

Roanoke Valley Bird Club



Celebrating
68 Years of Birding
1957-2025

Next Meeting:
April 14, 7:00 pm
Roanoke Council of
Garden Clubs

www.roanokevalleybirdclub.com

RVBC NEWSLETTER

APRIL 2025



PHOTOGRAPHER
GARLAND KITTS

Garland Kitts suggests that we “might like to see a mad tree swallow talking to another at what appears to be a nesting site.”

DREW'S BIRD OF THE MONTH TREE SWALLOW *Tachycineta bicolor*

Handsome aerialists with deep-blue iridescent backs and clean white fronts, Tree Swallows are a familiar sight in summer fields and wetlands across northern North America. They chase after flying insects with acrobatic twists and turns, their steely blue-green feathers flashing in the sunlight. Tree Swallows nest in tree cavities; they also readily take up residence in nest boxes. This habit has allowed scientists to study their breeding biology in detail, and makes them a great addition to many a homeowner's yard or field.

(More on page 4.)

~ The Cornell Lab

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!



JR and Willy Inman
Paul Beers
William Chandler
Corri Ell & Family
Lynn Ferrara
Holly Drummond

Next meeting:

MONDAY, APRIL 14
7:00 PM

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

Featured program:

MERLIN AND eBIRD PHONE APPS 101
SPEAKER: DAVID FRYE

The April program will open up two of the most useful tools that a birder could have in their kit – Cornell University's famed phone apps Merlin and eBird. This should be a most interactive session with questions, "how tos," and suggestions and comments from the audience. Dave will highlight screen prints from the apps and show how these apps can help in scenarios that many birders may have experienced (like "Where is a good spot to bird today?" or "I think I've just heard a bird that I don't recognize" or "I'm traveling to Savannah this weekend—where can I go birding while I'm there?" or "I've just seen a bird that I can't identify" or "I've heard that there's a Pyrrhuloxia that's been seen recently—I wonder where I would have to go to see it?")



Who Gives the Hoot!

- **Ruby-throated Hummingbirds**, according to www.hummingbirdcentral.com, are currently only 60 straight miles south of Roanoke in Mayodan, North Carolina; and they are already along the Virginia coast in Newport News and Chesapeake. Hummer feeders should be out by now in anticipation of their arrival. The nectar formula ratio is: 4 parts water to 1 part common sugar, heat to dissolve the sugar, cool, and then refrigerate for future use. Example: for a two liter bottle (1/2 gallon), heat 2 quarts water (8 cups) and 2 cups sugar.
- **Big Spring Day Saturday, May 3, 2025. Coordinator Barry Kinzie (540-580-0059)** Join the effort to count as many of our area birds as possible from Saturday morning through early afternoon. There are specific territories that need to be surveyed, and Coordinator Barry Kinzie can use all of the volunteers that he can enlist to cover them. Newcomers and birders returning to the volunteer flock are always encouraged and warmly welcomed. Please contact Barry if you're interested in getting involved and having fun!

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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Vice President, memberships

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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.

Photography is provided by membership.

Photos and articles are gladly accepted for publication as room allows, and may be sent electronically in JPEG or word docx..

Thank you!

Carol Whiteside
Newsletter Editor

540.774.2143

whitesidemules@yahoo.com



President's Musings

President Drew Daniels
ddaniels2627@cox.net
540.314.6069

Now that spring has arrived, it's time to prepare for the great migration northward, and to hone your birding skills to be ready. It's never too late to pick up your Warbler book and review which warbler has yellow where, or which one is found on the ground, or high in the trees? Try the spotting on thrushes, the activities of vireos, the wing bars on the small tyrant flycatchers, with or without, bright or dull?

It never hurts to refer to your favorite guide and as a novice, I constantly have my nose in mine, to the point of being obsessive, but who's counting? For the species you may have questions about, try Merlin to see all the photos of one species, which will help with your identification. This is particularly true for shorebirds. Study one at a time, otherwise it's overwhelming! Remember, it's like eating an elephant - one bite at a time!

It is a particularly good time to use Merlin to study bird calls. This can be a daunting task, but remember the elephant! Pick one bird at a time. I've found that sitting in the woods or in a field with Merlin works very well, and you begin to commit that call to memory, then just like the everyday birds, you got it!!

The key word is *practice!* Migration will be upon us quickly, so be prepared. See you at the April meeting when Dave Frye will go over the Merlin and eBird apps – it doesn't get any easier than this!



Carol Whiteside, Photographer

DREW'S BIRD OF THE MONTH

Tree Swallow

Tachycineta bicolor

"Status: Fairly common spring and fall transient and summer resident."

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



Tree Swallows are easy to find in much of North America from spring through fall. Head to open fields or marshes adjacent to bodies of freshwater. Scan the air for flying birds, look along utility wires and shrubs for perched birds. Also check any nest boxes you happen to see; in summer Tree Swallows spend lots of time sitting on or flying around them. Tree Swallows are vocal; listen for their sweet, chirping calls as they wheel around overhead in pursuit of insects. In the winter you can find Tree Swallows in the extreme southeastern and southwestern United States as well as south of the border.

Tree Swallows are highly social, forming large migratory and wintering flocks; and pairs often nest close together, particularly where nest boxes are numerous. Agile fliers, Tree Swallows tend to glide more than any other swallow species. They bathe by flying low over the water and skimming their bodies against the surface, then rising quickly while shaking off droplets. Tree Swallows line their nests with feathers, and they seem to display or even play with these feathers during the early nesting season. A bird flies above the nest with a feather held in its bill; sometimes this leads to chases, and sometimes the bird drops the feather, causing an aerial free-for-all to see which bird retrieves it. Tree Swallows pair up to breed but often mate secretly outside the pair. Occasionally a male attends two mates in separate nest sites. Though an individual swallow may have the same mate several years in a row, it is probably faithful to the site rather than the mate.

~The Cornell Lab



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.

APRIL 2025

- 05 Hinchee Trail Hike. Saturday 8:00 am. Leaders: Kathy Clemo (540-314-7049) and George Clemo (540-798-5370)**
Join the Clemos as they lead you on the Hinchee Trail up towards Carvins Cove. The trail is two miles long, but the group will turn around after walking about 1 ½ hours. The trail goes uphill and part of it is a gravel road.
Directions: We'll meet at the Hanging Rock trailhead on Dutch Oven Road, just north of the Orange Market at the intersection of Routes 419 and 311 in Salem.
- 09 Mid-Week Wednesday Bird Hike. Keagy Village 9:00 am. (Note: specific gathering time.) Leader: Drew Daniels (540-314-6069)**
Join us for a Wednesday morning bird walk in the parks local to Keagy Village, another opportunity for a pleasant local hike with plenty of birds to be seen. **Directions:** The group will gather at 9:00 am. at **Oak Grove Park**, off of Grandin Road Extension, behind Oak Grove Elementary School. We will bird there first, and then we will move to the parking area behind The Famous Toastery and bird the field.
- 12 Vinyard Park, Vinton. Saturday 8:00 am. Leaders: Kent Davis (540-353-6388) and Drew Daniels (540-314-6069)**
This Saturday trip will feature two park areas that are a bit under-birded in Vinton. Glade Creek runs through both east and west sections and should provide good habitat for early migrants. **Directions:** Meet the leaders at the Vinyard Park East car park. Take route 460 towards Vinton and turn onto Gus Nicks Boulevard heading southeast, then turn left onto King Street heading northeast. A right turn onto Berkley Road takes you southeast again and beyond railroad tracks. Vinyard Park Road is the first left turn beyond the tracks.
- 14 RVBC Membership Meeting, Monday 7:00 pm.** Roanoke Council of Garden Clubs, 3640 Colonial Avenue, Roanoke, VA 24018.
Featured Program: Merlin and eBird Phone Apps 101 with Speaker: David Frye.
- 26 Warbler Road, Arcadia. Saturday 7:30 am. Leaders: Tim and Alyce Quinn (540-537-1831)**
Join leaders Tim and Alyce Quinn (540-537-1831) for one of our favorite trips to see warblers and other spring migrants. We will bird a series of forest service roads between the Blue Ridge Parkway and Arcadia. There is limited space for pulling off on these roads, so plan to carpool. The trip usually lasts well into the afternoon, so bring plenty of drinks, snacks and a lunch. Be prepared for cooler temperatures as we get into higher elevations. In the event of bad weather, the field trip will be held the next day, April 27. We will meet in the parking lot of the Botetourt Bojangles.

Locher Tract Wetlands Trail is deferred to September (originally scheduled for April 19).

MAY 2025 (A QUICK LOOK AHEAD)

- 03 Big Spring Day 2025, Saturday, Coordinator: Barry Kinzie (540-580-0059)** Join the effort to count as many of our area birds as possible from Saturday morning through early afternoon. There are specific territories that need to be surveyed, and our coordinator Barry Kinzie can use all of the volunteers that he can enlist to cover them. Please contact Barry if you're interested in getting involved and having fun!
- 10 Tinker Creek Lane, Saturday 8:00 am. Leader: Sissy Logan (540-353-4500)** Sissy takes us for a birding hike in a beautiful tract (private property with access authorized by a friend of RVBC) just north of the Tinker Creek. The property is a mix of habitats with large open fields, wooded areas, fence rows, and areas near the creek. Expect spring migrants as well as waterfowl that may be present near the creek. **Directions:** Travel route 460 and turn onto northbound Plantation Road, then turn right onto Hollins Road eastbound. Turn left onto Old Mountain Road and immediately turn right once you cross the creek onto Tinker Creek Lane. The property is at the very end of the lane.
- 14 Second Wednesday Bird Walk, Greenfield 8:00am. Leader: Bill Hunley (540-467-3477)** 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. It will be mostly flat walking for about 1 mile each way.
- 17 Mill Mountain Park on Mill Mountain, Roanoke, 8:00 am. Leader: Linda Cory (540-580-5214)** Join leader, Linda Cory 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.
- 24 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.
- 31 Jae Valley Park Bird Hike, Saturday 8:00 am. Leaders: Kent Davis (540-355-6388) and Kirk Gardner (828-216-9170)**
Join us for a trip to a park area that's under-birded yet very productive. Our Leaders, Kent and Kirk, frequently have birds flocking to them, so don't miss this one!

March Highlights

Meeting Notes

Monday, March 10,

Featured Program: "Enhancing Woodlots for Wildlife" with Bruce and Elaine Ingram.

Secretary Karen Frye noted: "There were 58 members and guests in attendance. The March program highlighted the importance of creating and enhancing wildlife habitat through a variety of means. Topics covered habitat improvement tactics such as timber thinning to allow more sunlight to get to trees, creating hinge cuts in trees causing trees to fall over but not die thus creating live brush areas at ground level, cutting and spraying to eliminate invasive plants, and introducing new plantings. Bruce described how he stopped mowing the fescue grasses in his lawn and planted for the birds and bugs; he planted pollinators and tried to get rid of invasives like autumn olive. On larger acreage he clear cut to create sections of different ages near each other thus attracting birds which like young forests. He also mentioned the benefits of prescribed burns and native grasses."

Field Trip Reports

Saturday, March 8, Roanoke River Greenway Walk, West from Bridge Street

Leader David Frye introduced a group of 15 participants to this new section of the greenway, connecting Wasena to Salem. A sunny and breezy day made for decent birding during which the group bagged 25 species. The highlight of the hike was a group of six Common Mergansers (photo) navigating the Roanoke River.

Wednesday, March 12, Greenfield Lake (Botetourt Center) Wednesday Bird Hike

Leader David Frye provided excellent opportunities for the group of eight birders on this beautiful Wednesday morning hike. It was very interesting to watch the change of seasons, as reflected by the birds that were present in the area around Greenfield Lake. On this trip Eastern Bluebirds, White-throated Sparrows, Northern Cardinals, and Yellow-rumped Warblers (photo) dominated the scene. The highlight of the morning was a pair of Brown Creepers chasing each other from tree to tree along the creek by the car park.

Saturday, March 29, Evergreen Memorial Park, Roanoke City

Leaders: Kent Davis, David Frye, Drew Daniels, and Barry Whitt launched 56 people into four groups for a fun-filled birding morning under cloudy skies with temperatures in the 60's to view the following 27 species (best birds in **bold**):

Mourning Dove 5
Chimney Swift 1 Early
Red-tailed Hawk 1 (Photo)
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker 2
Red-bellied Woodpecker 2
Downy Woodpecker 2
Northern Flicker (Yellow-shafted) 3
Eastern Phoebe 1
American Crow 2
Ruby-crowned Kinglet 1
Golden-crowned Kinglet 1 (Photo)
Brown Creeper 1
Carolina Wren 3
European Starling 45

Brown Thrasher 1
Northern Mockingbird 6
Eastern Bluebird 5
American Robin 22
House Sparrow 4
House Finch 6
American Goldfinch 3
Chipping Sparrow 5
Dark-eyed Junco (Slate-colored) 8
White-throated Sparrow 8
Song Sparrow 7
Brown-headed Cowbird 4
Palm Warbler 1
Northern Cardinal 15



Garland Kitts, Photographer
(Top to Bottom)

Common Merganser male
Common Merganser female
Yellow-rumped Warbler female
Golden-crowned Kinglet



Kent Davis, Photographer
Red-tailed Hawk on nest in
Evergreen Memorial Park

ATTENTION: BLUEBIRD MONITORS AND BACKYARD BLUEBIRDERS

By Carol Whiteside, RVBC Bluebird Chairperson
540-774-2143, whitesidemules@yahoo.com
Photos by Carol Whiteside

In order to turn-in our personal bluebird box records to the Virginia Bluebird Society (VBS), we no longer have to have a minimum of bluebird boxes to form a trail! If you have just one or several bluebird boxes, maintain your records to submit to VBS at the end of the season. There is a special form on their website (details below), please look it over. It is important to document your first egg, first hatching, and first fledging dates of bluebirds and the other box nester species, along with more pertinent information. If you are interested or have questions, please contact me. With enough interest, I will entertain a bluebird session to make this easier for you. It's a lot of fun and very rewarding!

Time is slipping by quickly; the RVBC Blue Ridge Parkway Bluebird Trail has three boxes (out of 32) that have their first egg all laid on Saturday, March 29, 2025. These early birds are on schedule, but it is the first time to have three boxes with eggs laid on the same first day! It is never too late to install a bluebird box setup.



Box setups
are In stock

BACKYARD BLUEBIRD MONITORING

By Charlene Talcott, Virginia Bluebird Society State Coordinator

Members of Virginia Bluebird Society monitor thousands of trails on public lands across the Commonwealth. This brings us valuable information every year about nesting conditions, first eggs, last fledges, the effects of weather on broods, and so much more. This can be compared to previous years to help us identify trends in climate change, habitat changes and many other variables. We are missing a large portion of the findings in Virginia, and that is from back-yard bluebirders. Whether you have one box that you monitor or several, you can be part of this citizen science effort and contribute your information to VBS.

The forms you need are online [www.virginiabluebirds.org/Forms & Documents](http://www.virginiabluebirds.org/Forms%20&%20Documents) (under "About VBS" on the menu) Look for the VBS Weekly Nest box Monitor Form.

Anyone that monitors bluebirds can submit data to VBS. Ideally that goes to the Coordinator when we have one, but can come to me in the absence of one (Roanoke County does not have a county coordinator currently). If someone has just one or a few boxes in their yard they can submit a Backyard Bluebirder form. It's the last one on the VBS Forms & Documents page.

You don't have to be a member, but we strongly encourage it. Not only do you get our wonderful newsletter, but the membership fee goes to our grants programs for trails and schools, so that more people can enjoy bluebirds into the future. It's just \$27 a year.

Once you have finished for the year you can send them to Charlene Talcott at vabluebirdscordinator@gmail.com



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

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