

Roanoke Valley Bird Club

Next Meeting:
September 14, 7:00 pm
Roanoke Council of
Garden Clubs facility

Celebrating
69 Years of Birding

1957-2026

"LEAVE ONLY FOOTPRINTS"



www.roanokevalleybirdclub.com

RVBC NEWSLETTER

SEPTEMBER 2026



**PHOTOGRAPHER
KENT DAVIS**

DREW'S BIRD OF THE MONTH KILLDEER

A shorebird you can see without going to the beach, Killdeer are graceful plovers common to lawns, golf courses, athletic fields, and parking lots. These tawny birds run across the ground in spurts, stopping with a jolt every so often to check their progress, or to see if they've startled up any insect prey. Their voice, a far-carrying, excited kill-deer, is a common sound even after dark, often given in flight as the bird circles overhead on slender wings. (More on page 3.) ~The Cornell Lab



WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

Diana Quinn

Justine Feinstein

Joe and Christina Gwitt

Megan Fatta

Kelly Jones

Next meeting:

**MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 14
7:00 PM**

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

Featured program:

THE SECRET LIFE OF BIRDS

BIO-LOGGING AS A TOOL FOR AVIAN CONSERVATION

Ashley Lohr, President Lynchburg Bird Club



Our program will feature a good friend from the Lynchburg Bird Club, Ashley Lohr. Ashley is one of the lucky few that have been able to find a rewarding career adjacent to one of her great passions.

Have you ever wondered where birds go once they leave your backyard? Thanks to modern bio-logging technology, we can now map these hidden journeys in extraordinary detail. Biologgers -- miniature electronic devices attached to animals -- allow biologists to track real-time movements, study habitat preferences, and measure demographic metrics vital for conservation. In this presentation, we will explore different methods used to track birds and learn how databases such as Movebank (movebank.org) make it possible to manage, share, and archive animal tracking data to help protect bird populations worldwide.

Ashley Lohr is a wildlife biologist, permitted bird bander, and current President of the Lynchburg Bird Club. She earned her Master's in Wildlife Ecology & Management from the University of Georgia studying Wild Turkey reproductive ecology, and her Bachelor's in Wildlife Conservation & Entomology from Virginia Tech. Since 2020, she has worked as a Project Coordinator for

Movebank (a global animal tracking database), helping wildlife professionals & others work with their wildlife tracking data. She's been birding since 2014, ever since her Ornithology course at Virginia Tech sparked her interest in birds! Her career and passion for birding has taken her to many countries, including Belize, Canada, Colombia, Guatemala, Peru, Ecuador/Galapagos Islands, and--most recently--Botswana. When she's not working (or birding), she enjoys a wide variety of outdoor activities, planning her next birding trip, and curling up on the couch with her cats (Rigatoni & Ravioli) and a good book.



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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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

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President's Musings

President Drew Daniels
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This month I would like to talk about something I find very frustrating, that is the proliferation of data centers and their effects on the environment. Being an election year, it is a very contentious topic, and rightfully so!

I worry about the loss of bird and wildlife habitat. The loss of habitat is extraordinary. Draining wetlands and bulldozing forests will only contribute to the reduction of our already declining population of avian species. Fewer nesting areas and dwindling food sources force the same number of birds and wildlife into tighter spaces—a crowded dynamic that simply won't work. What is left is a large, noisy facility with lots of lights that will cause migrating birds to keep flying when they desperately need to stop and rest, while the local birds have a well-manicured landscape to eke out a living!

I also worry about the amazing amounts of daily water being consumed by data centers, and I have trouble grasping two million gallons of water. There has to be a better way?

Let's consider back in the early days of computers; they were behemoths! I remember typing punch cards to turn in for a Fortran class at VA Tech in 1970. Then came the 1980's and personal computers were all the rage. Instead of a whole, large room, you could put it on a desk or table. Then came the laptop and my how things had changed! As technology has progressed, we now can wear it on our wrist!

Now, the question is, how long will it be before we have the ability to downsize the data centers the same way we have downsized our computers? With the processing speed and storage technology rapidly advancing, will we come to a point where one data center will do the work of 10 or more? It's a wonderful thought, but the reality is, in the here and now, we are stuck with more data centers, less water, and more electricity. That said, the birds and wildlife will be the ones to suffer. The conservationists and grassroots folks are trying their best to fight the growth, but most politicians only see the money involved for their states and could care less what it hurts. Maybe we will see some change this fall?

The data center businesses need to be pushing for improved technology to do more with less - more data in fewer buildings, less water, and more efficient cooling methods, less lighting around the buildings, and better noise abatement! That's a lot to wish for, but here's hoping! After all, the Wright brothers had the idea to fly!



Ed Kyle, Photographer

DREW'S BIRD OF THE MONTH KILLDEER

Charadrius vociferus

"Status: Fairly common permanent resident, uncommon most winters. They seem to be less common than they were 45 years ago, especially in winter."

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



Barbara Kyle, Photographer

Killdeer are surprisingly unobtrusive even on green lawns, despite their warm tawny coloration. Look carefully over lawns, short-mown fields, and even parking lots, and listen for the far-carrying *kill-deer* (when you hear this call, the bird may be in flight). Killdeer get their name from the shrill, wailing *kill-deer* call they give so often.

Though they're often found on dry land, you should also look for them on the edges of freshwater ponds and muddy lagoons. A well-known denizen of dry habitats, the Killdeer is actually a proficient swimmer. Adults swim well in swift-flowing water, and chicks can swim across small streams.

The male and female of a mated pair pick out a nesting site through a ritual known as a scrape ceremony. The male lowers his breast to the ground and scrapes a shallow depression with his feet. The female then approaches, head lowered, and takes his place. The male then stands with body tilted slightly forward, tail raised and spread, calling rapidly. Mating often follows.

Killdeer lay their eggs into an empty nest but add other materials later on. Some of these items they pick up as they are leaving and toss over their shoulder into the nest. In one nest in Oklahoma, people found more than 1,500 pebbles had accumulated this way.

The Killdeer's broken-wing act leads predators away from a nest, but doesn't keep cows or horses from stepping on eggs. To guard against large hoofed animals, the Killdeer uses a quite different display, fluffing itself up, displaying its tail over its head, and running at the beast to attempt to make it change its path.

~The Cornell Lab



Ed Kyle, Photographer



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. 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!

SEPTEMBER 2026

Hawk Watching – Harveys Knob Overlook, milepost 95.3 on the Blue Ridge Parkway. (Note: The Blue Ridge Parkway is closed for road construction from Explore Park mp115 south to Mill Mountain Spur Road mp120.4, detours are in place. The Parkway is accessible from Vinton north to Harveys Knob Overlook and the Peaks of Otter.)

From September through November, the Roanoke Valley Bird Club with the Lynchburg Bird Club collect data at Harveys Knob hawk watching and report it to the Hawk Migration Association of North America (HMA). 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 feel you might not be ready to ID each hawk as it passes, extra eyes are ALWAYS needed and appreciated!

- 9 Second Wednesday Midweek Walk, Botetourt Center at Greenfield, 8:00 am. 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: Greenfield Education and Training Center, 57 S Center Drive, Daleville, VA 24083 Take Exit 150B on 1-81 and follow signs to Route 220N. 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.
- 14 Membership Meeting, Monday 7:00 pm.** Roanoke Council of Garden Clubs, 3640 Colonial Avenue, Roanoke, VA 24018.
Program: **The Secret Life of Birds, Bio-logging as a Tool for Avian Conservation.** Speaker: **Ashley Lohr.**
(Details on page 2.)
- 19 Saturday Butterfly Hike, Botetourt Center at Greenfield, 9:00 am. (note specific time) Leader: Toni Pepin (571-246-2598)**
This is Toni's second installment of our butterfly viewing trips at Greenfield and the Cherry Blossom Trail. We'll be focusing on the beautiful butterflies, so dial those binoculars for close-up viewing and enjoy this summertime walk. The Cherry Blossom Trail at Greenfield is mostly level for easy walking about 1-mile each way.
Directions: Greenfield Education and Training Center, 57 S Center Drive, Daleville, VA 24083 Take Exit 150B on 1-81 and follow signs to Route 220N. 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.
- 26 Saturday Falling Creek Park Field Trip, Bedford, 8:00 am. Leader: Kirk Gardner (828-216-9710)** Kirk enjoys leading our groups to areas that are less frequently targeted; yet, excellent ones for birding. The Lynchburg Bird Club will join us for a morning walk exploring the varied habitats around the Bedford County Parks and Recreation grounds. We will meet in front of the main Parks and Recreation building at **8:00 am** before heading out to bird the wooded trails, brushy edges, and riparian corridors. Expect easy walking along established wooded trails, and a few gentle hills, but nothing steep. We will concentrate primarily on edge habitat and riparian zones, to look for active songbirds, woodpeckers, streamside foragers, and seasonal movement. Bring binoculars, sturdy walking shoes, water, and weather-appropriate layers.
Directions: Falling Creek Park, County of Bedford, 1257 County Farm Road, Bedford, VA 24523 From Orange Avenue in Roanoke, drive US 460 East to Bedford and take US 460 East Bypass at Bedford. Take the State Route 714 exit, and turn right onto East Main Street (Route 714) southbound. Follow this for approximately 1.5 miles (East Main Street turns into Falling Creek Road). Turn left onto County Farm Road (Route 681). Go straight through the roundabout and stay on County Farm Road, the road bends right and then left. After about 1 mile on County Farm Road, turn right into the entrance of Falling Creek Park, and meet in front of the main Parks and Recreation building at **8:00 am**. Driving time should be approximately 45 minutes.

OCTOBER 2026 A QUICK LOOK AHEAD

- 10 Montvale Park, Saturday, 8:00 am. Leader: Kirk Gardner (828-216-9710)**
- 12 Membership Meeting, Monday 7:00 pm.**
- 14 Second Wednesday Bird Hike, Oak Grove Park, 8:00 am. Leader: David Frye (248-459-6783)**
- 17 Ellett Property Tract, Saturday, 8:00 am. Leader: Sissy Logan (540-580-5214)**
- 24 Fenwick Mines, Saturday, 8:00 am. Leader: Bill Hunley (540-580-5214)**

May Highlights

May Meeting Notes

Monday, May 11, 2026

Sissy Logan reported on behalf of **Secretary Karen Frye** that 55 members and guests were in attendance. This was our "Club Members' Sharing Night" program that is annually held in December, but was rescheduled due to inclement weather at that time. Members **Mary Lou Barritt**, **Bob Crawford**, **Garland Kitts**, and **Ed Kyle** shared outstanding photo contributions. **Rosalind Illet** shared an interesting video that she took at Sam's Club of a Cooper's Hawk being rescued from the building by trapping and later releasing. As tradition, everyone brought delicious treats.

May+ Field Trip Reports

April 25, Warbler Road, Arcadia, Leaders: Tim and Alyce Quinn. Thirteen birders went along with the Quinns on the annual Warbler Road field trip. We had excellent weather and saw/heard 56 species, including 12 warbler species. Highlights of the day were: Common Merganser (flyover), Warbling, Yellow-throated, Red-Eyed and Blue-headed Vireos, Cedar Waxwing, Junco, Orchard and Baltimore Oriole. Warbler species were Ovenbird, Redstart, Parula, Louisiana Waterthrush, and Worm-eating, Black-and-White, Hooded, Yellow-throated, Cerulean, Black-throated Blue, Black-throated Green, and Pine Warblers.

Katherine Clemo, photographer.



May 9, 55th Annual Big Spring Day – 129 Species! (Details on page 6).

May 20, Field Trip to Green Hill Park, Leader: Kent Scaggs. Six participants experienced another great outing at Green Hill Park. This park presents a wide variety of habitats for birds and did not disappoint on this morning. The group logged 47 species with a number of highlights – Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Osprey, Broad-winged Hawk, Great Crested Kingfisher, Warbling Vireo, Brown Thrasher, Wood Thrush, Orchard Oriole, Blackpoll Warbler, and Scarlet Tanager.

May 23, Bird Walk at Happy Hollow Gardens Park, Leader: Dave Frye. Steady light rain didn't deter the five participants at Happy Hollow Gardens. The rhododendren blossoms had receded, but the area was still lovely and the group observed 20 species during the morning. Highlights for the group were four very active Eastern Phoebes, Swainson's Thrush, American Redstart, Ovenbird, and good looks at an Acadian Flycatcher.

Photo L-R **Katherine Clemo**, **Karen Frye**, **Dave Frye**, **George Clemo, photographer**, **Linda Cory** (center).



July 18, Blue Ridge Wildflower Society & Roanoke Valley Bird Club 14th Annual Picnic (Details on page 7)

August 1, Austin's Hummingbird Celebration, Potluck, and Bird Walk (Details on page 8).

Reminder

DUES ARE DUE!

Memberships expire on August 31
(If you joined in January or later of this year,
your dues are good through August 2027)
Individual \$15, Family \$25, Student No Charge

**Dues may be paid three convenient ways:*

1. **Mail** with check and completed form to:
Roanoke Valley Bird Club
P.O. Box 20405, Roanoke, VA 24018
2. **In person** at the September 14, meeting and
give to V.P. Memberships **Mary Harshfield**
3. **Online** at www.roanokevalleybirdclub.com
Upper right corner click "Become a member/renew"

***Always include payment with completed membership form
found in this newsletter on last page 9, or on website.**

Coming Soon!
To the **October 12, Meeting**



ROANOKE VALLEY BIRD CLUB 2027 CALENDARS

Purchase price **\$16**
(Plus shipping if mailed)

Order form will be available
in the October Newsletter

55th Annual Big Spring Day – 129 Species!

Antoinette Pepin, Roanoke Coordinator and Donna Mateski de Sanchez, Compiler

On May 9, 2026, a total of 44 participants from the Roanoke Valley Bird Club and the Lynchburg Bird Club grouped into 16 teams and covered the count's 15-mile circle centered on the Big Spring at the Peaks of Otter Picnic Area. Folks were in the field as early as 4:05 AM when temperatures were quite brisk, and as late as 6:28 PM, when the increasingly cloudy afternoon skies luckily yielded no more than a few sprinkles.

The total of 129 species matches 2023's count, and is the highest number of species since 131 species were observed back in 2014. For the first time ever, all count data was submitted via eBird checklists, with a total of 72 eBird checklists across the circle for the day.

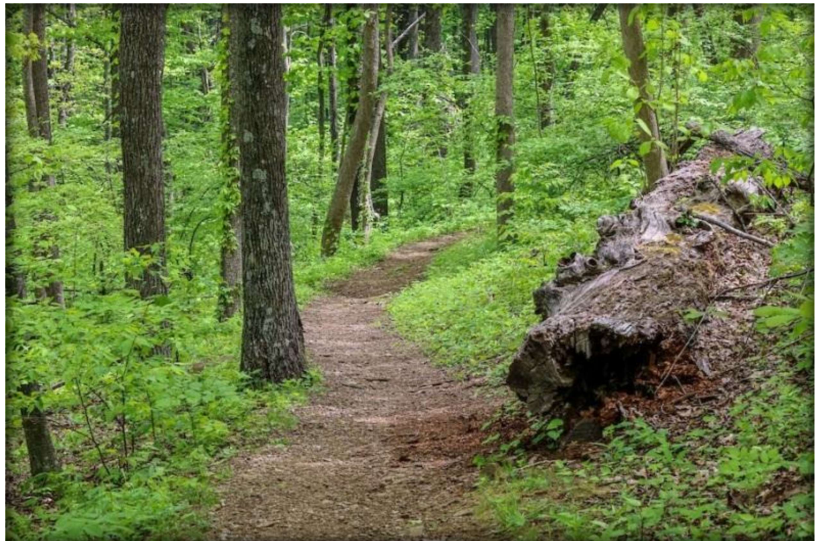


*Common Merganser takes flight, Photographer **Dick Grubb***

A total of 5,898 individual birds were observed this year. The most abundant species was once again the Red-Eyed Vireo with a total of 393 birds. American Redstart was the second most common with 311 birds. The following species rounded out this year's top ten: American Goldfinch (225), Ovenbird (204), Indigo Bunting (192), Northern Cardinal (177), Wood Thrush (160), Chipping Sparrow (145), Scarlet Tanager (141), and Tufted Titmouse (140).

Two notable species missed were the Mallard (seen in 46 prior years) and the Northern Bobwhite observed the past 4 years at Claytor Nature Study Center, but not this time (possibly due to coyotes now audible nearby).

A total of 17 species were seen at only one location: Common Nighthawk, Chuck Will's Widow, American Woodcock, Double-Crested Cormorant, Black-Crowned Night Heron, Green Heron, Northern Harrier, Bald Eagle, Least Flycatcher, Bank Swallow, Purple Martin, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Hermit Thrush, Dark-eyed Junco, Bobolink, Nashville Warbler, and Yellow-throated Warbler. An additional 6 species were observed at only two locations: Wood Duck, Solitary Sandpiper, American Kestrel, Northern Waterthrush, Bay-breasted Warbler, and Prairie Warbler.



*Heading up Flat Top Trail, Photographer **Mary Lou Barritt***

This illustrates the strength of the unique methodology used for this count with the large number of teams and individuals covering the circle which includes a wide range of altitudes and habitats. We also had an amazing total of 27 species of warblers observed this year. The last time we had that many warbler species on Big Spring Day was back in 2012. You can see the compiled 2026 BSD trip report here: <https://ebird.org/tripreport/518651>

Mark your calendars now for our **56th Annual Big Spring Day** that will be held on **May 1, 2027**.

Blue Ridge Wildflower Society & Roanoke Valley Bird Club

14th Annual Picnic, July 18, 2026

Carol Whiteside, Chairman

Photographers **Drew Daniels** (1st & 3rd rows) and **Carol Whiteside** (2nd row)



This was the most well attended picnic that we have of record with 71 responding to the invitation and 63 attending this year, which included 35 RVBC members, 12 BRWS members, 11 members of both clubs, and several welcomed guests. The Wildflower Society provided barbeque, the Bird Club provided fried chicken, and everyone brought the most delicious sides, salads, and desserts. RVBC President **Drew Daniels** and BRWS Vice President **Rebecca Ross** graciously welcomed everyone. BRWS President **Jennifer McCarthy** was unable to attend, but we greatly appreciate her dedication to this annual event. **Betty Kelly**, the original organizer of our first combined clubs picnic on August 11, 2013, was present with her daughter, Marlene Craig. RVBC member **Nancy Brattain** won the gift drawing of a BRWS annual membership, and RVBC member **Tom Johnson** won the RVBC annual membership.

Gratefully, we thank all the volunteers who made this event rewarding, enjoyable and relaxing, including the committee chairmen: **Drew Daniels** (the opening including set-up, fried chicken organizer, and closing clean-up), **Allen and Robin Austin** (drinks), **Mary Lou Barritt** (food tables), **Michelle Buonocore** (food placement greeter), **Connie Crites** (sign-in greeter), **Linda Harrison** (BBQ organizer), **Ellen Holtman and Rebecca Ross** (flower centerpieces). Plus the extensive, tireless volunteers who assemble for the clean-up afterward which includes: **Drew Daniels, Michael Belcher, Pat McMeekin, Rosalind Ilett, Betty Kelly, Marlene Craig, Linda Harrison**, and many other outstanding volunteers who jump in to help where needed! We also give a heartfelt thank you to everyone in attendance for making this a fun and very successful social event. We're already looking forward to gathering again next year, July 17, 2027, see you then!



Austin's Hummingbird Celebration, Potluck, and Bird Walk

Saturday, August 1, 2026

Robin and Allen Austin



There were 14 birders on our bird walk along Bottom Creek Road on Bent Mountain. It was a cool, mostly cloudy morning which made for very pleasant birding. We had a total of 40 species with some of the highlights being White-eyed Vireo, Yellow-breasted Chat, Black-and-white Warbler, Common Yellowthroat Warbler, American Redstart, Northern Yellow Warbler, and Indigo Bunting. Great looks were seen of a Red-tailed Hawk in a tree that took flight and wowed us with its very large size. The best bird of the walk was a life bird for several of us, an Olive-sided Flycatcher. It took a bit to ID this bird; however, with a lot of group effort we were successful. There were about 40 people for the potluck and Hummingbird viewing. Thanks to everyone for a great time!



Photographers: **Drew Daniels, Carol Whiteside, and Mary Lou Barritt** (Downey Woodpecker and Ruby-throated Hummingbird)



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

Enjoy Labor Day

www.roanokevalleybirdclub.com

RVBC NEWSLETTER

SEPTEMBER 2026

Roanoke Valley Bird Club

Membership Application/Renewal Form

Memberships expire on August 31, each year

Please print

2027
(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
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