

Roanoke Valley Bird Club



Celebrating
68 Years of Birding
1957-2025

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

www.roanokevalleybirdclub.com

RVBC NEWSLETTER

JANUARY 2025



PHOTOGRAPHER
GARLAND KITTS

DREW'S BIRD OF THE MONTH **ROSE-BREADED GROSBEAK** *Pheucticus ludovicianus*

Bursting with black, white, and rose-red, male Rose-breasted Grosbeaks are like an exclamation mark at your bird feeder or in your binoculars. Females and immatures are streaked brown and white with a bold face pattern and enormous bill. Look for these birds in forest edges and woodlands. Listen, too, for their distinctive voices. They sound like American Robins, but listen for an extra sweetness, as if the bird had operatic training; they also make a sharp chink like the squeak of a sneaker.
(Please see page 3.)

~The Cornell Lab



WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

Tim Garrison
Hugh Craft

Next meeting:

MONDAY, JANUARY 13
7:00 PM

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

Featured program::

**SAVING SEABIRDS:
NEW LESSONS FROM PUFFINS
WITH DR. STEPHEN W. KRESS**



Stephen Kress is the founder of Project Puffin, now known as the Audubon Seabird Institute. Prior to retirement, he served as Vice-President for Bird Conservation for the National Audubon Society. Dr. Kress received his Ph.D. from Cornell University and his master's and undergraduate degrees from Ohio State University.

For more than 50 years he has focused his research interests on developing techniques for managing colonial nesting seabirds. His innovative methods have earned global recognition for pioneering the use of social attraction and translocation of seabird chicks for restoring seabird colonies. The combined use of chick translocation, seabird decoys, sound recordings, and mirrors was first used to restore colonies of Atlantic Puffins and several species of terns at islands on the Maine coast.

Dr. Kress will share the hopeful success story about the restoration of Atlantic Puffins and other seabirds to coastal islands of Maine. Against all odds, this inspiring story demonstrates that people have the capacity to return seabirds to historic nesting islands and proactively help them find secure nesting places. This presentation will provide examples of how methods developed for bringing puffins back to Maine are helping to create new colonies of endangered seabirds worldwide. The presentation will also discuss how restored colonies of puffins and terns are providing fresh insight into the changing marine climate of the Gulf of Maine, how seabirds are adapting to climate change. The presentation will also show how tiny tracking devices are revealing the remarkable migrations of seabirds so that coming ocean wind development can proceed with minimal risk to seabirds.

His autobiography, co-authored with journalist Derrick Z. Jackson, is *Project Puffin: The Improbable Quest to Bring a Beloved Seabird back to Egg Rock* (Yale U. Press 2015). He is also the author of many books on bird watching and gardening for birds as well as science papers about seabirds and conservation. In recent years, his research has focused on the response of seabirds in the Gulf of Maine to changing diets in response to climate change.



CONTACT US!



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BIRD CLUB**

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NONPROFIT 501(C) (3)

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David Frye

Vice President, memberships

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Field Trips **David Frye**

Meeting Refreshments **Mary Lou Barritt**

Newsletter Editor **Carol Whiteside**

RVBC/BRWS Annual Picnic **Carol Whiteside**

Website **Nathan Anderson**

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. **Photography is by our members.**

Thank you!

Carol Whiteside

Newsletter Editor

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President's Musings

President Drew Daniels
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I sat down to write this shortly after our December meeting with no real direction in mind, which happens often!! I like to provide you with some tidbits of information I glean from reading articles or books about birds. As I let my mind wander trying to come up with a subject, the "lightbulb" flashed brightly. It hit me that my subject was right in front of me at the December meeting. Rather than writing about the birds, why not write about the "birders"?

After the meeting was over and everyone was partaking of the refreshments, it was hard not to notice all the talking and interactions of all the members. As we grow older, one of the most important activities we need to incorporate into our daily regime is "socialization." It provides a balance for our mental health and keeps us sharp. I read an article about keeping the brain healthy; the contention was that preventing boredom is the best way to keep the brain sharp and healthy. Boredom only leads to depression and cognitive decline. Our bird club offers socialization through our meetings as well as our field trips. Our meetings provide speakers who offer learning experiences to keep your brain sharp.

Keeping active by birding also provides for your physical health. As we age, staying active is one of the most important traits for longevity, and birding certainly provides for that. I know that each of you has experienced that euphoria when you spot a "lifer"!

I hope you don't mind my musing about you instead of the birds this month, as each of you is an integral part of the club. Being an active member certainly has its benefits, both for you and the club.

I would like to extend to each of you the Warmest Greetings for a Healthy, Happy, and Prosperous New Year!!!

Avian Influenza

It has now been confirmed that "bird flu" has passed from birds to cows to humans as 63 people have been infected in California, mostly in dairy farms. Just this week a Louisiana man was infected from picking up dead birds in his yard. Here in the East, we have the finch eye infection, finch conjunctivitis; it's not spreading to humans, but certainly in finches.

For your protection, please use rubber dishwashing gloves when filling feeders, when disinfecting feeders, and when working around places where birds congregate. This is only a precaution for your health and well-being, and not a "hair-on-fire" moment.

Periodic disinfecting of feeders where finches congregate using 1/3 cup of bleach/Clorox per gallon of water, wash thoroughly, let stand for 10 minutes and rinse. This should do the job. Stay vigilant and be careful!

~Drew

DREW'S BIRD OF THE MONTH

Rose-breasted Grosbeak

Pheucticus ludovicianus

"Status: Fairly common spring and fall transient and localized summer resident above 2500 feet."

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



Carol Whiteside, Photographer

Rose-breasted Grosbeaks breed in eastern forests; you can find them among both deciduous trees and conifers. They are most common in regenerating woodlands and often concentrate along forest edges and in parks. During migration, Rose-breasted Grosbeaks frequent fruiting trees to help fuel their flights to Central and South America.

Smaller than a robin but larger than a house finch, they are between 7-8 inches in length. These chunky, medium-sized birds use their stout tri-angular bills to eat seeds, fruit, and insects. They are also frequent visitors to backyard bird feeders, where they eat sunflower seeds with abandon.

They nest in a vertical fork or crotch of a sapling, and usually lay 1-5 pale green to blue with speckles eggs. Both male and female Rose-breasted Grosbeaks share incubation, brooding, and feeding duties at the nest. They appear to be monogamous. ~The Cornell Lab



Rose-breasted Grosbeak female
Garland Kitts, Photographer



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

**Also, please be careful when walking into the wilds of Virginia as Firearms Deer Season is in effect, and hunters could very well be in the vicinity. Bright colored clothing and walks on a well-groomed trail are good practices.*

JANUARY 2025

- 1 **New Year's Day Bird Count.** Everyone is encouraged to start the New Year off right and GO BIRDING!
- 8 **Second Wednesday Bird Hike – Greenfield 9:00 am. Leader: David Frye (248-459-6783).** Join us for a bird walk on the Cherry Blossom Trail at Greenfield on Wednesday morning. 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 turn 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.
- 11 **Catawba Greenway 9:00 am. Leader: Kirk Gardner (828-216-9170).** This Saturday trip will involve about a mile of walking on a mostly gravel road as well as small portions of some grassy fields. An option after the walk at Catawba (if time and weather permit) will be to visit nearby Whispering Pines where we have seen some interesting birds in past years. Waterproof shoes are recommended.
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.
- 13 **RVBC Membership Meeting, Monday 7:00 pm.** Roanoke Council of Garden Clubs, 3640 Colonial Avenue, Roanoke, VA 24018.
Featured Program: Saving Seabirds - New Lessons From Puffins. Presenter: Dr. Stephen Kress.
Dr. Kress of Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology returns to give us updates on the projects with which he is involved relating to the re-establishment of colonies of Atlantic Puffins and other threatened seabirds along the Northeast coast of the US.
- 18 **Pond Hopping in Botetourt County 9:00 am. Leaders: Tim and Alyce Quinn (540-537-1831).** Tim and Alyce Quinn (540-537-1831). Join Alyce and Tim at Greenfield Lake, to begin this multi-destination trip. We will spend the morning visiting local ponds in search of wintering waterfowl and other avian life. Bring your 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, across from the entrance to Ashley Plantation. Park in the second lot on the right.
- 25 **Wild Card Trip–TBA Leader: Barry Whitt (540-309-4353).** Barry has plans that are totally dependent upon climactic conditions; however, stay tuned! If he sees favorable weather, he'll send out an announcement.
- 31-02 **VSO Trip to North Carolina's Outer Banks -**
Virginia Ornithological Society members can sign up on their website for this popular trip to the coast of North Carolina.



FEBRUARY (A QUICK LOOK AHEAD)

- 8 **Raptor Count –** It's time for the annual raptor count, so save the date! The form and more details will be in the February Newsletter.
- 10 **RVBC Membership Meeting, Monday 7:00 pm.** Roanoke Council of Garden Clubs, 3640 Colonial Avenue, Roanoke, VA 24018.
Featured Program: Vultures: The Private Life of an Unloved Bird. Presenter: Katie Fallon. Katie Fallon will surprise and delight us with her program focusing on "The Clean-Up Crew" of the natural world. Vultures' fascinating lives will be in focus and applauded for the good that they do all around us.
- 12 **Second Wednesday Bird Hike – Walrond Park 9:00am. Leader: David Frye (248-459-6783).** Another in our series of local Wednesday morning bird walks, we'll walk the perimeter of Walrond Park looking for winter resident birds.
- 15 **RVBC Owl Walk – Fern Park, South Roanoke 6:00 pm. Leader: David Frye (248-459-6783).** Dave Frye will do his best to conjure up an Eastern Screech Owl, or a Barred Owl, or a Great Horned Owl. The Leader makes no guarantees, however (and no refunds for this trip).
- 22 **Saturday Bird Hike - Greenfield 9:00 am. Leader: Barry Whitt (540-309-4353).** Join us for a Saturday morning bird walk on the Cherry Blossom Trail at Greenfield. This Saturday trip enables folks that are unable to join us at this site when we routinely visit on Wednesdays.

December Highlights

Field Trip Report

Saturday, November 23, Waid Park - Franklin County

Leaders Alyce and Tim Quinn. Considering that it was a cold and windy morning at Waid Park, we still had a pretty good bird list with a total of 26 species. We covered about 3 miles in the 2.5 hours we were there. Best birds were belted kingfisher, raven, hermit thrush, purple finch, fox sparrow, and pileated woodpecker (Right: Carol Whiteside photographer)



Meeting Notes

Monday, December 9, Featured Program: "Club Members Sharing Night."



Secretary **Betty Burke** noted, "There were 60 members and guests present (think this may be the largest group we have had this year)." We were greeted by the holiday sounds of **The Ukaladies** – **Linda Cory, Kathy Clemo, and Mary Harshfield**, followed by the outstanding bird slide-presentations from **Mary Lou and Sid Barritt, Bob Crawford, Garland Kitts, and Ed and Barbara Kyle**. Then, while savoring the delicious treats that everyone provided, we were entertained by **Rosalind Ilett's** festive piano concert, while mingling among friends. Congratulations to **Linda Cory** and team, who distributed and sold all of the club's incredible 2025 calendars.

Breaking News Release

While the bald eagle has long been the unofficial mascot of the U.S., after 250 years President Biden signed the first legislation on December 24, 2024, following Congressional passage, to make the **Bald Eagle the National Bird of the United States**. In 1784, Founding Father Benjamin Franklin objected to the creature being chosen to represent the country, calling it a "bird of bad moral character." Franklin preferred the Wild Turkey. The bald eagle is also protected under the National Emblem Act of 1940, which makes it illegal to sell or hunt the creature. The birds were once on the brink of extinction, but the population has greatly increased since 2009. (Right: **Sherman Bamford**, photographer)





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

Happy New Year

www.roanokevalleybirdclub.com

RVBC NEWSLETTER

JANUARY 2025



Roanoke Valley Bird Club

Membership Application/Renewal Form

Memberships expire on August 31, each year

2025

Please print

(Current Year)

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:
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