

Roanoke Valley Bird Club

Celebrating

68 Years of Birding

1957-2025

"LEAVE ONLY FOOTPRINTS"



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

www.roanokevalleybirdclub.com

RVBC NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER 2025



PHOTOGRAPHER
ROGER MEDINA

DREW'S BIRD OF THE MONTH **EASTERN SCREECH OWL** *Megascops asio*

Congratulations to **Roger Medina**, for receiving the most membership votes to be awarded the best cover photo for the Roanoke Valley Bird Club 2026 Calendar. This year there were 72 photos submitted by 18 photographers. Roger found this owl in the Gala Wetlands of Botetourt County. (More on page 3.)

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!



Lynn Barlow

Demie Adams

Next meeting:

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

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

Featured program:

CLUB MEMBERS' SHARING NIGHT

Please bring your favorite photos, videos, and stories of birding adventures, and a snack! If you have a digital presentation, email President Drew Daniels with your estimated time to reserve your space, and then bring it on a flash drive so we can run it for you. Feel free to share a birding story or an exciting item to show the club. Also, you are encouraged to bring a holiday finger-food to share (healthy or a dessert). This will be a fun evening of sharing our love of birds and wildlife while enjoying delicious snacks!

Email: ddaniels2627@cox.net



Carol Whiteside, Photographer

***** Due to the holidays, the January issue of the newsletter will be delayed until the week of January 5, 2026. *****

CONTACT US!



ROANOKE VALLEY BIRD CLUB

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NONPROFIT 501(C)(3)

Email: rvbc2015@outlook.com
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 **20th of the month** prior to that publication.

Photography is provided by membership with their names in bold type.

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

Here it is mid-November, and I am trying to come up with a musing to write that would entertain as well as tell a story to get a point across. I am constantly reminded of the total ignorance of people who visit our parks, state and national. Trust me; birds will be involved before this is over.

How's this for starters? Buffaloes and elk be damned; a guy I read about this morning approached a pack of WOLVES in Yellowstone; he most certainly has a screw loose!

Then, there were the fine folk who visited Arches National Park during the government shutdown, and proceeded to paint graffiti on the fragile rock icons. Arches is a majestic landscape that has been kept in pristine condition by the National Park Service, considering the harsh weather conditions thrown at it by Mother Nature. The vandals must have come with graffiti in mind as they had their spray paint with them.

While birding on Tybee Island, Georgia, two weeks ago, we found a large flock of resting birds at the south end of Tybee. As we tried to ease up on them, a couple came down the beach, and the lady had her back turned to take a selfie with the flock in the background, only to decide they were too far away so she backed right into the flock as several hundred skimmers and terns took to the air. The couple thought it so funny that they flew up, not knowing they were resting for the next leg of their migration. It was bad enough they had to contend with the cold wind to conserve energy, only to be flushed up and expend additional energy, not to mention the stress involved with being flushed!

At the beach entrance, there was a sign that struck home with me, so I gave it to Carol to be a permanent reminder on the front page of our newsletter. It says, "Leave Only Footprints." If people would only take that to heart!

As we approach the holidays, I am constantly reminded how important family is, and how those alone at this time of year must feel. When you think about enjoying the holidays, think also about your friends who are alone. They, too, want to be included to enjoy the holidays, so invite them over. They will fit right in; show me a family that wouldn't make over them as one of their own! Try it; it will make the holidays something special!

My wish for each of you at this special time of year is that you will have a wonderful holiday and best wishes for the upcoming new year. Be safe, spread the cheer, and keep birding!

Hope to see each of you at our Members' Sharing Meeting on Monday, December 8, at 7:00 PM.

Happy Holidays!
Drew

RVBC CALENDAR

by Linda Cory, Chairman



Voting on the photos is a fun activity as members decide which photos will be in our calendar. This is our 31st year of producing the calendar which improves each year. It has grown from a fun club activity with photos of members and some birds to a polished calendar of bird photos that the club proudly presents to the community. The calendar committee is always looking for volunteers who have suggestions for next year's calendar. Member input can be sent to RVBC2015@outlook.com.

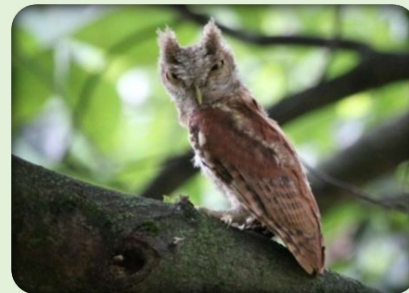
Roger Medina is pictured holding the 2026 Calendar which features his Eastern Screech-owl front cover photo. Past President Kent Davis, photographer, also presented to Roger the screech-owl figurine. Congratulations, Roger!

DREW'S BIRD OF THE MONTH

Eastern Screech-Owl *Megascops asio*

Status: "Common permanent resident."

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



Carol Whiteside, Photographer

If a mysterious trill catches your attention in the night, bear in mind the spooky sound may come from an owl no bigger than a pint glass. Common east of the Rockies in woods, suburbs, and parks, the Eastern Screech-Owl is found wherever trees are, and they're even willing to nest in backyard nest boxes. These supremely camouflaged birds hide out in nooks and tree crannies through the day, so train your ears and listen for them at night.

Like most raptors, male Eastern Screech-Owls are smaller than females, and are more agile fliers and hunters. The female doesn't hunt while on the nest; she and the chicks depend on food brought them by the male. The male is smaller, and his voice is deeper than a female's.

Red and gray individuals occur across the range of the Eastern Screech-Owl, with about one-third of all individuals being red. Rufous owls are more common in the East, with fewer than 15% red at the western edge of the range

Eastern Screech-Owl pairs usually are monogamous and remain together for life. Some males, however, will mate with two different females. The second female may evict the first female, lay her own eggs in the nest, and incubate both clutches.

They tend to pounce from perches six to ten feet off the ground, occasionally snatching an insect or bat on the wing or hitting shallow water talons-first to snag fish or tadpoles. Most flights are short (less than 75 feet or so). When traveling between perches, these owls often drop, fly straight, then, rise again, in a characteristic U-shaped pattern.

The oldest recorded Eastern Screech-Owl in the wild was at least 14 years, 6 months old when it was found in Ontario in 1968, the same province where it had been banded in 1955.

~ 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.*

Please be careful when walking into the wilds of southern Virginia as Firearms Deer Season is in effect and hunters could very well be in the vicinity; brightly colored clothing and sticking to walks on well groomed trails are both good practices.

DECEMBER 2025

- 08** **Membership Meeting, Monday 7:00pm** Roanoke Council of Garden Clubs, 3640 Colonial Avenue, Roanoke, VA 24018. Program: **Club Members' Sharing Night.** (Details on page 2.)

- 10** **Garst Mill Park – Roanoke Wednesday 9:00am Leader: David Frye (248-459-6783)** Join us for a mid-December Wednesday bird walk at a local park in Cave Spring. Garst Mill Park flanks Mud Lick Creek and is an easy paved path with interesting bird life. Listen closely and you may hear an Eastern Screech Owl quavering.
Directions: From Brambleton Avenue in Cave Spring turn onto Garst Mill Rd SW and head NNW. After almost ½ mile, turn onto WB Halevan Road. The entrance road is the very first left turn off of Halevan.

- 20** **Christmas Bird Counts – Roanoke and Fincastle- 8:00am Compilers/Organizers: Bill Hunley - Roanoke (540-467-3477) and Andrew Newcombe – Fincastle (anewco15@gmail.com)** These are a couple of our big events. Our club has established areas to survey each year in late December and many members join together to count every bird that they can in specific territories within that area. Anyone can join in! Contact Bill Hunley or Andrew Newcombe if you are interested in getting in on the fun!

- 28** **Roanoke Sewage Treatment Plant - Sunday 9:00am Leader: Kent Davis 540-353-6388** Join us for a walk around the Sewage Treatment Plant. Birders know that they are in for a treat anytime they have a visit to the sewage settling ponds! It's a holiday festive occasion! Entrance to the STP is by special permit; trip participants must all enter at the same time and stay together with our leader. 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. The walking is mostly flat with a short steep trail. Sturdy waterproof boots are recommended as it often is muddy.
Directions: Meet at the Greenway parking lot off of Bennington Street near the bridge over the Roanoke River; the entrance to the parking area is between the bridge and Brownlee Avenue. Note that Thirteenth Street SE changes names to Bennington Street at the bridge over the Roanoke River. After the group has gathered, we will caravan or walk the short distance to the STP, so please arrive minutes early.

JANUARY 2026 A QUICK LOOK AHEAD

- 01** **New Year's Day Bird Count.** Everyone is encouraged to start the New Year off right and GO BIRDING!

- 10** **Catawba Greenway and Whispering Pines – Saturday 9:00am Leaders: Kirk Gardner (828-216-9170) and Kent Davis (540-353-6388).**

- 14** **Second Wednesday at Greenfield - 9:00am Leader: Dave Frye (248-459-6783).**

- 31** **Pond Hopping in Botetourt County - Saturday 9:00am Leaders: Alyce and Tim Quinn (540-537-1831).**

November Highlights

Meeting Notes Monday, November 10

Secretary **Karen Frye** noted there were 61 members and guests in attendance. A motion was made by **Will Biddle** and seconded by **Sid Barritt** to accept the proposed slate of officers and directors for 2026. The membership approved the following with a show of hands.

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



▲ The calendar photographers in attendance were recognized for their photo contributions. They are (L to R) **Kent Davis, Roger Medina** (2026 RVBC Calendar cover), **Bob Crawford, Mary Lou Barritt, and Glenn Stafford**.

▲► Calendar sale event at the Brambleton Center Craft Fair. (L to R) **Nancy Stafford, Mel Ramos and Glenn Stafford**.
 Not pictured: **Linda Cory**, photographer.



▼ **David Frye** introduced the guest speaker, Jason Harris, who spoke of rehabilitating his Eurasian eagle-owl, Luna, and brought Luna with him. Jason is a native Cree elder and a certified raptor rehabilitator. He shared Cree stories and facts about Luna, owls, raptors and other wildlife. This was followed by members having a chance to hold Luna and stroke her feathers. ▼ **Lilly Tennant**



Pat McMeekin



Linda Barker



Will Biddle



Dick Hendrix



November Field Trip Reports

November 8, “New Birders Saturday Stroll” Highland Park, Roanoke. Leader: Dave Frye

Three participants sighted “the usual suspects,” netting 21 species at this local spot on perhaps the most glorious fall morning that we could remember. We did note that fall migrants were in place for us (Dark-eyed Juncos, White-throated Sparrows, and Yellow Bellied Sapsuckers) indicating that the slide into winter is now officially “full on.” Some fun was had at the expense of what turned out to be a very cantankerous Carolina Wren. After a quick “pish” or two, he blasted back at us with a string of sharp chips that would not be appropriate for this writer to translate here. And then he just kept it up for at least five minutes. He stayed tucked into the bushes, but he got his point across.

November 12, Second Wednesday Midweek Walk, Botetourt Center at Greenfield. Leader: Dave Frye

A handful of attendees walked the environs surrounding Greenfield Lake and were rewarded with 32 species observed. The lake continues to change state, as the preponderance of aquatic vegetation that has dominated this summer has dissipated greatly, and the lower water level has revealed some mudflats that could make for very interesting birding this winter. The listing of birds drawn to the lake included Canada Geese, Gadwall, Mallard, Green-winged Teal, Ring-necked Duck, Hooded Merganser, Killdeer, Wilson’s Snipe, Pied-billed Grebe, Double-crested Cormorant, and Great Blue Heron. We also found six Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers and wondered if that might be a high count for our visits to this terrific spot. It’s a number to aim for next time!

Savannah Sparrows

Karen Bolton, Photographer, Catawba Sustainability Center
Catawba, Virginia

Status: Uncommon spring and fall transient and fairly rare winter resident; very rare summer resident.

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

Not all streaky brown birds are impossible to identify: Take a closer look at this one and you’ll see an understated but distinctive sparrow with a short tail, small head, and telltale yellow spot before the eye. Savannah Sparrows are one of the most numerous songbirds in North America, and while sometimes overlooked, are likely visitors across the continent. In summer, they don’t hesitate to advertise their location, belting out a loud, insect-like song from farm fields and grasslands. On both their summer and winter ranges, Savannah Sparrows live in grasslands with few trees, including meadows, pastures, grassy roadsides, sedge wetlands, and cultivated fields planted with cover crops like alfalfa. Savannah Sparrows eat nutritionally rich insects and spiders. They stalk through grassy areas or along beaches in search of beetles, grasshoppers, and other bugs, as well as spiders, millipedes, and pillbugs, snapping them up in their bill and swallowing them whole. On their winter range, Savannah Sparrows switch to a diet of mostly small seeds from grasses and forbs.

~ The Cornell Lab



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 December 8, club meeting (club members sharing night!). Calendars will also be available on December 6, at the Salem Farmers' Market from 9am to 2pm. Lastly, on December 13, from 11am to 3pm, calendars can be bought during our convenient parking lot drive-thru option at our usual meeting place, Roanoke Council of Garden Clubs facility, 3640 Colonial Avenue, Roanoke.
2. **Online** at <http://roanokevalleybirdclub.com/> and click on "Buy a Calendar" link.



2026 Cover photo Eastern Screech Owl

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 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

Happy Holidays

www.roanokevalleybirdclub.com

RVBC NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER 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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