

# Roanoke Valley Bird Club



Celebrating  
67 Years of Birding  
1957-2024

Next Meeting:  
May 13, 7:00 pm  
Roanoke Council of  
Garden Clubs

[www.roanokevalleybirdclub.com](http://www.roanokevalleybirdclub.com)

RVBC NEWSLETTER

MAY 2024



PHOTOGRAPHER  
**KENT DAVIS**

ROANOKE CITY, SMITH PARK

## DREW'S BIRD OF THE MONTH

### **YELLOW-CROWNED NIGHT HERON** *Nyctanassa violacea*

While not as slender as a typical heron, the Yellow-crowned Night Heron's smooth purple-gray colors, sharp black-and-white face, and long yellow plumes lend it a touch of elegance. They forage at all hours of the day and night, stalking crustaceans in shallow wetlands and wet fields. Their diet leans heavily on crabs and crayfish, which they catch with a lunge and shake apart, or swallow whole. They're most common in coastal marshes, barrier islands, and mangroves, but their range extends inland as far as the Midwest. Look for them foraging on the ground, often along tidal creeks, where they stand still or walk slowly with a hunched-over posture. Nesting birds can be well hidden in trees and may occur with other heron species. These birds are often active at night, so keep an eye out at dusk and dawn for night herons commuting from roosts to foraging areas.

(Please see page 4 for more information.)

The Cornell Lab



*Next Meeting:*

**MONDAY, MAY 13, 7:00 PM**

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

**"BIRDING BELIZE"**

**BY SID AND MARY LOU BARRITT**

Sid and Mary Lou Barritt encountered some beautiful flora and fauna in their recent visit to the wilds of Belize. They talk us through their journey and show us the natural beauty of Central America in their presentation. Don't miss it!

**Mary Lou Barritt, Photographer**

Above: Russet-naped Wood-rail

Below: Collared Aracari

Reminder:

Please consider bringing a snack to share and/or something for the drawing.

**This is our last meeting and newsletter until September.**

We may still receive occasional email notifications and reminders.

Have a great summer!



# CONTACT US!



## ROANOKE VALLEY BIRD CLUB

P.O. Box 20405  
ROANOKE, VIRGINIA 24018

NONPROFIT 501(C)(3)

Email: [rvbc2015@outlook.com](mailto:rvbc2015@outlook.com)  
[www.roanokevalleybirdclub.com](http://www.roanokevalleybirdclub.com)

### 2024 BOARD OF DIRECTORS OFFICERS:

*President*

**Drew Daniels**

*Vice President, programs*

**David Frye**

*Vice President, memberships*

**Mary Harshfield**

*Secretary*

**Betty Burke**

*Treasurer*

**Carol Whitt**

### DIRECTORS:

**Nathan Anderson, Robin Austin, Mary Lou Barritt, Linda Cory, Kent Davis, Maxine Fraade, Sissy Logan**

### COMMITTEE CHAIRMEN:

*Bluebird Trails* **Carol Whiteside**

*Field Trips* **David Frye**

*Meeting Refreshments* **Mary Lou Barritt**

*Newsletter Editor* **Carol Whiteside**

*RVBC/BRWS Annual Picnic* **Carol Whiteside**

*Website* **Carol Siler**

The RVBC Newsletter is published monthly **September through May** with the deadline for each issue on the **20<sup>th</sup> 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](mailto:whitesidemules@yahoo.com)



## President's Musings



Recently, late in the afternoon I was reading, as I came to the end of a chapter I decided to put the book down and consider my options for my monthly musing for May. With all the war, fighting, shootings, and hate, I decided we all need a feel-good story to lighten our spirits.

This story certainly is not about me; however, it does start with me losing a crown while eating a piece of cake before Christmas. I called my dentist, and they could see me on January 4. Turns out, they made me a new one that didn't fit quite right, so "rinse and repeat." Now you have the groundwork for our story.

While at the dentist, I struck up a conversation with the receptionist, Jordan. She noticed my bird club hat, and the conversation started. She told me she had a parrot, and showed me pictures and videos on her phone. She said she wanted an African Gray so she could converse with it, as they are quite good talkers. I told her about a Parrot Rescue Organization in Louisa, and asked for her a name and number to text her the information that afternoon. She was delighted.

On my next visit, the morning of our March Bird Club meeting, she told me the contact didn't work out. She said she was bummed, but determined to keep looking.

That evening at the Bird Club meeting, one of our members, Michael, came up to me and said, "I need to ask you a big favor. Could I announce to the club that a friend of mine has a Yellow-naped Amazon parrot to give away?" I told him I would do better than that! I know someone who will take the parrot, and we don't have to announce it during the meeting.

So, here is the story as told to me by Michael: turns out his friend/neighbor is older and had recently lost her husband. She and her late husband had "Baby" for more than 30 years. She was crying while telling the story because she hated the thoughts of turning her parrot over to someone she didn't know, and was concerned her Baby wouldn't be going to a good home.

Michael stressed to me that we needed to announce this right away; he was worried that by not announcing this now,

then we would be a month away from being able to bring it up to the club. I assured him that this young lady was perfect, she already had a small parrot, and you could tell by the pictures and videos that it was a loving home. Michael was a little skeptical, but said okay.

I called Jordan the next morning and texted a picture of Baby. She was ecstatic! I gave her our member's name and number to contact. Now, here comes the best part! Later that day, Jordan called me to say, "Mr. Daniels, you aren't going to believe this, but I know this lady and she knows my whole family! I have a meeting with her to meet Baby and she is so excited."

The next day I got another call from Jordan saying, "I just had to call to tell you how the meeting went. We spent an hour talking and playing with Baby. She knows my mom, my grandmother, and my whole family, and she was so relieved that Baby is going to someone she knows and trusts."

Jordan then asked, "When do you want me to pick up Baby?" and the kind owner said, "Right now. You can take her home with you!" "I was stunned," Jordan declared, "Then the excitement hit me!"

On my next trip to the dentist, I was entertained with 15 minutes of photos and videos. It amazed me how well Baby had adjusted to the other parrot and Jordan's daughter. Baby was following the other parrot around as well as Jordan's daughter, who already had formed a tight bond with Baby.

The parrots' cages are together, and the smaller parrot reaches through the cage and pecks Baby on the beak, to which Baby says, "Ouch, Ouch, that hurts!" Sounds like a wild household.

Jordan told me that Baby is 43 years old. As I stated earlier, the couple had her for more than 30 years. According to the Minnesota Zoo, "The lifespan of the Yellow-naped Amazon is much longer in human care (60-80 years) when compared to in the wild (20-30 years). This makes them a life-long companion when cared for by humans."

There's still a lot of years to go, filled with plenty of laughs!

President Drew Daniels  
ddaniels2627@cox.net  
540.314.6069



DREW'S BIRD OF THE MONTH

# Yellow-crowned Night Heron

*Nyctanassa violacea*

As Barry Kinzie said, "About 1970, the bird club and Roanoke Valley birding community had a good, inspiring, capable leader: Bill Opengari. Norwood Middleton, Mike Purdy, John Pancake, and Barry Kinzie started to follow his lead in serious birding. I believe it was very early April 1974, when a couple nests were found in a Sycamore tree where Mason's Creek joins the Roanoke River. This seems to be the start of the Yellow-crowned Night Heron (YCNH) records locally. This species increased as a breeding bird along the Roanoke River and feeder streams like Tinker Creek and Mason's Creek providing crawfish, a very important food in 'our' area. In the past 30 plus years, Kent Davis has kept a close watch on them, a number of times seeing 10 or 12 in a single day, perhaps 15 nesting breeding pairs; although, numbers probably fluctuate due to nesting success, strong winds, heavy rain and food availability. This species would certainly be a good choice for 'the bird' of the Roanoke Valley Bird Club." Mike Purdy has been acknowledged as the first to suggest honoring this species for choosing our unique area as their migration breeding destination arriving in early March and heading south to Mexico in September/October."

Linda Cory said she "looked through past newsletters to see when our logo changed in our newsletters; we started using the new YCNH logo in December of 2014. Connie Marsh did a drawing for the club to use, and then later, Carol Siler made a cleaner graphic that matched the drawing."

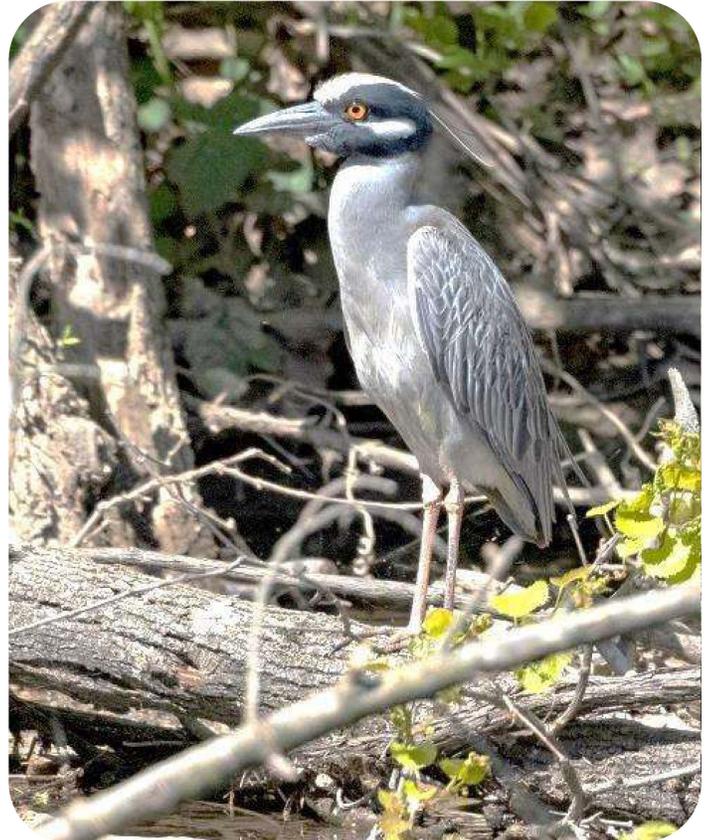
In 2014, "Kent Davis, our RVBC President, thought it would be fitting to have a bird that is very special to our area. Yellow-crowned Night-Herons actually roost and breed in Smith Park. It is a bird that is 'not supposed to be here,' but returns every year, and is expanding its range locally. Some people have even seen them in Fralin Park. Because of its uniqueness to our area, the RVBC Board of Directors asked local artist and club member, Connie Marsh, to incorporate it into a new club logo. The former logo, (a Northern Cardinal, designed by RVBC member Fred Cramer) was retired." *Reprinted from the January 2015 RVBC Newsletter.*

Also of note, earlier, the Yellow-crowned Night-heron contained two hyphens; today eBird and Cornell Lab use only the first hyphen. It is unknown when this was changed; therefore, these writings reflect both, especially in the earlier quotes.

Photographers:

**Terry McGuire's porch**  
King George Avenue  
Old Southwest in Roanoke, VA

**Kent Davis**  
Salem Rotary Park



**Bob Crawford**, Photographer  
4/20/24 along the Roanoke River on the Salem Greenway

### ***Birds and Birding of the Roanoke Valley*** by Barry Kinzie

The Yellow-crowned Night-heron is fairly common and localized near the Roanoke River from Salem to the Roanoke Sewage Treatment Plant in spring, summer and early fall. There must be a dozen or more breeding pairs, which means we can lay claim to the most of this species away from the coastal plain.

**Extreme Dates:** February 24, 1979 – November 2, 1981.

**Breeding:** Nest with two young, June 21, 1976, Salem by N. Middleton and J. Pancake.

Six active nests, Smith Park, Roanoke, April 20, 2010, by K. Davis

**Winter Records:** (1) December 17, 2001, Roanoke VA Christmas Bird Count.

(1) January 1, 2010, Roanoke, by T. Johnson.

**Peak Counts:** (7) July 3, 1976, Salem, by N. Middleton and J. Pancake.

(8) April 26, 2008, Roanoke, K. Davis.

(12) March 31, 2011, Smith Park, Roanoke, by K. Davis.



# BIG SPRING DAY 2024 THIS SATURDAY!

THE 53RD ANNUAL COUNT IS SATURDAY, MAY 4

This fun and historic citizen science tradition is a count conducted jointly by the Roanoke Valley Bird Club and the Lynchburg Bird Club. The first Big Spring Day count occurred in 1971 and 102 species were found. Last year, a total of 128 species were observed.

Sixteen groups of birders will cover designated areas within 7.5 miles of the Big Spring in the Peaks of Otter Picnic Area. Each of the sixteen groups independently chooses their starting time and rain-or-shine continues 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 having a chance to chat with fellow 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.

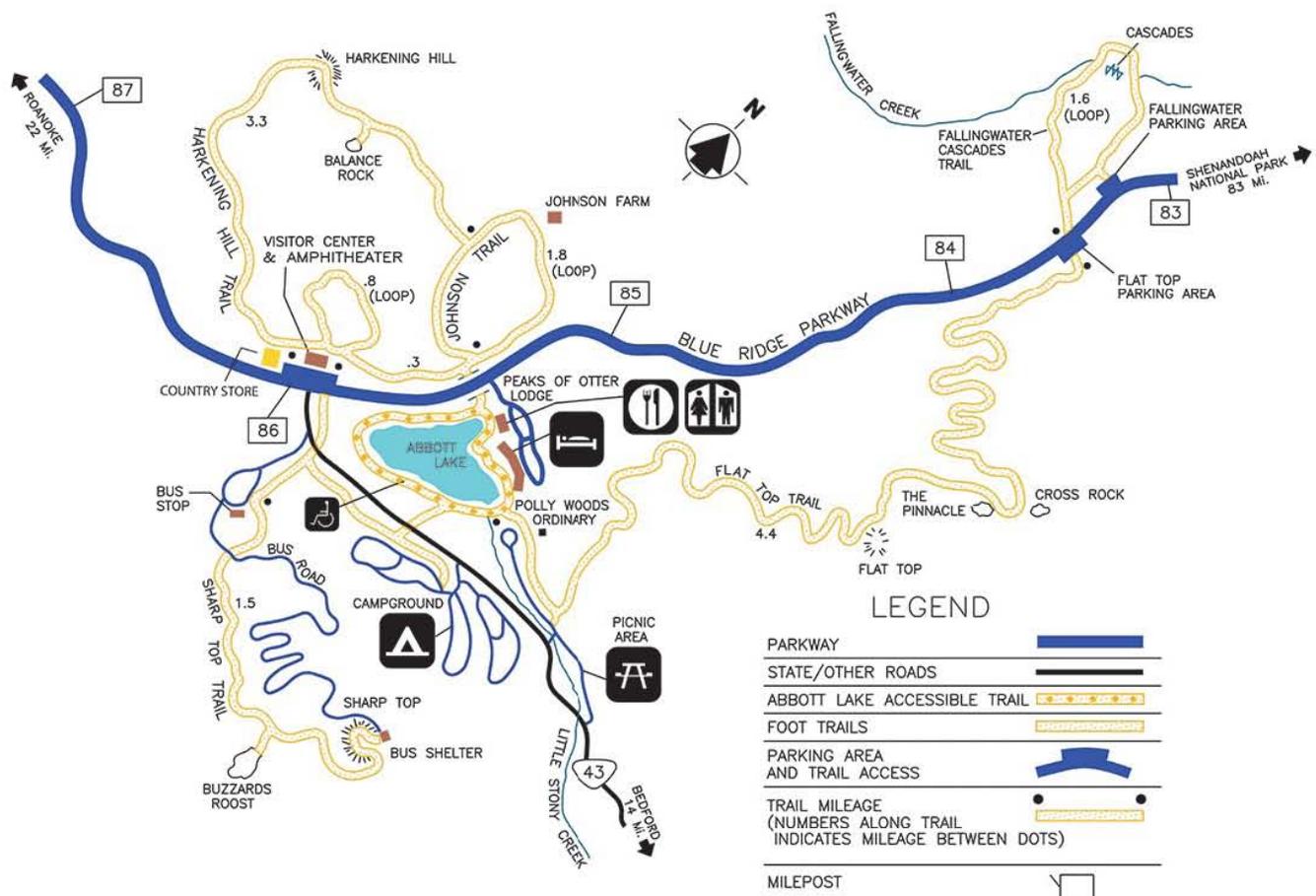
Past Big Spring Day participants, if you haven't already, please contact your group leader to confirm whether or not you are able to participate this year. Never birded on Big Spring Day, or haven't been able to participate in last few years? Newcomers and birders returning to the volunteer flock are always encouraged and warmly welcomed. Please contact Barry Whitt at [tthwb@gmail.com](mailto:tthwb@gmail.com) or 540-309-4353, and he will match you up with a route or an existing team looking for additional ears and eyes.

Special Note to Big Spring Day group leaders: If you are using eBird mobile in the field, please also share the list(s) with eBird user bigspringday before you submit, and the list will go straight into the compiled report. If you don't share in the field, due to an eBird quirk, you can't later share via the app. Instead, you will need to share via the eBird website. Access the eBird.org website on your computer or phone. Open the checklist(s), and at right of screen click on blue Checklist Tools, select Share w/others in your party, then at left in white box type bigspringday and then click green Share Checklist below. You should get a message: Yay! This checklist has been shared. That tech info said, data submissions via email or postal mail remain an option, as always.

Looking forward to sharing sightings at the tally-up on Saturday!

Submitted by: **Donna Mateski de Sanchez, Big Spring Day Compiler, Barry and Carol Whitt, Roanoke Coordinators**

## Peaks of Otter





# 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.*

## MAY 2024

- 4 **Saturday, BIG SPRING DAY. Coordinator: Barry Whitt (540-309-4353)** Please see page 5.  
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 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 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! Please see page 2.
- 18 **Evergreen Bird Hike, Evergreen Burial Park, Wasena, Sat, 8:00 am. Leaders: Kent Davis (540-355-6388) and Barry Whitt (540-309-4353)**  
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.

## JUNE 2024

- 1 **Audey Murphy Trail – Saturday, 8:00 am. Leader: Butch Kelly (540-808-5599)**  
Butch Kelly will take us to a spot that we haven't visited for a while. The Audey Murphy Trail is an Appalachian National Scenic Trail and is located near Catawba, VA. We will walk the trail looking for late migrants and summertime residents.  
**Directions:** We will meet in the parking area at the Orange Market at the junction of routes 419 and 311 in Hanging Rock at 8:00am. From there we will carpool to the trailhead.

## JULY 2024

- 13 **Roanoke Valley Bird Club and Blue Ridge Wildflower Society Picnic, Saturday 5:00 pm. Carol Whiteside, Chairman (540.774.2143)**  
Roanoke Council of Garden Clubs facility, 3640 Colonial Avenue, Roanoke, VA 24018. Please see page 8.

## AUGUST 2024

- 15 **Butterflies at Greenfield - Leader: Toni Pepin (571-246-2598)**  
Toni will take us to our favorite viewing grounds—Greenfield Lake, but this time focusing on beautiful butterflies! So, dial those binoculars for close-in viewing and enjoy this summertime walk. The Cherry Blossom Trail at Greenfield is mostly paved and a flat and even walking track.  
**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.

## SEPTEMBER 2024

- 9 **RVBC MEETING, Monday 7:00 pm.** Roanoke Council of Garden Clubs, 3640 Colonial Avenue, Roanoke, VA 24018.  
Featured Program: **Gardening for Birds and Wildlife by Robyn Puffenbarger.**

# Field Trip Reports

### Saturday, April 6, Walrond Park with Dave Frye

A rainy Friday evening turned into a beautiful and crisp Saturday morning as six participants took their time and made their way through the birdy areas of Walrond Park. The wooded sections of the trail at the back of the grounds proved to be very interesting and busy on this morning. We shared the joys of field trip birding with three new guests, relatively new to birding, and found 26 species. The highlights of the walk had to be a very cooperative Brown Thrasher, Red-winged Blackbirds dominating the scene, and spectacular Tree Swallows (they're back!)

### Saturday, April 13, Catawba Greenway with Kirk Gardner

Seven folks traveled nearly 2 hours over 2 miles in 50° temps during 40 mph gusty winds while observing: 37 species. (See below photos)

#### *Kent Davis, Photographer*



Field Sparrow



Red-bellied Woodpecker



Swamp Sparrow



Kent Davis with camera

### Saturday, April 20, Greenfield Lake at Botetourt Center with Kent Davis and Barry Whitt

On an overcast cloudy day with temps around 58°, seven participants spent 3 hours traveling 2.3 miles around Greenfield pond viewing 58 species. Notable birds seen were: 1 Wilson's Snipe, 1 Spotted Sandpiper, 1 Solitary Sandpiper, 1 Double-crested Cormorant, 4 Green Heron, 2 White-eyed Vireo, 3 Warbling Vireo, 4 Grasshopper Sparrow, 2 White-crowned Sparrow, 1 Orchard Oriole, and 3 Yellow Warbler.

Blue Ridge Wildflower Society and Roanoke Valley Bird Club

Cordially invite you to the

# Annual Picnic

Saturday, JULY 13, 2024, 5:00 PM

Roanoke Council of Garden Clubs inside facility

3640 Colonial Avenue, Roanoke, VA 24018



- Please bring a side dish or dessert to share including the serving utensil, and a card with your name and food title or recipe (for allergy inquiries)
- The RVBC will provide fried chicken and the BRWS will provide barbecue
- Drinks and ice are provided, or you may bring your favorite beverage
- Please note **new time change** including no rush to leave early

## Schedule:

- 4:00 PM Set-up
- 5:00 PM Social gathering
- 5:30 PM Welcome and picnic dining

Please RSVP by Friday, July 5, to:

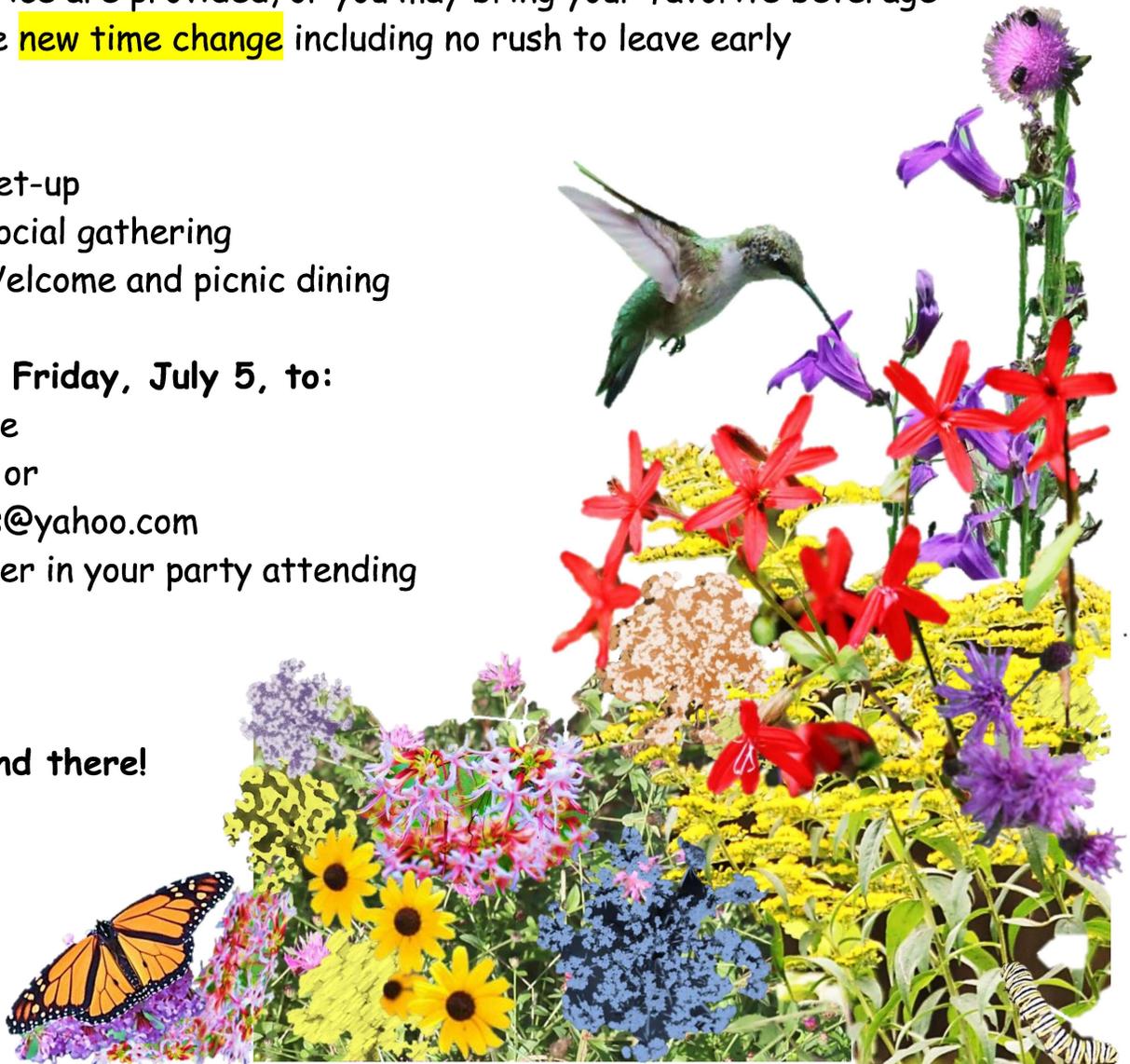
Carol Whiteside

540-774-2143 or

[whitesidemules@yahoo.com](mailto:whitesidemules@yahoo.com)

With the number in your party attending

See you then and there!





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