The Birds of the Greater Rockbridge County, Virginia Area

Pigeons, Doves, and Cuckoos

Richard A. Rowe

Department of Biology
Virginia Military Institute

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.

Columbiformes:

Pigeons and Doves
(All photos: Pigeons, Doves, and Cuckoos)

Rock Pigeon (*Columbia livia*):

Occurrence: Year-round resident and breeder
Dates: Year-round
Location: RC
History: Year-round residents of the county and can be found in most areas except forests. Rock Pigeons have been reported every year on the CBC since 1974 excepting 2003. A high count of 657 individuals was recorded in 2005. Prior to 1974, it appears that they were not included rather than being absent from the county.
Status: Abundant/common species in the area and should be seen
Photo: McCormick's Farm, 17 March 2011.
For additional photos: Rock Pigeon

Mourning Dove (*Zenaida macroura*):

Occurrence: Year-round resident and breeder
Dates: Year-round
Location: RC
History: Common residents that are seen thoughtout the county. Mourning Doves are often found in medium to large flocks in the fall and winter. Mourning Doves have been reported in 73 of 84 CBC. Murray reports eggs found from late March until September. Mourning Doves are a game species with a three-part hunting season from early September to early January.
Status: Abundant/common species in the area and should be seen.
Photo: Willow Lake, 4 August 2009.
For additional photos: Mourning Dove

Cuculiformes:
Cuckoos

Yellow-billed Cuckoo (*Coccyzus americanus*):

Occurrence: Summer breeder
Dates: 25 April through 21 October
Location: RC, LEX, GP, NM, BRP 2, BRP AO
History: There are numerous recent records of Yellow-billed Cuckoos from the county with the earliest record of 29 April 2000 with most birds in the area by mid-May. The latest departure record is 18 September 2010. Cuckoos can be found in wooded areas of the county including Lexington, Goshen Pass, and along the Blue Ridge Parkway. Murray considers Yellow-billed Cuckoos to be common summer residents arriving about 25 April and departing about 21 October. Nests with eggs have been found from 13 May through 1 August.
Status: Common summer breeder and could be seen in the county.
Photo: Goshen Pass, 7 May 2011
For additional photos: Yellow-billed Cuckoo

Black-billed Cuckoo (*Coccyzus erythropthalamus*):

Occurrence: Summer breeder in the area
Dates: May through September
Location: RC
History: Considered to be a summer resident but uncommon by Murray, he notes that they are found between 3 May and 23 September above 1500 feet. He reports nests in May near Lexington and Goshen Pass. Individual birds were reported during 2012 in the Kerrs Creek area and at Sky Farm near Lexington.
Status: Uncommon summer breeder that could be seen.