The Birds of the Greater Rockbridge County, Virginia Area

Plovers, Killdeer, Sandpipers, Snipe, Woodcock, Phalaropes, Gulls, and Terns

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Accidental – A bird outside of its normal range (breeding or winter) or outside of its normal migration route
Rare – A bird that is within its normal breeding or over-wintering range or its normal migration route, but should not be expected to be seen in the area on a yearly basis
Unusual – A bird that is within its normal breeding or over-wintering range but is not reported on a regular basis in the county (1-5 sightings per year)
Common – A bird that is regularly seen within the area but may not be present in large numbers or may have a restricted distribution (Locally Common)
Abundant – A bird that is found in large numbers within the county but may have a restricted distribution (Locally Abundant)

Transient – A bird that is seen in the area during migration or as a wandering sub-adult
Year-round – A bird that is present in the area throughout the entire year and is usually a breeder
Summer breeder – A bird that migrates into the area and breeds during the summer
Winter migrant/resident – A bird that migrates into the area and over-winters and then leaves in the spring

<u>Locations</u>

BB = Brownsburg and Bustleburg area including Route 252
BQ = Barger's Quarry
BRP 1 = Blue Ridge Parkway between mileposts 28 and 45 (Route 56 and Route 60)
BRP 2 = Blue Ridge Parkway between mileposts 45 and 64 (Route 60 and the James River)
BRP AO = Blue Ridge Parkway and Apple Orchard Mountain (mileposts 76 to 78)
BS = Big Spring
CT = Chessie Trail
GP = Goshen Pass
KD = Kendal Retirement community
LEX = Lexington
LM = Lake Merriweather at Goshen Pass
LR = Lake Robertson
LT = Locher Tract
MF = McCormick's Farm
MR = Maury River
NM = North Mountain
OFRP = Old Farm Road Pond
PQ = Quarry at the Ponds
RB = Rockbridge Baths area
RC = Rockbridge County in general
SR = South River
WL = Willow Lake

Notes:
Cameron's Pond, which was located near the current Rockbridge County High School, drained naturally in 19??.

Womeldorf Farm ponds are located just outside of Lexington in the new, Pond's housing development.
Lake Robertson and Lake Merriweather were created after Murray published his account of the Birds of Rockbridge County.

Charadriiformes:

Plovers, Killdeer, Sandpipers, Snipe, Woodcock, Phalaropes, Gulls, and Terns

(All photos: Plovers, Killdeer, Sandpipers, Snipe, Woodcocks, Phalaropes, and Gulls)

Black-bellied Plover (*Pluvialis squatarola*):

Occurrence: Transient during migration, but there have been no recent sightings
Dates: May and August through September
Locations: LEX (Womeldorf Farm)
History: There are four sightings near Lexington with three of the sightings at the pond at Womeldorf farm (18 August 1955, 28 August 1949, and 7 September 1953). The sighting in 1949 was associated with a costal hurricane that may have affected the migration of these birds. The other sighting was from north of Lexington on 25 May 1935.
Status: Accidental and should not be expected to be seen in the area.

Semipalmated Plover (*Charadrius semipalmatus*):

Occurrence: Transient during spring and fall migration
Dates: May and August and September
Locations: OFRP, LEX (Cameron's Pond and Womeldorf Farm)
History: Two individuals were located on Old Farm Road pond on 27 August 2011 by Dick Rowe. The birds were not present the next day, suggesting that they were passing through during migration. Murray reports Semipalmated Plovers as transients that are seen between 2 to 27 May and 6 August to 23 September. He notes that most of the records were from Cameron's Pond, but a flock of 25+ was seen on 20 May 1954 on Womeldorf Pond.
Status: Rare migrant and not be expected in the area.
Photo: Old Farm Rd. pond, 27 August 2011
For additional photos: Semipalmated Plover

Killdeer (*Charadrius vociferous*):

Occurrence: Year-round resident
Dates: Throughout the year with higher population numbers during the spring and summer
Locations: RC
History: Killdeer are permanent residents of the county with individuals seen all year. There are numerous recent records of Killdeer in the area. Many of the sightings are in March and April

and may represent migrants passing through the area. Killdeer are commonly seen around Willow Lake. Killdeer have been noted in 67 of 85 CBC with as many as 42 individuals seen in 1979. Murray reports several nests of Killdeer in the county.
Status: Common, year-round resident and should be seen in the area.
Photo: Willow Lake, 19 March 2009.
For additional photos: Killdeer

American Avocet (*Recurvirostra americana*):

Occurrence: Spring and fall migrant
Dates: 6 May 1967 and 12 – 16 September 2012
Location: Ponds Housing Development (former Womeldorf Farm)
History: Joshua Womeldorf located six Avocets on his farm on 6 May 1967. The identification was verified by JJ Murray. A report of this sighting was published in the Raven (v: 38:36). On 12 September 2012, Dick Rowe located an Avocet on a pond at the Ponds housing development (the former Womeldorf Farm). The bird remained in the area until 22 September 2012. The sighting was submitted to VARCOM.
Status: Rare migrant and not expected in the area.
Photo: Ponds housing development, 12 September 2012
For additional photos: American Avocet

Spotted Sandpiper (*Actitis macularia*):

Occurrence: Spring and fall migrant with previous records of breeding in the area.
Dates: April and May and August and September
Locations: SR, BS, WL, MR, BRP at James River, OFRP
History: There are a number of recent records: 11 April 2001, 26 April 2007, 24 April 2010, 24 April 2011, 25 April 2008, 28 April 2010, 5 May 2010, 10 May 2010, 12 May 2009, 13 May 2009, 16 May 2009, 17 May 2003, 30 July 2009, 12 August 2006, 21 August 2011, 8 September 2009, 17 September 2009, and 13 November 2009 of Spotted Sandpipers in the area. Murray reports that Spotted Sandpipers are a common, summer resident with sightings between 16 April and 24 September. He notes that downy young were found in May. There are no recent records of breeding in the area.
Status: Uncommon migrant and not commonly seen in the area
Photo: Old Farm Rd. pond, 17 April 2011.
For additional photos: Spotted Sandpiper

Solitary Sandpiper (*Tringa solitaria*):

Occurrence: Spring and fall migrant
Dates: Late March through May and July and September
Locations: MF, OFRP, SR, BS, LT
History: There are several recent sightings. Two individuals were seen at McCormick's Farm on 30 July 2006 and one individual on 22 August 2009. A single individual was seen along South River near the confluence with the Maury River on 28 April 2010. Two individuals were seen on 24 April 2011 with one at Willow Lake and the other along the South River near the Chessie Trail. A group of six individuals were present on the Old Farm Rd. Pond in from 10 September to 18 September 2010. Murray considered Solitary Sandpipers to be very common in the spring occurring between 29 March and 28 May. He reports two sightings in July (6 July and 9 July 1951).
Status: Common migrant and should be seen during migration
Photo: Old Farm Pond, 28 April 2012.
For additional photos: Solitary Sandpiper

Greater Yellowlegs (*Tringa melanoleuca*):

Occurrence: Probably migrants through the area
Dates: March through June and late August through late November
Locations: WL, LEX (Womeldorf Farm), OFRP
History: There are three recent sightings on 12 and 13 November 2009 by Alex Merritt at Willow Lake (probably the same bird). This is the same time frame that a large number of unusual ducks were forced down onto Willow Lake by a passing hurricane. Also, one individual was located at the Old Farm Road Pond on 13 September 2010, and one individual was found on 11 April 2011 by Dick and Lucy Rowe. Murray reports that Greater Yellowlegs are uncommon transients occurring in the area between 28 March to 1 June and between 28 August and 18 November. He notes that a flock of about 75 birds was present on Womeldorf Pond on 17 September 1957.
Status: Rare migrant and not expected in the area.
Photo: Old Farm Road pond, 11 April 2011.
For additional photos: Greater Yellowlegs

Lesser Yellowlegs (*Tringa flavipes*):

Occurrence: Migrants through the area
Dates: Late March through late May and July through November
Locations: OFRP
History: There are two, recent records for Lesser Yellowlegs, and both are from Old Farm Road pond. A Lesser Yellowlegs was located by Dick Rowe on 19 August 2011, and Alex Merritt Located one on 26 September 2010. Lesser Yellowlegs were considered by Murray to be common transients in the spring occurring between 27 March to 23 May but uncommon in the fall occurring between 21 July to 14 November.
Status: Rare migrant and not expected in the area.
Photo: Old Farm Road pond, 19 August 2011
For additional photos: Lesser Yellowlegs

Upland Plover (*Bartramia longicauda*):

Occurrence: Transient and potential breeder, but there have been no recent sightings.
Dates: 22 March through 18 October
Location: RC
History: Murray reports that Upland Plovers are fairly common as transients and uncommon as summer residents. He notes their presence from 22 March through 18 October and that nests with you were located in 1930 (3 June) and 1935 (27 May).
Status: Rare and not expected in the area.

Ruddy Turnstone (*Arenaria interpres*):

Occurrence: Two records for the county.
Dates: 28 August 1949 and 20 May 1954
Location: LEX (Womeldorf Farm)
History: Murray notes two records (28 August 1949 and 20 May 1954) from Womeldorf Pond.
Status: Accidental and not expected in the area.

Sanderling (*Calidris alba*):

Occurrence: One record from 1950 and one record from 2011.
Dates: 20 August 1950 and 12 August 2011
Location: LEX (Womeldorf Farm), OFRP
History: A single Sanderling was located by Dick Rowe on the Old Farm Rd. pond on 12 August 2011. The bird was not located the following day. Murray reports one Sanderling at Womeldorf Pond on 20 August 1950.
Status: Accidental and not expected in the area.
Photo: Old Farm Rd. pond, 12 August 2011
For additional photos: Sanderling

Semipalmated Sandpiper (*Calidris pusilla*):

Occurrence: Transients during spring and fall migration, but there have been no recent sightings.
Dates: May and August through September
Location: OFRP, RC
History: There two recent records of Semipalmated Sandpipers in the county. Both records are from the Old Farm Road Pond. Alex Merritt found an individual on 15 September 2010, and Dick Rowe found an individual on 3 September 2011. For both sightings, the bird only remained in the area for one day. Murray reports that Semipalmated Sandpipers are fairly common transients in the spring occurring between 3 and 31 May and that they are uncommon in the fall occurring between 8 August and 22 September.
Status: Transient and only expected during migration.
Photo: Old Farm Road Pond, 3 September 2011.
For additional photos: Semipalmated Sandpiper

Western Sandpiper (*Calidris mauri*):

Occurrence: One record from 1951 and one record from 2012
Dates: 9 July 1951 and 25 August 2012
Location: LEX (Cameron's Pond), OFRP
History: Barry Kinzie, John Pancake, Mike Stinson, and Kent Davis located a single Western Sandpiper at Old Farm Rd pond on 25 August 2012. Murray reports one record from Cameron's Pond on 9 July 1951.
Status: Rare migrant and not expected in the area.

Least Sandpiper (*Calidris minutilla*):

Occurrence: Transients during spring and fall migration
Dates: April through mid-June and August through mid-October
Locations: OFRP, RC
History: Several individuals were spotted on the pond on Old Farm Rd. on 5 September 2010 and were present until 30 September 2010. In 2011, three individuals were located on OFRP on 12 August. Murray reports that Least Sandpipers are common transients occurring between 2 April and 13 June and 8 August to 10 October. He provides no specific dates or locations.
Status: Rare and not expected in the area.
Photo: Old Farm Road Pond, 12 August 2011
For additional photos: Least Sandpiper

White-rumped Sandpiper (*Calidris fuscicollis*):

Occurrence: Transients during spring and fall migration, but there have been no recent sightings.
Dates: 21 and 31 May 30 and 30 September to 1 October 1940 and 5-6 November 1953
Locations: LEX, BS
History: Murray considers White-rumped Sandpipers to be transients through the area. He reports seven spring records occurring between 21 and 31 May. In addition he reports two fall records: 30 September to 1 October 1940 near Lexington and 5-6 November 1953 at Big Spring.
Status: Accidental and not expected in the area.

Pectoral Sandpiper (*Calidris melanotos*):

Occurrence: Transient during spring and fall migration
Dates: 3 to 8 April 1931 and 26 May 1950 and 2 September 2006
Locations: OFRP, BS
History: There have been several recent sightings. One individual was seen 2 September 2006 at Big Spring and there have been several sightings on Old Farm Rd Pond between 14 September and 18 September 2010 and 5 September 2012. Murray reports two spring records: 3 to 8 April 1931 and 26 May 1950. He considers them to be uncommon in the fall with an occurrence between 23 July and 12 November.
Status: Uncommon migrant and could be seen during fall migration.
Photo: Old Farm Road Pond, 5 September 2012.
For additional photos: Pectoral Sandpiper

Dunlin (*Calidris alpine*):

Occurrence: Transient during spring and fall migration, but there have been no recent sightings.
Dates: 21 and 29 May and 22- 27 September and 30 October
Location: RC
History: Murray reports four records: 29 May 1950, 21 May 1954, 22-27 September 1952, and 30 October 1957.
Status: Accidental and not expected in the area.

Stilt Sandpiper (*Calidris himantopus*):

Occurrence: Transient during fall migration.
Dates: September through mid-October
Location: LEX (Cameron's Pond), McCormick's Farm
History: There are only three records for Stilt Sandpipers in the area. Dick Rowe located a Stilt Sandpiper on the back pond at McCormick's Farm on 1 September 2012. (As a note, the back pond at McCormick's Farm is not in Rockbridge County, but it is

in Augusta Co. The county line passes through the front pond at McCormick's Farm.) Murray reports two records from Cameron's Pond, 13 October 1947 and 22-30 September 1949.
Status: Rare and not expected in the area.
Photo: McCormick's Farm, 1 September 2012
For additional photos: Stilt Sandpiper

Short-billed Dowitcher (*Limnodromus griseus*):

Occurrence: Transient during spring and fall migration, but there have been no recent sightings.
Dates: 20 May and 17 September
Location: LEX (Womeldorf Farm)
History: Murray reports two records from Womeldorf Pond, 20 May 1954 and 17 September 1957.
Status: Accidental and not expected in the area.

Wilson's Snipe (*Gallinago delicata*):

Occurrence: Migrant and occasional winter resident
Dates: September through May
Locations: BRP at JR, BB, OFRP, WL, RC
History: There have been a number of recent records for Snipe on 29 April 2000 and 29 May 1996 from the James River at the Blue Ridge Parkway, on 19 March 2007 near Rockbridge Baths, on 9 April 2010 at Willow Lake and at Big Spring, on 26 September 2010 on Old Farm Road Pond, and on 8 March 2010 and 18 December 2010 near Brownsburg. In addition, Snipe have been observed on the CBC 55 of the 84 years. Murray notes Snipe are seen in the spring between 20 February and 14 May and in the fall and winter from 9 September through January.
Status: Uncommon winter species and migrant that could be seen in the area.
Photo: Kerrs Creek area, 14 January 2011.
For additional photos: Wilson's Snipe

American Woodcock (*Scolopax minor*):

Occurrence: Transients during spring and summer migration and perhaps nest in the area.
Dates: Mid-March to mid-April and November through December
Locations: BRP AO, BB
History: There are a number recent records for the area. The earliest record for the county is 3 March 2010 and an additional early record is from the Pedlar Reservoir nearby in Amherst County on 12 March 2000. An individual was seen on Apple Orchard Mountain on 20 May 2006. Alex Merritt reports a number of sightings in March and April of 2009 and 2010 from a farm near Rockbridge Baths. He reports display flights from this location. The latest record (excluding the CBC) is 14 November (2005). Woodcocks have only been reported 8 of 84 years

on the CBC. Murray considers Woodcocks transients and notes that they have been seen in every month excepting October, January, and February. The wide-spread occurrence of Woodcocks suggests that they may breed in the area. There are reports of peenting grounds and breeding in nearby counties.
Status: Uncommon species seen mainly during spring migration and not expected to be seen in the area.

Red Phalarope (*Phalaropus fulicaria*):

Occurrence: Transient during fall migration and there are no recent sightings.
Dates: 30 September and 1 October
Location: LEX (Cameron's Pond and Womeldorf Farm)
History: Murray reports two records from the area. An individual was seen at Cameron's Pond on 30 September 1940 and one at Womeldorf Pond on 1 October 1957.
Status: Accidental and not expected in the area.

Bonaparte's Gull (Larus Philadelphia):

Occurrence: Transient during spring and fall migration.
Dates: Late March through April and October through early December.
Locations: WL, RC
History: There have been six recent sightings of 10-12 individuals at Willow Lake on 2 April 2005, two individuals at Willow Lake on 13 December 2010, four individuals at Willow Lake on 1 April 2011, nine individuals at Willow Lake on 5 April 2011, a single adult on 24 April 2011, and a single adult on 4 November 2012. Bonaparte's Gulls have been reported once (1978) on the CBC when a flock of 15 was sighted. Murray reports 11 spring records between 28 March and 29 April, 2 fall records between 8 – 31 October 1951, and 2 winter records on 4 December 1955 and 8 January 1932.
Status: Uncommon migrant and not expected in the area.
Photo: Willow Lake, 1 April 2011 by Lucy Rowe
For additional photos: Bonaparte's Gull

Laughing Gull (Larus atricilla):

Occurrence: Transient and there are no recent sightings.
Dates: 11 March
Location: LEX (Womeldorf Farm)
History: Murray reports one record on 11 March 1952 on Womeldorf Pond.
Status: Accidental and not expected in the area.

Ring-billed Gull (*Larus Delawarensis*):

Occurrence: Transient that could be seen anytime of the year but most commonly seen during the spring
Dates: March through April and late September to November.
Locations: WL, BS, BQ, LM, RC
History: There have been a number of recent sightings of Ring-billed Gulls in the area. A flock of 32 gulls was seen at Lake Merriweather on 26 December 2011 during the CBC. Individuals were seen at Willow Lake on 2 April 2005, a flock of about 60 individuals was observed on 6 December 2008, a single individual on 2 November 2009, a flock of 15 on 12 November 2009, a single individual on 9 December 2009, a single individual on 18 November 2010, 8 individuals on 7 December 2010, and a large flock of 139 individuals on 13 December 2010. A flock of about 20 individuals flying over Lexington on 12 March 2005, two individuals at Barger's Quarry Pond on 30 March 2004, two individuals were seen at Big Spring on 29 March 2010, and three individuals were seen in the Wal-Mart parking lot on 18 April 2010. Ring-billed Gulls have been reported on 10 of 84 CBC with a flock of 57 observed in 2001. Murray notes that Ring-billed Gulls are fairly common in the spring occurring between 1 February to 6 June with a flock of 11 individuals seen at VMI on 4 April 1954, and uncommon in the fall occurring between 24 September to 1 November. He reports one winter record on 6 December 1937.
Status: Uncommon transient and could be seen in the area.
Photo: Upper photograph – Big Spring, 29 March 2010; lower photograph – Willow Lake, 6 December 2008.
For additional photos: Ring-billed Gull

Herring Gull (*Larus argentatus*):

Occurrence: Transient during spring and fall migration and as wandering individuals.
Dates: March and December
Locations: RC, WL
History: There is one recent report of a Herring Gull at Willow Lake. Dick Rowe found an immature individual on 3 November 2012. An immature Herring Gull was seen on 4 November and is likely the same individual. There is one report on the CBC (1976). Murray notes only five records of Herring Gulls: 1 February, 4 March, and 19 March 1951; 18 March 1955; and 14 December 1956.
Status: Accidental transient and not expected in the area.
Photo: Willow Lake, 3 November 2012
For additional photos: Herring Gull

Caspian Tern (*Sterna caspia*):

Occurrence: Transient with one record in the area (1947).
Dates: 13 October 1947
Location: LEX (Womeldorf Farm)
History: Murray reports one record on 13 October 1947 at Womeldorf Pond. He notes that the bird was in poor health.
Status: Accidental and not expected in the area.

Black Tern (*Chlidonias niger*):

Occurrence: Transients during spring and fall migration, but there have been no recent sightings.
Dates: 10-26 May and 23 July to 6 October
Location: RC
History: Murray reports that Black Terns are transients and uncommon in the area. He has 13 records occurring between 10 – 26 May and 23 July to 6 October.
Status: Accidental and not expected in the area.

Common Tern (*Sterna hirundo*):

Occurrence: Transient during migration.
Dates: 20 May 1952 and 11 June 1955, 16 and 18 October 2009
Location: WL, LEX (Womeldorf Farm)
History: Alex Merritt reported two individuals at Willow Lake on 16 October 2010 and one individual at Willow Lake on 18 October 2010. Murray reports two confirmed records on 11 June 1955 at Womeldorf Pond and on 20 May 1952 near Lexington.
Status: Accidental and not expected in the area.

Forster's Tern

Occurrence: Transient during migration
Date: 16 – 24 April 2011, 18 October 2009 and 8 September 2010
Location: WL, LT
History: Alex Merritt found one individual at Willow Lake on 18 October 2009 and one individual on a pond on R.E. Lee road (near Locher Tract) on 8 September 2010. An individual was seen at Willow Lake on several occasions between 16 April and 24 April 2011. A single individual was seen at Willow Lake on 30 October 2012.
Status: Accidental and not expected in the area.
Photo: Willow Lake, 24 April 2011
For additional photos: Forster's Tern