

Roanoke Valley Bird Club



Celebrating
68 Years of Birding
1957-2025

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

www.roanokevalleybirdclub.com

RVBC NEWSLETTER

NOVEMBER 2025

PHOTOGRAPHER
KIRK GARDNER



DREW'S BIRD OF THE MONTH CASSIA CROSSBILL *Loxia sinesciuris*

Congratulations are in order to **Kirk Gardner, Ornithologist, Wildlife Biologist**, for having one of his Cassia Crossbill photos in Cornell's Macauley Library that was selected for the fall issue of *Living Bird* from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. The article, "Craig Benkman's 40-Year Fascination with Crossbills and Conifers," by Benjamin Hack, is about studies of Red Crossbills as well as White-winged Crossbills, and the Cassia Crossbill which is only found in Cassia County, Idaho. Kirk is pictured here looking for the Cassia Crossbills. We are always ready to recognize a member who has done something exceptional. Great photo, Kirk! (More on page 3.)

~ RVBC President Drew Daniels

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

Jeanette Warwick & Family
Kristin Mahood & Family
Charlotte Lomax



Michael Wise
Eva Gray
Greg Corman
Karen Martin

Welcome Back!
Richard Walker & Family

Lucinda Rowe

Next meeting:

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

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

Featured program:

REHABILITATION OF AN EAGLE OWL PRESENTED BY JASON HARRIS

Jason Harris will speak to us about the challenges and rewards that he has experienced in the process of rehabilitating his Eagle Owl, Luna. Jason will be with us "live" and we will all get to meet Luna during Jason's presentation.

Reminder:

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



Last Reminder

DUES ARE DUE!

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

*Mail checks to:

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

*Or bring to the November 10, meeting

*Or on the web: www.roanokevalleybirdclub.com

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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Drew Daniels

Vice President, programs

David Frye

Vice President, memberships

Mary Harshfield

Secretary

Karen Frye

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DIRECTORS:

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Field Trips David Frye

Meeting Refreshments Mary Lou Barritt

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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

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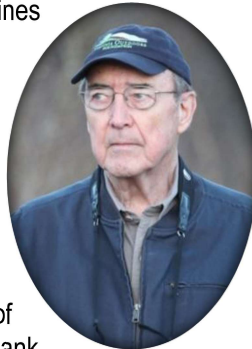


President's Musings

President Drew Daniels
ddaniels2627@cox.net
540.314.6069

As the migration is in full swing, I can't help but think where our little feathered friends would be in their fight for survival were it not for protected areas where they can rest, feed, and ready themselves for their continued trip. We owe a profound debt of gratitude to those individuals who had the foresight to lobby for land, especially wetlands, to be set aside for national parks, national wildlife refuges, national seashores, state parks, city parks, and all the land held by the myriad of national environmental groups. There are too many environmental and conservation groups to mention in a short article. It took a lot of hard work, meetings with influential people, not only monetarily, but politically, with many letters and speeches to like-minded groups both large and small. They never stopped, never deterred from their goal; they persevered! Thank goodness they did.

Our esteemed club member, **Dr. Rupert Cutler**, has uniquely worked at all levels of environmental preservation from the "grassroots" up the chain. Rupert is involved! He writes articles for magazines and newspapers, speaks to assemblies, is active in many local groups where he continues to spread the word. Rupert was the first executive director of the Blue Ridge Land Conservancy, was on the board of the Virginia Outdoors Foundation and the Western Virginia Water Authority, served on Roanoke City Council, and was executive director of Explore Park. I shudder to think where our avian friends, and wildlife in general, would be without the contributions of unique individuals like Rupert Cutler. Our sincerest "thank you" goes to Rupert, and those who came before, those who are here now, and to those who will follow in their footsteps. Godspeed!



The Cassia Crossbill, a finch with a crisscrossed bill, is closely related to the widespread Red Crossbill and was recognized as a full species in 2017. Unlike the nomadic Red Crossbill, the Cassia stays put year-round in a single county in Idaho, feeding on lodgepole pine cones that the Red Crossbill can't open. Groups of the red and yellow finches dangle from cones, quietly munching on seeds, until they erupt into flight with a kip. The species' small population and geographic isolation makes it vulnerable to extinction.



Kirk Gardner, Photographer

Prior to 2017, the Cassia Crossbill was considered one of ten types of Red Crossbill, all distinguished by differences in their calls and slight differences in bill size. But researchers discovered that it doesn't breed with other crossbills, has a thicker bill, and isn't nomadic. Its name comes from Cassia County, Idaho, the only location where it occurs. Females and immature males are grayish green. Males are a patchy mix of reds, yellows, and oranges.

~The Cornell Lab

DREW'S BIRD OF THE MONTH *Cassia Crossbill* *Loxia sinesciuris*



Kirk Gardner, Photographer

When asked how Kirk heard about this bird, he responded, "I visited Idaho for my son's high school graduation in 2020. He and I were hanging out in the hotel as I checked the rare bird alerts for Idaho and saw the crossbill listed. At that point I had never heard of the Cassia Crossbill, so I started to research the bird.

I learned this species recently split from Red Crossbill, recognized as a full species in 2017, and found only in Cassia County, Idaho. The next morning Colin and I decided to drive to Diamond Field Jack Campground to look for it.

When we arrived at the campground snow was falling with about three inches on the ground in June. We walked around a wooded area where there were a lot of brush piles from the recently pruned pine trees.

Birds were hanging around the brush piles and I noticed four crossbills together. Three of the four were juveniles being fed by the adult [see photo above]. All four were banded.

The photo in the magazine was taken while I was sitting by a brush pile. The Cassia crossbill popped up out of the brush pile and landed about ten feet from me eating from a pine cone."



Kirk Gardner's Cassia Crossbill photo in the 2025 fall issue of *Living Bird*, a quarterly magazine [pictured above by Drew Daniels] published by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Permission granted to reprint by the Macaulay Library.



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.

NOVEMBER 2025

Hawk Watching - Located at Harvey's Knob Overlook, Milepost 95.3 on the Blue Ridge Parkway. Milepost 105.8 Route 460 north to milepost 96 is now open with road construction complete. However, continuing the road construction full closure is in effect on the Parkway from milepost 105.8 Route 460 south to milepost 112.4 Route 24 in Vinton, with detour signs in effect.

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 "New Birders Saturday Stroll" Highland Park, Roanoke, 8:00 am. Leader: David Frye (248-459-6783)

Enjoy a leisurely walk at Highland Park -- a local gem within Roanoke City. On this Saturday morning, we are encouraging new or less accomplished birders to join us to experience what can be a very surprising population of birds, right here in our neighborhood. Dress for hiking the slightly hilly grounds and don't forget those binoculars. **Directions:** The group will gather at 8:00am (it can be very chilly at that time, so dress for the weather!) in the parking area on the north side of the park. In Southwest Roanoke, take 5th Street south from Elm Avenue to Washington Avenue. At the intersection make a quarter turn to the left going southwest into the parking drive Joel Richert Way. We'll meet in the large car park area beyond the fountain.

10 Membership Meeting, Monday 7:00 pm. Roanoke Council of Garden Clubs, 3640 Colonial Avenue, Roanoke, VA 24018.

Program: **Rehabilitation of an Eagle Owl**, Presenter: **Jason Harris** (Details on page 2.)

Jason Harris will speak to us about the challenges and rewards that he has experienced in the process of rehabilitating his Eagle Owl, Luna. Jason will be with us "live" and we will all get to meet Luna during Jason's presentation.

12 Second Wednesday Midweek Walk, Botetourt Center at Greenfield, 8:00am. 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: From north bound I-81, take Exit 150B and follow signs to Route 220N in the direction of Daleville and Fincastle. 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.

22 Jae Valley Park Bird Hike - Saturday 8:00am. Leader: Dave Frye (248-459-6783)

Join us for a trip to a nearby park area that's under-birded yet very productive. Multiple habitat types should make this an interesting visit.

Directions: From Roanoke SW take Walnut Ave eastbound across the bridge (across I-581, the railroad, and the Roanoke River) turn left on Piedmont Rd. After one block, turn right onto Riverland Rd SE and follow this route southeast until you reach the junction with Bennington Street. Stay to the right and the route turns into Mount Pleasant Boulevard and heads further southeast. This road (Route 116) goes straight and becomes Jae Valley Road which gets you to the park entrance. Turn right into Jae Valley Park.

DECEMBER 2025 A QUICK LOOK AHEAD

10 Garst Mill Park, Roanoke, Wednesday, 9:00am. Leader: David Frye (248-459-6783).

20 Christmas Bird Count, 8:00am. Compiler/Organizer: Bill Hunley (540-467-3477).

28 Roanoke Sewage Treatment Plant, Sunday, 9:00am. Leader: Kent Davis (540-355-6388).



November 1, 1926
Happy 99th Birthday
Eunice Hudgins

**Eunice now lives near her son, Jim, in Colorado
She still enjoys RVBC lifetime membership keeping up
through the RVBC Newsletter and her birding friends.**



October Highlights

Meeting Notes

Monday, October 13

Secretary Karen Frye noted: "There were 52 members and guests in attendance. [Ranger] Tom Davis, the scheduled speaker, unfortunately, was unable to present due to the government shut-down. Our January speaker was rescheduled for the meeting. David Frye introduced tonight's guest speaker, Josh Haas. Josh presented "Hawks on the Wing" by Zoom from his home in Delton, Michigan. Josh Haas is a Michigan birder, photographer and hawk watcher. He has been birding and photographing seriously for nearly 20 years teaching raptor identification through the use of video and audio commentary. Much hawk information can be found on the website www.Hawkmigration.org and on www.hawksonthewing.com.

Maxine Fraade, nominating committee chairman, reported: our new year starts in January. All elected officers are willing to serve in 2026, so we will not have to recruit new candidates this year. All attending officers and [directors] board members were introduced." They are:

Officers:

President: Drew Daniels
Vice President of Programs: David Frye
Vice President of Membership: Mary Harshfield
Treasurer: Carol Whitt
Secretary: Karen Frye

Directors:

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

Field Trip Reports

Wednesday, September 8, Oak Grove Park Second Wednesday Midweek Walk. Leader: David Frye

Six participants discovered a local spot that turns out to be a very handy place for birds. It was a morning for "the usual suspects" (18 species observed), with Blue Jays and Carolina Wrens dominating the scene. The group also discovered that Oak Grove Park has a very healthy stand of pawpaw trees. For those who enjoy their fruit, the pawpaws should appear and ripen in late August to mid-September.



Fall splendor in SW Roanoke County, Bray Ridge Pond, Carol Whiteside, photographer

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. Calendars may be ordered or purchased in three convenient ways:

1. **In person** at the RVBC meetings on 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.
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:



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Address _____

City _____

State _____

Zip Code _____

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FEEDING BIRDS IN WINTER

KEEPING OUR FEATHERED FRIENDS HAPPY

BY SISSY LOGAN, ROANOKE VALLEY BIRD CLUB

This article was originally written for the *Roanoke Council of Garden Clubs Newsletter*

As the days get shorter and colder, many of us start putting out bird feeders to help our feathered friends through the winter months. I would like to share some simple ways to make your yard a welcoming winter haven for birds, and how the effort you put in will reward you with color, song, and life, even on the grayest days.

Why Feed Birds in Winter?

Winter can be a tough time for birds. Natural food sources like berries, insects, and seeds become scarce once the frost sets in. By offering food, water, and shelter, we can help them survive those freezing nights; and in return, we get to enjoy their company right outside our windows. Feeding birds during winter helps them to keep up their energy, and stay healthy until spring returns.

Choosing the Right Feeders

The 5-7-9 rule refers to how you should place your feeder. The ideal spot should be 5 feet off the ground, 7 feet away from any structures (especially trees), and nothing less than 9 feet hanging above it. There are many types of feeders, and each attracts different birds:

- **Tube feeders** are great for small birds like chickadees, titmice, and finches. Fill them with black oil sunflower seeds, a winter favorite packed with fat and energy.
- **Platform hanging feeders** are like little bird tables, good for larger birds such as cardinals, mourning doves, and blue jays. They enjoy sunflower seeds, peanuts, and cracked corn.
- **Suet feeders** are a must-have for winter! Suet is made from animal fat and provides essential calories to help birds stay warm. Hang a suet cage to attract woodpeckers, nuthatches, and wrens.
- **Nyjer or Thistle feeders** have tiny openings for goldfinches and pine siskins. Nyjer seed (sometimes called thistle seed) is lightweight but high in oil for energy.
- **Ground feeding** or a low platform is used to sprinkle seeds for juncos, sparrows, doves, and towhees that prefer to eat at ground level.

Best Seeds for Winter Feeding

If you're only going to use one seed type, **black oil sunflower seed** is the winner! It is the #1 preferred seeds among small to medium birds. They are packed with protein, fat, and fiber, providing essential energy for birds year-round. These seeds have thin shells for easy cracking, and are a favorite food for a wide variety of species. Their high oil content makes them especially beneficial during cold weather to help birds stay warm and nourished. Here are some other good seed options for variety:

- **Safflower seed:** Cardinals, blue jays, chickadees and titmice like it, but squirrels usually don't!
- **Peanuts:** Great high energy food - use shelled or unsalted pieces.
- **White proso millet:** Rich in protein and essential B vitamins is a favorite for ground feeders such as towhees, sparrows and juncos.
- **Suet cakes with fruit or insects:** A big hit with insect-eating birds like woodpeckers and wrens.

Remember to keep the seed dry. Wet seed can mold quickly, so clean your feeders regularly to prevent disease.

Water: The Overlooked Essential

Food is important, but birds also need fresh water in winter. Natural sources may freeze, so if you can, offer a heated birdbath or use a simple deicer in your regular one. You will be amazed how many birds come just for a drink or quick bath, even when snow is on the ground! Pay special attention to your water source during extreme cold weather.

Location and Shelter

When setting up feeders place them near trees or shrubs, but not too close for acrobatic squirrels, where birds can take cover from predators and wind. Feeding birds isn't just good for them; it is good for us, too. So, as the temperatures drop, fill your feeders, hang up some suet, keep the birdbath from freezing, and enjoy your feathered friends.



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

Happy Thanksgiving

www.roanokevalleybirdclub.com

RVBC NEWSLETTER

NOVEMBER 2025



Roanoke Valley Bird Club

Membership Application/Renewal Form

Memberships expire on August 31, each year

2026

(Current Year)

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

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