

Roanoke Valley Bird Club



Celebrating
66 Years of Birding
1957-2023

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

www.roanokevalleybirdclub.com

RVBC NEWSLETTER

OCTOBER 2023



PHOTOGRAPHED BY

RVBC member

GLEN MITCHELL

September 6, 2023

Adney Gap, Blue Ridge Parkway entrance

Milepost 135.9 at Bent Mountain

"I saw more than 100 for two consecutive nights."

Common Nighthawks (*Chordeiles minor*) are medium-sized, slender birds with very long, pointed wings and medium-long tails. Only the small tip of the bill is usually visible, and this, combined with the large eye and short neck, gives the bird a big-headed look. They are well camouflaged in gray, white, buff, and black. The long, dark wings have a striking white blaze about two-thirds of the way out to the tip. In flight, a V-shaped white throat patch contrasts with the rest of the bird's mottled plumage. Look for Common Nighthawks flying in looping patterns in mornings and evenings. During the day, they roost motionless on a tree branch, fencepost, or the ground and are very difficult to see. When migrating or feeding over insect-rich areas such as lakes or well-lit billboards, nighthawks may gather in large flocks. Their buzzy, American Woodcock-like peent call is distinctive. Common Nighthawks are most visible when they forage on the wing over open areas near woods or wetlands. They nest on the ground in open areas such as gravel bars, forest clearings, coastal sand dunes, or sparsely vegetated grasslands. Eastern birds are browner than those from the northern Great Plains, which are silvery gray overall.

~ The Cornell Lab

Next Meeting:

MONDAY, OCTOBER 9, 7:00 PM

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

Featured Program:

"Rare and Unusual Wildlife of Virginia"

Presented by:

Dan Bieker



Rare and Unusual Wildlife of Virginia: With its varied topography, forested wilderness and abundant waterways, Virginia harbors a wide diversity of plant and wildlife species. This program highlights many of the fascinating yet rarely observed birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians and fish found in Virginia, especially the Mountain and Piedmont regions of the state.

Dan Bieker is an Assistant Professor of Natural Sciences at Piedmont VA Community College, where he teaches Field Ornithology and Appalachian Ecology. He is a past president of the VA Society of Ornithology, having served on that board for eight years, and also a past president of the Ivy Creek Foundation in Charlottesville. He has contributed extensively to the vertebrate database for Albemarle County's Natural Heritage Committee, and works with kids as a 4H Junior Naturalists club leader.



CONTACT US!



**ROANOKE VALLEY
BIRD CLUB**

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**2023
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Vice President, memberships

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Bluebird Trails

Carol Whiteside

Field Trips

Kirk Gardner

Meeting Refreshments

Mary Lou Barritt

Newsletter Editor

Carol Whiteside

RVBC/BRWS Annual Picnic

Carol Whiteside

Website:

Carol Siler

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. Photos and articles are gladly accepted for publication as room allows, and may be sent electronically,

Thank you!

**Carol Whiteside
Newsletter Editor**

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whitesidemules@yahoo.com

President's Musings



"It is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent that survives. It is the one that is most adaptable to change."

Charles Darwin (via Jim Cutler, Staff Scientist, Mote Marine Laboratory)

This quote was a chapter heading in a book I recently read and I thought, how appropriate! Stop and think of how many things in nature this applies. People - not the ones in Yellowstone trying to pet, ride, or take selfies of buffalo, or the ones piling out of their car to get a selfie with a momma grizzly or black bear with cubs - they're lost, no hope at all for them!

Most animals, birds included, adapt rather quickly to changes in their food supply or changes in their environment. For instance, irruptions in great Snowy Owls when the lemming population is inadequate, they fly south for food; when the cone crop is inadequate, the Red Crossbills fly south for food. These are just a few examples that come to mind.

It's all about the "curve-ball" we people have thrown at Mother Nature and allowed it to run rampant - climate change! The warming of our oceans, the changes in heat patterns, the changes in heavier rains, the severity in our hurricanes and wildfires, just to touch on a few of the problems climate change is causing on this old globe. We are not very responsible stewards!

Climate change must have affected the Roseate Spoonbill that was recently seen in of all places - Wisconsin? Head scratcher there! Speaking of climate change, what about the manatees? Will the rising temperatures compel them to relocate to new environments along the Gulf Coast, and how difficult will it be to find a supply of aquatic grasses to support them? The plight of the polar bear is already past critical. They are already turning to the towns around the Arctic Circle for food. With no pack ice to catch seals they are faced with starvation - bleak prognosis!

The very survival of any species depends on that species ability to look beyond their everyday struggle to eat, mate and propagate. As the planet warms, they must then decide - do I need to go as far south in migration as I have been, and do I need to go farther north to nest? Will my food sources change? Will the insects hatch earlier, and will they still be there when chicks need food?

These are questions that birds and animals must recognize and act on quickly. It's all a matter of survival!

President Drew Daniels
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540.314.606

Drew's Bird of the Month

"A joy to watch."

Carolina Wren

Thryothorus ludovicianus

*"A common permanent resident of the Roanoke Valley,"
Birds and Birding of the Roanoke Valley by Barry Kinzie.*



In summer it can seem that every patch of woods in the eastern United States rings with the rolling song of the Carolina Wren. This bird can be hard to see, but it delivers an amazing number of decibels for its size. Follow its teakettle-teakettle! and other piercing exclama-tions through backyard or forest. You may be rewarded with glimpses of this bird's rich unpatterned plumage of reddish-brown above and warm buffy-orange below, with a long white eyebrow stripe, white chin and throat, long slender downcurved dark bill, and distinctive long upward-cocked tail.

The Carolina Wren creeps around vegetated areas and scoots up and down tree trunks in search of insects and fruit. It explores yards, garages, and woodpiles, sometimes nesting there. This wren often cocks its tail upward while foraging and holds it down when singing. Carolina Wrens defend their territories with constant singing; they aggressively scold and chase off intruders.

Look—or listen—for Carolina Wrens singing or calling from dense vegetation in wooded areas, especially in forest ravines and neighborhoods. These birds love to move low through tangled understory; they frequent backyard brush piles and areas choked with vines and bushes.
~The Cornell Lab



Glen Mitchell, Photographer
RVBC member



Calendar of Events

Kirk Gardner, Field Trip Chairman, (828-216-9710)

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.

Thank you.



OCTOBER 2023

- 1 Harvey's Knob Hawkwatching August 15 – December 1, anytime from daylight through dark.**
Birders gather from mid-August through December to count and record data of the hawk migration at Harvey's Knob overlook, located at mile post 95.6 on the Blue Ridge Parkway. Bald eagles, ospreys and many other raptors can be seen. Thousands of broad-winged hawks have been spotted in a single day, usually between September 15 and 26, as recorded in previous years. People of all birding skills are welcome to stop by and enjoy the hawkwatching; extra eyes are always needed. Come and stay all day or just briefly. Don't forget to bring a lawn chair, binoculars and something to drink and/or eat. For more information contact: **Bill James, 540-563-9248** or email bijames@gmail.com
- 9 RVBC MEETING, Monday 7:00 pm.** Roanoke Council of Garden Clubs facility, 3640 Colonial Avenue, Roanoke, VA 24018. Featured Program: "Rare and Unusual Wildlife of Virginia" with Dan Bieker (Details on page 2.)
- 11 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:** Take Exit 150B on I-81 and follow signs to Route 220N. Go about 4 miles and take a left at the entrance to the Greenfield Education and Training Center, across from the entrance to Ashley Plantation. Park in the second lot on right.
- 28 Evergreen Bird Walk. Saturday 8:00-10:00 am, Leaders: Kent Davis (355-6388) and Linda Cory (580-5214)**
Preregistration is required through their website: evergreenmemorialtrust.com or call 540-342-2593. Please see poster on right. This is a community outreach walk, co-sponsored by Evergreen Burial Park. We will be walking the perimeter of the cemetery looking for fall migrants as well as resident birds. Wear sturdy waterproof shoes due to the wet grass and some uneven walking. **Directions:** 1307 Summit Avenue SW, Roanoke, VA 24015. Summit Avenue is off of Main Street in Roanoke. Park along the road in front of the main office.

NOVEMBER 2023

- 11 Locher Tract, Saturday, around 8 am. Leader: Bill Hunley.**
We will meet at the parking lot near the Daleville Bojangles. There will be about one mile of easy walking. Expected birds will be eagles, waterfowl and an assortment of field and woodland species. Locher Tract has a good mix of habitats in a relatively small area.

Free Bird Walk

Saturday, October 28th

8–10 AM

No experience necessary—all levels welcome!

Fall migration is a great time for birding. The walk will be led by knowledgeable and experienced guides provided by the Roanoke Valley Bird Club.

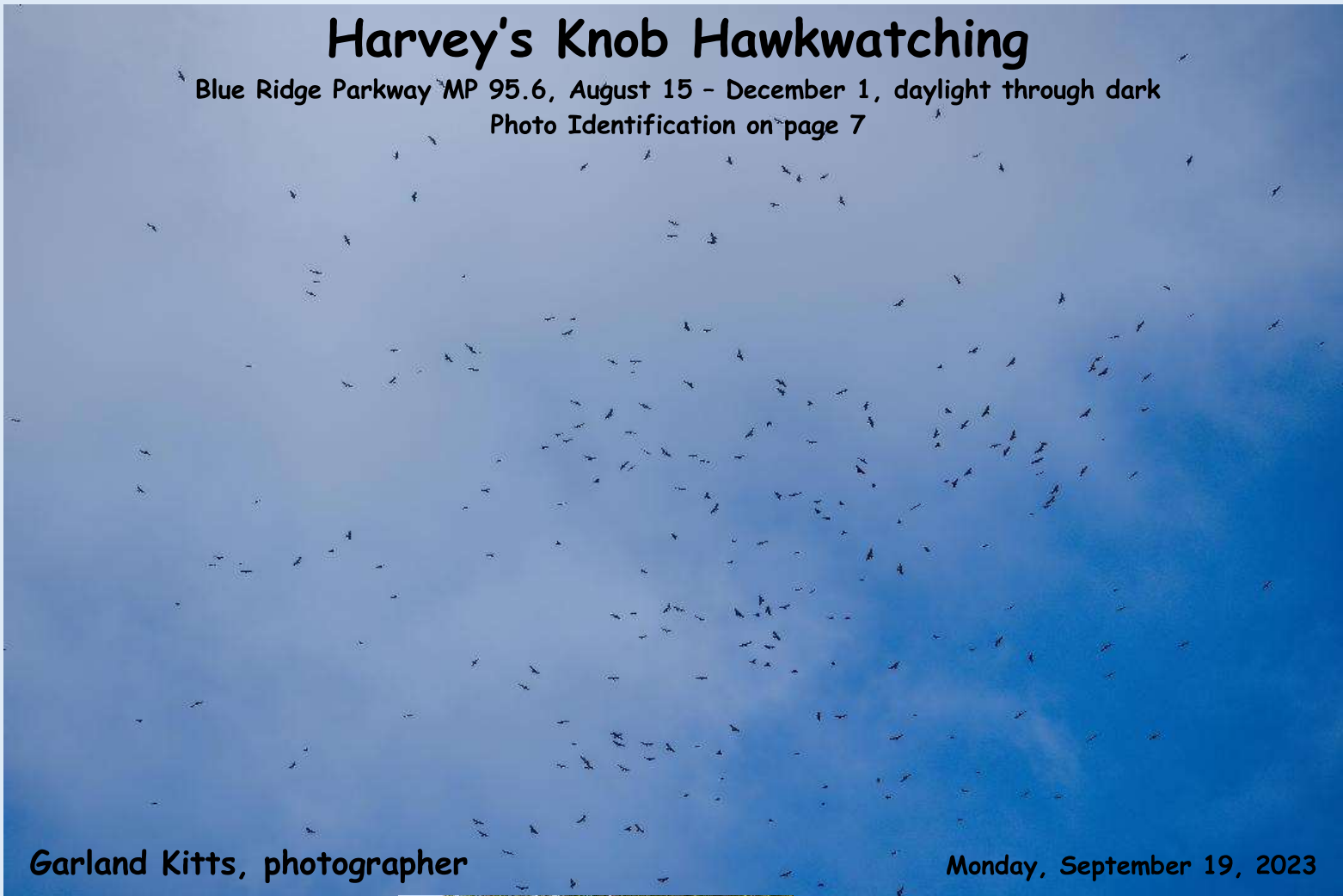
- Wear **appropriate footwear** as we will be walking in the grass and it may be wet!
- **Hats** are recommended.
- Bring **binoculars** or a **birding scope** if you have one.
- **No pets** please.

Space is limited so preregistration is required

visit our website or scan QR code below

Harvey's Knob Hawkwatching

Blue Ridge Parkway MP 95.6, August 15 - December 1, daylight through dark
Photo Identification on page 7



Garland Kitts, photographer

Monday, September 19, 2023



2023 RVBC Bluebird Trails Summary

Submitted by Carol Whiteside



Eastern Bluebirds (Sialia sialis) are well known in the United States for their brilliant plumage, sweet song, and use of nest-boxes. It is hard to imagine that this species nearly went extinct in the early 1900s because of a deadly combination of management practices that removed the dead tree snags that bluebirds depend upon for nesting, the introduction of exotic species that competed for nesting cavities, and the detrimental effects of pesticides. The recovery of populations across the eastern United States is an example of how everyday citizens can play a role in conservation. The major factor in the bluebird's recovery was the establishment of nestboxes by private landowners across their range.

~ National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, Everglades, Florida

In this vital conservation endeavor we offer sincere appreciation to the reliable volunteers who monitor our two bluebird trails weekly for five months to insure the success of our area Eastern Bluebirds. This year, our **bluebirds produced 397 eggs and fledged 306 for a success rate of 77%**, which is average for the two combined trails. The annual statistics are reported to the Virginia Bluebird Society at the end of each season. Please let us know if you are interested in volunteering to monitor (training is provided); it is very rewarding!

Blue Ridge Parkway Trail: Chairman **Carol Whiteside** extends a grateful thank you to the dependable, dedicated volunteers: **Allen and Robin Austin, Mary Harshfield, Dick Hendrix, Nancy Hill, Deb McPherson, Kathy Sink, Joanne Spetzler, Jenn Walker, and Marianne Wilder.** A special THANK YOU goes to **Al McPherson** who also assisted with the monthly weed whacking! After 3 years, the Blue Ridge Parkway opened on June 8, from the landslide failure. There was only one box that couldn't be reached during the closure, and we have always had trouble with wasps in it. When finally checked, there were three bluebird nests stacked with the top nest having five bluebird eggs. A huge abandoned wasp nest completely covered the box ceiling allowing just enough room for the female to barely enter the nest box; so the old bluebird nests on the bottom were removed to leave the active nest with eggs. (Photo right.) We learned that wasps will not reuse their nests; by leaving the abandoned wasp nest, no wasps bothered the box, which allowed the five bluebird eggs to develop and fledge. Through 24 years of record keeping our Parkway trail has produced **5,820 eggs with 4,411 fledglings, for a 76% success rate**, due to the valiant efforts of the RVBC since the mid-1960's.



Hanging Rock Golf Course Trail: First, Co-chairmen **Sissy Logan and Judy Repass** would like to recognize and thank our faithful and knowledgeable monitors: **Mary Lou and Sid Barrett, Beth and Alan Boyce, Caryl Connelly, Lindsay Eades, Diane and Michael Malpass, Nancy Reid and Karen Shelton.** Our thanks also extends to the Hanging Rock Golf Pro Shop. They are so willing to allow us to use the course and carts, and are always supportive of our efforts. Several of them have even gotten boxes for their own homes!

Our first egg appeared on April 4, 2023, and the first hatch was April 23, 2023. An early start to the season allowed four of our boxes to have three nestings. In past years we have had other species, but this season our 21 boxes were only filled with beautiful bluebirds! Our last baby fledged on August 15. We had 41 nest attempts and 191 eggs laid. While these numbers were almost identical to our excellent 2022 season, the ratio of fledged bluebirds (137) to the number of eggs laid (191) resulted in a success rate of only 72%. Unfortunately, we experienced serious predation from snakes, bears and even vandalism. Two of our boxes were stolen, but Alan and Beth Boyce used their skills to replace them to have them ready for next year. Please see photo below of their excellent job!

We submitted our annual trail summary form to the Virginia Bluebird Society at the end of August, but our work doesn't end. We will be protecting all the boxes with preserving sealant during the coming months in preparation for a new season and are hopeful for a very successful 2024!

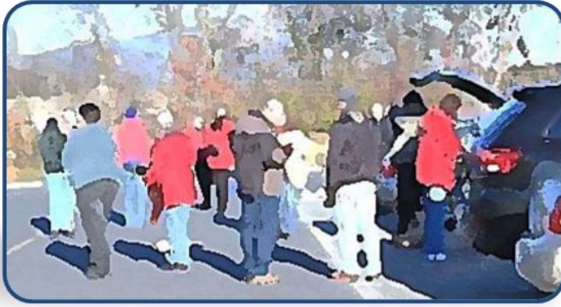
Alan Boyce installing box set-up ►



Blue Ridge Parkway Carol Whiteside, Chairman 33 boxes			
Species	Eggs	Fledged	Success
E. Bluebird	206	169	82%
C. Chickadee	14	12	86%
Tree Swallow	12	10	83%
House Wren	20	16	80%
Total	252	207	82%
First egg: March 27, 2023			
Last fledging: August 22, 2023			

Hanging Rock Golf Course Sissy Logan and Judy Repass, Chairmen 21 boxes			
Species	Eggs	Fledged	Success
E. Bluebird	191	137	72%
C. Chickadee	0	0	
Tree Swallow	0	0	
House Wren	0	0	
Total	191	137	72%
First egg: April 4, 2023			
Last fledging: August 15, 2023			

If you would like more bluebird information or are interested in purchasing a bluebird box (especially for a Christmas gift, we now have a post driver to borrow for installation), please contact Carol Whiteside 540-774-2143.



Field Trip Reports

9/13/23, 8:03 - 11:02 am, Kent Davis and Dick Grubb led this walk at the Botetourt Center at Greenfield in Daleville, Virginia, with seven people in attendance on a nice, 68° mostly sunny morning. They sighted 34 species that included 4 Northern Shoveler, 1 Wilson's Snipe, 1 Spotted Sandpiper, 3 Solitary Sandpiper, 1 Great Egret, 2 Green Heron, 1 Red-shouldered Hawk, and 2 Cape May Warbler.

9/16/23 Six people joined **Kent Skaggs** at 8:00 a.m. for a walk around Green Hill Park in Salem, Virginia. It was a beautiful morning with temperatures beginning in the mid 50's under sunny skies and little to no wind. Thirty-four species were seen with the highlights being a perched American Kestrel, a plethora of Cedar Waxwings, two Scarlet Tanagers, a Chestnut-sided Warbler, a Northern Parula and a flyover by two Pileated Woodpeckers. Attendee **Bob Crawford** snapped this photo (right) of a **juvenile Eastern Bluebird**.

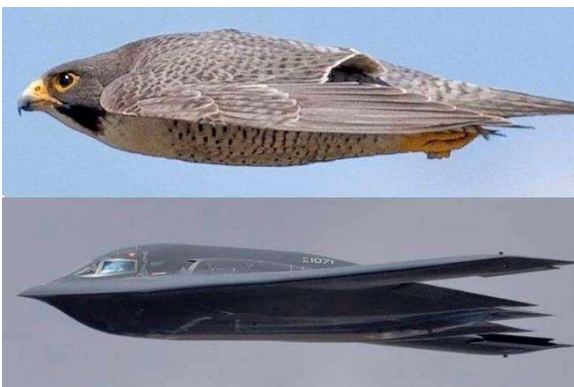


9/24/23, 7:23 - 8:32 am, Kent Davis led this walk on Glade Creek Greenway, Vinton, Virginia, with 20 species seen by three club members on this beautiful 59° mostly sunny Sunday morning. The best birds seen were 1 Northern Flicker (Yellow-shafted), 1 Eastern Phoebe, 1 Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, 1 Brown Thrasher, and 1 Rose-breasted Grosbeak.

Who Gives the Hoot!



The **Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge** birdwatchers were surprised to encounter a flock of rare visitors – a group of 11 pink flamingos which include three pink adults and eight gray juveniles that paid the Outer Banks a visit after Hurricane Idalia. Flamingo sightings have been reported in various states all along the East Coast over the past few days since Idalia, including Florida, South and North Carolina, and Virginia, but for birdwatchers in the Outer Banks region, this is the first reported sighting of wild flamingos ever seen in North Carolina.



◀ Peregrine Falcon vs. Stealth Jet

H.K. Hawkwatching Photo Identification

RVBC Member **Garland Kitts**, photographer

Top: Kettle of Broad-winged Hawks

Left column: Red-tailed Hawk, Osprey, Cooper's Hawk

Middle column: Hawkwatchers recording, Kent Skaggs, Mary Lou and Sid Barritt

Right Column: Two immature Bald Eagles, Bald Eagle

Roanoke Valley Bird Club 2024 Calendars Ready for Sale

We are excited to offer the Roanoke Valley Bird Club 2024 Calendar with 25 amazing photos taken by our own members for only \$16. We accept cash, check or credit card. The photos and order form have been added to our website; for a "Calendar Sneak Peak" please go to:
<https://roanokevalleybirdclub.com/2024%20Sneak%20Peek%20Calendar.pdf>
Calendars may be ordered or purchased in three convenient ways:



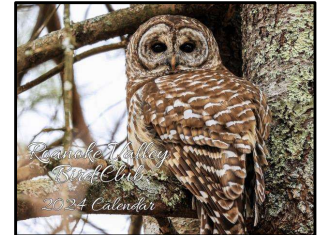
1. **In person** at the RVBC meetings on October 9, November 13 and December 11. There will be a "pick up day" at the Roanoke Council of Garden Clubs facility on November 18 and December 2, from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm.
2. **Online** at <http://roanokevalleybirdclub.com>. To order without postage, click on the yellow "Add to Cart" button. If you want to have your calendar mailed, click on the down arrow in the box for more options.
3. **Mail** with check, the completed form below to: R.V.B.C., P.O. Box 20405, Roanoke, VA 24018.

If you are ordering more than 4 calendars, please email rcbc2015@outlook.com to get the more accurate (and lower) shipping cost.



2024 CALENDAR ORDER FORM

R.V.B.C., P.O. Box 20405, Roanoke, VA 24018



of Calendars _____ X \$16.00 if picking up = \$ _____

of Calendars _____ X \$18.50 if shipping = \$ _____

If being mailed, send calendars to:

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____

Zip Code _____

Telephone _____



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

2023 - 2024

(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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