

Roanoke Valley Bird Club

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

Celebrating
69 Years of Birding

1957-2026

“LEAVE ONLY FOOTPRINTS”



www.roanokevalleybirdclub.com

RVBC NEWSLETTER

MARCH 2026



PHOTOGRAPHER
MARY LOU BARRITT

DREW'S BIRD OF THE MONTH SPOTTED SANDPIPER *Actitis macularius*

The dapper Spotted Sandpiper makes a great ambassador for the notoriously difficult-to-identify shorebirds. They occur all across North America, they are distinctive in both looks and actions, and they're handsome. They also have intriguing social lives in which females take the lead and males raise the young. With their richly spotted breeding plumage, teetering gait, stuttering wingbeats, and showy courtship dances, this bird is among the most notable and memorable shorebirds in North America. Though you may think of the beach as the best place to see a sandpiper, look for Spotted Sandpipers alone or in pairs along the shores of lakes, rivers, and streams. Once in flight, watch for their stuttering wingbeats, or look for them teetering along rocky banks or logs. (More on page 3.)

~The Cornell Lab



WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

Rhonda Swanson Diane Holsinger
Lacy Cloud & family Jessica Miller
Katlyn Holley & Riley Houston

Next meeting:

MONDAY, MARCH 9
7:00 PM

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

Featured program:

CONSERVING BIRDS AND THEIR HABITAT IN VIRGINIA AND BEYOND

Presented by:

DAN LEBBIN, PH.D.

Dr. Dan Lebbin will talk about bird conservation and some of American Bird Conservancy's efforts to conserve birds and their habitats for birds in Virginia and Latin America. Work in Virginia includes advocacy for terns, forest management in the Appalachians, and land conservation in Guatemala for wintering migratory birds. Work in Latin America focuses on reserve creation and management, reforestation of degraded areas and implementing conservation practices on farms to enhance habitat for migratory birds. He will end with a few suggestions we can all do to contribute to bird conservation in our own homes and communities.



Dan Lebbin is American Bird Conservancy's Vice President of Threatened Species. In this role, Dan works with ABC's programs and partners to conserve migratory birds and globally threatened bird species and their habitats in Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as our programs for marine birds and Hawaii. These programs act to create, expand, and manage nature reserves for birds; restore habitat for birds by implementing best management practices on working farms and ranches; reducing threats to endangered species such as seabird bycatch in fisheries, controlling introduced predators and diseases for birds on islands. Dan co-authored The American Bird Conservancy Guide to Bird Conservation.

Prior to ABC, Dan received a BA in Biology and Environmental Science and Policy from Duke University and a PhD in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology from Cornell University. Dan has worked for World Wildlife Fund and the National Zoo, and participated in field research projects in Peru, Jamaica, Costa Rica, and Venezuela. A lifelong birder, Dan enjoys bird illustration and photography.

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)

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

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David Frye

Vice President, memberships

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Karen Frye

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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**

Web Manager: **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. 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
ddaniels2627@cox.net
540.314.6069

I was recently scrolling through the internet and ran across this PBS story about a Merganser in Berlin, Germany. It seems this Merganser, who was a regular at the pond in the Hospital Park, was in distress and went seeking help. He paddled up to the Emergency Room door and pecked on it to get someone's attention. The ER workers called the Fire Company for assistance. The firemen caught the Merganser, and the ER nurses and doctors got to work on him. The Merganser had a treble hook (a three barbed hook) caught in his bill and was unable to catch any fish, much less eat them. The ER team took little time to extract the hook and treat the Merganser. He was later released back to the pond in the Hospital Park and is recuperating nicely.

I find it quite amazing how animals such as birds have an innate ability to know when they are injured and that humans will help. I read through several scientific papers about reactions between humans and birds. Many bird species have remarkable cognitive abilities allowing them to form relationships with humans such as backyard birds eating out of people's hands. They realize that humans feed them and provide water, and these acts of kindness are rewarded with a sort of friendship. The article also stated that instances of birds seeking help indicate a level of awareness regarding human intervention, suggesting they may appreciate assistance.

Please don't confuse this with Northern Cardinals and Eastern Bluebirds pecking at your windows thinking they need help. Being quite territorial, these two species see their reflections in your windows thinking there is an intruder in their territory and attack your window!

One of the scientist's key takeaways was understanding how birds respond to human kindness, that can improve wildlife conservation efforts and promote ethical considerations when helping injured or orphaned animals. While it is imperative that humans honor the ethical treatment of birds, and all wildlife for that matter; we must realize that disrupting a bird's normal activities is unethical. It also begs the question of whether the bird has a chance of survival if we don't step in.

Your role in aiding birds can significantly impact their survival, highlighting the importance of responsible intervention.



Who Gives the Hoot!

Eastern Bluebirds are now actively choosing their nesting location in the Roanoke Valley. Late February is the time to make sure the boxes are cleaned out from winter roosting as evidenced by poop. Nest building may take 3-4 days, but can take 2 weeks or longer. Earliest eggs have been historically recorded regularly in mid-to-late March, but typically in April and May.

Bluebird boxes and set-ups are in stock for purchase. Box, pole, and predator guard set-up is \$87 for RVBC members, and the box alone is \$25 each. To make purchase arrangements, please contact Carol Whiteside: whitesidemules@yahoo.com or call 540.774.2143.

Ruby-throated Hummingbirds' arrival has been historically documented in mid-to-late April in the Roanoke Valley. To follow their sightings and migration map, check out www.hummingbirdcentral.com. They currently are reported throughout Florida and the southern shores of the Gulf of America.

40 lbs. Black Oil Sunflower Seed: Tractor Supply \$24.69, Lowes \$29.98, NW Ace Hardware \$34.99 (+tax). Always check these sites for frequent sales.

DREW'S BIRD OF THE MONTH SPOTTED SANDPIPER

Actitis macularius

Status: Fairly common spring and fall transient; very rare summer resident."

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



Kent Davis, Photographer

Spotted Sandpipers are the most widespread sandpiper in North America, and they are common near most kinds of freshwater, including rivers and streams, as well as near the sea coast. Their range includes water bodies in otherwise arid parts of the continent, and it extends into the mountains, where they may occur upwards of 14,000 feet above sea level. Breeding territories generally need to have a shoreline, a semi open area where the nest will be, and patches of dense vegetation for sheltering the chicks. Spotted Sandpipers spend the winter along the coasts of North America or on beaches, mangroves, rainforest, and cloud forest up to 6,000 feet elevation in Central and South America.

Nest building is an important part of courtship. A pair may begin several nests during the process, but those are rarely finished. The actual nest, built after the pair has formed and courtship is over, is a 2-3 inch depression scraped out in the soil and lined with dead grass and woody material. Often it is begun by the female and finished by the male.

Spotted Sandpipers are active foragers along stream-banks and lake edges, walking in meandering paths and suddenly darting at prey—almost constantly bobbing their tail end in a smooth motion. Their flight style is equally distinctive: low over the water with stuttering bursts of fast wingbeats interspersed with very brief glides. Spotted Sandpipers were one of the first bird species described in which the roles of the males and females are reversed. Males are usually smaller, less aggressive and tend the nest and young. Meanwhile, the larger females fight for territories and may be polyandrous, meaning they mate with more than one male.

~The Cornell Lab



Kirk Gardner



Mary Lou Barritt

Photographers:



Calendar of Events



Roanoke Valley Bird Club
Dave Frye, Vice President Programs, Field Trip Chairman, 248-459-6783
American kestrel, Photographer **Garland Kitts**

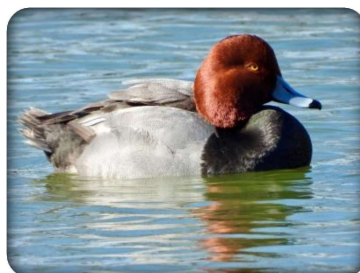
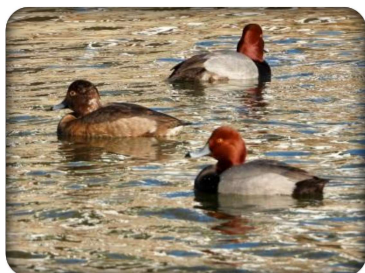
*Note: if inclement weather necessitates a cancellation, an e-mail notification will be sent out. You may also call or text the leader. Please do not call any of the trip leaders after 8 pm the night before the field trip, in consideration of having to get up early the next day to lead the field trip. 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.*

MARCH 2026

- 7 Evergreen Burial Park in Wasena Bird Walk, Saturday 9:00am. Leaders: David Frye (248-459-6783), Kent Davis, Linda Cory, and Drew Daniels** Pre-registration is required through their website: evergreenmemorialtrust.com or call 540-342-2593. This is a community outreach bird walk, co-sponsored by Evergreen Burial Park. We will be walking the perimeter of the cemetery looking for winter resident birds. Wear sturdy weatherproof shoes and be prepared for uneven surface walking. **Directions:** 1307 Summit Avenue SW, Roanoke 24015. Summit Avenue is off of Main Street in Roanoke. Park along the road in front of the main office.
- 9 Membership Meeting, Monday 7:00pm** Roanoke Council of Garden Clubs, 3640 Colonial Avenue, Roanoke, VA 24018. (See page 2.) Program: “**Conserving Birds and Their Habitat in Virginia and Beyond,**” Presented by **Dan Lebbin.**
- 11 Second Wednesday Bird Walk at Botetourt Center at Greenfield, 9:00 am, 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 I-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 Roanoke Greenway Riverside Drive, Salem, Saturday 9:00 am. Leader: David Frye (248-459-6783)** We'll walk the Roanoke Greenway from the Colorado Street bridge along the shores of the Roanoke River. The greenway here is level and paved. It can feature numerous water birds and an occasional raptor making the scene. This is “shoulder season,” so dress for the weather. **Directions:** At the western end of Apperson Drive in Salem, the road turns northward and changes to Colorado Street. Heading north and just before crossing the Roanoke River, turn right onto eastbound Riverside Drive. There is a small parking area immediately on your left along the southern shoreline of the river.
- 21 Woodcock Walk, Bent Mountain Center, Saturday 6:00pm. Leader: Robin Austin (540-676-0951)** Meet Robin at the Bent Mountain Center for an evening walk of birding and Woodcock watching. We will visit the boardwalk at the Bent Mountain Center (formerly Bent Mountain Elementary school), and then walk the surrounding area. The group will then carpool to a nearby area to observe the Woodcocks that begin their courtship flight at sunset. Walking is level, and waterproof shoes are recommended. **Directions:** Bent Mountain Center, 10148 Tinsley Lane, Bent Mountain VA 24059
- 29 Roanoke Sewage Treatment Plant, Sunday 9:00am. Leader: Kent Davis (540-355-6388)** Join us for a walk around the Sewage Treatment Plant. Entrance to the STP is by special permit and 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 is often 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.

APRIL 2026 A QUICK LOOK AHEAD

- 8 Oak Grove Park Bird Walk, Wednesday, 8:00 am. Leader: David Frye (248-459-6783)**
- 11 ECO Fest at Explore Park Bird Walk, Saturday, approximately 11:00 am. Leaders: David Frye (248-459-6783), Linda Cory, Mary Lou Barritt**
- 18 Hinchee Trail Bird Walk, Saturday, 8:00 am. Leader: Kathy Clemo (540-314-7049)**
- 25 Warbler Road and Arcadia Birding Trip, Saturday, 8:00 am. Leaders: Alyce and Tim Quinn (540-537-1831)**
- 29 Starkey Wetlands Bird Walk, Wednesday, 8:00am Leader: David Frye (248-459-6783)**



“These pretty Redheads were hanging out on the duck pond in Salem! There were 4 males and 1 female,” reports migration observer and photographer **Karen Bolton.**



February Highlights

February Meeting Notes

Monday, February 9, 2026

Secretary Karen Frye reported there were 61 members including two guests in attendance. Vice President-Programs David Frye introduced the night's guest speaker, National Park Service Ranger Tom Davis, on the topic *Camera Trapping the Blue Ridge Parkway: Adventures with Bears and Birds*. 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. His program highlighted some of the wildlife including numerous species of hawks, owls and passerines "caught" on the Blue Ridge Parkway's camera traps. It also included numerous other wildlife, including bears, deer, raccoon, and coyote. He showed photos and videos with data relating to the species present. He also answered questions for attendees.



Blue Ridge Parkway, Wildlife Camera Bird List
*63 Species

Wood duck	Blue jay	Eastern towhee
Ruffed grouse	American crow	Brown-headed cowbird
Wild turkey	Common raven	Common grackle
Great blue heron	Carolina chickadee	Ovenbird
Mourning dove	Tufted titmouse	Louisiana waterthrush
Turkey vulture	White-breasted nuthatch	Black-and-white warbler
Red-shouldered hawk	Carolina wren	Swinson's warbler
Red-tailed hawk	Winter wren	Common yellowthroat
Eastern screech owl	Gray catbird	Hooded warbler
Great-horned owl	Brown thrasher	American redstart
Barred owl	American robin	Yellow-rumped (magnolia) warbler
American kestrel	Eastern bluebird	Cerulean warbler
Yellow-bellied sapsucker	Veery	Scarlet tanager
Red-bellied woodpecker	Wood thrush	Northern cardinal
Downy woodpecker	Hermit thrush	Winter wren
Hairy woodpecker	Cedar waxwing	Swamp sparrow
Pileated woodpecker	House finch	
Northern flicker	Purple finch	
Eastern wood pewee	American goldfinch	
Acadian flycatcher	Pine siskin	
Eastern phoebe	Dark-eyed junco	
Blue-headed vireo	White-throated sparrow	
Red-eyed vireo	Song sparrow	

Detection Rates by Species

Species	# Sites*	Detection Rate
White-tailed deer	141	.98
Black bear	97	.68
Coyote	91	.64
Raccoon	84	.59
Gray squirrel	73	.51
Opossum	62	.43
Bobcat	35	.24
Red fox	10	.07
Gray fox	4	.03
Elk	4	.03
Wild hog	2	.01

*n=143 camera trap sites
Detection rate = # sites occupied/total camera trap sites

February Field Trip Reports

Most field trips were rescheduled due to February's inclement weather events.

Detection Rates Birds

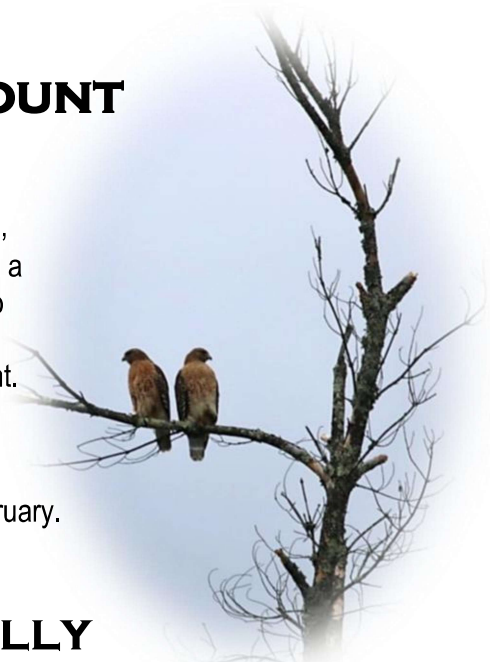
Species	# Sites	Detection Rate
Wild turkey	127	.89
American crow	19	.13
Turkey vulture	5	.03
Pileated woodpecker	5	.03
Northern flicker	3	.03
Brown thrasher	2	.02
Barred owl	2	.01
Ovenbird	2	.01
Great blue heron	1	.01
Wood duck	1	
Ruffed grouse	1	
Eastern screech owl	1	
Hairy woodpecker	1	
Gray catbird	1	
Northern cardinal	1	
Owl sp.	2	
Hawk/raptor sp.	7	
Passerine sp.	10	

2026 ANNUAL RAPTOR COUNT

Tim Quinn, Coordinator

The Annual Raptor Count of 2026 was held Saturday, February 14. We had five teams, with 14 birders participating on a fine Valentine's Day. The winner for the SIXTH year in a row is the team of Charlie Kahle, Rodney Davis and Brian Hirt. This year they were also joined by Lynn Joyce, Amy Nelson and Randall Yoder. They saw an incredible 35 Bald Eagles, and the full count total of 42 Bald Eagles was a new record for the Raptor Count. Alyce and I received some inside info from Clyde Kessler about Dublin, Virginia, and managed to find three Loggerhead Shrikes; so that was a very nice consolation prize.

Remember for next year - this count is traditionally held on the second Saturday in February. Come out and count raptors!



2026 RAPTOR COUNT TALLY

SPECIES	TEAM A	TEAM B	TEAM C	TEAM D	TEAM E	TOTAL SPECIES
TURKEY VULTURE (***)	36	50	39	38	42	205
BLACK VULTURE (***)	7	11	33	7	11	69
RED-TAILED HAWK	7	28	8	3	11	57
AMERICAN KESTREL	9	6	3	2	6	26
COMMON RAVEN	13	19	1	3	4	40
EASTERN SCREECH-OWL (***)						
GREAT HORNED OWL						
COOPER'S HAWK						
SHARP-SHINNED HAWK						
RED-SHOULDERED HAWK	6	3	2		2	13
BARRED OWL						
NORTHERN HARRIER		1	1			2
LOGGERHEAD SHRIKE					3	3
MERLIN					1	1
BALD EAGLE	2	35	3	2		42
GOLDEN EAGLE						
UNIDENTIFIED RAPTOR			1		1	2
TOTAL BIRDS	80	153	91	55	81	460
TOTAL POINTS	585	2352	260	217	509	3923
		***	***			

*** RECEIVED 10 BONUS POINTS FOR PEAK COUNTS

TEAM A – Jim and Judy Phillips – Summers, Mercer, Monroe Counties, WV, and Giles, Craig Counties, VA

TEAM B – Charlie Kahle, Rodney Davis, Brian Hirt, Lynn Joyce, Amy Nelson, Randall Yoder - Summers, Monroe, Greenbrier Counties, WV, and Alleghany, Craig Counties, VA

TEAM C – Laurie and Scott Spangler – Bedford and Botetourt Counties, VA

TEAM D – Donna Mateski de Sanchez and Guillermo Sanchez – Amherst County, VA

TEAM E – Tim and Alyce Quinn – Burnt Chimney to Dublin, VA and route between



BIG SPRING DAY – THEN AND NOW

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

Big Spring Day is a cooperative citizen science event of the Roanoke Valley Bird Club and the Lynchburg Bird Clubs. It is usually held the first Saturday in May, though occasional conflicts with statewide birding events (such as this year) have resulted in the count taking place anytime between late April and mid-May. It is always held on the scheduled date, regardless of weather, which can be highly variable in early spring in the mountains.

Dennis L. Carter of the National Park Service organized the first Big Spring Day on May 1, 1971. Dennis was transferred shortly thereafter, but **Bill Opengari**, stepped in and organized, compiled, and published the event and its results from 1972 until 1995. In 1995, **John Dalmas** took over the job of compiler, working in this role until 2011. In 2012, **Jim Elder** succeeded him and served as compiler through 2021. **Barry Kinzie** coordinated the Roanoke Valley Bird Club field teams for many of the early years, and also made a gracious one-year return in 2025. **Eunice Hudgins** served as the Roanoke field team coordinator from 2000 through 2016, and was succeeded by **Barry and Carol Whitt** as coordinators from 2017 through 2024. We continue to applaud the dedication, hard work and magnificent loyalty of these prior volunteers.

In the prior 55 years of the count, a total of 201 species and 275,756 individual birds have been observed! This data was gathered by an average of 46 team members out in the field each Big Spring Day. The year 1980 saw peak participation with 78 birders.

This year Big Spring Day will be held on **Saturday, May 9, 2026**. Each of the sixteen teams will independently choose their starting time and continue as long into the day as they desire. As per tradition, a mid-day tally will be held for those interested in sharing the day's findings and having a chance to chat with other enthusiastic birders. This year's tally will be held between 12:30 and 1:30 PM in the amphitheater behind the Peaks of Otter Visitor Center. Restrooms are available, and snacks and cold beverages will be provided.

Never birded on Big Spring Day, or haven't been able to participate in last few years? Newcomers and birders returning to the volunteer flock are always encouraged and warmly welcomed. Please reach out to **Toni** at alpfree46@yahoo.com if you are interested in joining this fun count. She can match you with an existing team looking for additional bird lovers.



Beautiful birding vista on the Goose Creek Valley route - **Katherine Clemo**, Photographer

55TH BIG SPRING DAY - MAY 9, 2026



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

Happy St. Patrick's Day

www.roanokevalleybirdclub.com

RVBC NEWSLETTER

MARCH 2026



Roanoke Valley Bird Club

Membership Application/Renewal Form

Memberships expire on August 31, each year

2026

Please print

(Current Year)

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