

# Roanoke Valley Bird Club

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

Celebrating  
69 Years of Birding

1957-2026

“LEAVE ONLY FOOTPRINTS”



[www.roanokevalleybirdclub.com](http://www.roanokevalleybirdclub.com)

RVBC NEWSLETTER

APRIL 2026



PHOTOGRAPHER  
BARBARA KYLE

## DREW'S BIRD OF THE MONTH EASTERN TOWHEE *Pipilo erythrophthalmus*

A strikingly marked, oversized sparrow of the East, feathered in bold black and warm reddish-browns – if you can get a clear look at it. Males are striking: bold sooty black above and on the breast, with warm rufous sides and white on the belly. Females have the same pattern, but are rich brown where the males are black. Towhees are a kind of large sparrow. Look for their thick, triangular, seed-cracking bill as a tip-off they're in the sparrow family. Also notice the chunky body and long, rounded tail. Eastern Towhees are birds of the undergrowth, where their rummaging makes far more noise than you would expect for their size. They spend lots of time concealed beneath thick underbrush. You may see this bird more often when it climbs into shrubs and low trees to sing. Their chewink calls let you know how common they are, but many of your sightings end up mere glimpses through tangles of little stems.. (More on page 3.)

~The Cornell Lab



## WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

Robert Love

Margaret Kirkby

Eric Boice

Jonathan Hirst

Susan Rourke

Emilie Biddle & Family

Next meeting:

**MONDAY, APRIL 13**

**7:00 PM**

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

Featured program:

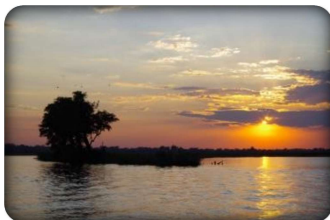
### **TOUR OF SOUTHERN AFRICA IN BIRDS AND WILDLIFE**

Presented by:

**DAVID FRYE, VICE PRESIDENT  
ROANOKE VALLEY BIRD CLUB**

Dave will lead the audience, virtually, through some of the rare moments that he and his wife, Karen, experienced during their trip to southern Africa. The trip was not simply time spent in the bush, but also included many opportunities to experience what the countries in the region are, today, as well as what their people's lives are like. The program will visit several National Parks in the southern continent, showcasing Zimbabwe, Botswana, and South Africa.

Dave is a retired mechanical engineer and purchasing manager for General Motors. The audience may wonder what his qualifications might be to address this group regarding Africa - there are two. One, he has recently **been there**, taking over 1200 photos (actually including a couple "good" ones!). And, two, he is a passionate bird and wildlife conservation-minded guy. Dave will describe experiences, people, and feelings that were impactful during this trip of a lifetime.



Reminder:

**Please consider bringing to the meeting a snack to share.**

**Thank You!**

## CONTACT US!



### **ROANOKE VALLEY BIRD CLUB**

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

Email: [rvbc2015@outlook.com](mailto:rvbc2015@outlook.com)  
[www.roanokevalleybirdclub.com](http://www.roanokevalleybirdclub.com)

#### **2026 BOARD OF DIRECTORS OFFICERS:**

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*Vice President, programs*

**David Frye**

*Vice President, memberships*

**Mary Harshfield**

*Secretary*

**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**

*Web Manager:* **Andrea Boone**

The RVBC Newsletter is published monthly **September through May** with the deadline for each issue on the **20<sup>th</sup> 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](mailto:whitesidemules@yahoo.com)



# President's Musings

President Drew Daniels  
ddaniels2627@cox.net  
540.314.6069

As I am writing this, it's the day after St. Patrick's Day and two days before spring. I gave myself the annual "anticipatory spring haircut." I didn't have much to start with, so it didn't take long to shave it all off. Now I will place the clippings in a small, covered, flat feeder for the birds to use for their nests. Nice neutral color for a discriminating female looking to revitalize her nest, and it will be soft and warm for the hatchlings!

Well, back to what I am going to talk about - spring birds. For the last three weeks I have had a pair of Eastern Towhees in my small garden area scratching every morning, and my pair of Eastern Bluebirds is building a nest in our birdhouse. The Song Sparrow and the Northern Cardinal are singing away looking for a mate. The wind is doing quite a job of emptying my bird feeders every day, but the chipmunks are there to cleanup. My mom used to scold me for having my mouth too full; she had evidently never seen a foraging chipmunk with its jowls full!

I am noticing on eBird that several of our members are seeing early warblers in the area. A Louisiana Waterthrush and an Orange-crowned Warbler have been spotted. By the time you are reading this, we should be seeing several more species of warblers in the area as April is the big month for their flights through the area. I hope you will attend the birding trip to Warbler Road on April 25. The diversity of species of warblers is quite astounding, and the mountains are alive with song! The trip is a great way to increase your warbler checklist for the year. Listen closely for the song of the Cerulean Warbler as he will be trying to locate a mate. He is a hard-to-find warbler; as well as a beautifully colored one!

Yes, spring is coming, in spite of the recent cold snaps and strong winds. We will be able to bird in lighter-weight clothing with the warm sunshine and calm winds. It's coming, I promise! It always has!



## Who Gives the Hoot!



● **Ruby-throated Hummingbirds have arrived!** Males have been seen in Salem on March 24, as reported on [www.hummingbirdcentral.com](http://www.hummingbirdcentral.com) (see their sightings and migration map). Hummers are traveling northward quickly, already in Charlottesville, Richmond, and along the East Coast. They are hungry after their long trip from Mexico and Central America; it is time to fill our feeders.

To make hummingbird nectar, mix one part white sugar with four parts water (e.g., 1/4 cup white sugar to 1 cup water), boiling it briefly to dissolve the sugar and retard spoilage. Refrigerate, and let it cool completely before filling hummingbird feeders. Never use red dye, honey, brown sugar, or artificial sweeteners as these are harmful.

● After many years of chairing the Hanging Rock Golf Club Bluebird Trail in Salem, volunteers **Judy Repass and Sissy Logan** decided it was time to pass on this position to someone new. **Karen Shelton** has graciously and enthusiastically agreed to serve as the new chairman, thank you, Karen. Judy and Sissy are looking forward to continuing as part of Karen's team. They wish to thank all of their volunteers and for Carol Whiteside's leadership; adding, "It has truly been a pleasure working with all of you who made our job easy." We truly appreciate their many years of volunteer service!

● **The Third Virginia Birding Classic 2026 of the Department Wildlife Resources (DWR)** is from April 15 to May 15. Teams of two to six birders have one fierce 24-hour window to find as many species as possible on Virginia's public lands. Use "Explore the Wild" to strategize your route and uncover prime birding hotspots across the Commonwealth. Registration is **free** and open from March 13 to May 14 (powered by eBird). Build your team, pick your day, and chase the ultimate prize—the Cardinal Cup. Think you can out-bird the competition? Register now and prove it! See more details: <https://dwr.virginia.gov/virginia-birding-classic/>

## DREW'S BIRD OF THE MONTH EASTERN TOWHEE

*Pipilo erythrophthalmus*

"Status: Common spring, summer, and fall resident; uncommon winter resident"

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



Mary Lou Barritt, Photographer (male E. Towhee)

Walk slowly along the edges of forests, thickets, and old fields. Listen carefully for the Eastern Towhee's scratchy chewink call, its bright song, or simply any rustling the bird makes in dry leaves. Then lower your eyes to ground level and scan the leaf litter, looking for a scratching towhee or the bright white corners of the bird flashing its tail at you.

Eastern Towhees are likely to visit or perhaps live in your yard if you have brushy, shrubby, or overgrown borders. If your feeders are near a vegetated edge, towhees may venture out to eat fallen seed. They eat many foods: seeds, fruits, insects, spiders, millipedes, centipedes, and snails, as well as soft leaf and flower buds in spring. Also, they eat seeds and fruits, including ragweeds, smartweeds, grasses, acorns, blackberries, blueberries, wheat, corn, and oats.

Eastern Towhees usually nest on the ground, the nest cup sunk into the fallen leaves up to the level of the rim. In some cases they build their nests in shrubs or grape, honeysuckle, or greenbrier tangles, up to about 4 feet off the ground. Seasonally, they have 1-3 broods consisting of 2-6 eggs that are creamy, grayish, pinkish, or greenish white, spotted and speckled with brown, reddish brown, purple and gray.

Towhees tend to be pretty solitary, and they use a number of threat displays to tell other towhees they're not welcome. You may see contentious males lift, spread, or droop one or both wings, fan their tails, or flick their tails to show off the white spots at the corners. Studies have shown that male towhees tend to defend territories many times larger than needed simply to provide food.

The oldest known Eastern Towhee was at least 9 years old when it was recaptured and rereleased in South Carolina. It was originally banded in the same state in 1937.

~The Cornell Lab



Mary Lou Barritt, Photographer (female E. Towhee)



# 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.*

## APRIL 2026

- 8 Second Wednesday Bird Walk, Oak Grove Park, Roanoke, 8:00 am. Leader: David Frye (248-459-6783)**  
Join us on a bird walk through a 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:** The group will gather at 8:00 am. at Oak Grove Park, southwest of Electric Rd (Route 419) off of Grandin Road Extension, behind Oak Grove Elementary School.
- 13 Membership Meeting, Monday 7:00pm** Roanoke Council of Garden Clubs, 3640 Colonial Avenue, Roanoke, VA 24018.  
Program: **“Tour of Southern Africa in Birds and Wildlife”** Presented by: **David Frye.** (Details on page 2.)
- 18 Hinchee Trail Bird Walk, Salem, 8:00 am. Leaders: Kathy Clemo (540-314-7049) and George Clemo (540-798-5370)**  
Join the Clemos on the Hinchee Trail, travelling toward Carvins Cove. The trail is two miles long but the group will turn around after walking about 1 ½ hours. The trail goes uphill and part of it is a gravel road. **Directions:** We will meet at the Hanging Rock trail head on Dutch Oven Road just north of the Orange Market at the intersection of Routes 419 and 311 in Salem.
- 25 Warbler Road, Arcadia, 7:45am. Leaders: Tim and Alyce Quinn (540-537-1831).** This is our annual trek along several roadways that attract spring migrants and more specifically warblers. Join leaders Tim and Alyce Quinn for one of our favorite trips to see warblers. The group will bird a series of forest service roads between the Blue Ridge Parkway and Arcadia in search of warblers and other Neotropical migrants. This trip usually lasts well into the afternoon, so bring drinks, snacks and a lunch. Dress in layers. There is limited space for pulling off on Warbler Road, so we'll need to carpool as much as possible. In the event of bad weather, the field trip will be held the next day, Sunday, April 26. Call Alyce (540-312-6844) or Tim (540-537-1831) if there is any doubt in the forecast. **We will meet at the Botetourt Bojangles.**
- 29 Starkey Wetlands, Cave Spring, 8:00am. Leader: David Frye (248-459-6783)** Join us for a Wednesday morning stroll on the boardwalk through the Starkey Wetlands area behind the South County Library in Cave Spring. We will walk through the wild areas, taking advantage of a couple pathways as well as the main boardwalk there. Migration will be well underway and this wetland habitat can draw in a nice variety of spring migrants. The walk will be mostly on flat well-developed paths for nearly a total 1 mile. **Directions:** Travel Route 221 (Brambleton Ave), turning onto southeast bound Merriman Road or take Route 419 (Electric Rd), turning southbound on Chaparral Drive and then onto southeast bound Merriman Road. The library is at the first turn-off from the roundabout at Meadowlark Road. We'll meet up near the outdoor patio area on the east end of the library.

## MAY 2026 A QUICK LOOK AHEAD

- 1-3 VSO Summer Field Trip, New River Valley, Blacksburg. Organizer: Meredith Bell (804) 824-4958** or visit the VSO website ([www.virginiabirds.org/vso-events/nrv-2026](http://www.virginiabirds.org/vso-events/nrv-2026))
- 9 Big Spring Day, Saturday, Coordinator: Toni Pepin (571-246-2598)**
- 11 Membership Meeting, Monday 7:00pm. Program: Club Members' Sharing Night**
- 13 Second Wednesday Bird Walk, Greenfield 8:00am. Leader: Toni Pepin (571-246-2598)**
- 16 Mill Mountain Park, Roanoke, Saturday 8:00am. Leaders: Linda Cory (540-580-5214) and Sissy Logan (540-353-4500)**
- 20 Green Hill Park, Wednesday, 7:00am. (Note: earlier start time) Leader: Kent Skaggs (308-627-5414)**
- 23 Happy Hollow Park Walk, Roanoke, Saturday 8:00am. Leader: David Frye (248-459-6783)**
- 30 Keagy Village Meadows, Roanoke, Saturday, 8:00am. Leader: Drew Daniels (540-314-6069)**

# March Highlights

## March Meeting Notes

Monday, March 9, 2026

**Secretary Karen Frye** noted there were 60 members, including four guests, in attendance. David Frye introduced the night's guest speaker, Dr. Dan Lebbin, who presented his program, *Conserving Birds and Their Habitat in Virginia and Beyond*. Dr. Lebbin talked about bird conservation and some of American Bird Conservancy's efforts to protect birds and their habitats in Virginia and Latin America. This includes minimizing invasive plants and animals, raising awareness of the harm of pesticides, and international efforts to conserve habitats. Improving and expanding birds' winter environment in Latin America contributes greatly to the success of the birds overall. They work partnerships with Non-governmental Organizations (NGO) and private groups including farmers and property owners. He ended with a few suggestions that we can all do to contribute to bird conservation in our own homes and communities, such as supporting environmental causes and growing native plants. There is further information on the American Bird Conservancy website.

## March Field Trip Reports

### February 28, Pond Hopping Field Trip, Leaders: Tim and Alyce Quinn

We had a large group of 18, including a number of people from the Rockbridge Bird Club, at the unseasonably warm Pond Hopping field trip. (**Alyce Quinn, Photographer ►**) At Greenfield we found 33 species, including Canada Goose (of course), Green-winged Teal, Ring-necked Duck, Common Merganser, Belted Kingfisher, Red-shouldered Hawk, and Yellow-Bellied Sapsucker. The surprise for the day was a **Greater White-fronted Goose (George Clemo, Photographer ►)** hanging out with the Canada Geese. A few people continued on to Murray's Pond where we only had 8 species, including Scaup sp., Canada Goose, Hairy Woodpecker, and Red-winged Blackbird. We also made a quick stop at Carvins Cove, but any waterfowl present were too far out to be identified.

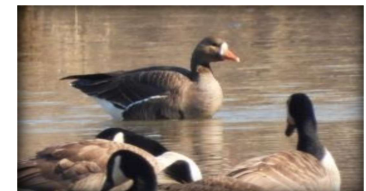


**March 7, Field Trip to Evergreen Burial Park, Leaders: David Frye, Drew Daniels, Kent Davis, and Linda Cory.** An enormous group of over eighty participants and four leaders strolled the grounds at Evergreen Burial Park on the overcast Saturday morning. The crowd was enthusiastic as it broke into manageable teams with some decent exercise, taking-in the fresh air, and learning about the birds that call the park their home. (**Drew Daniels, Photographer ►**) The highlight was a Red-tailed Hawk circling the grounds overhead, later to land on a nest of branches and twigs, very suitable for raising this summer's upcoming brood of young hawks. The groups logged approximately 25 species for the morning featuring Cooper's Hawk, Cedar Waxwing, Great Blue Heron, Brown-headed Cowbird, Yellow-rumped Warbler (Myrtle), among the many others.



### March 11, Field Trip to Greenfield, Leader: David Frye

A small group of five birders made a very good morning of it as they traipsed their way around the grounds beside and beyond the lake observing 37 species on this day. They had good looks at what would be a life bird for many birders - the **Greater White-fronted Goose. (Karen Bolton, Photographer ►)** He was still on the lake as he had been two weeks earlier, hanging out with a group of around 20 of his friends - the lake's Canada Geese.



### March 14, Field Trip to Riverside Drive on the Roanoke Greenway, Leader: David Frye

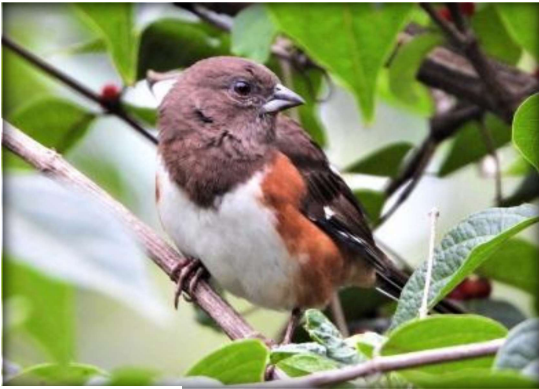
Our group numbered fourteen on a nice mostly sunny morning on the Greenway. (**Drew Daniels, Photographer ►**) A healthy total of 37 species were clocked with several highlights being beautiful Wood Duck, Hooded Merganser on the water, and Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Brown Creeper, and Golden-crowned Kinglet adorning the trees. Also entertaining was a female Eastern Bluebird that was wrangling a very chubby and tasty looking grub, it was almost as big as her head. Needless to say she was having some trouble subduing it. She finally was able to fillet it with her beak, what a yummy snack!



### March 21, Field Trip to Bent Mountain Center Woodcock Walk, Leader: Robin Austin

We had 18 people attend a perfect evening birding opportunity. (**Drew Daniels, Photographer ►**) It was great to see a lot of new faces in the group. The weather was some of the best in years for this walk; calm, clear skies, 70 degrees to start, falling to 52 degrees by the end of the walk. We had a total of 32 species. A few of the species we observed were Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Cooper's Hawk, Chipping Sparrow, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Red-winged Blackbird (33 settling to roost), Eastern Meadowlark, Tree Swallow, Great Blue Heron (flying low at dusk), Fox Sparrow, Red-shouldered Hawk (who appeared to hunting very late), and American Woodcock were heard but not seen.





Kent Davis

*Photographers,  
Thank You...*



Kirk Gardner



Kent Davis



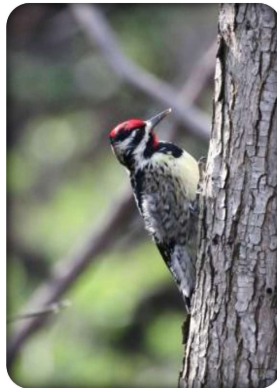
Barbara Kyle



Drew Daniels



Drew Daniels



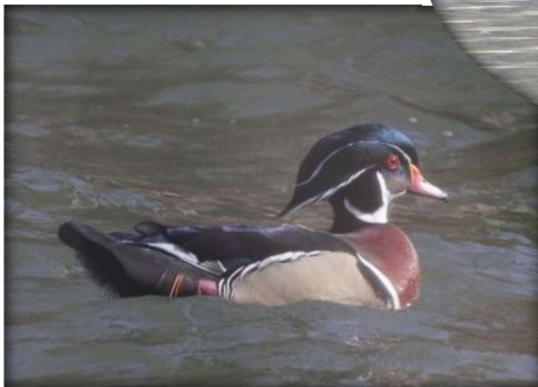
Drew Daniels



Ed Kyle

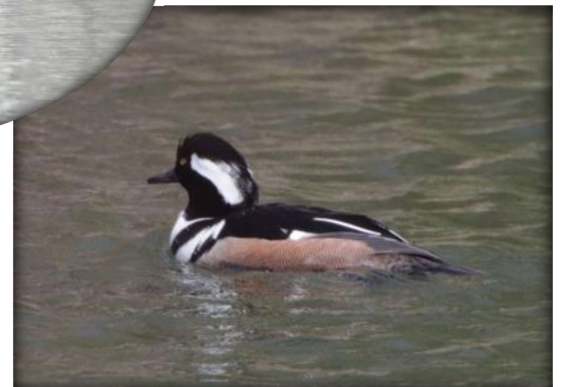


George Clemo



Drew Daniels

*for  
capturing  
birdlife moments  
and sharing them with us.*



Drew Daniels

# BIG SPRING DAY – CURVE BALL!

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

Editor's Note: This newsletter is in pdf; therefore, links are not accessible; please copy links onto another browser.

This year Big Spring Day will be held on Saturday, May 9, 2026. In its 50+ year tradition, Big Spring Day has always been a rain or shine event, but this year it turns out it will be a rain or shine or road closure event! The National Park Service has recently closed the Blue Ridge Parkway between mileposts 86 and 89 for critical road repairs. This means that the parkway will not be accessible via Route 43 from Buchanan. Unfortunately, this closure is anticipated to continue through at least Memorial Day May 25, so it is not possible to re-schedule the date and still have it be a migratory spring count.

All of the facilities at Peaks of Otter remain open, but are only accessible via Route 43 from Bedford or the Blue Ridge Parkway traveling from the North.

Additional details on this closure, **including the suggested detour**, can be accessed here:

<https://www.nps.gov/blri/learn/news/critical-road-repairs-begin-between-milepost-86-and-89-on-the-blue-ridge-parkway.htm>

What this means for this year's Big Spring Day?

- The count will still be held as planned, while acknowledging that full coverage of all the circle territory may not be possible due to the detours required and the consequent extra travel time.
- Toni will be connecting with the Roanoke group leaders whose access to their route is affected, and Donna will be doing the same for the Lynchburg groups whose routes are impacted.
- Some swapping of routes based on home locations may be an option.
- Sadly, this means a lunchtime tally-up will not be held this year due to the difficulty in reaching the visitor center, picnic area, or even Harvey's Knob for those with territories downslope.
- In lieu of the in-person tally-up, interim reports will be sent out both Saturday evening and Sunday sharing the initial results submitted.

Since the tally-up will be all digital, it will be optimal if as many groups as possible use eBird to share their list(s) with the bigspringday compiler account:

If you are using eBird mobile in the field, please also **share the list(s) with eBird user *bigspringday*** before you submit, and the list will go straight into the compiled report.

If you don't share in the field, due to an eBird quirk, you can't later share via the eBird app. Instead, you will need to share via the eBird website. Access the eBird.org website on your computer or phone. open the checklist(s), and at right of screen click on blue Checklist Tools, select Share with others in your party, then at left in white box type *bigspringday* and then click below on the green Share Checklist button. You should get a message "Yay! This checklist has been shared."

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 welcomed. Please reach out to Toni at [alpfree46@yahoo.com](mailto:alpfree46@yahoo.com) if you are interested. Given the road closure twist, we may be looking for a few more volunteers in order to cover the count circle.



**Bob Epperson, Photographer**

## **View of Blue Ridge Parkway Facing South from Peaks of Otter Visitor Center Parking Area**

Bob Epperson tried to get to Harvey's Knob on Friday, March 20, but was blocked by this large fence. He then tried birding northward instead, but found that there was also a weather-related closure starting at Apple Orchard Mountain. Hopefully that one will be resolved soon. At least he did get a Blue-headed Vireo and a Louisiana Waterthrush for his efforts.

Bob also called VDOT to complain that Route 511 was inaccurate, and Route 48 was posted as the road that was closed. That helps explain why this closure has been flying under the radar!



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