



# Roanoke Valley Bird Club



October 2021

## Next Meeting

Due to the continued presence of COVID-19 and its variants, we will continue to meet via Zoom. The board will reevaluate at the end of year to determine what is the best meeting options beginning in January. Our next meeting via Zoom will be Monday, October 11<sup>th</sup> at 7pm. Please be on the look out for the Zoom link in your email the weekend before. Stay well, and happy birding.

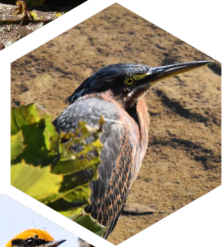


## Birding Blandly - Confusing Fall Warblers and other Topics

Our speaker, David Carr, PhD, will discuss confusing Fall warblers and other topics based on his work at the Blandly Experimental Farm. This unique property has been operated by the University of Virginia since 1927 and includes the State Arboretum of Virginia which is an excellent birding spots. The 712 acres that comprise Blandly includes a mix of field, forest, wetland, and agricultural habitats.

neotropical migrants in September and early October. As the warblers wane, sparrows from the upper Midwest and the boreal forest begin moving through in late October/ November along with Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers, Kinglets, and Rusty Blackbirds. In irruption years, the conifer collection attracts Purple Finches and Pine Siskins and even the occasional Crossbill. Fall has always been the best season for rarities at Blandly. A day trip from Roanoke, Blandly is open to everyone from dawn until dusk, 365 days a year, and there is no admission or parking charges.

Dr. Carr grew up in northern Kentucky along the Ohio River where he caught birding fever as a teenager. His background includes degrees in Biology, Zoology (studying salamanders) and Quantitative Plant Genetics. Since earning his doctorate from University of Maryland, he has been working on the genetics and reproductive ecology of plants and is a Research Professor and Director of the Blandly Experimental Farm. His current research focuses on pollen foraging by bumble bees and the olfactory signals that plants use to communicate with their pollinators. As a birder, He has traveled to every state in the continental US.



## 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.

### ● Sewage Treatment Plant (Sunday, October 3rd, at 8am)

Join leader Kent Davis (540-355-6388) for a walk around the Sewage Treatment Plant. Entrance to the STP is by special permit and trip participants must all enter at the same time and stay together with their leader. This site is one of the best spots for viewing shorebirds in the Roanoke Valley. The property includes impoundments, sludge ponds, mudflats, riparian habitat and woodlands. Besides shorebirds, we can expect to see resident hawks and possibly ravens and fish crows. The walking is mostly flat with a short steep trail. Sturdy waterproof boots are recommended as it often muddy.

Directions: Meet at the Greenway parking lot off of Bennington St near the bridge over the Roanoke River; the entrance to the parking area is between the bridge and Brownlee Avenue. Note that Thirteenth Street SE changes names to Bennington St at the bridge over the Roanoke River. After the group has gathered, we will caravan or walk the short distance to the STP, so please arrive a few minutes early.

### ● Green Hill Park (Saturday, October 9<sup>th</sup> at 8am)

Join leader Linda Cory (540-580-5214) for an easy walk at Green Hill Park in Salem, VA. We will be walking up to 2 miles along the Greenway path that goes along the Roanoke River. We will be looking for migrants leaving for southern climes, as well as possibly some early arriving ducks. Wear good walking shoes or boots that are waterproof in case we leave the path.

Directions: From West Main Street, Salem, take at left at Diuguids Rd. In less than ½ mile, you will cross over the Roanoke River and take the next right onto Green Hill Park Rd. Park in the first parking lot on your right.

### ● 2nd Wednesday Walk at Greenfield (Wednesday, October 13<sup>th</sup>, at 8am)

Join leaders Sissy Logan (540-353-4500) and Mary Lou Barritt for a bird walk on the Cherry Blossom Trail at Greenfield. We will walk around Greenfield Lake in search for migrants and incoming 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 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 the right.

● Blue Hills Industrial Park (Friday & Saturday, October 22<sup>nd</sup> & 23<sup>rd</sup> at 7:30am)

Join leader Kirk Gardner (828-216-9710) for a 1.5 mile mostly level walk. This is a good area for grassland birds, including American Pipit and Wilson's Snipe which might be seen. Other unusual birds have been spotted here. The walk will start out on an asphalt greenway and then we will walk the field. Waterproof boots are recommended since the grass will probably be wet. Participants are encouraged to come both days to observe similarities and differences from day to day.

Directions: Meet Kirk at the Kroger parking lot (farthest away from the front door) at 3970 Valley Gateway Blvd. off of Rt. 460. If you are coming from Roanoke on Rt. 460, Kroger is located on the right before you get to Walmart and Lowe's. People can carpool or follow Kirk a short distance to the meadow at Blue Hills Industrial Park.

## Field Trip Reports

Sept. 8th, Greenfield: Seven birders joined leader Bill Hunley for an excellent morning of birding. We observed 31 species, including a Red-headed Woodpecker (!), Green Herons, Semi-palmated Sandpiper, Northern Shoveler, several Wood Ducks, Eastern Wood-Pewee, Chimney Swifts, American Redstart, and Cedar Waxwing. We welcomed new members, David and Karen, recently moved here from Michigan.

## Nominations for Officers and Directors 2021-22

According to our by-laws, in October of every year, a nominating committee proposes a slate of officers and directors for club members to vote on at the November meeting. This is the slate put forward for 2021-22, terms to begin January 1, 2022. We will vote on this slate November 8.

### Officers

President: Kent Davis (who will be serving his 10<sup>th</sup> term)

VP Programs: Drew Daniels

VP Membership: Linda Cory

Secretary: Betty Burke

Treasurer: Carol Whitt

### Directors

Nathan Anderson: Newsletter Editor & Zoom

Mary Harshfield: Field Trips

Robin Austin

Mary Lou Barritt

Annie Downing

Maxine Fraade

Sissy Logan

Eunice Hudgins, Emeritus

# 2021 R.V.B.C. 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 nestboxes. 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

We offer sincere appreciation to the dedicated volunteers who monitor the bluebird trails weekly all season to insure the success of our area Eastern Bluebirds. This year, we monitored despite the Coronavirus pandemic, waves of cold/heat and extreme rainy and dry seasons; our **bluebirds produced 405 eggs and fledged 310 for a success rate of 77%**. These annual statistics are reported to the Virginia Bluebird Society at the end of each season. Most assuredly, the RVBC (and the birds!) gratefully thank the bluebird trails volunteer monitors for participating in this vital conservation endeavor. We gladly accept and train new monitors; please volunteer, it is very rewarding!

**Blue Ridge Parkway Trail:** This year the National Park Service closed the section from Vinton Route 24 south to Explore Park due to reconstruction of the Roanoke River Bridge. Also, the section from Route 220 south to Adney Gap on Bent Mountain is still closed due to the landslide of spring 2020. Despite the inconvenience of travel our dedicated volunteers monitored the boxes faithfully with only two boxes not reachable. There were three boxes with three nest attempts each. Most unusual this year there were three boxes that produced the first egg on the same day, March 28! There were 7 house wren attacks and 2 snake attacks with 17 infertile eggs, 15 missing eggs, 22 dead/missing chicks and 10 dead chicks in the nest. Through 22 years of record keeping our BRP trail total has produced 5,381 eggs with 4,040 fledglings, for a 75% success rate. With sincere appreciation to all our faithful volunteers, thank you! A special thanks goes to Al McPherson who also assisted with monthly weed whacking!

Blue Ridge Parkway Carol Whiteside, chairman 33 boxes			
Species	Eggs	Fledged	Success
E. Bluebird	218	159	73%
C. Chickadee	6	6	100%
Tree Swallow	38	35	92%
House Wren	7	2	29%
<b>Total</b>	<b>269</b>	<b>202</b>	<b>75%</b>
First egg: <b>March 28, 2021</b>			
Last fledging: <b>August 22, 2021</b>			

**Hanging Rock Golf Course Trail:** For the first time since we have been in charge of the trail, we have had only bluebirds in our boxes, no other species. All 21 boxes were occupied producing eggs and at least one or two nests. Our 81% success rate was lower because of box #3. There were 2 nesting attempts, 11 eggs total and not one fledged, most likely a snake. Our plans are to re-locate this box. We had a total in all boxes of 20 missing/unhatched eggs and 16 missing/dead young. Many thanks to our team of dedicated volunteers!

Hanging Rock Golf Course Sissy Logan and Judy Repass, chairmen 21 boxes			
Species	Eggs	Fledged	Success
E. Bluebird	187	151	81%
C. Chickadee	0	0	
Tree Swallow	0	0	
House Wren	0	0	
<b>Total</b>	<b>187</b>	<b>151</b>	<b>81%</b>
First egg: <b>April 1, 2021</b>			
Last fledging: <b>July 23, 2021</b>			

*A heart-felt THANK YOU to our volunteers:*

Allen and Robin Austin, Sissy Logan, Judy Repass, Kathy Arrington, Mary Lou and Sid Barrett, Alan and Beth Boyce, Caryl Connolly, Lindsay Eades, Diane and Michael Malpass, Nancy Reid, Karen Shelton, Eunice Hudgins, Carol Whiteside, Dan Whitcomb, Mary Ellen Belcher, Eleanor Dye, Ardy Kidd, Mary Harshfield, Dick Hendrix, Jenn Walker, Al & Deb McPherson, Kathy Sink and Joanne Spetzler.

**If you would like more bluebird information or are interested in purchasing a bluebird box (especially for a Christmas gift!), please contact Carol Whiteside 540-774-2143.**





## Bluebird Trail Summary, cont.

### Friendship Retirement Community:

We have a 'Nest Box Trail' here on the campus of Friendship Retirement Community on Hershberger Road in Roanoke, Virginia. There are 24 pole mounted nest boxes designed for bluebirds and 5 hanging boxes for wrens and chickadees. The end of the year summary is as follows:

Bluebirds fledged - 54      Tree Swallows fledged - 19      Wrens fledged - 12

Eggs laid - 68                      Eggs laid - 37                      Eggs laid - 12

Phillip Dean & Jack Cunningham

### Hunting Hills Trail:

Olivia Hill monitors and maintains the Hunting Hills trail of 34 nestboxes. There were 221 fledgling bluebirds with an 88% success rate.



Ruby-Throated Hummingbird (Bob Crawford); Bald Eagle (Garland Kitts); Eastern Wood-Pewee (Kirk Gardner)



Roanoke Valley Bird Club  
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Editor: Nathan Anderson

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### 2021-2022 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 _____
Family \$25 _____
Student \$10 _____
Adopt a Bluebird \$15 _____
Additional Contribution _____
Total Payment _____