

Roanoke Valley Bird Club



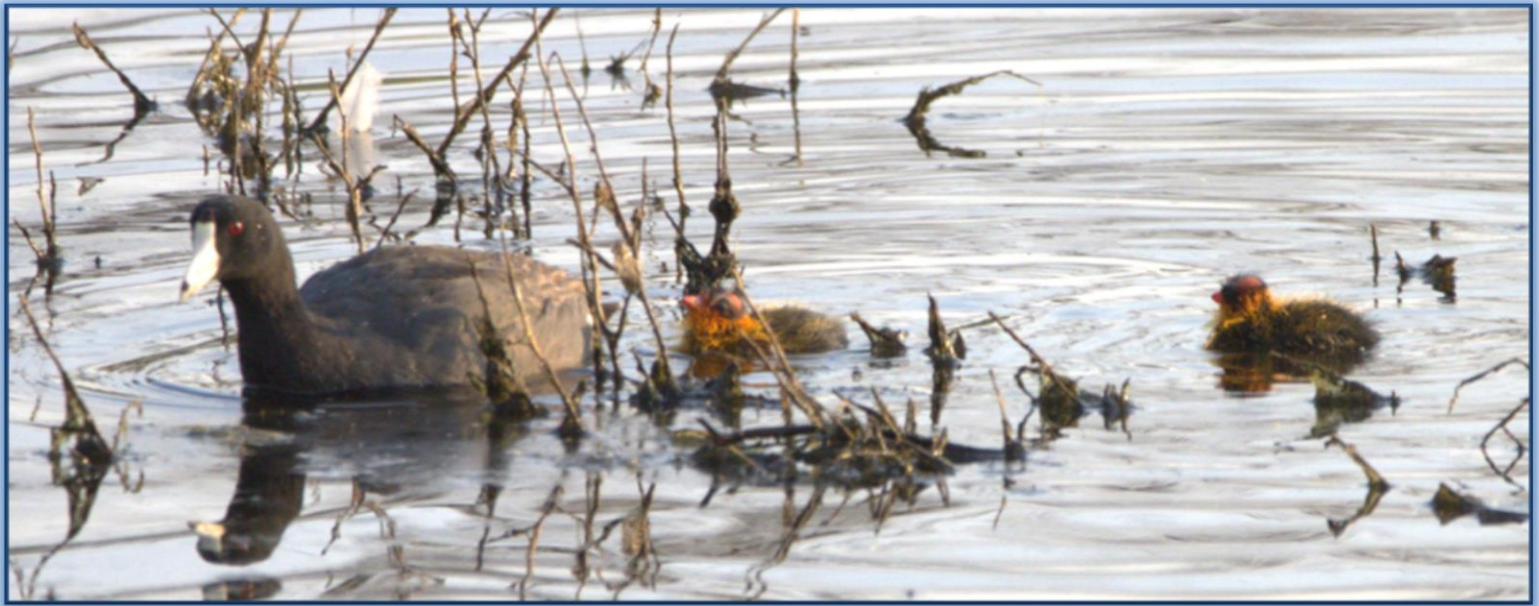
Celebrating
67 Years of Birding
1957-2024

Next Meeting:
September 9, 7:00 pm
Roanoke Council of
Garden Clubs

www.roanokevalleybirdclub.com

RVBC NEWSLETTER

September 2024



PHOTOGRAPHER
DREW DANIELS
DENVER, COLORADO

DREW'S BIRD OF THE MONTH **AMERICAN COOT** *Fulica Americana*

American Coots can be found by scanning lakes and ponds for a small, all-black bird with a bright white bill. They may be at the edges, among vegetation, or out in open water; you may even see them walking around (not waddling) on land on their fairly long, yellow-green legs. In the winter, they can be found in massive flocks of coots and other waterfowl, sometimes numbering in the thousands of individuals.

(Please see page 3.)

~The Cornell Lab



Next Meeting:

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 9

7:00 PM

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

"GARDENING FOR BIRDS"

WITH

DR. ROBYN PUFFENBARGER

Robyn Puffenbarger returns to us to describe things that any of us can do to make our gardens more attractive and supportive of the birds around us.

By making our yards more bird, pollinator, and wildlife friendly, we encourage other creatures to linger in our spaces. Just a few additions can make your backyard into an interesting, welcoming environment for birds. Robyn will talk about the ecosystem and building your plant community, whether you have sun or shade, a patio, or acres to enjoy. Following some of Robyn's suggestions just might help you add some new birds to your personal backyard list.

Robyn Puffenbarger received her Bachelor of Science in biology from Virginia Tech and a Ph.D. in molecular immunology from the Medical College of Virginia. After a post-doctoral research fellowship at SUNY-Stony Brook, she joined the faculty of Bridgewater College. She is professor and chair of the Department of Biology and Environmental Science. Robyn teaches ornithology, genetics, and intro biology courses. With her husband Bill, they bird watch in the yard and all over the world, having seen birds on four continents. Robyn is a Virginia Cooperative Extension Master gardener since 2011, and loves learning more about native plants to support wildlife.

Reminder

DUES ARE DUE!

Memberships expire on August 31

Individual \$15, Family \$25, Student No Charge

Mail checks to:

Roanoke Valley Bird Club

P.O. Box 20405, Roanoke, VA 24018

Or bring to the September 9, meeting

(Include membership form on last page 8)

Or on the web: www.roanokevalleybirdclub.com

CONTACT US!



**ROANOKE VALLEY
BIRD CLUB**

P.O. Box 20405
ROANOKE, VIRGINIA 24018

NONPROFIT 501(C)(3)

Email: rvbc2015@outlook.com
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 **20th of the month** prior to that publication. Photos and articles are gladly accepted for publication as room allows, and may be sent electronically in JPG and word docx.

Thank you!

Carol Whiteside

Newsletter Editor

540.774.2143

whitesidemules@yahoo.com



President's Musings

Cute Coots

Recently, while visiting grandkids in Denver, I went birding twice at the Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge. The first visit was with daughter, Lindsey, who always arranges a day off when I come out for us to bird. We had a very successful morning as we saw Bald Eagles, Swainson's Hawks, Kestrels, Merlins, Red-tailed Hawks, American White Pelicans, Great Blue Herons, Virginia Rail, Red-winged Blackbirds, Bullock's Orioles, Western Wood Peewees, Lark Buntings, Horned Larks, Upland Sandpiper, Blue Grosbeaks, Canada Geese, Mallards, Blue-winged Teal and others, about 40 species at three locations in the refuge.

The second visit I went by myself and got there before sunup. I had to wait at the gate for the Ranger to open it at 6 AM. I went to one of the smaller lakes called the Rod and Gun Club Ponds to try out the viewing platform with portholes arranged to see the waterfowl without spooking them. The sun still hadn't come up when I arrived and deer were everywhere with lots of ducks, geese, and coots. I found one female American Coot with two chicks feeding along the side of the pond. I watched them for about 15 minutes and took some photos. I wondered about those two little chicks that had the deck stacked against them when it came to survival. As you can see in the photos, their little reddish orange heads stick out like a neon sign. If they can make it until they molt and grow in some gray feathers, they will be one step closer to becoming an adult.

First off, there are Kestrels, Merlins, Red-tailed Hawks, Ferruginous Hawks, Swainson's Hawks, Northern Harriers and Bald Eagles in abundance, all searching for food. Now on the other hand, there are thousands of prairie dogs and rabbits on the menu for the birds of prey. Even with their mother close by, opportunity could knock, and a juvenile hawk could swoop in and grab a snack and this doesn't take into account the danger from raccoons, foxes and coyotes that call the Arsenal home. I also didn't count the owls as they will grab a quick rabbit, prairie dog, or ground squirrel rather than sitting by a marsh waiting for the coots to come out.

I watched the mother work her head under water and come up with a very fine, tender aquatic plant and pass it to the young chicks. It was devoured quickly and as is normal for chicks, they were begging for more. The ponds must be an excellent source of aquatic plants as there were ducks, geese, and coots all feeding voraciously in the cool of the morning. With over 330 species of wildlife documented at the refuge during the year, it is a very well managed impoundment.

It was a great visit; 3 Lifers and two of the most adorable American Coot chicks I have ever seen.



President Drew Daniels
ddaniels2627@cox.net
540.314.6069

DREW'S BIRD OF THE MONTH American Coot

Fulica americana

"During the 1970's there were 100 or so Coots at Carvins Cove every winter. We currently see them in much reduced numbers. They can often be found at Murray's Pond and Greenfield Lake.

Status: Fairly common spring and fall transient uncommon winter resident."

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



Drew Daniels, Photographer

The waterborne American Coot is one good reminder that not everything that floats is a duck. A close look at a coot—that small head, those scrawny legs—reveals a different kind of bird entirely. Their dark bodies and white faces are common sights in nearly any open water across the continent, and they often mix with ducks. But they're closer relatives of the gangly Sandhill Crane and the nearly invisible rails than of Mallards or teal.

Although it swims like a duck, the American Coot does not have webbed feet like a duck. Instead, each one of the coot's long toes has broad lobes of skin that help it kick through the water. The broad lobes fold back each time the bird lifts its foot, so it doesn't impede walking on dry land, though it supports the bird's weight on mucky ground.

American Coots in the winter can be found in rafts of mixed waterfowl and in groups numbering up to several thousand individuals.

The ecological impact of common animals, like this ubiquitous waterbird, can be impressive when you add it all up. One estimate from Back Bay, Virginia, suggested that the local coot population ate 216 tons (in dry weight) of vegetation per winter.

The oldest known American Coot was a female who lived to be at least 22 years 4 months old when she was shot in 1982.

~The Cornell Lab

Blue Ridge Parkway receives \$75 million for road improvements in Roanoke corridor

Historic investments funded by the Great American Outdoors Act will bring needed repairs to iconic roadway

ROANOKE, VA - The Blue Ridge Parkway is receiving approximately \$75 million in Great American Outdoors Act (GAOA) Legacy Restoration Funding for major road and safety improvements along the park's corridor in Roanoke, Va.

The three-year repaving and rehabilitation project in America's most visited national park will improve the condition of 24 miles of the Parkway from milepost 97 at Blackhorse Gap (south of Peaks of Otter) to milepost 121 near US 220 in Roanoke. The project includes slope stabilization, road resurfacing, and repair or replacement of drainage structures, curbs, walks, shoulders, guardrails, stone walls, overlooks, pavement markings, and signage.

"Generations of park visitors and local residents have treasured memories of their Blue Ridge Parkway experiences, both inside the park and out in our neighboring communities," said Blue Ridge Parkway Superintendent Tracy Swartout. "We know how important the Parkway is to these communities. The historic investments at work with these critical infrastructure repairs allow the Parkway to continue to serve as an economic and tourism driver for generations to come."

A Design Build contract for the Roanoke project has recently been awarded. The design efforts are currently underway and include development of construction timelines and detour locations. Across most of the 2024 season, Parkway visitors can expect short, single-lane closures for survey and design work, with possible full-closures implemented later in the year. The project is jointly managed by the National Park Service and the Federal Highway Administration.

Full road closures for construction will be announced well in advance and are most likely to occur across the 2025 and 2026 visitor seasons. This project will be phased with a staggered series of lane and road closures allowing for continuous access to key intersections and visitor amenities within the project limits, including the Explore Park entrance. Once full closures are announced, maps and detour information will be available and updated on the park's website at <https://www.nps.gov/blri/planyourvisit/roadclosures.htm>.

GAOA is part of a concerted effort to address the extensive maintenance and repair backlog in national parks. Including this project, the Blue Ridge Parkway is slated to receive more than \$200 million from GAOA for multiple projects to address long-needed infrastructure improvements that will improve the visitor experience for a park that welcomed 16.8 million visitors in 2023.

Supported by revenue from energy development, GAOA's Legacy Restoration Fund provides up to \$1.3 billion per year for five years to the National Park Service to make significant enhancements in national parks to ensure their preservation and provide opportunities for recreation, education, and enjoyment for current and future visitors.

Editor's Note:

We felt it important to remind and inform our birding community of the major road construction on the Blue Ridge Parkway for the next couple of years, since we enjoy birding the many diversified aspects within the Park. This certainly will affect traveling, also the bluebird trail monitors will be suspended; although, I will monitor when accessibility allows. The road is noticeably in bad shape and in dire need of restoration. As mentioned, please check the Blue Ridge Parkway website for road information, detours, etc. I will be glad to answer questions or concerns, and provide updates when available.



Roanoke Valley Bird Club & Blue Ridge Wildflower Society

11th Annual Picnic, July 13, 2024



We are so pleased with having 47 attendees this year, which were 21 RVBC members, 6 BRWS members, 16 members of both clubs, and 4 welcomed guests! The Wildflower Club provided barbeque, the Bird Club brought fried chicken and everyone delivered the most delicious sides, salads and desserts. **Drew Daniels (left) and Marilyn Lerch (right)** graciously welcomed all.

We were thrilled that RVBC member Laura Montague won a RVBC annual membership, and Roger Holtman (he and his wife, Ellen, are members of both clubs) won a BRWS membership! Carol Whiteside brought a photo-board of our first combined picnic on August 11, 2013, in Waldron Park, featuring Betty and Butch Kelly, our original combined picnic organizers. Thank you to all the volunteers who made this event enjoyable and relaxing; many thanks to everybody for making this a fun, very successful social event; we're already looking forward to seeing you next year!



ROBIN AND ALLEN AUSTIN'S HUMMINGBIRD CELEBRATION Saturday, August 3, 2024 ~ Bent Mountain, Virginia

Twelve people attended Robin's morning bird walk; spotting 32 species of birds! The best sightings were Black and White warbler, Common Yellow Throat warbler, White-eyed Vireo and Brown Thrasher. There were at least 30 people enjoying the pot-luck picnic of abundant nourishments with Allen working the hot dog and hamburger grill to perfection. The hummers did not disappoint, buzzing through the Austin's manicured gardens and their feeders in outstanding numbers while everyone mingled and savored the gorgeous day while feasting.



Photographers:
Mary Lou Barritt:
Ruby-throated hummingbirds
Tom Johnson and Sid Barritt
Carol Whiteside (picnic people)





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.

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.**
- 11 **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. Fall migration will be in full swing, and who knows what will be flying through the area?! 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 turn 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.
- 22 **Sunday Hawk Watching at Harvey's Knob, 9:00am to 4:00pm, Located at milepost 95.3 on the Blue Ridge Parkway.**
From September through November, our club and the Lynchburg club report data on the hawk migration at Harvey's Knob Overlook on the Blue Ridge Parkway. All are welcome to join our resident hawk watchers to see how it is done. Bring a lawn chair, binoculars, and a spirit of adventure for learning about the annual hawk migration. You are welcome to show up any day, arrive and leave when you like, and even though you may not be ready to ID each hawk as it passes, extra eyes are ALWAYS needed.
Additional info: The best time to observe the broad-winged hawk migration from that overlook is from around Sept. 15 – Sept. 26, although there are many other raptors that you may spot at other times.
- 28 **Saturday Evening Greenway Hike – Wasena, 4:30pm. Leader: David Frye (248-459-6783)**
Join us for a bit of a different outing – a late afternoon walk. The group will travel the paved paths of the Greenway, looking for migrating species and resident birds. The Roanoke River also offers opportunities to view ducks, geese, and herons along its banks. The group will gather up in the car park areas around The Green Goat Restaurant in Wasena and work our way east from there. We may also “wet our whistles” afterward at one of their outdoor tables.
Directions: 802 Wiley Drive SW, Roanoke 24015. From Brandon Avenue take northbound Main Street into Wasena, going one block past the traffic light (Wasena Ave) turning right onto Winona Avenue (GPS may route you a slightly different way). Take the roundabout around to the left onto the drive at the river's edge, along which you may park (across from the restaurant on your left). There are also many other places to park in that area.

OCTOBER 2024

- 14 **RVBC MEETING, Monday 7:00 pm.** Roanoke Council of Garden Clubs, 3640 Colonial Avenue, Roanoke, VA 24018.
Featured Program: **Using Forestry to Increase Bird Diversity for Conservation with Dr. Steven Latta.**
Steven Latta works for the National Aviary in Pittsburgh, PA where he is the Director of Conservation and Field Research. He will discuss with us possible revisions to forestry policy/planning that can improve diversity and overall health of bird populations.

2025 Bird Club Calendar News – Vote by September 11

Our talented club members have provided 87 fantastic pictures for our consideration for the 2025 calendar. This calendar is our annual fund raiser and your action is needed. Club members get to choose which photos will be in our calendar. Voting will begin August 28, until midnight on September 11. The photos to vote on will be posted on our website, <https://roanokevalleybirdclub.com/>. At that time, votes can be emailed to RVBC2015@outlook.com. Detailed voting rules will be emailed to all club members just prior to the voting period.

After member voting, the Calendar Committee (and printer) will then get busy to produce our calendar in time for our October meeting. If you can't attend meetings, an option will be available to order your calendar(s) online or by mail. Thank you all for another great calendar year!

Field Trip Reports



Kathy Clemo photo ▲
Mike Dorsey photos ▼



Saturday, April 27, Warbler Road Field Trip with Leaders Tim and Alyce Quinn - Fourteen people attended our annual Warbler Road field trip. On this glorious spring day we found 56 species, even if a few we expect to see were absent. Some highlights of the day: osprey; yellow-throated, blue-headed and warbling vireos; ruby-crowned kinglet; orchard oriole; scarlet tanager; and 12 warbler species--ovenbird, worm-eating, Louisiana waterthrush, black-and-white, hooded, redstart, cerulean, parula, black-throated blue, pine, yellow-rumped, and black-throated green.

Saturday, August 10, Butterfly Walk with Leader Toni Pepin – A beautiful and sunny Saturday morning provided plenty of close-up views of gorgeous butterflies. The damp ditches, pebbled walkways, milkweed plants, and thistle flowers attracted 17 species for the 17 participants on the walk. It was ALL about butterflies – birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians were merely distractions for the butterfly enthusiasts on this day! The butterfly of the day was the Zebulon Skipper (36 individuals observed), but the Spicebush Swallowtail, Monarch, Pearl Crescent, Eastern Tiger Swallowtail, and Eastern Tailed Blue all got their share of oos and ahhs. With the participation that this trip received, it will, no doubt, become one of our group's annual events.



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

2025

(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