



October 2020 Newsletter
of the
Rockbridge Bird Club,
encouraging
the enjoyment, knowledge, &
conservation of birds in the Rockbridge Area

Calendar

Fri., Oct 23—Deadline for Seed Sale orders;

Wed., Nov. 11, 10-12 a.m. & 4-5:30 p.m.—pick up orders *

Sat., Nov 14, 9 a.m.—Boxerwood Bird Walk, 2 - 3 hours *

Probable date: Sat., Dec. 19—*Christmas Bird Count* *

* See article below

My kids always joked that I spent more time cooking the birds' food than I have cooking for them. And it's probably true. — Roz Chast, cartoonist

No cooking necessary...

Stock up Now on Seed and Suet!

The Rockbridge Bird Club's annual Bird Seed and Suet Sale is officially underway. The sale is a fundraiser for Boxerwood Nature Center, co-sponsored by the Rockbridge Farmers Co-op. Order your winter supplies now, and you'll benefit both the birds and Boxerwood!

Items include black-oil sunflower seed, nyjer, gourmet blends, and suet cakes. This year we've added a sturdy tube feeder made from post-consumer recycled plastic with four metal ports and perches.

You'll find product information and an order form on the [Boxerwood webpage](#). Order online, or print out the order form and mail it with a check to Boxerwood. PREPAID ORDERS MUST BE RECEIVED NO LATER THAN FRIDAY, OCTOBER 23, and will be available for pick-up at the Rockbridge Farmers Co-op on Wednesday, November 11, from 10 a.m. to noon and 4 to 5:30 p.m. For everyone's safety, Bird Club volunteers will wear masks and place orders in customers' vehicles.

Proceeds from the sale go to support the conservation of Boxerwood's woodland garden, encompassing diverse wildlife habitats that attract more than 85 different bird species. The Club's first guided walk of the season (November 14) will take place at Boxerwood, to observe and listen for many of our winter residents.

Have questions? Please send email to bonnie.bernstein@gmail.com or call her at 460-9147.



Bird Club Field Trips in the Time of COVID

We've come up with a plan for field trips during this socially-distanced time, and we hope you'll venture out to join us. This is your chance to get outside and get to know the birds that like to hang out in our area. Starting in November, Club members will lead "Bird Walks for Beginning Birders" at nearby birding locations.

For our first walk in this series we plan to **meet at the Boxerwood parking lot at 9 a.m. on Saturday, November 14th, for a 2- to 3-hour stroll** through the gardens and fields. We'll limit our group size to 4 people per leader, with 2 or 3 leaders on hand, and we'll stay at least 6 feet apart. Masks are required. It's important that folks reserve a spot by contacting me by phone (463-5214) or by email at richardsw@wlu.edu.

Everyone is welcome. The emphasis of upcoming walks will be on getting to know our resident birds by careful observation and listening. Of course, you never know what bird might show up when you take time to focus on the outdoor world!

—Wendy Richards, Field Trip Chair



White-throated Sparrow, an abundant winter resident here. Photo by Dick Rowe

Message from the Club President: Here We Are

I was talking with a fellow Breeding Bird Atlasser recently, detailing all the great migrants who have dropped into my yard this September, and he responded with this comment: "That's your bonus gift for helping with the breeding bird atlas." Well, I don't know about that, but certainly getting caught up and watching birds really helps me disengage from all the concerns and anxieties I feel about the current situation and the practicing of social isolation and the uncertainty of the future. When I look at a bird, I just think about the bird.

The Bird Club Executive Committee has been figuring out what the heck we're going to do, and we've been looking around at other bird clubs. Some of them have

completely stopped everything—and you haven't heard much from us, either! Alexia sent out a News Note recently, and since then we've decided to start up with some very modest local field trips. We're very excited: we're going to really concentrate on trying to spend time with new birders, and observing the resident birds who bring us all such great pleasure.

One outcome of the pandemic has been the increase in birdwatchers. Cornell Lab had a 50% increase in ebird checklists this spring! If it so develops that any of you are interested in learning how to ebird, ebird.org has [numerous lessons](#) for how to do what; and Bob, Wendy, or I would be happy to help out. *

ExCom members are also thinking about sharing some of our experiences watching webinars and taking classes online. There are oodles of fantastic programs being offered by Audubon Chapters around the country that are free and always top caliber. Additional opportunities abound if you're a member of Facebook, where numerous birding sites offer virtual educational, informational, travel, etc. experiences.

We're moving into our 9th year of the revived Rockbridge Bird Club, and our first President, Wendy Richards, has accepted a nomination for President—her second time around! Yay! And we've figured out how to run an election in current circumstances, as described elsewhere in this newsletter.

The rest of us on the ExCom are still pitching in to keep our little bird club going, and we welcome any help or suggestions or interests that anyone might want to pursue under the Club "umbrella" — be it from an occasional birder, a new birder, a young, old, or want-to-be birder! Birdnuts too!

—Laura Neale, President

For help with ebird, contact Laura Neale, Bob Biersack, or Wendy Richards by emailing rockbridgebirdclub@gmail.com.



Dick Rowe

*Ruby-crowned Kinglet, another winter resident. A male hiding his crown, as they often do?
Photo by Dick Rowe*

Dues-&Donations Season

Our fiscal year began September 1—but it feels like an odd time to be asking for money, when people everywhere are having difficulty just making ends meet. I hope all of you in our bird-loving community are getting along as well as can possibly be.

Then, too, the Club's program expenses may be few or none this coming year! But support for bird conservation is as critical as ever. So, if you can, please join or renew your membership, with dues just \$15 per household. And if you're among the fortunate who can afford to make an additional donation, please consider doing so: the Club will continue to channel your funds to organizations that work effectively to reduce threats to birds and to save habitat. You can mail payment to Jan Smith, our Treasurer (see address near the end of this newsletter).

Meanwhile, we'll continue to keep in touch with all of you via the newsletter. Many thanks for giving what you can — for the birds' sake.

—Alexia Smith, Membership

The November Election—for Bird Club officers, that is

Our officers' terms are up this year, and while we aren't able to have an annual meeting in person, we'll nonetheless hold an election in November—in special Covid-19 fashion. Our ExCom/nominating committee hereby presents the following slate: Wendy Richards, President; Bob Biersack, Vice President; Joyce Cambron, Secretary; and Jan Smith, Treasurer (the last three are incumbents). If you would like to serve for any office, or nominate someone else, please submit the name by Monday 26 October. Nominations will then close, and we'll send out the names of all candidates. And if you're a member, you can then vote by sending an email, by Monday 9 November, to rockbridgebirdclub@gmail.com.



Dick Rowe

Hermit Thrush, winter resident. Photo by Dick Rowe.

A Heads Up: the Christmas Bird Count in Coronavirus Times

This year the Lexington Area Christmas Bird Count is planned for Saturday, December 19—a tentative date until our Count can be officially registered. In accordance with the Audubon Society/CBC, there will be changes to this year's count due to Covid-19. First, teams in the field conducting counts must be in the same "bubble"—in other words, I cannot assign individuals who would like to participate in the count, but who do not wish to cover an area on their own, to a team. Second, the rules forbid gatherings like the Tally Potluck. I apologize for having to restrict participation in the CBC, but I am obligated to follow Audubon Society guidelines. Specific information about the Count will be sent out in November.

—Dick Rowe

Learning About Birds Online

Here's a lecture series called [Making Bird Connections](#), presented by the Hog Island Audubon Camp and suggested by Laura Neale. The eight varied topics, presented by noted experts, include Intro to Birding, Birding by Ear, and Indigenous Conservation, and you can register to attend the live sessions, with Q&A at the conclusion, on Tuesdays at 7 p.m., or else stream the presentations afterwards.

We'll very much miss being together for programs and visiting, but we can keep learning! Please send us your suggestions for good online programming about birds.

❖ Editor's note: one more bird awaits you, on page 6 ❖



JOIN THE CLUB OR RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP!

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, Laura Neale
Vice President, Bob Biersack
Secretary, Joyce Cambron
Treasurer, Jan Smith
Program Chair needed

Field Trip Chair, Wendy Richards
Publicity Chair, Bonnie Bernstein
Membership Chair, Alexia Smith
Club Ornithologist, Dick Rowe

Newsletter edited by Alexia Smith. Logo by Jennifer Cox
Website managed by Bob Biersack
Facebook page managed by Becky McKenzie



White-crowned Sparrow—yes, here in winter. Photo by Dick Rowe