

Roanoke Valley Bird Club



Celebrating
68 Years of Birding
1957-2025

Next Meeting:
February 10, 7:00 pm
Roanoke Council of
Garden Clubs

www.roanokevalleybirdclub.com

RVBC NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY 2025

PHOTOGRAPHER
GARLAND KITTS



DREW'S BIRD OF THE MONTH

The American Birding Association 2025 Bird of the Year

COMMON LOON *Gavia immer*

Common Loons have always stirred the hearts of humans with their mysterious nocturnal behavior and their striking calls, which have been likened to everything from moans of death to insane laughter. Add to this their preference for breeding on isolated northern lakes and it is easy to see why our scanty knowledge of loons has in the past been filled in largely by imagination rather than with facts. In recent years this has changed. This has been inspired, in part, by numbers of summer vacationers on lakes where the birds breed. Strong efforts to protect the loon and create greater public awareness of its needs have been fostered by the North American Loon Fund. Now all of us can enjoy loons more, and, in fact, you do not even need to see them to start following their behavior. Simply by knowing the meaning of loon "language," you can begin to interpret many of the events of their lives. For example, the "laugh," or Tremolo-call, is generally given when they are alarmed. The long Wail-call is probably a location note that helps the pair keep in contact, and the Yodel-call is used in territorial advertisement and defense. It is extremely important to remember that loons are easily disturbed during the egg incubation phase. If you come near the nest, even unintentionally, they will leave through a series of long dives and will not return until you have left the area. The better you know loon behavior the better you can tell which stage they are in, and whether they are disturbed. Then we can adjust our actions so that loons can be in peace, and we can continue to enjoy their wild sounds and fascinating behavior. (More on page 4.)

~ Stokes Nature Guides by Donald & Lillian Stokes



WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

Alessandra Thorpe
Nicholas Marko
Will & Anne Biddle

Next meeting:

**MONDAY, FEBRUARY 10
7:00 PM**

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

Featured program: **VULTURES:
THE PRIVATE LIFE OF AN UNLOVED BIRD**
SPEAKER: KATIE FALLON

Vultures are often overlooked, underappreciated, and unloved, despite the vital roles they play in healthy ecosystems. Worldwide, vultures are primarily scavengers; they can help stop the spread of disease by quickly and efficiently removing dead animals from the landscape. Unfortunately, due to poisoning, direct persecution, habitat loss, and other threats, vultures are more likely to be threatened or endangered than any other group of raptors. But in the Western Hemisphere, Turkey and Black Vultures counter this trend and are increasing in number. Based on Katie Fallon's recent book, this fun presentation will explore the life and times of the noble Turkey Vulture, including its feeding, nesting, and



roosting habits, migratory behaviors, and common misconceptions. Katie will also discuss what it's like to be up-close-and-personal with Turkey and Black Vultures through her work with the Avian Conservation Center of Appalachia.

Katie Fallon is the author of the nonfiction books *Vulture: The Private Life of an Unloved Bird* (2020, 2017) and *Cerulean Blues: A Personal Search for a Vanishing*

Songbird (2011), as well as two books for children. She is Executive Director of the Avian Conservation Center of Appalachia, a nonprofit organization dedicated to conserving the region's wild birds through research, education, and rehabilitation. She has also served as President of the Mountaineer Chapter of the National Audubon Society. Katie is a Certified Professional Bird Trainer and has worked with birds since 1998; over the last twenty-five years she has given educational presentations featuring live raptors, vultures, parrots, and corvids. She writes the column WINGBEATS for *Bird Watcher's Digest* and has taught writing at West Virginia University, Virginia Tech, and elsewhere. Her first word was "bird."

54th Annual Big Spring Day will be on **May 3, 2025**. This is in keeping with the tradition of an early May date for this count; and also, does not conflict with either the VSO Big Virginia Day on April 26, nor the VSO Gloucester County field trip the weekend of May 16 – 18. A recap of 2024 Big Spring Day and planning details for 2025 will follow in the March 2025 newsletter.

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 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
ddaniels2627@cox.net
540.314.6069

This month my thoughts are with Butch and Betty Kelly; after 61 years together, we cannot mention one without the other. Neither can we separate the Bird Club and Wildflower Society. Butch accomplished much for both associations including but not limited to, serving countless years on their boards, numerous committees, led field trips, presented programs, and the Kelly's established our joint picnic in 2013. Butch served as RVBC President. He was a volunteer for the Nature Conservancy and always promoted how birds and native plants are dependent on each other.



Honoring a Life Well Lived

By Michael Belcher

Photos by Carol Whiteside

January 16, we lost a dear friend, teacher and advocate for nature with the death of Richard Kelly.

I met Butch 25 years ago, and we quickly became friends. Over the years he became one of my best friends. Somewhere along the way, he became my brother.

Most of us never called him anything but Butch. It was a nickname his grandmother gave him when he was a little boy. She said he looked like the character from the Carl Thomas Anderson comic strip "Henry." Butch doesn't sound like a name you would associate with a person that smart, nice, and enthusiastic. Yet somehow "Butch" still fit.

Besides his family and friends, Butch's zest for life spilled out in a love for nature, history, and sports. Wherever he was, Butch often was looking for and talking about birds and butterflies, flowers and trees, geology and landscapes. He could point out a hundred different species on a walk and effortlessly explain in simple terms how they all fit together. Yet he remained humble enough to quickly admit when he didn't know something or couldn't identify it.



You might not know this, but when Butch first retired, he got a little depressed. As he looked at the world, he wondered if he had wasted his career teaching science and conservation. But he soon snapped out of it. I think a big reason he shook it off is we often came across former students from his teaching and coaching days with Roanoke County. Folks would stop us to tell him how much they enjoyed his classes. They thanked him for instilling a love of nature and for opening their eyes to the rich biodiversity all around us.

I hope you all find a mentor who inspires like that.

If you were ever in a vehicle with Butch, you know he loved to talk. In fact, when we were together, the two of us never shut up. But it was important work. During those conversations, we solved all the world's problems. Of course, no one was there to listen so the problems remain for us to keep solving.

I hope you all find a best friend that you can talk with like that.

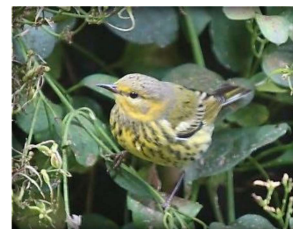
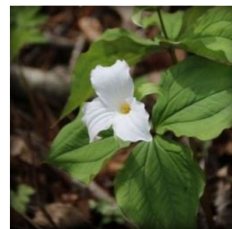


Butch often took short and long trips to see a bird or plant. One of his favorite spots was Burke's Garden in Tazewell County. We went there several times over the years in different seasons. On my first trip there with Butch, we watched a pair of nesting Bald Eagles in a field across from an Amish country store. On another trip, I saw my first red-headed woodpecker on a split-rail fence. Recently, Butch, Rupert Cutler and I went there



and saw Loggerhead Shrikes. It was another first-sighting for me. On a few occasions, we went to the Smokies in September to watch the bull Elk fight during the rut. We returned in April to see the spring ephemerals bloom. Butch could just as quickly point out the differences among the various trilliums on the ground and the warblers in the trees.

I hope you all can witness something beautiful and rare with a friend.



During our trips, we always laughed. Usually, it was because things went wrong. We would laugh so hard that sometimes Butch would almost run off the road while driving. Unfortunately, most of the things we laughed about aren't appropriate to repeat in public. But I will tell you this one. Several years ago, we went on a trip for a week in West Virginia in mid-March. We were staying at the lodge at Blackwater Falls and hiking and exploring every day.

While the first two days were pleasant, it then turned cold and wet. At one point, Butch and I were standing in 6 inches of marshy water and muck identifying about a dozen species of ferns. It was 30 degrees outside and snow and rain was coming down.

I told him: "I am having a good time, and I am glad we are doing this, but this ain't normal." Butch snapped back: "What exactly would be normal -- sitting in a bar eating burgers and drinking beer while watching a game?"

"Yes. Yes, Butch, that would be normal!" I snapped back.

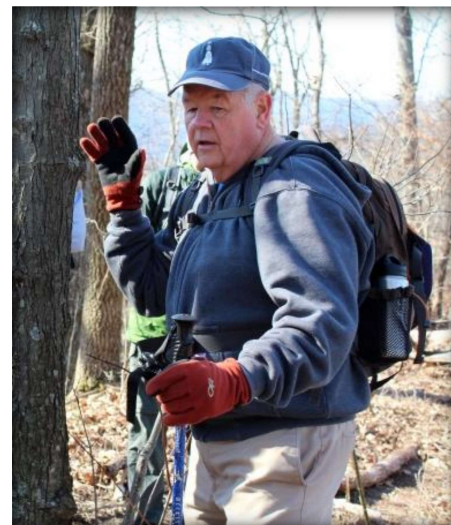
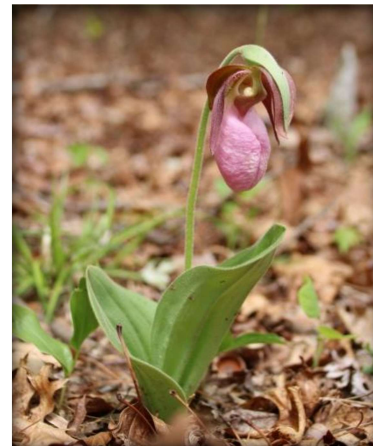
And then we laughed and kept on looking at plants until it got dark.

I hope you all can find a friend where you both see the humor even when the situation is miserable.

Even after Butch got sick, we were still planning trips as much as a year or two out. If you ever traveled with Butch, you know he usually bought a T-shirt from the gift shops. He probably had a couple hundred of them. When I think of him now, I suspect I will always remember him in the shirt with the John Muir quote:

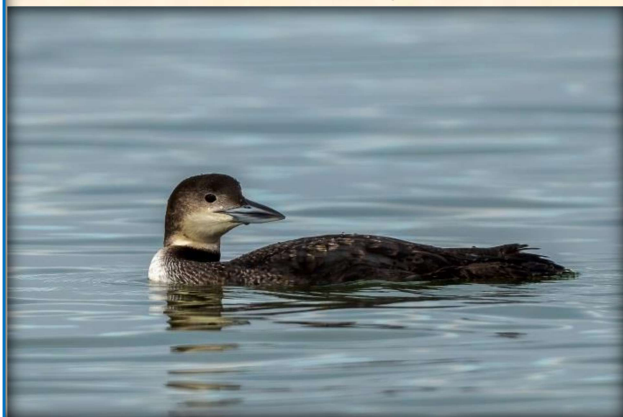
"The mountains are calling, and I must go."

I hope you all nurture that kind of zest in your life.



DREW'S BIRD OF THE MONTH **COMMON LOON** *Gavia immer*

Garland Kitts, Photographer



The American Birding Association 2025 Bird of the Year

"Status: Uncommon spring and fall transient and fairly rare localized winter resident. Carvins Cove is the place to look for loons and occasionally a non-breeding individual will remain all summer."

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

Common Loons are large, diving waterbirds with rounded heads and dagger-like bills. They have long bodies and short tails that are usually not visible. In flight, they look stretched out, with a long, flat body and long neck and bill. Their feet stick out beyond the tail (unlike ducks and cormorants), looking like wedges. They are stealthy divers, submerging without a splash to catch fish. Pairs and groups often call to each other at night. In flight, notice their shallow wingbeats and unwavering, bee-lined flight path.

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

FEBRUARY 2025

- 1 **Saturday Bird Hike - Greenfield 8:30 am. Leader: Kirk Gardner (828-216-9710).** Join the Lynchburg Bird Club for a Saturday morning bird walk on the Cherry Blossom Trail at Greenfield. We will meet at the Cherry Blossom TRACK Trail parking lot at 8:30 am. We are hoping to see some waterfowl! **Directions:** Take Exit 150B on I-81 and follow signs to Route 220N. Go about 4 miles and turn left at the entrance onto International Parkway and the Greenfield Education and Training Center, across from the entrance to Ashley Plantation. Park in the second lot on right
- 8 **Raptor Count – Time for the annual Raptor Count!** Grab your birding buddies and go out looking for raptors! No skill required, just binoculars and hawk id ability. Drive around the area within 100 miles of Woodpecker Ridge on Saturday, February 8 (inclement weather date Sunday, February 9). You earn points for each hawk you see. The tally sheet (on page 9) lists the points awarded for the various hawks. Contact Anne Tucker (540) 204-5693 if you have any questions. The completed tally sheet can be photo'd to Anne at (540) 204-5693, emailed to billt3256@gmail.com or mailed to 3256 Lakewood Forest Rd. Moneta VA 24121-2477.
- 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. Walrond Park has a wooded area and a pond at the south end of the park that can have some surprises for birders. **Directions:** The Park is southeast of and very near the junction of I-81 and Plantation Rd in Hollins. From Plantation Road, turn onto southbound Walrond Drive (just east of the Country Inn and Suites) and continue into the park. The car park is near the center of the grounds.
- 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, a Barred Owl, or a Great Horned Owl. The leader makes no guarantees, however (and no refunds for this trip, lol!). We'll discuss the many unique aspects of owls; then quietly head onto the path to listen for their calls, and play some recordings that might draw an owl within our viewing range. Dress for the cold and wear sturdy winter footwear. Again, "sometimes there's an owl and sometimes there's not." **Directions:** From the Crystal Spring neighborhood in Roanoke City, take McClanahan Street East and turn right onto Jefferson Street heading South. Jefferson Street ends at the junction with Cornwallis Avenue and at the trailhead for Fern Park. There is no car park there, so attendees will need to find suitable curbside parking in the residential neighborhood nearby
- 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. We will walk around Greenfield Lake and possibly to the pond beyond. It 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 onto International Parkway and the Greenfield Education and Training Center, across from the entrance to Ashley Plantation. Park in the second lot on right.

MARCH 2025 (A QUICK LOOK AHEAD)

- 8 **Roanoke River Greenway Walk, West from Bridge Street, Saturday 9:00 am. Leader: David Frye (248-459-6783).** A much anticipated connection of the Roanoke River Greenway was completed last year and we'll introduce everyone to it. The trail is flat and paved and should afford us a nice hike with, hopefully, some nice resident birds.
- 12 **Mid-Week Wednesday Bird Hike - Greenfield 9:00 am. Leader: David Frye (248-459-6783)** Join us for a Wednesday morning bird walk on the Cherry Blossom Trail at Greenfield. We will walk around Greenfield Lake and possibly to the pond beyond looking for winter residents and hoping for a seasonal helping of diving ducks and waterfowl.
- 16 **Roanoke Sewage Treatment Plant, Sunday 9:00 am. Leaders: Kent Davis (540-353-6388) and Kirk Gardner (828-216-9710).** Join us for a walk around the Sewage Treatment Plant. This site is one of the best spots for viewing shorebirds in the Roanoke Valley. The property includes impoundments, sludge ponds, mudflats, riparian habitat and woodlands. Besides shorebirds, we can expect to see resident hawks and possibly ravens and fish crows.
- 22 **Woodcock Walk on Bent Mountain, Saturday 6:30 pm. Leaders: Robin Austin (540-676-0951) and Linda Cory (540-580-5214)** Meet Robin and Linda at the Bent Mountain Community Center for an evening walk of birding and woodcock watching. We will visit the boardwalk at the community center and walk the surrounding area, then carpool to a nearby area to observe the woodcocks that start their courtship flight at sunset.
- 29 **Evergreen Burial Park – Saturday 9:00 am. Leaders: Linda Cory (540-580-5214) and Kent Davis (540-353-6388)** Pre-registration is required through their website: evergreenmemorialtrust.com or call (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 winter resident birds.

January Highlights

Field Trip Report

Wednesday, January 8, Greenfield Lake and Surrounds

Leader Dave Frye was joined by two hearty souls on an icy Wednesday and saw the Cherry Blossom Trail covered with an inch of ice glazing. These conditions made continuing with our hike a dangerous proposition, so it was abandoned before it even got started. Greenfield Lake, however, was observed to have one fairly sizable area of open water and, as one might expect, was chocked full of Canada Geese. Over 200 individual birds were estimated there on that morning.

Meeting Notes

Monday, January 20,

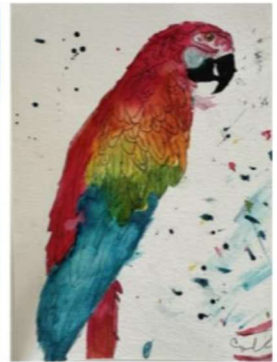
Featured Program: "Saving Seabirds: New Lessons from Puffins" with Dr Stephen W. Kress.

Secretary Karen Frye noted: There were 45 members and guests present. Dr. Kress shared the hopeful success story about the restoration of Atlantic Puffins and other seabirds to coastal islands of Maine. *Maine Birds* by R. Palmer and A. Norton, inspired him to find out why puffins were no longer in Maine. Bird models and calls were used successfully to attract birds. The study is influencing where wind energy sites are placed. This model has been used worldwide on bird preservation activities. The study is continuing to shed light on the impact of global warming. Projectpuffin.org was recommended for further information about bird conservation and to purchase books. There are also links to puffin cams on this site.

Members' Kids Art



Whitney Anderson's son wants to share a few of his recent paintings with the group. Cole's career aspiration (age 11) is to be an ornithologist.



10 Conservation Takeaways from the closing days of the 118th Congress – 7 Wins & 3 Misses

The National Audubon Society • By Felice Stadler, Vice President, Government Affairs
Submitted by **Kent Davis, RVBC Past President**

WASHINGTON (December 24, 2024) – As the year draws to a close, we reflect on the hectic ending weeks of the 118th Congress, where despite the chaotic moments, there remained a bipartisan commitment to getting some important conservation policies over the finish line. From adding new protections to hundreds of thousands of acres of coastal areas and safeguarding vital bird habitat, to establishing new funding for global conservation projects, these wins will conserve vital habitats and nurture economic growth for years to come. Unfortunately, much was left undone and significant bipartisan conservation bills faltered as time ran out—leaving much work ahead for the next Congress and administration.

Here are 7 wins for conservation, and migratory birds, from the 2024 lame-duck Congressional session (post-election day until now):

1. More than \$110 billion in disaster recovery funds to restore private and public lands and related infrastructure. In the rushed final days of the 118th Congress, bipartisan support ensured conservation programs related to disaster recovery received notable funding. This includes supporting farmers and private forest landowners in their conservation efforts with \$828 million for United States Department of Agriculture's Emergency Conservation Program and \$356.5 million for the Emergency Forest Restoration Program. Additional disaster recovery resources went to federal land agencies including the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Forest Service and the National Park Service.
2. America's Conservation Enhancement Reauthorization (ACE) Act will ensure continued funding for multiple conservation programs like the North America Wetlands Conservation Act. It includes resources for conservation in the Chesapeake Bay and for the National Fish Habitat Partnership, which has funded more than 1,100 aquatic conservation projects across the country since its inception in 2006.
3. The Bolstering Ecosystems Against Coastal Harm (BEACH) Act modernizes the 40-year-old Coastal Barrier Resources Act (CBRA), protecting an additional 280,000 acres of coastal lands on the Atlantic and Gulf coasts. It represents the largest addition to the CBRA system in its history, with most of the newly protected areas in the states hardest hit by recurring hurricanes and coastal flooding. These coastal areas serve both as buffer for severe weather and as habitat for numerous birds and other species.
4. The Water Development Resources Act (WRDA) supports a range of critically important infrastructure projects to improve the management of rivers and harbors and provides key conservation protections and resources to restore the Florida Everglades.
5. The U.S. Foundation for International Conservation will establish a new foundation to leverage private and public investments for global conservation projects, which has the potential to provide up to \$3 billion over the next decade to conserve vulnerable habitats across the globe.

6. The Expanding Public Lands Outdoor Recreation Experiences (EXPLORE) Act increases accessibility to our nation's public lands, which are enjoyed by millions of people—including millions who like to birdwatch. This legislation, which has long been championed by Audubon's nonprofit conservation partners, is a major win that will ensure all Americans have access to and can enjoy public lands. By supporting greater access, by extension people will not just appreciate these special places but will work to conserve them for future generations.
7. The Great Salt Lake Stewardship Act allows for water conservation within the Great Salt Lake basin to be an approved practice for funding from the Central Utah Project Completion Act, providing a new tool for protecting and stabilizing water resources in this critical ecoregion.

Additionally, there were several bills related to the health and sustainability of the nation's waterways that passed Congress. These include the Fishery Improvement to Streamline untimely regulatory Hurdles post Emergency Situation (FISHES) Act, which is designed to speed up access to resources for fisheries recovering from disasters; the Colorado River Salinity Control Fix Act, which gives local jurisdictions increased access to federal funding for salinity control programs; and the Upper Colorado and San Juan River Basins Endangered Fish Recovery Programs Reauthorization Act of 2023, which provides a seven-year extension to programs that advance protections for native fish species, helping improve ecosystem health that birds and other wildlife depend on.

But it wasn't all wins, and vital conservation policies that enjoy bipartisan support failed to make it over the finish line. Three key missed opportunities were:

1. The lands package falling apart. Among the legislation that could've been pulled into a larger lands package were two bills focused on conservation action along the Colorado River Basin, multiple Tribal water rights settlements, bills that would've protected public lands and rivers across six western states, and more.
2. Reinvesting In Shoreline Economies and Ecosystems Act of 2023 (RISEE). Introduced in 2023, the legislation would have created a revenue sharing model to help fund coastal restoration, both helping conserve vital bird and wildlife habitat and providing protection to communities from extreme weather and sea level rise.
3. Public Land Renewable Energy Development Act of 2023. The legislation would have encouraged growth in domestic renewable energy production through the responsible development and siting of wind and solar energy on public lands. The increase of renewable energy is vital for addressing climate change.

As we close down 2024, we take stock of the important gains we've made, the partners we have that share our mission of addressing biodiversity loss and climate change, and the bipartisan support for conservation that will be so critical as we look to the year ahead.

Audubon is looking forward to working with the new Congress to call for continued action to protect the waters and lands that birds call home.

WINTER RAPTOR COUNT

February 8, 2025

Participants _____

Time Started _____ Time Completed _____

Location _____

<u>SPECIES</u>	<u>POINTS</u>	<u>QUANTITY</u>	<u>NOTES</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
Turkey Vulture	*1			
Black Vulture	*2			
Red-tailed Hawk	5			
American Kestrel	10			
Common Raven	10			
Eastern Screech Owl	**10			
Cooper's Hawk	20			
Sharp-shinned Hawk	20			
Great Horned Owl	30			
Red-shouldered Hawk	30			
Barred Owl	35			
Northern Harrier	40			
Bald Eagle	50			
Barn Owl	50			
Loggerhead Shrike	50			
Merlin	75			
Peregrine Falcon	75			
Rough-legged Hawk	75			
Short-eared Owl	75			
Golden Eagle	100			
Northern Goshawk	100			
Long-eared Owl	125			
Northern Saw-whet Owl	125			
Northern Shrike	150			
Unidentified Raptor	5			

POINT TOTAL _____

* Maximum of 50 Points

** Maximum of 100 Points

Be sure to keep your totals! There is a 10-point bonus
for peak counts of these three species.

RULES: Teams must be at least 2 people. Teams may bird any area within a 100-mile radius of Woodpecker Ridge Nature Center. Birds must be seen or heard by at least 2 team members. Count period cannot exceed a total of 12 hours.

[Completed forms can be emailed to billt3256@gmail.com](mailto:billt3256@gmail.com) or mailed to Anne Tucker

3256 Lakewood Forest Rd. Moneta VA 24121. Call or text Anne at 540-204-5693 with any questions.



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

Happy Valentine's Day

www.roanokevalleybirdclub.com

RVBC NEWSLETTER

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

www.roanokevalleybirdclub.com