

# Roanoke Valley Bird Club



Celebrating  
68 Years of Birding  
1957-2025

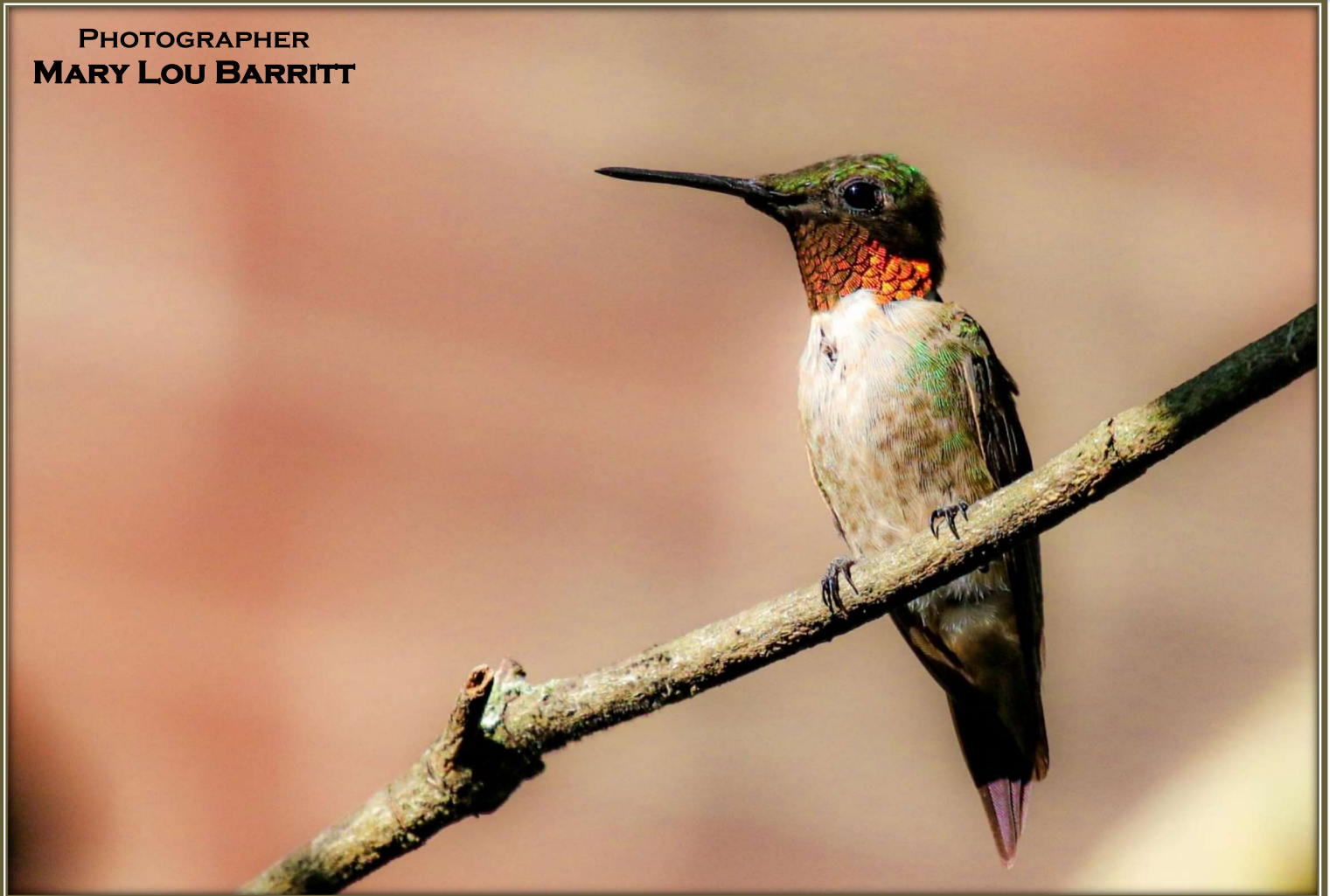
Next Meeting:  
September 8, 7:00 pm  
Roanoke Council of  
Garden Clubs

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

RVBC NEWSLETTER

SEPTEMBER 2025

PHOTOGRAPHER  
MARY LOU BARRITT



## DREW'S BIRD OF THE MONTH RUBY-THROATED HUMMINGBIRD *Archilohus colubris*

A flash of green and red, the Ruby-throated Hummingbird is eastern North America's sole breeding hummingbird. These brilliant, tiny, precision-flying creatures glitter like jewels in the full sun, then vanish with a zip toward the next nectar source. Feeders and flower gardens are great ways to attract these birds, and some people turn their yards into buzzing clouds of hummingbirds each summer. Enjoy them while they're around; by early fall they're bound for Central America. (More on page 3.)

~The Cornell Lab

Next meeting:

**MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 8**  
**7:00 PM**

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



Featured program:

**THE SPECTACLE OF CRANE MIGRATION –  
PRESENTED BY KENT SKAGGS**

*Our own RVBC Excellent Birder*

When a person in the United States is asked to name some of the great wildlife migrations in the world, the first thing that may pop into their head is the Wildebeest migration in Tanzania and Kenya, and rightfully so. Next might be the Monarch Butterflies in Mexico, or the Caribou in Alaska. But what about Sandhill Cranes in March in Nebraska?

Believe it or not, the annual stopover of Sandhill Cranes along the Platte River in south-central Nebraska is one of the most spectacular wildlife gatherings in North America, and underrated globally.

Kent Skaggs, who lived and worked right in the heart of this spectacle for over 30 years, will provide a look into the life of Sandhill Cranes in the Central Flyway, and why the Platte River is so important to this species during their spring migration.

Kent was born and raised in Nebraska which is where he developed his passion for birds and nature in general. He worked 20 years at Audubon's Rowe Sanctuary where he helped countless visitors experience the annual spring staging of Sandhill Cranes along the Platte River in south-central Nebraska. While at Rowe, he conducted bird surveys on the sanctuary and coordinated and led birding field trips for the annual Audubon Nebraska Crane Festival. He also spent three seasons leading tours to see displaying Greater Prairie-Chickens and Sharp-tailed Grouse for Calamus Outfitters in the Nebraska Sandhills and currently guides for Naturalist Journeys.

**Kent Skaggs, Photographer**



**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)

**2025 BOARD OF DIRECTORS  
OFFICERS:**

*President*

**Drew Daniels**

*Vice President, programs*

**David Frye**

*Vice President, memberships*

**Mary Harshfield**

*Secretary*

**Karen Frye**

*Treasurer*

**Carol Whitt**

**DIRECTORS:**

**Nathan Anderson, Robin Austin, Mary Lou Barritt, Betty Burke, 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* **Nathan Anderson**

*Webmaster* **Andrea Boone**

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.

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



# President's Musings

President Drew Daniels  
ddaniels2627@cox.net  
540.314.6069

When you look WAY back on your school days, you remember that one teacher who made a real impression on you. The ironic thing is that he/she was probably one of the hardest teachers you had, but they made a real mark on you!

While chatting with some of my friends at our 60th high school class reunion, a teacher's name came up while discussing the hardest teachers we had. She was older and my 10th grade year was her first at our high school. Her name was Mrs. Tefft. She had moved down from New York and was a strict disciplinarian; boy did she have my number! I was called on every class period with her and berated in front of the class. I must say that after a couple of weeks, I got on the right path and got a 100 on our weekly 20 word vocabulary test. That day, she stopped class and had me stand for a round of applause. From that day on, I made straight A's in her class.

Ah, fond memories! At the end of the school year, she wrote an old proverb in my yearbook from a 1911 book by Edwin Osgood Grover called "The Book of Good Cheer." The proverb says: "What they call Luck is nothing but pluck and doing things over and over; Patience and Will, Perseverance and Skill are the four leaves of Luck's clover!" I remember the words to this day!

Later that evening on our way to Richmond, I thought about how the poem applied exactly to birding. Let's think about each leaf of Luck's Clover:

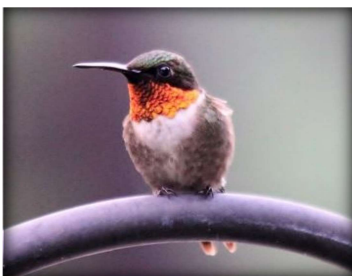
**Patience:** I can't think of a better word to describe birding! The patience to walk slowly, stop often, watch for movement, and wait for the bird to settle, if possible!

**Will:** You have to have the desire to get out on a cold morning when you could stay in the warm bed. Birds arise early and start singing and foraging. Remember, the early bird gets the worm!

**Perseverance:** Another great word to describe a birder. As a birder, you don't give up when you miss a bird or misidentify one. You have to keep going; failure is a learning experience, make the most of it and you will be rewarded many times over!

**Skill:** This leaf comes with the learning process-learning the field identification points and colors of each bird, as well as their calls. You must learn the habitats of each bird so you will know where to look. There is no better teacher than experience. I read a quote from a famous birder who said there is no such thing in birding as an expert. Skill is derived from years of experience!

It's funny to reminisce and still recall what was done 58 years ago. I'm sure I left out many other examples, but there again, I'm no expert in writing either, just ask Mrs. Tefft! This is a true proverb for birders!



Mary Lou Barritt and Kent Davis, Photographers

## DREW'S BIRD OF THE MONTH *Ruby-throated Hummingbird* *Archilochus colubris*

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

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



Mary Lou Barritt, Photographer

### Hummer Tips:

- Smallest of all birds being 3.5 inches long and weigh 3.1-3.4 grams
- Avian precision fliers, masters at hovering and the only birds able to also fly backwards and upside down
- Have the fastest heart rate, the fastest wing beat (40-80 beats per second), the fastest metabolism and the largest heart, in proportion to body size of any bird
- Binocular vision to see your feeder from ¾ mile
- Cats are their main predator
- Generally in October they migrate to South America for winter taking 18-24 hours to fly across the Gulf, they are expected back to our area by early April
- Nest is the size of large thimble, built directly on top of a branch, made of thistle or dandelion down, held together with strands of spider silk and camouflaged with bits of lichen and moss
- Have one of the highest nesting success rates of any neotropical migrant, generally lay two eggs, each about the size of a small jelly bean or Tic Tac candy
- Main insect prey includes mosquitoes, gnats, fruit flies, small bees and spiders.

### Nectar food for feeders:

- 4:1 ratio, Mix 4 parts water to 1 part table sugar
- Use common sugar (sucrose) without any other alternatives or substitutions like sweeteners
- Do not use red dye
- Heat until sugar is melted, cool and refrigerate
-



# 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.*

## SEPTEMBER 2025

**Hawk Watching - Located at Harvey's Knob Overlook, milepost 95.3 on the Blue Ridge Parkway. Due to Parkway road construction full closure is in effect from Route 460 milepost 105.8 North to milepost 95.9, so follow detour signs through Bedford for now.**

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.

- 08 **Membership Meeting, Monday 7:00 pm.** Roanoke Council of Garden Clubs, 3640 Colonial Avenue, Roanoke, VA 24018.  
**Program: The Spectacle of Crane Migration – Speaker: Kent Skaggs.** See details on page 2.
- 10 **Second Wednesday Midweek Walk - Botetourt Center at Greenfield, 9:00 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 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.
- 13 **Saturday Butterfly Hike at Greenfield (Botetourt Center), 9:00 am.** (note specific gathering time). **Leader: Toni Pepin (571-246-2598)**  
Toni will take us to one of our favorite viewing grounds, Greenfield Lake and the Cherry Blossom Trail. This is the second of two hikes that we will take this summer, focusing on beautiful butterflies! So, dial those binoculars for close-up viewing and enjoy this summertime walk. The Cherry Blossom Trail at Greenfield is mostly level for easy walking about 1-mile each way.  
**Directions:** Take Exit 150B on I-81 and follow signs for Route 220 N. Go about 4 miles and turn a 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.
- 20 **Saturday Hike at Ellett Tract Property, 8:00 am. Leader: Sissy Logan (540-353-4500)**  
A visit to lovely private grounds stretching from Mud Lick Road to Brandon Avenue. Diverse habitats on this property promise excellent birding.  
**Directions:** Entrance to the property is on a private drive heading south off of Brandon Avenue near Peters Creek Road. Their driveway is the first turn-off west of the intersection with Peters Creek Rd (Poplar HI Rd SW). There is a Lee Highway Historical Marker near the driveway entrance. Continue to the top of the hill. The parking area will be after passing an out-building on the right and the Ellett House on the left.

## OCTOBER 2025 (A QUICK LOOK AHEAD)

- 08 **Second Wednesday Bird Hike, Oak Grove Park, 8:00 am. Leader: David Frye (248-459-6783)**
- 18 **Locher Tract, Saturday 8:00 am. Leader: Bill Hunley (540-580-5214)**
- 25 **Montvale Park, Montvale, Saturday 8:00 am. Leaders: Kirk Gardner (828-216-9170) and Kent Davis (540-355-6388)**

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 8, meeting  
(Include membership form on last page 8)

\*Or on the web: [www.roanokevalleybirdclub.com](http://www.roanokevalleybirdclub.com)

# Blue Ridge Wildflower Society & Roanoke Valley Bird Club 12<sup>th</sup> Annual Picnic, July 19, 2025

Carol Whiteside, Chairman



We are very pleased to have 54 attendees this year, consisting of 26 RVBC members, 11 BRWS members, 14 members of both clubs, and 3 welcomed guests. The Wildflower Society provided barbeque, the Bird Club provided fried chicken, and everyone brought the most delicious sides, salads and desserts. RVBC President **Drew Daniels** and BRWS Vice President **Rebecca Ross** graciously welcomed everyone. RVBC member **Lilly Tennant** won the gift drawing of a BRWS annual membership, and **Michael Belcher**, who is a member of both clubs, won the RVBC annual membership.

**Carol Whiteside** displayed a photo-board of our first combined picnic on August 11, 2013, held in Walrond Park, featuring **Betty and Butch Kelly**, our original combined picnic organizers (see photo). While remembering **Butch** who passed earlier this year, we were honored to have **Betty** in attendance with their daughter, Marlene Craig. We missed BRWS President **Jennifer McCarthy** and greatly appreciate her dedication and devotion to this annual event.

Gratefully, we thank all the volunteers who made this event rewarding, enjoyable and relaxing, especially the committee chairs: **Allen and Robin Austin, Mary Lou Barritt, Michelle Buonocore, Iris Daniels, Linda Harrison, Mary Harshfield, Ellen Holtman** (who provided the lovely wildflowers for the tables' center pieces!), **Rodelin Palmer, Rebecca Ross**, and all their committee volunteers; plus the extensive, tireless volunteers who assemble for the set-up and clean-up afterward. We give a heartfelt thank you to everyone in attendance for making this a fun and very successful social event. We're already looking forward to gathering again next year!

~ Photos by Iris Daniels and Carol Whiteside



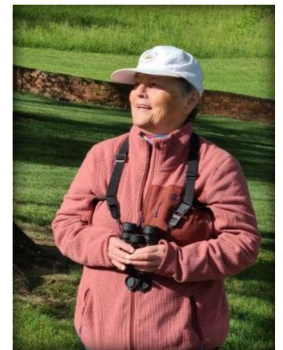
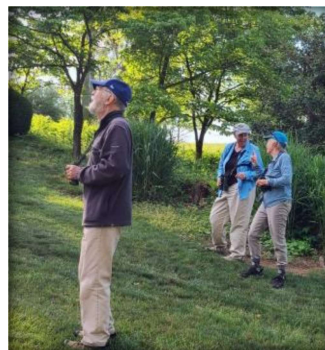
# May and August Highlights

## Field Trip Reports

### **Saturday, May 10, Tinker Creek Lane.**

Twelve birders joined Sissy Logan for a walk on the Wilson property bordering Tinker Creek in Roanoke City. The temperature started out at 49 degrees warming up to 60 degrees. The morning was picture perfect; spring at its best. We tallied 41 species. Highlights were Bobolink, Grasshopper Sparrow, Orchard and Baltimore Orioles, Indigo Bunting and Yellow Warbler. Birding was good from the wrap-around porch. Our hostess had a table full of treats, lemonade and water to whet our appetites. It was a perfect morning.

**Katherine Clemo, Photographer**



### **Saturday, August 2, Summertime and Hummingbirds on Bent Mountain, Birding Hike and Pot Luck Picnic.**

**Hosts: Robin and Allen Austin.**

Overcast skies, drizzle, patchy sun, and full-on rain were all in play for the annual event staged by Robin and Allen at their beautiful home and gardens. A group of 18 folks followed Robin as she led us through the environments adjoining their property. We logged 37 species of birds during the morning walk, with the highlights being, of course, the 30-40 Ruby-throated Hummingbirds that swirled and zipped by everywhere we looked. The day was complete when a tasty feast was laid out and shared by all. The weather may have dominated the scene, but it couldn't diminish the festive atmosphere or the fun had by everyone that day. Thanks, again, to Robin and Allen!

### **Saturday, August 9, Greenfield (Botetourt Center) Butterfly Hike. Leader: Toni Pepin.**

This trip has quickly become one of our most anticipated and well-attended field outings! On this morning we had a group of 34 participants and Toni did a great job getting all of us to see and identify the tiny fascinating creatures. Imagine a group of 34 people all crowding together to see one or two butterflies on a thistle blossom with their binoculars. It was quite a treat for everyone! In terms of highlighted species, the Zebulon Skippers were everywhere, followed by Silver-spotted Skippers, Sachems, Red-spotted Purples, Pearl Crescents, Eastern Tiger Swallowtails, Spicebush Swallowtails, and Monarchs!



# 54<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL BIG SPRING DAY SATURDAY, MAY 3, 2025

Donna Mateski de Sanchez, Big Spring Day Compiler



Yellow-breasted Chat, Sissy Logan, Photo

On May 3, a total of 50 participants from the Roanoke Valley Bird Club and Lynchburg Bird Club grouped into 16 teams and covered a 15-mile circle centered on the Big Spring at the Peaks of Otter Picnic Area. After a few cool, soggy, and foggy years of late, the weather was much more cooperative this year.

We ended up observing 123 species (including 25 warbler species) and 5997 individual birds. This is consistent with the average number of birds observed the most recent 10 years of the count, which is 122.8 species, but is lower than the 54-year average of 130.5 species for Big Spring Day.

The most frequently observed species this year was Red-Eyed Vireo for a total of 352 birds. More than 200 each of the following were counted: American Redstart, Blue Jay, and Indigo Bunting.

The improved weather conditions yielded good results for raptors, with Osprey, Sharp-Shinned Hawk, Cooper's Hawk, Northern Harrier, Bald Eagle, Broad-Winged Hawk, Red-Shouldered Hawk, Red-Tailed Hawk, American Kestrel, Merlin, Great-Horned Owl, Barred Owl, and Eastern Screech Owl all observed. Just one of each of the following species were tallied this year: Common Merganser, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, and Hermit Thrush. The most notable missed species was the humble Rock Pigeon, which had been seen in 49 of the prior 53 years of the count.

A special thanks goes to **Barry Kinzie** who graciously agreed to step back in to help coordinate the Roanoke teams this year. Barry has participated in 50+ years that this count has been held, and his knowledge of the birds of the Blue Ridge is an asset to all area birders.

You can see the compiled BSD trip report at <https://ebird.org/tripreport/374110>. Stay tuned for a save-the-date announcement for 2026 in an upcoming newsletter.

**Katherine Clemo, Photos**



## ROBIN AND ALLEN AUSTIN'S HUMMINGBIRD CELEBRATION Saturday, August 2, 2025 ~ Bent Mountain, Virginia

Eighteen people attended Robin's morning bird walk; spotting 37 species of birds. There were at least 30 people in attendance 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 exquisite gardens and their numerous feeders in outstanding numbers while relishing the light drizzle. Everyone mingled and savored the day while feasting in their lovely, comfortable home. We thank the Austin's for sharing their spacious home, property, and hummers for this annual event!



**Carol Whiteside, Photos**





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

2026

(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