

Roanoke Valley Bird Club

Celebrating

69 Years of Birding

1957-2026

“LEAVE ONLY FOOTPRINTS”



Next Meeting:
February 9, 7:00 pm
Roanoke Council of
Garden Clubs facility

www.roanokevalleybirdclub.com

RVBC NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY 2026



PHOTOGRAPHER
KENT DAVIS

DREW'S BIRD OF THE MONTH SONG SPARROW *Melospiza melodia*

A rich, russet-and-gray bird with bold streaks down its white chest, the Song Sparrow is one of the most familiar North American sparrows. Don't let the bewildering variety of regional differences this bird shows across North America deter you: it's one of the first species you should suspect if you see a streaky sparrow in an open, shrubby, or wet area. If it perches on a low shrub, leans back, and sings a stuttering, clattering song, so much the better.

(More on page 3.)

~The Cornell Lab



WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

Stacey Danstrom

Lisa Daugherty

Sherry Fuller

Carrinelle Humm

Billy Joe Riggins

Tim & Mitzi Steele

Next meeting:

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 9

7:00 PM

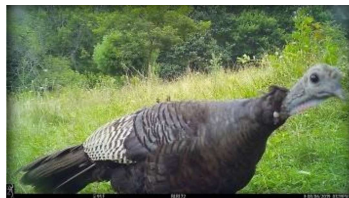
Roanoke Council of Garden Clubs
3640 Colonial Avenue, Roanoke, VA 24018

Featured program:

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



Ranger Tom Davis has utilized camera traps (trail cameras) on the Blue Ridge Parkway for over 15 years in order to monitor and assess the distribution of wildlife along this 469-mile scenic road. Tom also maintains two long-term black bear monitoring stations as part of an on-going effort to evaluate black bear and wildlife behavior, and use of natural and artificial water sources along the Blue Ridge Parkway, America's most visited park with over 16 million recreationists annually. His program will highlight some of the wildlife including numerous species of hawks, owls and passerines "caught" on the Blue Ridge Parkway's camera traps.



Camera Trapped: Barred Owls, Wild Turkey, Great Blue Heron

Working as a biologist on the Blue Ridge Parkway for over 30 years; Ranger Davis assists with inventorying and monitoring wildlife populations, oversees the Park's Bear Management Program, and serves as the Program Manager for the Park's agricultural lands program. He is also actively involved in several wetland restoration projects on the Parkway. Tom has a bachelor's degree from Shepherd University and a master's degree from Virginia Tech in urban and regional planning with a concentration in environmental planning and policy. He is an avid birder and photographer.

Reminder:

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

CONTACT US!



ROANOKE VALLEY BIRD CLUB

P.O. Box 20405
ROANOKE, VIRGINIA 24018
NONPROFIT 501(C)(3)

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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. Since the newsletter is in pdf, links are not active and should be copy/paste into your browser. **Photography is provided by membership with member 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
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540.314.6069

While flying back from Denver earlier this month, I had time to reflect on the conversation I had with life-member **Eunice Hudgins** about life lists. She has accomplished 1,584 species, and we talked about how she and **John** approached an upcoming trip to somewhere they had never been. Eunice studied all the birds in the area and the habitat in which they normally occur. She mentioned how much easier it is today with eBird as she could only rely on the information found in bird guides. The chief aim was to record every bird they could find and with that would come the lifers. It made me think, what do birders use as their criteria today?

Birding is so diverse as far as how you approach your record-keeping and what is important to you. The actual task of birding is the same world over. We all know that. The question is where to put your emphasis. Do you want to see all the birds in your locality, say, Roanoke City or County? Do you want to cover the local counties? I know there are some who have birded in every county in Virginia. Are you interested in seeing the unusual birds that come through the area, obviously off course during their migration? Are you only interested in adding to your life list? Or do you just enjoy getting outdoors in the fresh air and watching our little buddies in their native habitat going about daily life? This is why birding has attracted more than 47 million people as it relieves stress, gets you outside moving in the fresh air, and you can approach it anyway you want!

Eunice says "Hi" to all her friends in the Bird Club. Miss you all! Happy New Year from Colorado Springs!



Song Sparrow Photographers

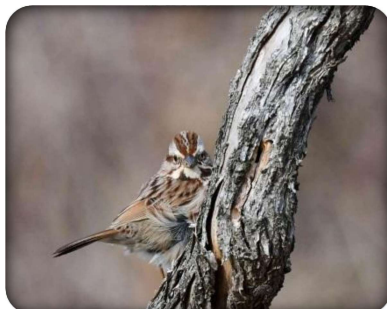
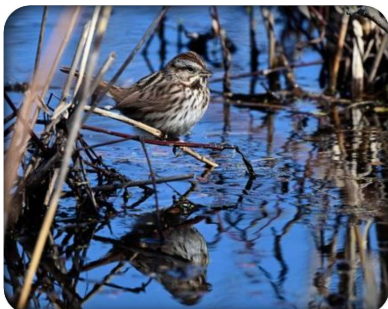


▼ Ed Kyle



▲ Mary Lou Barritt ▲

▼ Barbara Kyle



DREW'S BIRD OF THE MONTH SONG SPARROW

Melospiza melodia

Status: Common permanent resident"
~Barry Kinzie's *Birds and Birding of the Roanoke Valley*



Ed Kyle, Photographer

Song Sparrows are medium-sized and fairly bulky sparrows. For a sparrow, the bill is short and stout and the head fairly rounded. The tail is long and rounded, and the wings are broad. They are streaky and brown with thick streaks on a white chest and flanks. On a closer look, the head is an attractive mix of warm red-brown and slaty gray, though these shades, as well as the amount of streaking, vary extensively across North America.

Scientists recognize 24 subspecies of Song Sparrows and have described some 52 forms: they are one of the most regionally variable birds in North America. In general, coastal and northern birds are darker and streakier, with southern and desert birds wearing paler plumages.

Song Sparrows flit through dense, low vegetation or low branches, occasionally moving onto open ground after food. Flights are short and fluttering, with a characteristic downward pumping of the tail. Male Song Sparrows sing from exposed perches such as small trees.

Look for Song Sparrows in nearly any open habitat, including marsh edges, overgrown fields, backyards, desert washes, and forest edges. Song Sparrows commonly visit bird feeders and build nests in residential areas.

Song Sparrows eat many insects and other invertebrates in the summer, as well as seeds and fruits all year round. Prey include weevils, leaf beetles, ground beetles, caterpillars, dragonflies, grasshoppers, midges, crane flies, spiders, snails, and earthworms. Plant foods include buckwheat, ragweed, clover, sunflower, wheat, rice, blackberries, blueberries, strawberries, raspberries, mulberries, and wild cherries. Food types vary greatly depending on what's common across the Song Sparrow's extensive range.

~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.*

FEBRUARY 2026

- 6-8 **Virginia Society of Ornithology Weekend Trip to Outer Banks, NC.** To participate you must be a VSO Member. Information is available on their website www.virginiabirds.org
- 9 **Membership Meeting, Monday 7:00pm** Roanoke Council of Garden Clubs, 3640 Colonial Avenue, Roanoke, VA 24018. (See page 2.) Program: **Camera Trapping the Blue Ridge Parkway: Adventures with Bears and Birds**, Presented by **Ranger Tom Davis**.
- 11 **Second Wednesday Bird Walk at Greenfield - Botetourt Center at Greenfield, 9:00am, Leader: Dave 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. It will be mostly flat walking for about 1 mile each way. Bring your spotting scope if you have one. **Directions:** Take Exit 150B on 1-81 and follow signs to Route 220N. Go about 4 miles and turn left at the entrance to the International Parkway and the Greenfield Education and Training Center, across from the entrance to Ashley Plantation. Park in the second lot on right.
- 14 **RVBC Annual Raptor Count, Saturday (inclement weather date Sunday, February 15). Tim Quinn, Coordinator (540) 537-1831.**
Choose an area within 100 miles of Woodpecker Ridge, drive or hike around to count all raptors observed, and earn points for each. The tally sheet is on page 7. Please see details listed below.
- 21 **Bird Walk at Walrond Park, Saturday 9:00am. Leader: David Frye (248-459-6783)** We will walk the perimeter of Walrond Park looking for winter resident birds. Walrond Park has a wooded area and a pond at the south end of the park that can have some surprises for birders. **Directions:** The park is southeast of and very near the junction of I-81 and Plantation Road in Hollins. From Plantation Road, turn onto south-bound Walrond Drive (just east of the Country Inn and Suites) and continue into the park. The car park is near the center of the grounds.
- 28 **Pond Hopping in Botetourt County, Saturday 9:00am, Leaders: Alyce and Tim Quinn (540-537-1831).** Join Alyce and Tim at Greenfield Lake to begin this multi-destination trip. We will spend the morning visiting local ponds in search of wintering waterfowl and other avian life. Bring your scope if you have one. If we have iffy weather or road conditions we may cancel, so call if you have any doubts. **Directions:** Take Exit 150B on I-81 and follow signs to Route 220N. Go about 4 miles and turn 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.

MARCH 2026 A QUICK LOOK AHEAD

- 7 **Evergreen Burial Park Bird Walk. Leader: David Frye (248-459-6783)**
- 11 **Second Wednesday Walk at Greenfield, 9:00am. Leader: David Frye (248-459-6783)**
- 14 **Roanoke Greenway Riverside Drive, Saturday 9:00am. Leader: David Frye (248-459-6783)**
- 21 **Woodcock Walk at Bent Mountain Center, Saturday 6:00pm. Leader: Robin Austin (540-676-0951)**
- 29 **Roanoke Sewage Treatment Plant, Sunday 9:00am. Leader: Kent Davis (540-355-6388)**



Red-breasted Nuthatch, Ed Kyle, Photographer



ANNUAL RAPTOR COUNT

Tim Quinn, Coordinator



Hey everybody, it's time to get outside and look for raptors! Make a team, remember your binoculars, and choose an area within 100 miles of Woodpecker Ridge. Drive or hike around on Saturday, February 14 (inclement weather date Sunday, February 15), and count all the raptors you can find. You earn points for every raptor you see. The tally sheet (page 7) lists the points awarded for the various hawks.

Contact: **Tim Quinn (540) 537-1831** if you have any questions. The completed tally sheet can be texted to **Tim**, emailed to roanokerq@gmail.com, or mailed to 681 Edgewood Farm Lane, Wirtz, VA 24184.

Oh yeah, and many thanks to **Anne Tucker** for coordinating this annual count for a LONG time!

January Highlights

January Meeting Notes

Monday, January 12, 2026

Secretary Karen Frye noted there were 64 members/guests in attendance. David Frye introduced the guest speaker, William Young, who provided (by Zoom) "Birds of the World." William spoke about his birding travels from Antarctica to the Andes to his backyard, and all seven continents. He showed photos of birds with amazing feathers, colors, and appearances. He has a YouTube channel, @williamyoung42. William recommended Monticello Park in Alexandria in late April to mid May for a lot of bird views in a relatively small park.

January Field Trip Reports

(Photos may not have been taken at field trip locations.)

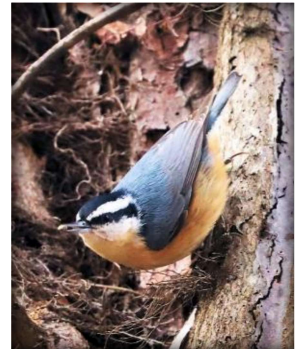
December 28 Field Trip to Roanoke Sewage Treatment Plant – Leader: Kent Davis

Seven participants joined Kent Davis as he escorted everyone through the beautiful settling ponds in Southeast Roanoke's water treatment facility. The group observed 29 species with the highlights being a group of seven **Kildeer (Barbara Kyle, Photographer ►)**, a Wilson's Snipe, and a group of 16 Ring-billed Gulls. Our club visits this invitational birding hot spot regularly with plans to revisit in early spring, March 29.



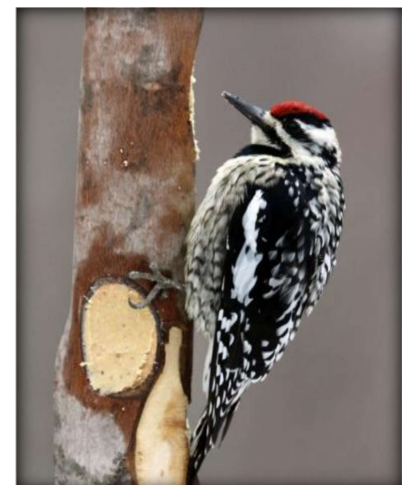
January 11 Field Trip to Catawba Greenway and Whispering Pines – Leader: Kirk Gardner

After having rescheduled this trip to Sunday, due to the rains of the previous day, nine participants dealt with 35 degree temperatures and 35mph winds (a cruel trade-off!). At the Catawba Sustainability Center the group saw 18 species with glimpses of a red-shouldered hawk hunting over the fields there. At Whispering Pines Park the group was keen to see if perhaps all three nuthatches might be observed. Upon stepping out of the cars, Kirk Gardner immediately pointed above his head to one of two Brown-headed Nuthatches that had flown over to check us out. We also observed a White-breasted Nuthatch, but the **Red-breasted Nuthatch eluded us this day (Dick Grubb, Photographer ►)**. The group observed 19 species in the park and identified a total of 29 species overall.



January 14 Field Trip to Garst Mill Park – Leader: David Frye

A group of 13 walked the pathway alongside Mud Lick Creek at Garst Mill Park looking for a peaceful stroll on a Wednesday morning. A mostly sunny winter day provided to be just that for everyone. A fairly modest list of 22 species was observed. Leader, Dave Frye, pointed out the opportunity to encounter an Eastern Screech Owl that had been heard on our club's last two trips to the park, but after several tries at playing recordings of the whinnying calls, the group had to assume that if there was an owl, it was unimpressed. At the end of the walk, the group's patience was rewarded with a very nice 10-minute viewing session with a smart looking **male Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (Mary Lou Barritt, Photographer ►)**. He'd flown to a tree trunk about 25 feet from the group. Sometimes these sapsuckers can look a bit "sooty," but this guy was looking fine!



Red-breasted Nuthatch **Mary Lou Barritt, Photographer ▲**

Female Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, **Joanie/Ed Kinser, Photographer ▲**

Save-the-Date

55TH BIG SPRING DAY - MAY 9, 2026

Toni Pepin, Roanoke Coordinator and Donna Mateski de Sanchez, Big Spring Day Compiler



The center point of our count circle

A favorite local birding tradition for 54 years, Big Spring Day returns on Saturday, May 9, 2026. In keeping with the standard of an early May date for this count, it also does not conflict with the Virginia Society of Ornithology New River Valley field trip for the weekend of May 1-3. This citizen science custom is conducted jointly by the Roanoke Valley Bird Club and the Lynchburg Bird Club. Sixteen groups of birders will cover designated areas within 7.5 miles of the Big Spring in the Peaks of Otter Picnic Area.

A very hearty thanks goes to **Barry Kinzie** who stepped back in to coordinate last year's successful count! Barry has participated in 50+ prior counts, including serving as coordinator for many, many years. He has been vital in keeping this project thriving.

For 2026, **Toni Pepin** has graciously agreed to be the new coordinator for the Roanoke teams. Big Spring Day group leaders, please confirm to Toni whether you will be covering the same route again. Past Big Spring Day participants, please reach out to your group leader to confirm whether or not you are able to participate this year.

More planning details for 2026 will follow in the March and April newsletters; in the meanwhile, feel free to email Toni at alfree46@yahoo.com if you are interested in joining this fun count. She can match you with an existing team looking for additional bird lovers.

Donna Mateski de Sanchez, Photographer



WINTER RAPTOR COUNT

February 14, 2026

Participants _____

Time Started _____ Time Completed _____

Location _____

<u>SPECIES</u>	<u>POINTS</u>	<u>QUANTITY</u>	<u>NOTES</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
Turkey Vulture	*1			
Black Vulture	*2			
Red-tailed Hawk	5			
American Kestrel	10			
Common Raven	10			
Eastern Screech Owl	**10			
Cooper's Hawk	20			
Sharp-shinned Hawk	20			
Great Horned Owl	30			
Red-shouldered Hawk	30			
Barred Owl	35			
Northern Harrier	40			
Bald Eagle	50			
Barn Owl	50			
Loggerhead Shrike	50			
Merlin	75			
Peregrine Falcon	75			
Rough-legged Hawk	75			
Short-eared Owl	75			
Golden Eagle	100			
Northern Goshawk	100			
Long-eared Owl	125			
Northern Saw-whet Owl	125			
Northern Shrike	150			
Unidentified Raptor	5			

POINT TOTAL _____

* Maximum of 50 Points

** Maximum of 100 Points

Be sure to keep your totals! There is a 10-point bonus for peak counts of these three species.

RULES: Teams must be at least 2 people. Teams may bird any area within a 100-mile radius of Woodpecker Ridge Nature Center. Birds must be seen or heard by at least 2 team members. Count period cannot exceed a total of 12 hours.

Completed forms can be emailed to roanokerq@gmail.com or mailed to Tim Quinn

681 Edgewood Farm Lane, Wirtz VA 24184. Call or text Tim at 540-537-1831 with any questions.



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

Happy Valentine's Day

www.roanokevalleybirdclub.com

RVBC NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY 2026



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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