

Roanoke Valley Bird Club



Celebrating
67 Years of Birding
1957-2024

Next Meeting:
March 11, 7:00 pm
Roanoke Council of
Garden Clubs

www.roanokevalleybirdclub.com

RVBC NEWSLETTER

MARCH 2024



PHOTOGRAPHER
GARLAND KITTS

AMERICAN CROW

Corvus brachyrhynchos

DREW'S BIRD OF THE MONTH

American Crows are highly social birds, more often seen in groups than alone. In addition to roosting and foraging in numbers, crows often stay together in year-round family groups that consist of the breeding pair and offspring from the past two years. The whole family cooperates to raise young. Winter roosts of American Crows sometimes number in the hundreds of thousands. Often admired for their intelligence, American Crows can work together, devise solutions to problems, and recognize unusual sources of food. Some people regard this resourcefulness and sociality as an annoyance when it leads to large flocks around dumpsters, landfills, and roosting sites; others are fascinated by it. American Crows work together to harass or drive off predators, a behavior known as mobbing. (See more on page 3.)

~ The Cornell Lab

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!



Andrew Newcomb
Kathryn Gregg
Martha Slaughter



Next Meeting:

MONDAY, MARCH 11, 7:00 PM

Roanoke Council of Garden Clubs, 3640 Colonial Avenue, Roanoke, VA 24018

**"BUTTERFLY JOURNEYS, NEAR AND FAR"
WITH DR. MARK ADAMS**

Mark Adams is a professional astronomer, recently retired, who led the National Radio Astronomy Observatory's Science Communications Office for more than a decade. Mark was born in Baltimore and was raised in Maryland and Pennsylvania. He received a B.S. in astronomy from Pennsylvania State University, and then earned his Ph.D., also in astronomy, at the University of Arizona. He was the Assistant Director for West Texas Operations for the University of Texas–McDonald Observatory for a decade prior to his January 2004 move to Charlottesville.



Living in the wilds of west Texas sparked Mark's interest in birds and butterflies. He has studied Virginia's butterflies since his arrival and has also spent more than three months photographing butterflies in the lush Peruvian and Colombian Andes, the Afrotropical forests of Ghana, and the forests of northern Thailand.

Mark's program will explore and compare the spectacular butterflies that inhabit these varied ecosystems and will feature many of Mark's photographs from Peru, Colombia, Ghana, Thailand, and Virginia.

CONTACT US!



ROANOKE VALLEY BIRD CLUB

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NONPROFIT 501(C)(3)

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The RVBC Newsletter is published monthly **September through May** with the deadline for each issue on the **20th of the month** prior to that publication. Photos and articles are gladly accepted for publication as room allows, and may be sent electronically.

Thank you!
Carol Whiteside
Newsletter Editor
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President's Musings

Growing up in a small Virginia town in the '50's was quite the education. I knew most everyone and they knew me. I was in the Boy Scouts, went to the Methodist Church, delivered newspapers, mowed lawns, shoveled snow, and did a multitude of odd jobs. I mostly stayed out of trouble, mostly! I raised pointers, had a young groundhog for a while, kept a Barred Owl for a couple of days, and had numerous other animals in my menagerie. Anytime someone found a sick or injured bird or animal, they would bring it to Drew.

I don't remember the details, but I got a call that someone had brought in a crow hit by a car with a severely broken wing, and they had to amputate the wing. "Would you like it?" "Why of course!!!"

I picked-up the crow and brought it home. I had an old out-building in our backyard, and with Mom's ancient foldup clothes dryer I made the crow a roost. I called him "Charlie Crow."

I had two beagles at the time, and at first they didn't know what to make of this crazy bird. I would feed the dogs in the evening and while they were eating, I would feed the crow a wad of raw hamburger. He wasn't a very fast eater, so the dogs would gang him and take the hamburger away.

Charlie tamed down very quickly, mostly due to my hand feeding. I would also sprinkle cracked corn in places under shrubs around the yard for his protection. It got to the point I could leave him out all day and he wouldn't leave the yard. The beagles loved him, so when I let them out in the afternoon after school, they would run straight to Charlie to smell and lick his beak to see what he had been eating. Charlie would hop right after them and around the yard they would go with lots of cawing. I would sit on the ground while the dogs ran and Charlie would hop up on my leg and watch them intently. After about three weeks when I would feed the dogs, Charlie got creative and took his wad of raw hamburger and poked it in the end of the water hose. The dogs would go nuts trying to get at the raw meat, but to no avail! Charlie had outsmarted them! As soon as I put the dogs up for the evening, Charlie would hop over to the water hose to pick out his dinner and eat it in peace! Charlie couldn't understand the lawn mower, so I had to put him in his building until I finished. He loved the freshly mowed grass as it was full of bugs that he could easily get.

As summer turned into fall and I started back to school, I would leave Charlie out during the day. He would stay near the dog pen and never left the yard. One night after we had gone to bed, there was a loud commotion in the yard, cawing and dogs barking. I jumped out of bed and ran into the backyard to find Charlie was gone. I got my flashlight to search the yard. There in the corner of the backyard was Charlie, a meal for an opossum. We saw him scurrying off through the neighbor's yard. Three nights later, he met his "maker" at the hands of the Ultimate Predator - sad, but vindicated!!!

Eight months of fun, enlightenment, education, and hopefully an eight-month reprieve that Charlie enjoyed! I gained a newfound respect and admiration for crows that lasts to this day!



Thanks Charlie!!!

President Drew Daniels
ddaniels2627@cox.net
540.314.6069

DREW'S BIRD OF THE MONTH

American Crow

Corvus brachyrhynchos

"Common permanent resident. This intelligent and wide-spread species often congregates in large roosts in winter."

~Barry Kinzie's *Birds and Birding of the Roanoke Valley*



Dick Grubb, Photographer

American Crows are familiar over much of the continent: large, intelligent, all-black birds with hoarse, cawing voices. They are common sights in treetops, fields, and roadsides, and in habitats ranging from open woods and empty beaches to town centers. They usually feed on the ground and eat almost anything — typically insects, earthworms, and other small animals, seeds, and fruit; also garbage, carrion, and chicks they rob from nests. Their flight style is unique, a patient, methodical flapping that is rarely broken up with glides.

American Crows congregate in large numbers in winter to sleep in communal roosts. These roosts can be of a few hundred up to two million crows. Some roosts have been forming in the same general area for well over 100 years. In the last few decades, some of these roosts have moved into urban areas where the noise and mess cause conflicts with people.

Crows sometimes make and use tools. Examples include a captive crow using a cup to carry water over to a bowl of dry mash; shaping a piece of wood and then sticking it into a hole in a fence post in search of food; and breaking off pieces of pine cone to drop on tree climbers near a nest.

The Crow is an extremely shy bird, having found familiarity with man no way to his advantage. He is also cunning—at least he is so called, because he takes care of himself and his brood.

The oldest recorded wild American Crow was at least 17 years 5 months old when it was photographed in Washington State. A captive crow in New York lived to be 59 years old.

~The Cornell Lab

Field Trip Reports

Saturday, January 27, Pond Hopping with Tim and Alyce Quinn - We had a lovely day with 13 birders enjoying the surprisingly nice weather and 38 species. We found 9 waterfowl species: Canada Goose, Northern Shoveler, Gadwall, Mallard, Green-winged Teal, Ring-necked Duck, Hooded Merganser, Ruddy Duck, Pied-billed Grebe. Other highlights were: Killdeer, Red-shouldered Hawk, Belted Kingfisher, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Golden Crowned and Ruby Crowned Kinglets, Hermit Thrush and Cedar Waxwing.

Saturday, February 10, Greenfield Lake Saturday Morning Walk with Barry Whitt –



Brian Unwin, Photographer



Kent Davis, Photographer

Saturday, February 17, Evergreen Bird Hike – On a cold, blustery Saturday morning 40 hardy souls braved the elements to participate in the Evergreen Memorial Burial Park Bird Walk. Evergreen hosted the event and had 53 people to sign up. We divided into three teams with Linda Cory, David Frye and Drew Daniels leading the groups. We had some great finds as we saw a pair of Red-Tailed Hawks mating, a Bald Eagle, a pair of Yellow-Bellied Sapsuckers, a Merlin and Eastern Bluebirds. We saw a total of 21 species. Considering the windy, cold weather, it was a successful walk. Many thanks to RBVC Member Don Wilson and his staff at Evergreen for hosting the event. Don is planning another walk in May.

continued

Field Trip Reports



Katherine Clemo, Photographer

Wednesday, February 14, Second Wednesday Midweek Walk at Greenfield Lake in Botetourt with Dave Frye – Seven participants enjoyed a terrific walk around Greenfield Lake and into the trails beyond. Thirty-nine species were observed with the highlights being nine species of waterfowl, a beautiful Red-shouldered Hawk patrolling the stream just north of the parking area, an accommodating Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, a stealthy Brown Creeper, and a close in encounter with a showy Ruby-crowned Kinglet flashing his crest.

Who Gives the Hoot!

- **April 15 – May 15, The Virginia Birding Classic** On behalf of the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources in partnership with the VA Department of Conservation and Recreation and the VA Department of Forestry, are kicking off a birding competition this year —**The Virginia Birding Classic**—which will invite teams of birders to search the public lands of Virginia every spring for as many species as they can find in 24 hours. This year, the event will run from April 15 through May 15, after which time teams will have 48 hours to submit their best eBird checklist for review. (More info coming next month.)
- **40# Black Oil Sunflower Seed:** Tractor Supply \$19.99, Lowes \$36.98, NW Ace Hardware \$35.99 (+tax).
- A “bird brain” is commonly mentioned, but birds are more intelligent than most people think. Birds exhibit a wide range of smart behaviors. These include good memories and communication. Some birds even play, which shows a higher level of thinking. Which bird is the most intelligent, if one looks at reasoning power? (*Answer covered on page 3.*)
- **Eastern Bluebirds** are now actively choosing their nesting location. Make sure the boxes are cleaned out, especially from winter roosting (evidenced by poop). Nest building may take 3-4 days, but can take 2 weeks or longer. Earliest eggs have been noted during the end of March, but typically in April and May.



2023 ROANOKE CHRISTMAS COUNT

Bill Hunley

I have just completed data entry for the 2023 Roanoke Christmas Count. We had a total of 68 species, which is about average for recent years. The count was notable for the number of lingering fall migrants that were seen. Brown Thrasher, Gray Catbird and Palm Warbler were among these. We had a new high of 51 Chipping Sparrows, which was by far the largest number in the history of the Roanoke Count, and probably represents a new winter peak count for the Roanoke Valley.

Merlins were seen by two different parties. Mary Lou Barritt got a nice photo of one.

Other highlights include 4 Rusty Blackbirds, 11 Wilson's Snipe, 6 Brown-headed Nuthatches, 2 Bald Eagles, 9 Common Mergansers, 2 Barred Owls and one very cooperative Screech Owl.

Many thanks to all the hardy birders who braved the cold to take part in this year's count.



Calendar of Events



Roanoke Valley Bird Club
Dave Frye, Vice President Programs, Field Trip Chairman, 248-459-6783
American Kestrel, Photographer **Garland Kitts**

Note: if inclement weather necessitates a cancellation, an e-mail notification will be sent out. You may also call or text the leader. Please do not call any of the trip leaders after 8 pm the night before the field trip, in consideration of having to get up early the next day to lead the field trip.

MARCH 2024

- 2 Smith Mountain Lake State Park, 8:00 am. Leader: David Frye (248-459-6783)**
We will visit several areas of interest within the park looking for winter residents.
Directions: Meet at the Fallon Park parking area (off of Dale Avenue) at 8:00 am. We will carpool from there approximately 55 minutes to the park (entrance fee will be split by members of each vehicle). Bring your scope if you have one. We will probably return to Fallon Park around 12:45 pm.
- 11 RVBC MEETING, Monday 7:00 pm.** Roanoke Council of Garden Clubs, 3640 Colonial Avenue, Roanoke, VA 24018.
Featured Program: **Butterfly Journeys Near and Far. Dr. Mark Adams** will help us forget about winter for a while as he discusses and highlights beautiful butterflies from around the world. exploring and contrasting species from Virginia and global tropical ecosystems. Be prepared for breath-taking photos of beautiful butterfly species!
- 13 Second Wednesday Midweek Walk - Greenfield Lake at Botetourt Center, 9:00 am. Leader: David Frye (248-459-6783)**
Join us for a bird walk on the Cherry Blossom Trail at Greenfield. We will walk around Greenfield Lake and possibly to the pond beyond. The walk will be mostly flat walking for about 1 mile each way. Bring your spotting scope if you have one.
Directions: Take Exit 150B on I-81 and follow signs to Route 220N. Go about 4 miles and take a left at the entrance to the Greenfield Education and Training Center, across from the entrance to Ashley Plantation. Park in the second lot on right.
- 23 Bent Mountain Woodcock Walk, 6:30 pm. Leader: Robin Austin (540-676-0951)**
Meet Robin Austin at the Bent Mountain Community Center for an evening walk of birding and Woodcock watching. We will visit the boardwalk at the community center (formerly Bent Mountain Elementary school) and then walk the surrounding area. The group will then carpool to a nearby area to observe the Woodcocks that start their courtship flight at sunset. Walking is level, but wear waterproof shoes as we will be walking on the grassy roadside. **Directions:** The Community Center is at 10148 Tinsley Lane, Bent Mountain VA 24059.

APRIL 2024

- 6 Walrond Park, 8:00 am. Leader: David Frye (248-459-6783)**
Join us at a local park that is a surprisingly good spot for birds all year round. We will be looking for anything flitting about, but mostly keen to find early spring arrivals. Some walkways are paved, but most areas that we will walk are level and fairly easy hiking.
Directions: Walrond Park is located on Walrond Drive off of Plantation Road (Route 115 near Exit 146 off of I-81) in Hollins, VA.
- 8 RVBC MEETING, Monday 7:00 pm.** Roanoke Council of Garden Clubs, 3640 Colonial Avenue, Roanoke, VA 24018.
Featured Program: **Turkeys in Virginia. Dr. James Parkhurst** has studied trends in Virginia's wild turkey populations, and has fascinating insight regarding their behaviors, forest management practices, and their expanding habitats. Stay tuned for more information regarding his program.
- 10 Second Wednesday Midweek Walk - Greenfield Lake at Botetourt Center, 8:00 am. Leader: David Frye (248-459-6783)**
Join us for a bird walk on the Cherry Blossom Trail at Greenfield. We will walk around Greenfield Lake and possibly to the pond beyond. The walk will be mostly flat walking for about 1 mile each way. Bring your spotting scope if you have one.
Directions: Take Exit 150B on I-81 and follow signs to Route 220N. Go about 4 miles and take a left at the entrance to the Greenfield Education and Training Center, across from the entrance to Ashley Plantation. Park in the second lot on right.
- 20 Saturday Morning Walk - Greenfield Lake at Botetourt Center, 8:00 am. Leader: Barry Whitt (540-309-4353)**
Join us for a Saturday morning bird walk on the Cherry Blossom Trail at Greenfield. This is one of the most diverse habitats anywhere in the Roanoke area—birdy at all times of the year. We will walk around Greenfield Lake and possibly to the pond beyond. The walk will be mostly flat walking for about 1 mile each way. Bring your spotting scope if you have one.
Directions: Take Exit 150B on I-81 and follow signs to Route 220N. Go about 4 miles and take a left at the entrance to the Greenfield Education and Training Center, across from the entrance to Ashley Plantation. Park in the second lot on right.
- 27 Warbler Road - Arcadia, 7:45 am. Leaders: Tim and Alyce Quinn (540-537-1831)**
This is our annual trek along several roadways that attract spring migrants and more specifically... wait for it... warblers! Join leaders Tim and Alyce Quinn for one of our favorite trips to see warblers. The group will bird a series of forest service roads between the Blue Ridge Parkway and Arcadia in search of warblers and other Neotropical migrants. This trip usually lasts well into the afternoon, so bring drinks, snacks and a lunch. Dress in layers. There is limited space for pulling off on Warbler Road, so we will need to carpool as much as possible. In the event of bad weather, the field trip will be held the next day, April 28. Call Alyce (540-312-6844) or Tim (540-537-1831) if there is any doubt on the forecast.
Directions: We will meet at the Botetourt Bojangles.

2024 Raptor Count Tally

Anne Tucker

The Annual Raptor Count was held Saturday February 10, 2024, even though we had lousy, rainy weather. We had 7 teams, with 17 birders participating. For the FOURTH year in a row, Charlie Kahle captained the winning team!! He was helped by Rodney Davis, Brian Hirt and Dan Britton. Congratulations guys, you win NOTHING !!!

Linda Cory, Sissy Logan and Toni Pepin's team found a gray Screech Owl. Always fun to see those cute little guys!!

I have been compiling these results for about 25 years. Anyone else want a stab at it? It's time for me to give it up. Also, let me know if you know of some organization that might be interested in this data. (Anne - billt3256@gmail.com).

Hopefully next year (the second Saturday of February) we will have better weather! Thanks everyone for getting out!

2024 RAPTOR COUNT TALLY

SPECIES	TEAM A	TEAM B	TEAM C	TEAM D	TEAM E	TEAM F	TEAM G	TOTAL SPECIES
TURKEY VULTURE (***)	103	59	40	46	3	3	8	262
BLACK VULTURE (***)	35	7	11	61			8	122
RED-TAILED HAWK	9	16	2	10	1	1	5	44
AMERICAN KESTREL	13	10		3	1	2	5	34
COMMON RAVEN	5	17	3	5	3	2	3	38
EASTERN SCREECH-OWL (***)			1			1	1	3
GREAT HORNED OWL								
COOPER'S HAWK			1					1
SHARP-SHINNED HAWK								
RED-SHOULDERED HAWK	1	5	1	2	2	2	2	15
BARRED OWL								
NORTHERN HARRIER								
BALD EAGLE	8	9				2		19
GOLDEN EAGLE								
UNIDENTIFIED RAPTOR								
TOTAL BIRDS	174	123	59	127	10	13	32	538
TOTAL POINTS	765	1014	172	296	108	218	189	2762
	***		***	***				

*** RECEIVED 10 BONUS POINTS FOR PEAK COUNTS

TEAM A - Jim & Judy Phillips - Mercer & Monroe Counties WV, and Giles & Craig Counties VA

TEAM B - Dan Britton, Charlie Kahle, Rodney Davis, Brian Hirt - Summers, Monroe & Greenbrier Counties WV, Alleghany & Craig Counties VA

TEAM C - Sissy Logan, Toni Pepin, Linda Cory - Starkey Area

TEAM D - Laurie & Scott Spangler - Botetourt County

TEAM E - Garland Kitts - Bent Mountain Area

TEAM F - Bob Epperson, Barry Kinzie, John Pancake - Southeast Rockbridge County

TEAM G - Bill & Anne Tucker - Eastern Bedford County



Roanoke Valley Bird Club
 P.O. Box 20405
 Roanoke, VA 24018



Roanoke Valley Bird Club

Membership Application/Renewal Form

Memberships expire on August 31, each year

2024

(Current Year)

Please print

Name(s) _____

Address _____

City _____ ST _____ Zip _____

Phone _____

*Email _____

*Required to receive newsletters and communications

Annual Dues are as follows:

- Individual \$15
- Family \$25
- Student under 18 - No Charge

Additional Contribution \$ _____

Adopt a Bluebird \$ _____

Total Payment \$ _____

Make check payable to:
Roanoke Valley Bird Club

Mail To:
 Roanoke Valley Bird Club
 P.O. Box 20405
 Roanoke, VA 24018

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