



Roanoke Valley Bird Club



May 2023

Next Meeting

Our next meeting will be **in-person** with a Zoom option on Monday, May 8th at 7pm at the Garden Club Building (3640 Colonial Ave, Cave Spring, VA 24018). We will continue to engage in best practices regarding Covid moving forward. We value everyone's safety and health. If you feel more comfortable wearing a mask, please feel free. If you choose not to wear a mask, please respect those who do. Thank you!

The Butcher Bird

Presented by Sergio Harding



Sergio Harding, Nongame Bird Conservation Biologist, for the Department of Wildlife Resources (DWR) will introduce us to the Loggerhead Shrike, a charismatic and imperiled bird, affectionately known as “the Butcher Bird.”

He will give us an overview of the status and natural history of Loggerhead Shrike with a focus on Virginia, and discuss what DWR and partners are doing to help reverse shrike declines in Virginia and beyond.

in North Carolina. Sergio has worked as a Nongame Bird Conservation Biologist with the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources since 2005. He oversees various avian projects and coordinates with other agencies on bird conservation issues. He is also the Virginia coordinator of the North American Breeding Bird Survey, and regularly participates in avian surveys. These have included breeding land bird surveys of Wildlife Management Areas, as well as surveys of bald eagles, peregrine falcons, golden-winged warblers, loggerhead shrikes and breeding marsh birds.

Sergio Harding holds a Master's Degree in Biology from Virginia Tech, where his thesis work focused on the federally endangered Red-cockaded Woodpecker



Clockwise from top: Purple Gallinule (Garland Kitts); Barred Owl (Nathan Anderson); Painted Bunting (Mary Lou Barritt); Common Tern (Nathan Anderson); Bald Eagle (Bob Crawford); Sedge Wren (Kirk Gardner)

Big Spring Day 2023

The Spring Peepers may already be peeping and the Bradford Pear blossoms popping, but both our club history and eBird migratory records indicate the best spring birding is yet to come. Big Spring Day returns on Saturday May 6th, 2023! This fun and historic citizen science tradition is a count conducted jointly by the Roanoke Valley Bird Club and the Lynchburg Bird Club and the Sixteen groups of birders will cover designated areas within 7.5 miles of the Big Spring in the Peaks of Otter Picnic Area. This will be our 52nd annual count.

Early May in the mountains of Virginia is a wonderful time for spring birding. Migrating birds are heading north from the tropics to their northern breeding grounds. Birds that spend the entire year here in Central VA are setting up breeding territories and pairing up, which makes them more active, vocal, and easier to observe in their bright spring plumages. Last year's count was particularly fruitful despite dreary weather to start the day.

Past Big Spring Day participants – please contact your group leader to confirm whether or not you are able to participate this year. Note that there will be a tally-up this year at the Amphitheater behind the Peaks of Otter Visitor Center at Noon. Snacks and cold drinks will be provided.

Never birded on Big Spring Day? Newcomers are always warmly welcomes and appreciated. Please contact Barry Whitt, the Roanoke Coordinator, at tthwb@gmail.com or 540-309-4353 and he will match you up with a group looking for fresh eyes.

Submitted by Donna Mateski de Sanchez, Big Spring Day Compile

Passing the Baton

Seven years about I took up the position of compiling and editing the monthly newsletter. Much has changed for the Roanoke Valley Bird Club in those seven years: we've moved meeting places leaving Grandin Court Baptist Church for our new home in the Roanoke Valley Garden Club building, we hosted the Virginia Society of Ornithology yearly meeting, we said good-bye to long time members as they moved away, launched several community outreach programs (Go-Fest and the Birding Backpacks), and we survived a global pandemic while adapting to online meetings via Zoom.

Much has changed in my personal life in seven years. Seven years ago our three children were in elementary and middle school. Now our youngest two are in high school and our oldest is in college. My wife has written several books, a couple of which I have illustrated. And my professional career has taken a couple of unexpected turns.

Through all this I have thoroughly enjoyed being the editor of the newsletter and being a part of the club as a whole. I will always remember my first warbler road field trip, being part of the planning team for the VSO meeting, and helping everyone navigate Zoom. So after seven years and 63 editions of the newsletter, it is time to pass the baton. Rest assured, I am not going anywhere and will continue to participate with and serve alongside the leadership team. Carol Whiteside has volunteered to become the new editor of the newsletter, and I am confident she will do a wonderful job.

Lastly, I would like to thank Linda Cory for being an extra set of eyes on each newsletter. She was a great help.

- Nathan Anderson

Field Trips

Note that if inclement weather necessitates a cancellation, an e-mail notification will be sent out. You can also call or text the leader Kirk Gardner at 828-216-9710 or kirk.gardner1980@gmail.com.

● Lynchburg Bird Club Big Spring Day (Saturday, May 6th, 8am)

The Spring Peepers may already be peeping and the cherry blossoms popping, but both our club history and eBird migratory records indicate the best spring birding is yet to come. Big Spring Day returns on Saturday May 6th, 2023! This fun and historic citizen science tradition is a count conducted jointly by the Lynchburg Bird Club and the Roanoke Valley Bird Club. Sixteen groups of birders will cover designated areas within 7.5 miles of the Big Spring in the Peaks of Otter Picnic Area. This will be our 52nd annual count.

Early May in the mountains of Virginia is a wonderful time for spring birding. Migrating birds are heading north from the tropics to their northern breeding grounds. Birds that spend the entire year here in Central VA are setting up breeding territories and pairing up, which makes them more active, vocal, and easier to observe in their bright spring plumages. Last year's count was particularly fruitful despite dreary weather to start the day – see the BSD 2022 article under “Reports From the Field”.

Past Big Spring Day participants – please contact your group leader to confirm whether or not you are able to participate this year.

Never birded on Big Spring Day? Newcomers are always warmly welcomed and appreciated. Please contact Donna at mateski@bu.edu or 434-546-3812 and she will match you up with a route or an existing team looking for fresh eyes.

● 2nd Wednesday Walk at Greenfield (May 10th, 8am)

We will walk around Greenfield Lake in search for migrants and waterfowl. The walk will be mostly flat walking for about 2 miles. We will also cover the grassy area overlooking the lake and the trail down to the lower pond. Bring a 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 the right.

● New River Trail State Park and Byllesby Dam (Saturday, May 6th, 7:30am)

Join local naturalist and avid birder Patty Elton on this wonderful Spring morning! Peak songbird migration along the New River is mid-April to mid-May. Each spring in Virginia, warblers and other neotropical songbirds travel through Virginia along the Atlantic Flyway. This annual journey presents a marvelous opportunity to experience the colors and sounds of spring migration. These hikes are open to all ages and skill levels. Beginners are always welcome! Free birding apps such as Merlin Bird ID and eBird are excellent resources. Please wear closed-toed shoes, and don't forget water and binoculars! To increase chances of bird sightings, no dogs please. Participants will meet at the Byllesby Dam at 7:30 am.

Field Trip Reports

Greenfield's Cherry Blossom Trail

Five participants scoured Greenfield Lake and its surrounding territory. Winter is really starting to lose its grip on us, as the morning quickly melted into a 70 degree beauty chocked full of sunshine. Before really getting started, the group chose to divert its focus and head off to nearby Orchard Lake Rd (Daleville Ponds area) for great views of a Sandhill Crane walking peacefully along within a group of Canada Geese. Its grey feathers were already stained brown in preparation for summer breeding season and it hadn't a care in the world.

Upon returning to Greenfield Lake, the group tallied 46 species. Warblers disappointed this day (only Yellow-rumped Warblers observed), but sparrows provided some counterbalancing interest (with Chipping, Song, Field, White-throated, White-crowned, and Savannah Sparrows all in the mix). Close up views of beautiful Blue-winged Teals stopped us in our tracks. We even heard a Sandhill Crane calling (was it the same bird from earlier? – we will never know).

David Frye

April 8 - Catawba Greenway and Whispering Pines

Kent Skaggs was joined by six birders for a morning walk at Catawba Greenway and Whispering Pines. The temperature at the start of the walk was in the mid 40's, with light winds and cloudy skies. Forty-two species were observed, including five raptor species (Northern Harrier, Cooper's, Red-shouldered and Broad-winged Hawks and American Kestrel). Really good views of a Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Brown-headed Nuthatch and Eastern Towhee were had as well and with lots of birds singing, the group was able to brush up on their bird song ID skills.

"We welcome birders of all skill levels.
Don't forget your binoculars,
wear close-toed shoes and bring water."



Roanoke Valley Bird Club
PO Box 20405
Roanoke, VA 24018
Editor: Nathan Anderson

2022-2023 Roanoke Valley Membership Form

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____

Email _____

Make check payable: Roanoke Valley Bird Club PO Box
20405 Roanoke, VA 24018

Individual \$15 _____

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