

Roanoke Valley Bird Club



Celebrating
67 Years of Birding
1957-2024

Next Meeting:
April 8, 7:00 pm
Roanoke Council of
Garden Clubs

www.roanokevalleybirdclub.com

RVBC NEWSLETTER

APRIL 2024



PHOTOGRAPHER
GARLAND KITTS

CERULEAN WARBLER *Setophaga cerulea*

DREW'S BIRD OF THE MONTH

A warbler the color of the clear blue sky hops sky high through the upper canopy of eastern forests, foraging often 50 feet above the ground. That's the male Cerulean Warbler, a brilliant blue songbird with a cerulean neck band and streaks down the sides. Females are equally well-dressed, wearing a dusky hue of blue-green. She has an unusual way of leaving a nest after sitting on it a while. Some people call it "bungee-jumping." She drops from the side of the nest, keeping her wings folded to her sides, and opens her wings to fly only when she is well below the nest. These long-distance migrants breed in mature eastern deciduous forests; they often use white oaks, cucumber magnolias, bitternut hickories, and sugar maples more than other species, and spend the winters in the Andes in South America. Their populations have declined dramatically due to habitat loss. (See more on page 3.)

~ The Cornell Lab

Garland Kitts, Photographer



Next Meeting:

MONDAY, APRIL 8, 7:00 PM

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

**"TURKEYS IN VIRGINIA"
WITH JIM PARKHURST, PH.D., CWB**

Dr. Parkhurst's talk is intended to cover a wide range of topics related to getting to know the Wild Turkey better. It will primarily cover aspects of basic life history and behavior, population status and management, habitat needs/requirements, exploitation/utilization (i.e., harvest), managing existing conflicts, and investigating emerging concerns and threats (e.g., disease).

Jim currently is an Associate Professor of Wildlife Science in the Department of Fish and Wildlife Conservation at Virginia Tech, where he has been on the faculty since 1993, and teaches undergraduate and graduate classes in *Human-Wildlife Conflict Resolution* and *Wetland Ecology and Management*. He also holds the position of Wildlife Extension Specialist for Virginia Cooperative Extension, where he conducts public outreach and educational programming on wildlife-related topics. The focus of his research and extension work centers broadly in the human dimension arena, with emphasis on resolving human-wildlife conflicts. However, he has extensive professional experience in facilitating management planning and public involvement processes for state agencies; wetland ecology and management; forest wildlife habitat management; and working with private landowners to promote sound stewardship of our natural resources.



CONTACT US!



ROANOKE VALLEY BIRD CLUB

P.O. Box 20405
ROANOKE, VIRGINIA 24018

NONPROFIT 501(C)(3)

Email: rvbc2015@outlook.com
www.roanokevalleybirdclub.com

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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
540.774.2143
whitesidemules@yahoo.com



President's Musings

When writing my monthly musings, I try to dwell on my “likes” and “dislikes.” This month, though, it’s a little of both. I want to talk about one of my favorite activities---Eating! In my early days, I stayed with my aunt and uncle while Mom was bringing my sister into the world. My aunt would feed me canned apricots; I loved canned apricots and called them “seeds”! I always wanted more seeds! This brings back a lot of memories from a long time ago. Since I am coming upon a day that will make it a little farther back in time, I thought it’s a good time to expound on what got me here - Eating!

I’ve always been a big fruit eater, starting with my “seeds.” I loved pink grapefruits and ate them right up until I found out they affected the drugs I was taking to live longer. Scratch those - back to apples, pears and navel oranges!

I have always been a “junk food junkie,” too, and knew every little store in a five county area where I could get my fix along with a bottle of “pop”! Twinkies, Moon Pies, chips, Honey Buns, Butterfingers, Hostess Cupcakes and fried cherry pies were all on the menu when hunger struck! I continued having my junk food stops, and told Iris that I was contributing to the local economy. When our children realized what a great idea a “junk food stop” was, I was forced into slowly weaning us all off the stops. My excuse to them was how bad it was for them to eat too much sugar, fat and salt.

So now we’re on the “dislike” portion of the muse --- sugar, fat and salt! As we have aged, it’s as though “Mother Nature” has a vendetta against us for aging. She has inserted gravity into our equations, and it is not kind or caring! I guess I could fight it, but I really can’t see doing a lot of strenuous activity and at my age going to the gym is not in my realm of possibilities.

I enjoy a 2+ mile walk to bird and enjoy the woods, but sit-ups, bar bells, etc. -- nope, not going to happen! Did I just hear my recliner calling?? To go along with gravity, the food manufacturers have all conspired with each other to increase the sugar, fat and salt in their products so they are the same percentages regardless of the manufacturer. So, why sugar, fat and salt, you ask ... because they make their products taste better and we will eat it. The sweetener, high-fructose corn syrup for instance, is added since it tastes so good that it stimulates your brain to want MORE!! How fair is that?

Lately, I find myself intently reading labels at the grocery store to find the lesser of two or three evils that I can eat without too much salt to raise my blood pressure, too much saturated fat to raise my cholesterol, too much sugar, not enough fiber, too many carbs. And yet my middle still expands!!

President Drew Daniels
ddaniels2627@cox.net
540.314.6069

DREW’S BIRD OF THE MONTH *Cerulean Warbler*

Setophaga cerulea

“Uncommon spring and fall transient and localized summer resident. We are lucky to have a good number of this species breeding in the area of the Peaks of Otter and Warbler Road.”

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



Garland Kitts, Photographer

Cerulean Warblers breed in large tracts of older deciduous forests with tall trees. In the Appalachian Mountains many warblers nest on north and east-facing slopes and seem to gravitate toward gaps or openings in the canopy.

These sky-blue warblers are insectivorous, eating primarily insects such as flies, beetles, weevils and caterpillars. In the winter, they also eat some plant material. They hop along branches in the canopy and pick insects from leaves and twigs.

Together male and female Cerulean Warblers choose the nesting location. They tend to pick white oaks, cucumber magnolias, and sugar maples. They place the nest on a branch in the canopy with clumps of leaves concealing the nest site from above. Nests are often placed near gaps in the canopy. Nest height varies considerably, from 16 feet to 115 feet above the ground. Females weave together bark fibers, grass stems, and hair that they bind together with spiderwebs to form a cup-shaped nest. Males occasionally help collect spiderwebs at the beginning of nest construction. The female lays 1-5 eggs that are grayish to greenish white, speckled with brown. They only have one brood.

Breeding pairs aggressively defend their canopy territories. Males sometimes attack each other, grappling with bills and feet as they tumble toward the ground. Pairs stay together for the breeding season, but their canopy lifestyle makes studying their nesting behavior somewhat challenging.

~The Cornell Lab



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. Field Trips begin at 8:00am unless otherwise announced; morning field trips in December through March will begin at 9:00am. Thank you.

APRIL 2024

- 3 NRV Bird Club Meeting/Program, Wednesday 7:00pm. Blacksburg Community Center, 615 Patrick Henry Drive, Blacksburg, VA**
Featured Program: **Promise of Bird-Friendly Cities with Dr. Timothy Beatley.** Teresa Heinz Professor of Sustainable Communities teaches urban planning in the School of Architecture at UVA. In this talk he will review ideas and practices for making towns and cities bird-friendly. From bird-safe glass to lights-out programs to planting native species of trees, he will discuss the range of specific steps that can be taken in support of birds, sustainability and the environment. This talk will include ideas and material from his recent book, *The Bird-Friendly City*.
- 6 Walrond Park, Saturday, 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: **Virginia's Wild Turkeys. Dr. James Parkhurst,** Professor at VA Tech, has spent much time studying and researching turkeys' behaviors and their evolving abilities to adapt to changing habitats. He also has profound observations relating to the interplay between turkeys and the expanding human communities that bring them in closer contact with human beings. Join us for more on Jim's presentation.
- 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.
- 13 Catawba Greenway, Saturday, 8:00 am Leader: Kirk Gardner (828-216-9710)** Meet in the parking lot at the Catawba Sustainability Center. The trip will involve about a mile of walking on a mostly gravel road as well as small portions of some grassy fields. The target birds will be various species of sparrows (savanna, vesper, etc.) and other open country birds. We could get good looks at raptors like kestrel and red-tailed hawks.
Directions: Take Rte. 311 towards Catawba 6.7 miles. Turn right onto Rte. 779 (Catawba Creek Road) and drive a half mile to the Catawba Sustainability Center. The group will meet in the parking lot.
- 15 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. Registration closes on April 1. **Contact:** Meagan Thomas, 804.965.3013, www.virginiawildlife.gov
- 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, Saturday, 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.

MAY 2024

- 4 **Saturday, BIG SPRING DAY. Compiler: Barry Whitt (540-309-4353)**
RVBC continues to participate in this annual event. Volunteer Members spend the day observing and documenting birds found in their specific assigned territories in the Roanoke area. **Contact:** Barry Whitt if you want to volunteer to work an area within RVBC's assigned territory.
- 8 **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 1.5 miles each way. Bring your spotting scope if you have one.
Directions: Take Exit 150B on 1-81 and follow signs to Route 220N. Go about 4 miles and take a left at the entrance to the Greenfield Education and Training Center on International Parkway, across from the entrance to Ashley Plantation. Park in the second lot on right.
- 11 **Mill Mountain Park – Mill Mountain, Roanoke, Saturday, 8:00 am. Leader: Sissy Logan (540-353-4500)**
Join leader, Sissy Logan, for a morning bird walk at the top of Mill Mountain. The park at the peak of the mountain is a beautiful horticultural and avian spot especially in spring. We will walk around the park, and also take a stroll to the Roanoke Valley Overlook platform. The walk will be mostly paved in a shaded environment.
Directions: From Jefferson Street in Roanoke City turn onto Southeast bound Walnut Street and follow it as it winds to the top of Mill Mountain, turn right at the intersection of Mill Mountain Spur (at the Big 'Ol Bikes sculpture) before entering the Blue Ridge Parkway. Park in the lot adjacent to the Discovery Center to meet up with the group.
- 13 **RVBC MEETING, Monday 7:00 pm.** Roanoke Council of Garden Clubs, 3640 Colonial Avenue, Roanoke, VA 24018.
Featured Program: **Birding Belize by Sid and Mary Lou Barritt.** Our own members, Sid and Mary Lou, will present a travelogue from their recent trip to Belize in Central America. It's bound to be chocked full of beautiful scenery and gorgeous birds!
- 18 **Evergreen Bird Hike, Evergreen Burial Park, Wasena, Sat, 8:00 am. Leaders: Kent Davis (540-355-6388) and Linda Cory (540-580-5214)**
Pre-registration is required through their website: evergreenmemorialtrust.com or call them (540-342-2593).
This is a community outreach walk, co-sponsored by Evergreen Burial Park. We will be walking the perimeter of the cemetery looking for spring resident birds. Wear sturdy weatherproof shoes and be prepared for uneven surface walking.
Directions: 1307 Summit Avenue SW, Roanoke 24015. Summit Avenue is off of Main Street in Roanoke. Park along the road in front of the office.
- 25 **Green Hill Park – Salem, Saturday 7:00 am (note specific start time). Leader: Kent Skaggs (308-627-5414)**
Kent Skaggs will lead us on an early morning hike along the paths of Green Hill Park. The park borders the Roanoke River and incorporates wooded habitat around its periphery.
Directions: From West Main Street, Salem, take at left at Diuguids Road. In less than ½ mile, cross over the Roanoke River, and turn right onto Green Hill Park Road. Park in the first parking lot on right.



Maxine Fraade and George Blamar came upon a bald eagle on the ground eating a fish next to wildlife drive in Ding Darling National Refuge in Sanibel, Florida, on March 3. It wasn't clear why he didn't just fly to a nearby treetop to consume his meal, but he didn't seem to mind that dozens of people were watching him from about 20 feet away.



Field Trip Reports

Saturday, March 02, Smith Mountain Lake State Park with Dave Frye

A handful of participants braved dodgy conditions and were rewarded with an absolutely beautiful morning. Smith Mountain Lake resident Dick Hendrix showed us a couple trails and areas that proved to be very productive for birds, with the area at the far west arm of the park being a very active area for songbirds. We observed 28 species with the highlight being Common Loons at two spots on the lake.

Wednesday, March 13, Second Wednesday Midweek Walk at Greenfield Lake in Botetourt with Dave Frye

Nine birders, including four that hadn't been on a trip with us previously participated in a very nice morning walk around Greenfield Lake and the surrounding area. Thirty-eight species were observed with the highlights being American Pipits and a pair of mating Red-shouldered Hawks—she was calling incessantly for him and eventually, he obliged!

Saturday, March 23, Woodcock Walk at Bent Mountain with Robin Austin

The group braved wind and cold in search of spring woodcocks. A total of 22 species were observed with the highlight being a small flock of seven Rusty Blackbirds. Alas, American Woodcocks were not seen or heard. (Perhaps they, too, were affected by the weather?)



Who Gives the Hoot!



▲ **Bob Crawford** shot this pair of juvenile (not yet fledged) Great Horned Owls in a nest across from Fishburn Park earlier in March.

2024 RVBC Birding Outreach Programs

Sissy Logan, Chairman

February 5, Essig Center, Rocky Mount:

"Birding 101" Sissy Logan

"Library Birding Backpacks" and "Roanoke Valley Bird Club" Linda Cory

February 19, Roanoke Public Children's Library:

"Bird Watching Party, Linda Barker and Linda Cory

March 4, Essig Center, Rocky Mount:

"Hummingbirds" Sissy Logan, and "Bluebirds" Carol Whiteside

March 23, Roanoke South County Library:

American Association of University Women,

"Introduction to Birding" David Frye

April 3, The Glebe Retirement Community, Daleville:

"Introduction to Birding" David Frye

April 12, Birding Waid Park for the Essig Center, Rocky Mount:

Alice and Tim Quinn

April 13 Eagle Rock Library and Fincastle Library:

"Birding Backpacks" Robin Austin

April 27, Blue Ridge Library and Buchanan Library:

"Birding Backpacks" David Frye

May 15, Waterfront Women's Luncheon, Smith Mountain:

"Hummingbirds" Sissy Logan, and "Bluebirds" Carol Whiteside



◀ **Mary Lou Barritt** captured this female Eastern Bluebird as she carries nest material to her nest in the Barritt's backyard. The Blue Ridge Parkway Bluebird Trail recorded the earliest first egg in its history on March 17, 2024.

▶ **Carol Whiteside's** photo is a reminder that Ruby-throated Hummingbirds are on their way, and have crossed into Virginia. Check out: "Hummingbird Central"

for the 2024 Migration Map. Prepare your feeders with 1 part table sugar to 4 parts water, and dissolve the sugar water over heat before refrigerating for later use. It's time to fill our feeders now in anticipation of their April arrival.



● Merchandise - If RVBC members have an interest in ordering merchandise, such as hats, patches, shirts, etc., please forward your desires to our email (rvbc2015@outlook.com). Merchandise is a costly venture and we don't want to keep an inventory, so pre-ordering is a must – a convenient, easy way to receive what you want.

Roanoke Valley Spring Migration Dates 2024

Compiled by Kirk Gardner using eBird reports from 1900-2023

Waterfowl Departure Dates

March 23rd

Northern Pintail

March 31st

Gadwall

April 6th

American Black Duck
Lesser Scaup
Greater Scaup
Ring-necked Duck
Northern Shoveler

April 13th

Canvasback

April 20th

Bufflehead
Common Goldeneye
Green-winged Teal
Red-breasted Merganser
Horned Grebe

May 4th

American Wigeon
Common Merganser
Piled-billed Grebe
Blue-winged Teal

Warbler Arrival Dates

March 17th

Yellow-throated Warbler

March 31st

Ovenbird
Worm-eating Warbler
Black-and-white Warbler
Common Yellowthroat
Northern Parula
Palm Warbler
Black-throated Green Warbler

April 7th

Blue-winged Warbler
Prothonotary Warbler
Hooded Warbler
American Redstart

Prairie Warbler
Yellow-breasted Chat

April 14th

Cerulean Warbler
Yellow Warbler
Chestnut-sided Warbler
Black-throated Blue Warbler
Wilson's Warbler

April 21st

Kentucky Warbler
Cape May Warbler
Magnolia Warbler
Blackburnian Warbler
Tennessee Warbler
Nashville Warbler
Bay-breasted Warbler
Blackpoll Warbler
Canada Warbler

Swallows and Purple Martin Arrivals Dates

February 1st

Tree Swallow – (dates vary)

March 10th

Northern Rough-winged Swallow
Purple Martin

March 24th

Barn Swallow
Cliff Swallow

April 7th

Bank Swallow

Waterthrush Arrival Dates

March 17th

Louisiana Waterthrush

April 21st

Northern Waterthrush

Vireo Arrival Dates

March 17th

Blue-headed Vireo

March 31st

White-eyed Vireo

April 7th

Red-eyed Vireo

April 14th

Warbling Vireo
Yellow-throated Vireo

May 1st

Philadelphia Vireo (Botetourt date)

Flycatcher Arrival Dates

March 31st

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher

April 7th

Eastern Kingbird

April 14th

Great Crested Flycatcher

April 28th

Least Flycatcher
Acadian Flycatcher
Eastern Wood-Pewee

May 5th

Willow Flycatcher

Cardinals and Allies Arrival Dates

April 14th

Scarlet Tanager

April 21st

Summer Tanager

April 14th

Rose-breasted Grosbeak
Blue Grosbeak
Indigo Bunting

Thrush Arrival Dates

April 7th

Wood Thrush

April 21st

Veery

April 28th

Swainson's Thrush
Gray-cheeked thrush

Cuckoo Arrival Dates

April 28th

Yellow-billed Cuckoo
Black-billed Cuckoo

Bobolinks Arrival Dates

April 21st

Bobolink

Dickcissel Arrival Dates

April 28th

Dickcissel

Nightjars Arrival Dates

March 17th

Eastern Whip-poor-will

April 14th

Chuck-will's-widow

Oriole Arrival Dates

April 7th

Baltimore Oriole

April 14th

Orchard Oriole

Mockingbirds and Thrasher

March 1st

Brown Thrasher (dates vary, some
overwinter in the area)

April 1st

Gray Catbird (Dates vary, some
may overwinter in the area)

Wrens Arrival Dates

April 7th

House Wren

**Hawks, Kites, and Osprey Arrival
Dates**

March 17th

Osprey

March 31st

Broad-winged Hawk

May 1st

Mississippi Kite (rarity- reported
in Botetourt)

53RD ANNUAL BIG SPRING DAY

SATURDAY MAY 4, 2024

Donna Mateski de Sanchez, Big Spring Day Compiler

Barry and Carol Whitt, Roanoke Coordinators

A favorite local birding tradition, Big Spring Day, returns on Saturday May 4, 2024! This fun and historic citizen science tradition is a count conducted jointly by the Roanoke Valley Bird Club and the Lynchburg Bird Club, with a few members of the Rockbridge Bird Club aiding the effort from time to time. Sixteen groups of birders will cover designated areas within 7.5 miles of the Big Spring in the Peaks of Otter Picnic Area. This will be our 53rd annual count!

Early May in the Blue Ridge Mountains is a wonderful time for birding. Migrating birds are heading north from the tropics to their northern breeding grounds. Birds that spend the entire year in Central Virginia are setting up breeding territories, pairing up, and building nests; which make them more active, vocal and easier to spot in their bright spring plumage.

Each of the sixteen groups independently chooses their starting time, and may continue as long into the day as they desire. As per tradition, a mid-day tally will be held for those interested in sharing the day's findings, and offers a chance to chat with other enthusiastic birders. Per a request from last year's tally participants, the time will shift slightly later. This year's tally will be held between 12:30 and 1:30 PM in the amphitheater behind the Peaks of Otter Visitor Center. Restrooms are available, and snacks and cold beverages will be provided.

Past Big Spring Day participants, please contact your group leader to confirm whether or not you are able to participate this year. Big Spring Day group leaders, please confirm to the Whitt's whether you will be covering the same route as last year.

Never birded on Big Spring Day, or haven't been able to participate in last few years? Newcomers and birders returning to the volunteer flock are always encouraged and warmly welcomed. Barry and Carol Whitt will match you up with a route or an existing team looking for additional eyes.

Please contact: **Barry Whitt, tthwb@gmail.com or 540-309-4353**



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

www.roanokevalleybirdclub.com