

Roanoke Valley Bird Club



Celebrating
68 Years of Birding
1957-2025

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

www.roanokevalleybirdclub.com

RVBC NEWSLETTER

OCTOBER 2025



PHOTOGRAPHER
MARY LOU BARRITT

DREW'S BIRD OF THE MONTH **CANVASBACK** *Aythya valisineria*

Often called the aristocrat of ducks, the Canvasback holds its long sloping forehead high with a distinguished look. Males stand out with a rusty head and neck with a gleaming whitish body bookended in black. Females are pale brown overall, but that Canvasback head shape still gives them away. This diving duck eats plant tubers at the bottom of lakes and wetlands. It breeds in lakes and marshes and winters by the thousands on freshwater lakes and coastal waters. (More on page 3.)

~The Cornell Lab

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!



Veronica Tingle & Family
 Jeff Howard Debra & Walter Billings
 Carl Richardson David Baker
 Jordan Hatfield Joy Marino

Next meeting:

MONDAY, OCTOBER 13
7:00 PM

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



Featured program:

CAMERA TRAPPING THE BLUE RIDGE PARKWAY: ADVENTURES WITH BEARS AND BIRDS PRESENTED BY TOM DAVIS

Barred Owls pictured above



Tom Davis joins us to share how he has utilized trail cameras (aka camera traps) on the Blue Ridge Parkway for over 17 years to monitor and assess the distribution of wildlife along the 469-mile scenic road. For the past 10 years he has maintained two long-term black bear monitoring stations as part of an on-going effort to assess black bear (and wildlife) behavior, and the use of natural and artificial water sources along the Blue Ridge Parkway. This talk will highlight some of the wildlife and birds "captured" on the Parkway's camera traps over the past 10 years. Tom has worked as a biologist on the Blue Ridge Parkway for over 30 years. He is an avid birder and photographer.

Tom Davis, Photographer



Reminder:

Please consider bringing a snack to share, or a small drawing gift, to the meeting. Thank You!

CONTACT US!



ROANOKE VALLEY BIRD CLUB

**P.O. Box 20405
ROANOKE, VIRGINIA 24018**

NONPROFIT 501(C)(3)

Email: rvbc2015@outlook.com
www.roanokevalleybirdclub.com

2025 BOARD OF DIRECTORS OFFICERS:

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Vice President, programs

David Frye

Vice President, memberships

Mary Harshfield

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Karen Frye

Treasurer

Carol Whitt

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Nathan Anderson, Robin Austin, Mary Lou Barritt, Betty Burke, Linda Cory, Kent Davis, Maxine Fraade, Sissy Logan

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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 **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

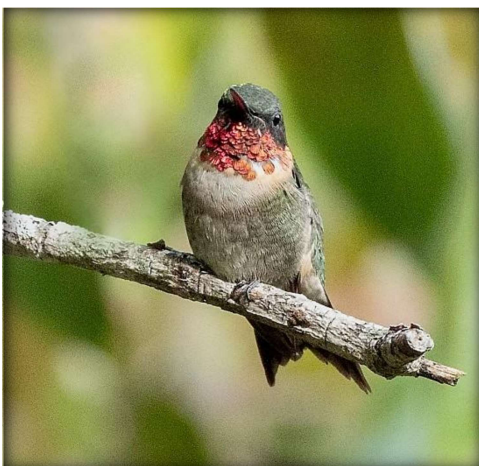
As I'm writing this, tomorrow is the official first day of fall. Migration is progressing through the Roanoke Valley. Now is also decision time for what migrants you desire to see. Do we want to see the warblers with their molting colors? It's a great way to sharpen your skills checking for eye rings, eye stripes, wing bars or lack thereof, and muted colors. It is an exciting time to spot some unusual warblers who have strayed from their normal areas, such as the Connecticut and the Mourning that were seen recently.

Would you rather head for the coast to see the multitude of shorebirds coming through in great droves? Some species we see only during migration stopovers twice a year. You have to search around the droves to see the small individual groups of birds you may be looking for. You might be fortunate enough to see a rare species that has fallen in with a new group of travelling mates. It makes for a very interesting trip.

How about a longer trip out to Nebraska to see the Sandhill Cranes Kent spoke about last meeting - thousands in the air at once and a noise level that hurts your ears. That said let's discuss the Snow Geese that come through there by the hundreds of thousands if not more. They fill the sky and blot out the sun. It makes one wonder what it must have been like in the early twentieth century when the Passenger Pigeons would migrate by the millions and blackened the sky. Now, they are extinct!

As I think of migration, one must ponder the loss of habitat on both ends of the migration. With global warming, pesticides, development, and other habitat destruction, will our little feathered friends be able to adapt and survive for our kids and grandkids to enjoy?

Wherever you travel, please leave "No Trace" and be safe!



The refractive properties of the gorget (throat) feathers of the Ruby-throated Hummingbird change toward autumn due to wear and weathering, shifting the observed color toward orange or bronze in appearance.
Photo September 6, 2025.

Bob Crawford,
Photographer

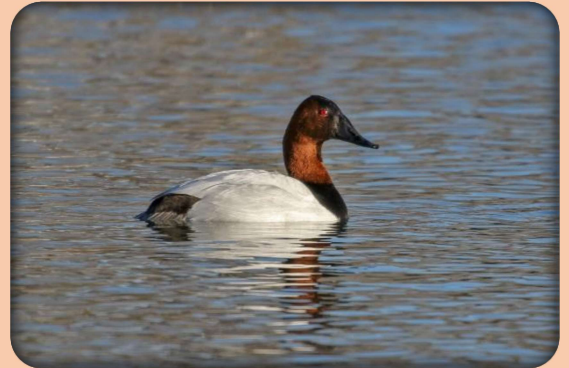
DREW'S BIRD OF THE MONTH

Canvasback

Aythya valisineria

Status: "Uncommon spring and fall transient and winter resident. Best chance to find Canvasback would be Carvins Cove, Murray's Pond and Greenfield Lake"

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



Mary Lou Barritt, Photographer

Canvasbacks are diving ducks at home in the water, seldom going ashore to dry land. They sleep on the water with their bill tucked under the wing, and they nest on floating mats of vegetation. To get airborne Canvasbacks need a running start, but once in the air they are strong and fast fliers, clocking airspeeds of up to 56 miles per hour. Canvasbacks are social outside of the breeding season; they gather in large rafts by the thousands to tens of thousands. Only when winter food is scarce or clumped do they defend foraging areas against other Canvasbacks.

Pairs begin forming during spring migration and continue on the breeding grounds. Courting male ducks gather around one female, assessing each other with a series of head movements until the female chooses one of them. Males stretch their necks, lower their heads while giving a coughing sound, and toss their head all the way back until it reaches the top of the back. Females stretch their necks and raise and lower their head to signal acceptance of a male. About halfway through incubation, males move to large fresh and brackish wetlands in central and western Canada to molt before migrating south in the fall. During this flightless period, males stay away from the shore, feeding on submerged vegetation and resting on islands. Females continue to incubate and feed hatchlings until it is time to migrate south.

~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.

OCTOBER 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 Second Wednesday Midweek Walk, Oak Grove Park, Roanoke 8:00am. Leader: David Frye (248-459-6783)**
Join us on a bird hike through a Roanoke local spot, Oak Grove Park. We will bird the immediate park area beside the parking lot and then head out on a trail that hugs a hillside and meanders through a hardwood forest area.
Directions: Gather at Oak Grove Park 8:00 am, southwest of Electric Road (Route 419) off Grandin Road Extension, behind Oak Grove Elementary School.
- 13 Membership Meeting, Monday 7:00 pm.** Roanoke Council of Garden Clubs, 3640 Colonial Avenue, Roanoke, VA 24018.
Program: Camera Trapping the Blue Ridge Parkway: Adventures with Bears and Birds. Presenter: Tom Davis. (Details on page 2.)
- 18 Locher Tract Wetlands Trail, Saturday 8:00am Leader: Bill Hunley (540-467-3477)** Join us on a special field trip to Locher Tract, located in the Jefferson National Forest. This is a managed wildlife habitat that contains woods, open fields, a beaver pond and good views of the James River. We can expect an excellent variety of birds with our target birds including early migrant warblers, Wood Duck, Brown Creeper, Fox Sparrow and Hairy Woodpecker. In the past, we have seen Rusty Blackbirds here. There will be 2 miles of level walking, but wear sturdy, waterproof shoes. Locher Tract is near Natural Bridge Station in Rockbridge County and Bill will have hand out maps showing the location.
Directions: On I-81, take exit 150B and follow signs to 220N. Go 3/4 miles and turn left on Kingston Road into the Botetourt Commons shopping center in Daleville. We will meet in the Bojangles parking area at 8:00am.
- 25 Montvale Park, Bedford County, Saturday 8:00am. Leader: Kirk Gardner (828-216-9170)** Join us for a bird walk at Montvale Park! On this trip we will be targeting Lincoln's Sparrow, Swamp Sparrow and other late-season migrants such as Orange-crowned Warbler and Nashville Warbler, as well as other local residents. Our route will follow the Creekside Trail along South Fork Goose Creek, looping back via the Soggy Bottom Trail. We will cross the creek again before returning to the parking lot. Optionally, we may explore the wetland area between the trails, including a cattail wetland, to observe diverse habitats. With the wet areas involved, please wear muck boots, wellies, or other waterproof footwear suitable for crossing a stream.
Directions: Drive northeast on route 460 traveling approximately 16 miles just past the town of Montvale and turn right onto southbound Marketplace Dr. As you approach a circular drive, the parking area will be on the right. We will meet in that gravel parking lot on the east side of the park (37.3751197-79.7129808).

NOVEMBER 2025 A QUICK LOOK AHEAD

- 08 Saturday, 8:00am. Beginning Birder Hike, Highland Park. Leader: David Frye (248-459-6783)**
- 12 Second Wednesday Bird Hike, Greenfield, 8:00am. Leader: David Frye (248-459-6783)**
- 22 Saturday, 8:00 am. Jae Valley Park. Leader: David Frye (248-459-6783)**



Reminder

DUES ARE DUE!

Memberships expire on August 31
Individual \$15, Family \$25, Student No Charge
(Include membership form on last page 8)

*Mail checks to:
Roanoke Valley Bird Club
P.O. Box 20405, Roanoke, VA 24018
*Or bring to the September 8, meeting
*Or on the web: www.roanokevalleybirdclub.com

September Highlights

Meeting Notes

Monday, September 8

Secretary Karen Frye noted: "There were 69 members and guests in attendance. Kent Skaggs spoke on the topic, 'The Spectacle of Crane Migration.' Kent is from Nebraska and worked at Audubon's Rowe Sanctuary for 20 years. He helped countless visitors experience the annual spring staging of Sandhill Cranes on the Platte River. Cranes are in a varying state of extinction danger. People particularly connect with Sandhill's because of their mating dances. There is an hourglass migration pattern with a stop at Platte River in Nebraska to fatten up for the final flight to their summer grounds. Their predators are eagles and great horned owls. About a million Sandhill Cranes pass through the central flyway each spring."



Carol Whiteside Photographer

Field Trip Reports

Wednesday, September 10, Greenfield (Botetourt Center) Second Wednesday Walk. Leader: David Frye

A small group kicked off our birding field trip year on a beautiful morning at Greenfield. We observed 33 species with highlights being two beautiful Green Herons, a Least Flycatcher, a Vireo three-of-a-kind (Red-eyed, Warbling, and White-eyed), Swainson's Thrush, and a "just fledged young'un" Chipping Sparrow hopping through the grass a few feet from us with Mom excitedly scolding us as we moved away down the path.

Saturday, September 13, Greenfield (Botetourt Center) Butterfly Hike. Leader: Toni Pepin

This was our second and slightly later in season field outing looking specifically for butterflies. A handful of us tried to keep up with Toni and were treated to more than 20 species on the morning. Highlighted species included Zebulon Skippers, Sachems, Red-spotted Purples, Buckeyes, Spicebush Swallowtails, and quite a few Monarchs. Our club will continue to plan field trip outings for butterflies each summer (Aug and/or Sept).

Saturday, September 20, Ellett Farm Property. Leader: Sissy Logan

A beautiful morning with temperatures in the low 80's was enjoyed by twelve birders on this picturesque, privately owned Ellett Property located along Brandon Road within the confines of Roanoke city. Thirty-four total species were reported with the highlights being Osprey, Red-tailed Hawk, Double-crested Cormorant, Brown Thrasher, Least Flycatcher, Palm Warbler, and Cape May Warbler. The bird of the day was Bluebirds, everywhere! There were 17 bluebird boxes on the property.

Photographers: **Kent Davis** ▼ **Mary Lou Barritt** ►



Osprey ▲



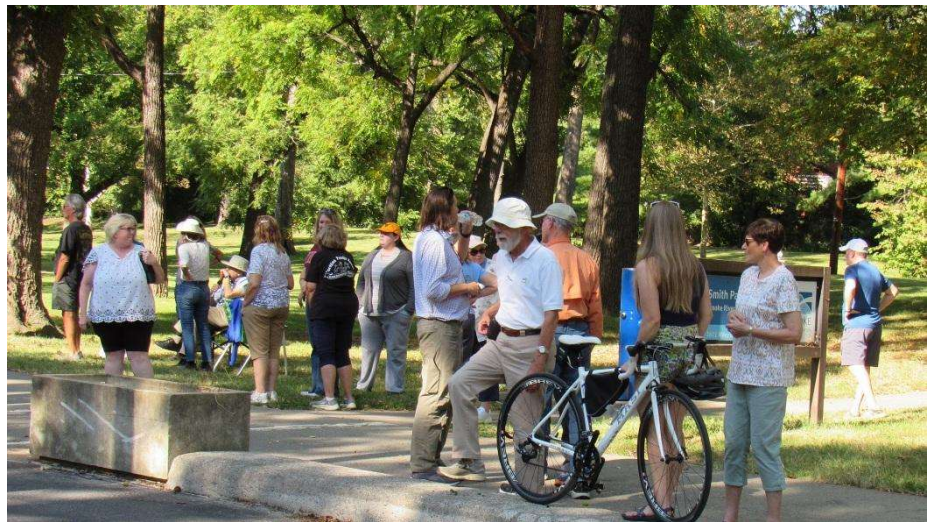
Cape May Warbler ▲ Palm Warbler ▼



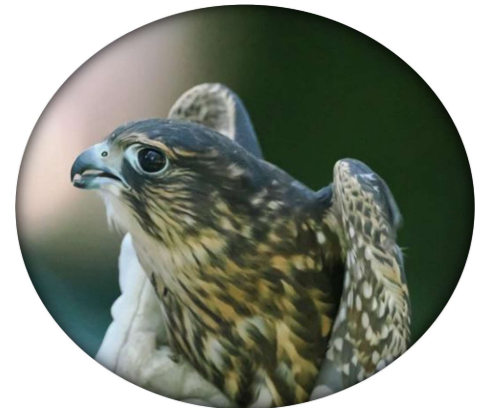
Nestling Merlin Raised at Southwest Virginia Wildlife Center

The first Merlin successfully raised in rehabilitation in Virginia was released by the Southwest Virginia Wildlife Center on Thursday, September 11, 2025, 4:30 p.m. at Smith Park. The bird was rescued in early July after its nest was destroyed by a tree-cutting operation. Merlins are rare in Virginia, as their typical breeding grounds are in Canada, making this rehabilitation and release a historic event for the state. Staff initially had trouble identifying the species but confirmed it was a Merlin after its primary feathers grew in, revealing it was not a Peregrine Falcon or a Kestrel. While adult Merlins occasionally pass through the region, having a fledgling in care is extraordinary. Even more encouraging, the first known Merlin nesting site in Virginia remains active, with the parent pair returning each year. This new case offers hope that Merlins may one day establish a home in Southwest Virginia.

Submitted by **Carol Whiteside**



The **Roanoke Valley Bird Club** was well represented at the historical Merlin release by **Sid Barritt**, **Sandy Stinnett** (above right on either side of the bicycle), and **Kent Davis**, who provided all photos except above left by **Sid Barritt** as Sabrina Garvin, President and Co-founder of the Southwest Virginia Wildlife Center, released the Merlin.





2025 RVBC Bluebird Trails Summary

Submitted by Carol Whiteside



Eastern Bluebirds (*Sialia sialis*) are well known in the United States for their brilliant plumage, sweet song, and use of nestboxes. It is hard to imagine that this species nearly went extinct in the early 1900s because of a deadly combination of management practices that removed the dead tree snags that bluebirds depend upon for nesting, the introduction of exotic species that competed for nesting cavities, and the detrimental effects of pesticides. The recovery of populations across the eastern United States is an example of how everyday citizens can play a role in conservation. The major factor in the bluebird's recovery was the establishment of nestboxes by private landowners across their range.

~ National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, Everglades, Florida

Hanging Rock Golf Course Sissy Logan and Judy Repass, Co-chairmen 21 boxes			
Species	Eggs	Fledged	Success
E. Bluebird	153	142	93%
C. Chickadee	0	0	
Tree Swallow	4	4	100%
House Wren	0	0	
Total	157	146	93%
First SS egg: April 10, 2025			
Last BB fledging: August 13, 2025			

Blue Ridge Parkway Carol Whiteside, Chairman 32 boxes			
Species	Eggs	Fledged	Success
E. Bluebird	215	195	91%
C. Chickadee	22	18	82%
Tree Swallow	12	12	100%
House Wren	0	0	
Total	249	225	90%
First BB egg: March 29, 2025			
Last BB fledging: August 20, 2025			

In this vital conservation endeavor we offer many thanks to the dedicated volunteers who monitor our two trails weekly for five months to insure the success of our area Eastern Bluebirds. We greatly appreciate **Robin and Allen Austin**; the bluebird trails could not exist without Allen's expertise in construction of the nest box set-ups. This year, our **bluebirds produced 368 eggs and fledged 337 for a success rate of 92%**, for the two combined trails of 53 boxes. These annual statistics are reported to the Virginia Bluebird Society at the end of each annual season.

The Blue Ridge Parkway Trail is proving to be a manageable challenge with the motor road construction underway from MP 106 (Route 460) through MP 121.4 (Route 220), split into two sections over the next two years. Therefore, we will not be able to accept monitors. Chairman **Carol Whiteside** extends a grateful thank you to **Carl Richardson** who assisted with weekly monitoring and weed whacking around the 32 boxes. Carl is also a trusted Parkway volunteer assisting the Park maintenance crew with their duties. Carol and Carl plan to monitor the trail for the next two years once permission is received through the motor road construction. This 2025 season was the best overall season of record, even though there were eight infertile eggs laid, which most likely was attributed to the highly unusual weather. Through 25 years of record keeping, our Parkway bluebird trail has produced **6,084 eggs with 4,605 fledglings, for a 76% success rate.**



If you would like more bluebird information or are interested in purchasing a bluebird box (especially as a great Christmas gift), please contact:

Carol Whiteside
540-774-2143.



Big Spring Day over the Decades

Submitted by: Donna Mateski de Sanchez, Big Spring Day Compiler

First held on May 1, 1971, this volunteer citizen science project has been held 54 of the last 55 years. Here is a snapshot at 10-year intervals. Species landing in the top ten for the first time in the highlighted years are in bold.

May 3, 1975

Species: 141

Birds: 8327

Participants: 67

10 Most Common Species: **Common Grackle**, **American Goldfinch**, **Red-winged Blackbird**, **American Crow**, **Eastern Meadowlark**, **European Starling**, **Blue Jay**, **Northern Cardinal**, **White-Throated Sparrow**, and **Yellow-Rumped Warbler**

May 1, 1985

Species: 125

Birds: 3173

Participants: Not recorded

10 Most Common Species: Common Grackle, European Starling, **American Robin**, American Crow, American Goldfinch, Red-winged Blackbird, **Red-eyed Vireo**, Blue Jay, **American Redstart**, and Northern Cardinal

May 13, 1995 (this is the latest day of year ever held, also done in 2006)

Species: 118

Birds: 5032

Participants: 60

10 Most Common Species: **Indigo Bunting**, Red-eyed Vireo, Common Grackle, American Crow, European Starling, American Goldfinch, Northern Cardinal, **Turkey Vulture**, **Cedar Waxwing**, and American Robin

April 30, 2005 (versus earliest day of the year ever held was 29 April 2017)

Species: 125

Birds: 5683

Participants: 50

10 Most Common Species: American Goldfinch, Common Grackle, Red-Winged Blackbird, European Starling, Blue Jay, White-Throated Sparrow, Red-Eyed Vireo, **Chipping Sparrow**, American Robin, and American Redstart

May 2, 2015

Species: 126

Birds: 4244

Participants: 57

10 Most Common Species: Red-eyed Vireo, Blue Jay, Common Grackle, American Goldfinch. **Tufted Titmouse**, **Ovenbird**, European Starling, Northern Cardinal, American Redstart, and Turkey Vulture

May 3, 2025

Species: 123

Birds: 5997

Participants: 50

10 Most Common Species: Red-eyed Vireo, American Redstart, Blue Jay, Indigo Bunting, Northern Cardinal, Tufted Titmouse, Ovenbird, American Goldfinch, **Scarlet Tanager**, **Wood Thrush** and Chipping Sparrow (Tied for 10th)
The only species landing in top 10 most observed all of these years was the American Goldfinch.

What lies in store for us in the field in 2026? Stay tuned for a save-the-date announcement in an upcoming newsletter. New birders, or those looking to get back out in the lovely mountains, are always welcome to join our effort.

Roanoke Valley Bird Club 2026 Calendar

We are excited to offer the Roanoke Valley Bird Club 2026 Calendar with 25 amazing photos taken by and voted by our own members. It's our 31st year and is still only \$16. We accept cash, check or credit card. Starting October 13, calendars may be ordered or purchased in three convenient ways:

1. **In person** at the RVBC meetings on October 13, November 10, and December 8. Other dates and locations will be announced later.
2. **Online** at <http://roanokevalleybirdclub.com/> and click on "Buy a Calendar" link after October 13.
3. **Mail** with check, the completed form below to:
RVBC, PO Box 20405, Roanoke VA 24018
If you are ordering more than 4 calendars, please email us at RVBC2015@outlook.com to get more accurate and lower shipping cost.



2026 Cover photo
Eastern Screech Owl



2026 CALENDAR ORDER FORM

R.V.B.C., P.O. Box 20405, Roanoke, VA 24018

of Calendars _____ X \$16.00 if picking up = \$ _____

of Calendars _____ X \$19.50 if shipping = \$ _____

If being mailed, send calendars to:



Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____

Zip Code _____

Telephone _____

Email _____



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