Rowe, Chincoteague *

Friday - Sunday, Sept. 12th-14th - Virginia Society of Ornithology fall field trip: Chincoteague

Sunday, Sept. 14th, 11am to 3pm - Rockfish Gap Hawk Watch Open House *

Saturday, Sept. 20th - Field trip: Rockfish Valley Trail with Walt Childs. Meet to carpool at 8 am *

Sat., Oct. 4th, 8 am-8 pm - Boxerwood Bioblitz *

Wednesday, Oct. 8th, 7 pm - Program: Teta Kain, "Feeding Wild Birds," plus Annual Seed Sale kick-off

Sunday, Oct 19th - Field trip: Blue Ridge Parkway. Meet for carpool at 8 am

Wednesday, Nov. 12th, 7 pm – Program: Justin Folks on quail habitat

Saturday, Nov 15th - Field trip: Greenfields. Meet for carpool at 7:30 am

Fri.-Sun., Dec. 5-7th - VSO winter field trip to Virginia Beach/Chesapeake Bridge-Tunnel

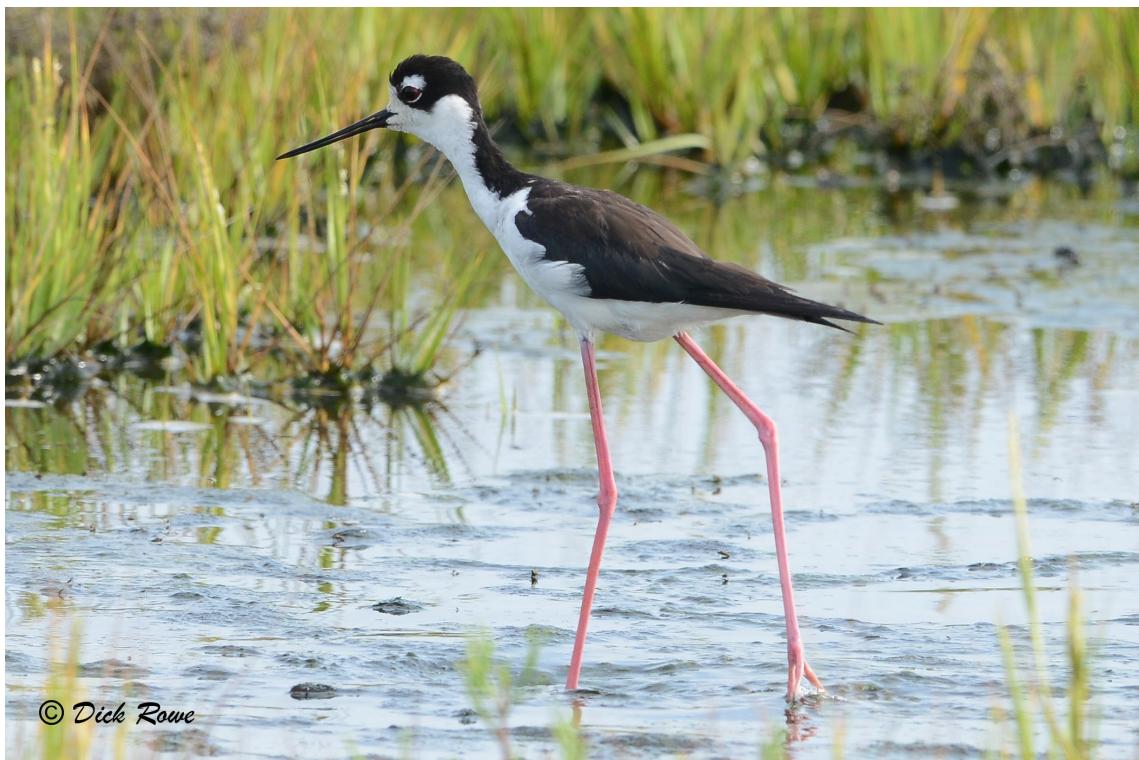
December, date TBA - Christmas Bird Count

2015

Wednesday., Feb. 11th, 7 pm - Program: Katie Fallon, "Cerulean Warblers"

Wednesday, April 8th, 7 pm – Program: Sergio Harding, bird conservation biologist with the Virginia Dept. of Game & Inland Fisheries

*** PROGRAM: *Birding at Chincoteague***



Black-necked stilt, by Dick Rowe

Club Ornithologist Dick Rowe will give an illustrated talk for our first meeting of the fall season, at 7 pm on Wednesday, September 10th. Everyone is welcome: come, and bring a friend!

Dick's talk will cover birding spots in and around the Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge. "I'll project photos of the areas so that people who haven't been to CNWR can get a feel for what a very different habitat looks like – salt marsh, tidal marsh, beach, back bay, and the forested areas," he says. "The focus will be on the birds that might be seen, including shorebirds, herons, and egrets, with tips on how to identify them."

*** *Field Trips***

First-Saturday bird walks at Boxerwood begin September 6th

Kerry Kilday is initiating a series of bird walks at Boxerwood on the first Saturday of each month, meeting at the Boxerwood parking area at 7:30 a.m. and lasting about 2 hours. The first will take place this Saturday, September 6th; the second will be replaced by the Boxerwood Bioblitz on Saturday, October 4th (see story below). If you have any questions, feel free to call Kerry at (561) 389-9612.

VSO annual field trip to Chincoteague, weekend of September 12-14th

Dick's program on September 7th will have you eager to go to Chincoteague, and it's not too late to sign up for the **Virginia Society of Ornithology's Chincoteague field trip**. It's a favorite among VSO members, and several Club members plan to attend. More information is available on the VSO webpage: http://www.virginiabirds.net/f_trips.html. If you decide to go and are interested in carpooling, please email the Club at rockbridgebirdclub@gmail.com.

Rockfish Valley Trail field trip on September 20th

Meet at 8 a.m. to carpool for this half-day trip along the Rockfish Valley Trail system, which offers diverse habitats and abundant species (for more information about the locale, see http://www.rockfishvalley.org/birds/RVTrail_birding.htm). Walt Childs, past president of the Augusta Bird Club & enthusiastic frequenter of the Trail, will be our guide. Those who wish may extend the trip by stopping at the Rockfish Gap Hawk Watch on the return trip as the thermals are developing and hawks beginning to move. Questions? Please call Kerry Kilday at (561) 389-9612.

*** OTHER EVENTS**

Rockfish Gap Hawk Watch Open House September 14th

“Where the Raptors Soar—A Day at the Hawk Watch” is the name of this event, running from 11 am to 3 pm on Sunday, September 14th, on the grounds of the Inn at Afton. Visitors will find exhibits, educational materials, raptor prints, and a special raptor presentation by The Wildlife Center of Virginia at 1pm, and free refreshments will be provided.

Says Brenda Tekin, Watch Co-coordinator, “We welcome visitors who wish to watch, learn, and even help spot hawks in the sky. It’s a beautiful venue where folks and their families can visit, bring a lawn chair and picnic, and hang out.”

The Rockfish Gap Hawk Watch is in its 39th season counting raptors on their southward migration. The season runs through the end of November. For more information, including directions, see <http://www.rockfishgaphawkwatch.org>

Calling all Citizen Scientists! Boxerwood BioBlitz to be held on October 4th

Boxerwood Nature Center, located just outside Lexington on Ross Road, is planning to host its very own BioBlitz on Saturday, October 4th, from 8 am to 8 pm. What is a BioBlitz? According to Wikipedia, it's “an intense period of biological surveying in an attempt to record all the living species within a designated area.” This will be an opportunity for nature-minded folks to learn about the local flora and fauna and to contribute real data about Boxerwood's ecosystem. Rockbridge 4H Coordinator Amanda Rose Newton, an event coordinator, explains: “The idea of the BioBlitz is to promote biodiversity in all kinds of habitats, from large parks and nature centers to one's own backyard.”

This is a free event for the community, and volunteers are needed to make it successful. You can sign up for one or more hour-long slots, where you'll join a team tasked with identifying and counting individuals in one of the following categories: birds, mammals, plants, trees, insects, reptiles, amphibians, and fungi. If you have expertise in identifying birds (or in any of the other categories), you are especially needed. This

promises to be a fun and rewarding activity, so please contact Wendy Richards at 463-5214 or Elise Sheffield at education@boxerwood.org to sign up. For more information see the Boxerwood website at www.boxerwood.org

—Wendy Richards

September Bird Note: Broad-winged Hawk

Each fall, Broad-winged Hawks leave their breeding grounds in North American forests, heading for southern Mexico and as far south as Brazil and Bolivia. They move in flocks, sometimes hundreds or even thousands together. We have a chance to witness this marvel of nature at the nearby Rockfish Gap Hawk Watch, where peak migration occurs from mid to late September and total individual Broad-wings per year averages well over 7,000.

How far & fast do they go? To find out, says allaboutbirds.com, “scientists used satellite transmitters to track four Broad-winged Hawks as they migrated south in the fall. The hawks migrated an average of 4,350 miles to northern South America, traveling 69 miles each day.” Once on their wintering grounds, the account continues, the hawks didn’t move around much, staying on average within a one-square-mile area.



Broad-winged hawk by Dick Rowe

Come spring, some returning Broad-wings settle in Rockbridge County to breed, arriving in April. They prefer to nest in large forests, away from human disturbance. Here they spend most of their time beneath the forest canopy, perch-hunting for insects, amphibians, reptiles, mammals, and birds. Occasionally you may hear a piercing call and look up to see a Broad-wing soaring above the canopy: an adult declaring its territory.

Happily, Broad-winged Hawks are numerous, and according to the North American Breeding Bird Survey their populations were stable or slightly increasing from 1966–2011. Reforestation in the northeastern U.S. over the past century has provided more breeding habitat—but human development continues, threatening to offset this gain. The largest threat to Broad-winged Hawks, in fact, is habitat destruction, especially in its wintering range far to the south. As these birds and their wide-ranging journeys remind us, we are all interconnected, all one world.

Information for this Bird Note comes from <http://bna.birds.cornell.edu/bna>; www.allaboutbirds.org, and Dick Rowe's Birds of Rockbridge, <http://www.vmi.edu/fswebs.aspx?tid=41325&id=4294972715&libID=4294972712>; Birds of North America,

—Alexia Smith



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

Contact the Club by email at rockbridgebirdclub@gmail.com or call Wendy Richards, 540-463-5214, 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

President, Wendy Richards

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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