



April '21 Newsletter

Celebrating 64 Years of Birding
1957-2021

NEXT MEETING

Our meeting will NOT be in person, rather we'll meet using the technology of Zoom. Our meeting will be 7PM, Monday, April 12th. You'll receive a link in your inbox a few days before the meeting.

A Study of Grassland Bird Nesting Sites in Central North Dakota

Presented by Emma Weaver



Pipits and Longspurs and Sparrows - Oh My! Although weather can be bleak at times in North Dakota, the prairies and potholes are a great place to birdwatch. A great variety of sparrow species breed there as will be explained by our speaker, Emma Weaver.

Emma Weaver is an undergraduate senior studying Wildlife Conservation at Virginia Tech. She worked as a Grassland Bird Field Technician in North Dakota where she studied the impacts of patch-burn grazing on grassland bird nesting sites. Since being at Virginia Tech, she has been a Resident Advisor, a Teaching Assistant in the course Wildlife Field Biology, studied Evolution in the Anthropocene—where she was able to visit the Galápagos Islands and observe mist-netting of Darwin's finches—, and has received experience with research methods and handling small mammals, birds, reptiles, and amphibians. After

graduating, Weaver hopes to gain more experience with research and environmental education.

CLUB NEWS

Big Spring Day 2021

After losing last year to the virus, we will hold the 50th annual Big Spring Day bird count on May 1st, 2021. The count is conducted jointly with the Lynchburg Bird Club and the Roanoke Valley Bird Club. About 15 groups will cover designated areas within 7.5 miles of the Big Spring in the Peaks of Otter Picnic Area.

Late April through mid-May in the mountains of Virginia is about as good as it gets for spring birding. Migrating birds are heading north from the tropics to northern breeding grounds. Birds that spend the entire year here are setting up territories and pairing up to breed which makes them more active, vocal, and easier to observe in their bright spring plumages.

During this count, we must observe Covid-19 guidelines, even if you have been vaccinated. Please follow CDC guidelines regarding indoor and outdoor gatherings. Do not ride with people outside your bubble, i.e. no carpooling. Don't share scopes, guidebooks, etc. When birding outside your cars with folks outside your bubble, maintain social distance and wear masks.

Instead of the usual tally-up at noon, we will have a wrap-up Zoom session at 7:00 that same evening. People will be able to compare notes and chat about the day's experience. We might even do a tally-up. I'll email details later to participants. Thanks to Nathan Anderson of RVBC for setting up the meeting.

Group leaders can mail or email their checklists to me.

Jim Elder
1349 Deerview Dr.
Forest, VA 24551
Email: jim_elder@msn.com

Additionally, I will be at the Peaks of Otter Ranger Station (directly across the Parkway from VA 43) from 12 noon until 1pm to collect checklists.

*** Roanoke birders who want to sign up to participate, please contact Barry Whitt, ttihwb@gmail.com or 540-309-4353 ***

I will distribute the final report by email to all participants. New participants, please give your email address to your leader or to me. Let me know if you need a paper copy and I'll send it.

Jim Elder (Compiler and Lynchburg coordinator)

Meet a Member: Mark Shelton

Mark's lived here since 1976 but only joined the bird club last year when by chance he read an article in the Roanoke Times mentioning RVBC, looked us up on the internet...and the rest is history! Mark's passion for 40+ years has been photography and when he goes for a walk usually has both his binoculars and camera with him.

Mark originally intended to study forestry and wildlife management at VA Tech with a special interest in ornithology but soon learned there were not too many job opportunities in the field at that time. So he switched and made a career working in clinical engineering at Carilion maintaining medical equipment such as EKGs, IV pumps, patient monitors, dialysis machines and other vital medical machinery. Mark currently lives in Roanoke near the Coffee Pot Restaurant with his wife veterinarian Kathie Neel, who recently retired from Vinton Animal Hospital and now works at Pet Vet.

—Maxine Fraade

Annual Raptor Count

The Annual Raptor Count was held Saturday February 20. Bad weather postponed the event for one week. We had 17 birders in 8 teams roaming around looking for hawks. And boy, did we find them. We had the highest count of Red-shouldered Hawks since my records started in 1996. There were high counts for both Red-tails and Cooper's Hawks since 2013. We had the best Bald Eagle numbers since 2004, plus 3 Golden Eagles and 3 Northern Harriers. Two groups had nesting Red-tails. A Great Horned Owl was also a good find. Big winners were Brian Hirt and Charlie Kahle with 9 Eagles. Congrats, guys, you win bragging rights for the year. All-in-all, lots of interesting birds and a great way to spend a winter afternoon. If you are interested, try it next year. It is always the second Saturday of February, weather permitting.



Cedar Waxwings by Mary Barritt

2021 RAPTOR COUNT TALLY

SPECIES	TEAM A	TEAM B	TEAM C	TEAM D	TEAM E	TEAM F	TEAM G	TEAM H
TURKEY VULTURE (***)	28	32	6	20	21	4	48	64
BLACK VULTURE (***)	17	4	3	6	6	6	20	52
RED-TAILED HAWK	7	9	2	5	16	3	25	7
AMERICAN KESTREL		1		2	1		4	2
COMMON RAVEN		7		1	6			2
EASTERN SCREECH-OWL (***)								1
GREAT HORNED OWL				1				
COOPER'S HAWK		2				1	1	
SHARP-SHINNED HAWK								
RED-SHOULDERED HAWK	2				5	1	7	5
NORTHERN HARRIER		1			1		1	
BALD EAGLE	1	5		1	7		1	
GOLDEN EAGLE					2		1	
UNIDENTIFIED RAPTOR			15				3	
TOTAL BIRDS	55	61	26	36	65	15	111	133
TOTAL POINTS	207	495	97	167	923	81	688	365

*** RECEIVED 10 BONUS POINTS FOR PEAK COUNTS

TEAM A - Robin & Allen Austin - Bent Mtn, Floyd County, southern Roanoke County

TEAM B - Jim & Judy Phillips - Giles & Craig Counties

TEAM C - Daphne & Ron Jamison - Franklin County (Burnt Chimney Rd & Westlake)

TEAM D - Sid & Mary Lou Barritt, Sissy Logan - Explore Park, SW Roanoke, Fincastle

TEAM E - Brian Hirt, Charlie Kahle - Alleghany, Craig, Summers & Monroe Counties

TEAM F - Tina Gibson, Toni Pepin - Waldron Park area, Carvin's Cove, Murray Pond

TEAM G - Laurie & Scott Spangler - Roanoke County, Botetourt County

TEAM H - Bill & Anne Tucker - Franklin, Pittsylvania & Bedford Counties (around Smith Mountain Lake)

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 or Mary Harshfield at 540-309-8277. When birding with a group, please wear a mask and social distance.

APRIL 3rd, Sat., 8:00 a.m., LOCHER TRACT

Meet Bill Hunley (467-3477) at Botetourt Commons for a morning field trip to Locher Tract, located in the Jefferson National Forest. This is a managed wildlife habitat that contains woods, open fields, a beaver pond and good views of the James River. We can expect a good variety of birds, including early migrant warblers, Wood Duck and Fox Sparrow. Locher Tract is near Natural Bridge Station in Rockbridge County. There will be 2 miles of level walking. If time permits we will also stop at Arcadia and nearby Solitude Swamp. Wear water proof shoes. Directions to meeting place: On I-81, take exit 150B and follow signs to 220N. Go 3/4 miles and take a left on Kingston Rd into the Botetourt Commons shopping center. Find the group at the parking area near Bojangles. Those who have been vaccinated may want to carpool.

April 14th, 8:00 a.m., 2nd Wednesday Walk at Greenfield

Join leaders Dick Grubb (728-1029) and Annie Downing in a 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 or 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.

April 17th: Sat, 8:00 a.m., Mill Mountain

Meet leaders Linda Cory (580-5214) and Sissy Logan at the Mill Mountain Discovery Center to look for spring migrants and other woodland birds. We'll be birding on paved or mulched trails around the top of Mill Mountain for a couple of hours.

April 24th, Sat., 7:30 a.m., Craig Creek boat launch area

New member Kirk Gardner (featured in our March newsletter) will be leading this trip to the Craig Creek boat launch area near Eagle Rock. We will meet at the Botetourt Commons shopping center at 7:30 and carpool about 20 miles up 220 N to the site. Depending on numbers and timing, we will probably also visit the Gala Wetlands which is another 5 to 10 minutes up 220. Directions to meeting place: On I-81, take exit 150B and follow signs to 220N. Go 3/4 miles and take a left on Kingston Rd into the Botetourt Commons shopping center. Find the group at the parking area near Bojangles. Kirk's phone number: 828-216-9710

May 8th, 7:00 a.m., Warbler Road Trip

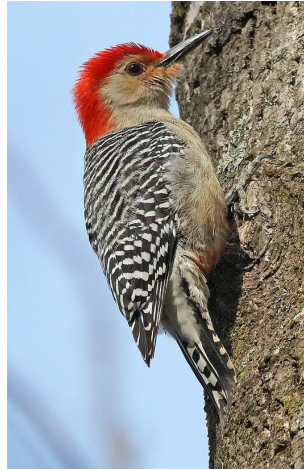
Join leaders Alyce and Tim Quinn for one of our favorite trips to see warblers. The group will bird a series of forest service roads between the Blue Ridge Parkway and Arcadia in search of warblers and other Neotropical migrants. This trip usually lasts into the afternoon so bring drinks, snacks and a lunch. Dress in layers. Call or e-mail Alyce at 540-312-6844 or twoquinns@yahoo.com to reserve a space and get directions to the meeting place. Think about whether you are willing to carpool since there is limited space for pull-offs. Deadline to reserve is April 30th.

Field Trip Reports

March 10th, 2nd Wednesday walk at Greenfield: 13 birders joined leader Dick Grubb on a sunny cool day. They observed 48 species. Waterfowl included Wood Duck, Canvasback, Redhead, Green-winged Teal, Lesser Scaup, and Bufflehead. Other birds of note: Hairy Woodpecker, American Kestrel, Red-shouldered Hawk, Golden and Ruby-crowned Kinglets, Junco, Meadowlark, Red-winged Blackbird, White-crowned Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, Yellow-rumped Warbler, and Tree Swallow.

March 20th, Woodcock Walk on Bent Mountain. A large group of 30 birders came out to enjoy this sunny early spring evening bird walk around the Bent Mountain Community Center and nearby fields. It was great to see fellow birders in person and we were treated to a fine display of the American Woodcock at sunset. At least 3 male woodcocks were observed (calls and flight displays); of course the females were nearby but not spotted. Sixteen other birds were observed, including Brown Creeper, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Eastern Meadowlark, and two Great Blue Herons. Thanks to leader Robin Austin for making this happen!

March 27th, Tinker Creek Greenway. Leaders Mary Lou and Sid Barritt were joined by 19 others for a nice sunny morning of birding. 34 species were observed including Dark-eyed Junco, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Ruby and Golden-crowned Kinglet, White-throated Sparrow, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Tree Swallow, Phoebe, American Kestrel, and Sharp-shinned/Cooper's Hawk.



Red-Bellied Woodpecker
by Bob Crawford



Song Sparrow
by Nathan Anderson

Rescue Operation

A male Pileated Woodpecker was found on the sidewalk in Blacksburg by a member of the New River Valley Chapter of Virginia Master Naturalists—the bird was unable to fly and dragging their wing on the ground. We suspect the patient was either hit by a car or had a close encounter with another animal—while this bird has a minor fracture that has a fair prognosis he is missing several flight feathers on one wing which will extend his stay until they grow back. Pileated Woodpeckers are the largest living woodpecker in the United States and are one of the most important animals in our woodlands—they help create cavities in trees which provides shelter for other animals that can't make cavities themselves like owls, flying squirrels, and more!



The word “pileated” means “a crest that goes from the beak to the nape of the head of a bird” – which you can obviously see! We know this bird is a male because he has a “red mustache” which females do not have.



Roanoke Valley Bird Club
PO Box 20405
Roanoke, VA 24018



2020—2021 Roanoke Valley Bird Club Membership Form

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____

Email _____

Memberships expire August 31st.

Annual Dues	
Individual \$12	_____
Family \$20	_____
Student \$7	_____
Sustaining \$30	_____
Adopt a Bluebird \$15	_____
Additional Contribution	_____
Total Payment	_____
Make check payable to the Roanoke Valley Bird Club PO Box 20405 Roanoke, VA 24018	