Pre-meeting Dinner

Naseem Reza,
Chair—Hospitality Committee
hospitality@richmondaudubon.org,
Please join us for the dinner
before the meeting at 5:30 PM
on Thursday, January 20 and
February 17. You do not have to
bring food but you are welcome to
share one of your favorite dishes—
made by you or from a local deli.
Keep all your receipts for any food
you buy if you want to be reim-
bursed. There is a $5 charge to
cover drinks, paper products and
fill in food items. Call 804-272-
1145 or e-mail me by the Monday
continued on page 3

January Program: Keeping an
Eye on Rising Sea Levels

Join us at our January meet-
ing for an update on the 2011
General Assembly session and
any pending legislation RAS will
be tracking this year. Some of the
areas we will be watching include
legislation on conservation and
climate change, and our guest
speaker, Skip Stiles, will address
just that.

Skip Stiles is the execu-
tive director of Wetlands Watch,
which is a non-profit organization
that works to protect and conserve Virginia’s wetlands. Stiles and Wet-
lands Watch have been studying sea level rise in Virginia. What they’ve
found is that sea levels are rising at an ever-increasing pace, and Virginia
is a high-risk state and unprepared for the changing sea levels. Stiles
will demonstrate how sea level rise will impact Virginia in the coming
years, and what that will mean for the wetlands and important bird hab-
itats. He will also outline the steps Virginia can take now to be prepared.
You won’t want to miss this eye-opening and informative program.

Our January meeting will be on Thursday, January 20th at 7:00 P.M.
at St. Luke Lutheran Church, located at Custis Road and Chippenham
Parkway. The pre-meeting dinner will begin at 5:30 P.M.

February Program: Emily Kimball

On February 17 at 7:00 PM.
The February 17th program will
be presented by Emily Kimball. She is a Richmond resident and
an inspirational older woman
who applies lessons learned from
her many experiences to motivate
continued on page 3
President’s Message

Martha Gail visits Chester

Lewis Barnett

Over the years, central Virginia has been host to a small number of wintering Rufous Hummingbirds. While not numerous, we could usually expect to hear about one or two of these rambling hummers a year. So, on November 20, when long-time Richmond Audubon member Julie Kacmarcik, talking with a neighbor in her Chester front yard, heard a familiar buzz by her ear and subsequently found a young hummingbird visiting her Mexican Sage, the obvious thought was that she had been fortunate enough to attract one of these colorful, engaging winter visitors.

The hummingbird hung around for a few days, and obligingly posed for some photos, which Julie has been kind enough to share with us on the RAS listserv. She also sent them to Bob Sargent, an Alabama bird bander of her acquaintance who specializes in hummingbirds. Sargent was intrigued, and contacted Bruce Peterjohn and David Holmes, banders from Laurel, Maryland, who quickly arranged with Julie to come down and band the bird. Their examination determined that what was actually taking advantage of Julie’s garden was a much less likely hatch-year female Allen’s Hummingbird.

Allen’s Hummingbirds breed only in a narrow strip of the coast of California and southern Oregon, and they winter in south central Mexico. Julie’s bird will be only the third recorded Allen’s in Virginia. We are always amazed by the tenacious and hardy little Rufous Hummingbirds that have visited in the past, and this rare cousin just kicks that wonder up a notch!

Julie has dubbed her guest Martha Gail, after Bob Sargent’s wife, and has replaced the sage killed off by recent cold weather with heated feeders to keep her fueled. Sharing her good fortune with the rest of us through daily listserv updates, Julie has welcomed a steady stream of birders eager to catch a glimpse of her long-distance visitor – and the guests are coming from far afield as well. As is often the case when a rare bird makes an extended visit, new acquaintances are a pleasant side-effect.

continued on page 3

Richmond Audubon Society

The Richmond Audubon Society promotes the enjoyment, understanding, and preservation of birds, other wildlife, and habitat through education, advocacy, and fellowship.

Important Notices

RAS membership meetings are on the 3rd Thursday of the month except June, July, August and December. Meetings are at 7:00 PM, and are held at St. Luke Lutheran Church at Custis Road and Chippenham Parkway unless notified.

RAS Board meetings are held on the 2nd Thursday on alternate months starting in January (except June and August). In July, the Board has its annual strategic planning retreat. RAS members are welcome to attend board meetings, but let the President or Secretary know due to space considerations. Meeting locations vary; contact the President or Secretary for location details.

Richmond Audubon Society is also a chapter of the Virginia Society of Ornithology and the Virginia Conservation Network.

Richmond Audubon Society
P.O. Box 26648
Richmond, VA 23261
(804) 257-0813
www.RichmondAudubon.org

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Publication Schedule

The Thrasher is issued six times a year. Submit articles no later than the 15th of the month before each issue. Deadlines for each issue are listed here >

- December 15th for Jan/Feb issue.
- February 15th for Mar/Apr issue.
- April 15th for May/Jun issue.
- June 15th for Jul/Aug issue.
- August 15th for Sep/Oct issue.
- October 15th for Nov/Dec issue.

Email articles to: arun1bose@gmail.com.
Images to accompany articles are encouraged, and should be at full size with a resolution of 300 dpi.
2010 Auction Results
Pam Dummitt, Treasurer
This year’s auction was a tremendous success. We had a lot of fun, and raised some serious money for our projects in the process. Over 80 folks attended the pot luck dinner and watched the slideshow retrospective of bird photos taken by our members during the year. 51 people donated items ranging from a handmade apron with a bird motif to a field trip sponsored by the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries. The total amount raised was $2922, including $80 in outright cash donations, and $206 worth of raffle tickets sold. Steven Dunn did a fabulous job coordinating the event, despite being new to RAS and having never done a fundraising auction before. Many others too numerous to mention worked behind the scenes to make it all add up to a fun and “fund” evening. Thanks to all of those who attended, contributed, bid, won a bid, or made a donation.

Pre-meeting continued from page 1 of the meeting week. Please let me know what you will be bringing.

**NOTE:** If you would like to come for the dinner but are not sure if you can make it, give us your name by mid-day on Wednesday. If you cannot make it to the dinner, you will not be responsible for the $5 charge.

Bon Appétit!

February program continued from page 1

others to create active and involved lifestyles. She hiked the complete Appalachian Trail in stages from 1993 - 2003, and will present images of birds and scenic photos from some of the journey. RAS members are urged to visit her website to learn more about this amazing lady at www.theagingadventurer.com.

Birding Volunteers Needed Petersburg National Battlefield

Petersburg National Battlefield is currently in the process of developing a bird monitoring program. We seek volunteers to assist us surveying about 70 points in our Eastern Front Unit. Volunteers will conduct surveys between late May and mid July, record general survey information and record all birds seen and heard within a 10-minute period. Time commitment involves completing a 3-4 hour mandatory training and spending an estimated 30 minutes per assigned point. If you are interested in assisting the Battlefield in this program please contact Tim Blumenschine at Tim_Blumenshine@nps.gov or 804-732-0171, ext. 303.
State Legislature to Convene Soon

Glenda C. Booth, gbooth123@aol.com, Advocacy Chair, National Audubon Society

The Virginia General Assembly will convene on January 12 for a 45-day “short” session. A number of energy and environment-related bills are expected to be considered. To learn more, visit the Virginia Conservation Network at http://vcnva.org and click on the 2011 Conservation Briefing Book.

Auduboners may wish to participate in Conservation Lobby Day on January 17. Visit this website for more information http://vcn.citizen-networks.org/site/Calendar?id=100661&view=Detail.

The Virginia League of Conservation Voters has legislative contact teams for each state delegate and senator. Serving on these teams (one for your delegate, one for your senator) is an excellent way to get to know your elected officials, other conservationists and to influence state policy. Visit http://vcn.citizen-networks.org/site/Calendar?id=100661&view=Detail to learn all about it.

The Virginia League of Conservation Voters at http://www.valcv.org/ has a 2010 Conservation Scorecard showing how current state legislators voted on conservation issues this year. Check out yours.

Congress May Block EPA

Most observers expect the new Congress, to convene in January 2011, to try to limit the Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) authority to protect the environment. Which laws, programs or initiatives will be attacked are not known at this time.

Many people predict that legislators may try to limit the agency’s ability to reduce greenhouse gas emissions under the current Clean Air Act. There were several unsuccessful efforts to limit EPA in 2010. The Senate rejected Senator Lisa Murkowski’s bill, S. J. Res. 26, and both Senators Webb and Warner voted against it. In Senate debate on June 10, 2010, Senator Webb said he would support Senator Jay Rockefeller bill, S. 3072, to prevent EPA from acting for two years. You can read Senators Murkowski’s and Rockefeller’s bills here http://thomas.loc.gov/ by entering the bill numbers.

The current Clean Air Act is designed to protect human health and welfare. Greenhouse gas emissions are a threat to human health, many experts say. As the planet warms, for example, climate change will worsen health problems like heat-related mortality, diarrheal diseases and diseases associated with exposure to ozone and allergens from the air. Warmer temperatures encourage the formation of ozone, which aggravates asthma.

The Virginia Commission on Climate Change reported that more extreme weather events from climate change could compromise water and food supplies, increase waterborne and food-borne illnesses and increase the incidence of respiratory and cardiovascular conditions.

EPA administers several laws designed to protect the public health. The Obama administration is using the authority under the current Clean Air Act to tighten up on vehicle emission standards. Without a comprehensive law, the Clean Air Act authority is EPA’s primary legal tool for controlling greenhouse gas emissions.

Every day the Congress fails to act means continued dependence on imported oil and fossil fuels, little resolution of the threats to our national security posed by imported oil and climate changes, more extreme weather events like hurricanes and droughts and more threats to public infrastructure and health. Inaction on climate change adds costs to government at every level, from increased flooding from sea level rise to damage from more extreme weather events.

Please ask your Congressman and Virginia Senators Mark Warner and Jim Webb to oppose bills that would limit EPA’s authority to protect the environment.

How to contact Virginia’s U. S. senators:
The Honorable James Webb
(http://webb.senate.gov/)
U. S. Senate, Washington, D. C. 20515;
202-224-4024

The Honorable Mark Warner
(http://warner.senate.gov)
U. S. Senate, Washington, D. C. 20515;
202-224-2023

You can also send an e-mail at your senator’s web site or through Audubon's Action Center, www.audubonaction.org.

For clean energy and climate fact sheets, visit http://www.audubon.org/globalWarming/GetTheFacts.php
Field Trips
Art Baker, Field Trip Chair
These are all the RAS trips that have been submitted as of the publication date.
Check the RAS listserv (if you don’t subscribe the archives are at www.freelists.org/archive/va-richmond-general/) or the RAS website for any late breaking news about field trips (www.richmondaudubon.org/ActivFieldTrip.html.)

January 2nd, 2011, Sunday, Bryan Park with Sue Ridd, 7:45 AM. Come see Bryan Park from a different point of view. Each season has its own cast for your birding interests! Meet at Shelter #1. There is a Bryan Park trip on the first Sunday of each month, starting about 1/2 hour after sunrise. For more information, call Sue at (804) 270-5365.

January 16, 2011, Sunday, Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel Islands. Join us for a visit to this one of a kind birding hotspot. Registration is required for this trip and participation is limited by the CBBT. Call or email Art Baker before January 4th for details. (804) 730-9127 or fieldtrips@richmondaudubon.org

January 22, Saturday, James River Park Winter Count, and Brunch. This is our annual species inventory of the James River Park System and post-foray brunch at the home of Mary Arginteanu and Larry Robinson. There will be a one suet cake entrance fee once again as well as the request of a brunch item and/or beverage to share.

January 29, Saturday, 10:00 A.M. Lets go gulling. Join Arun Bose to look for gulls in the Richmond metro area. Meet at Lake Brook Drive (off Nuckolls Rd) Innsbrook at 10:00 A.M. Afterwards we will check downtown areas. Contact Arun at arun1bose@gmail.com or 804-335-8813 for details.

February 6th, 2011, Sunday, Bryan Park with Sue Ridd, 7:35 AM. Meet at Shelter #1. For more information, call Sue at (804) 270-5365.

February 11th -13th, Virginia Society of Ornithology Outer Banks Field Trip, with Bill Akers and Jerry Via. Full details at http://www.virginiabirds.net/f_trips.html.

February 19th, Saturday, Lewis Ginter Botanical Gardens, 8:00 AM to 9:45 AM. Members FREE; Special Non-Member Cost: $6.00. The count will continue on to the James River Park. This trip is part of the 4 day nationwide Great Backyard Bird Count. Meet in the rotunda of the visitor center. You must sign up in advance; there must be at least four people signed up by 9:00 PM the Wednesday before the trip or it will be cancelled. Contact: Tyler Turpin at (804) 317-9478 or tylerturpin@earthlink.net. Lewis Ginter BT is located at 1800 Lakeside Ave, Richmond, VA 23228-4700.

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Hopewell CBC 2010 Summary
Arun Bose
The 71st Hopewell Christmas Bird Count was held on December 19, 2010. Thanks to the 44 participants who braved the chilly weather, we were able to equal the previous species high count of 117 set in 2007. This year we added two new species to the count: Allen’s Hummingbird, and Northern Waterthrush. These bring the count total to 170 species. Other highlights included 23 species of waterfowl (including single Ross’s and Cackling Geese), Nine species of hawk (including Merlin and Osprey) 10 species of sparrow (including American Tree Sparrow, and a new high count for White Crowned - 60), Lapland Longspur, Baltimore Oriole, and 13 Purple Finch. There were “only” four species of warbler this year including Orange-crowned, Pine, Yellow-rumped, and the previously mentioned Waterthrush.

My thanks again to participants, landowners who gave permission to include their properties, the US Fish and Wildlife Service, and Chesterfield county parks for transportation support, and lastly VCU for letting us have the compilation tally at the Rice Center.
From The Kitchen Window—Mid December Morning

John Coe

... And, as the sun comes up across the way... its streams of new morning light set the snow glazed tree tops ablaze. Ice crystals on the window panes frame the wonder of the fresh fallen snow scene out back. I am writing this on a mid December morning - not even winter yet, so says the calendar - and we have enjoyed our second snowfall, already. Wow, what is yet to come? The birds probably hope for less cold and less snow, but it brings them together at the feeders... and we can just sip our coffee on the warm side of the window and enjoy watching.

Our birds, and Caroline and I, wish to dedicate this beautiful view of the snow and this “From The Kitchen Window” to a friend of ours, and a friend of Audubon’s, Alfred “Tim” Kaulfers, who passed away this past spring.

Tim would call me often to tell me tails (tales) of the birds in his back yard, and you knew the birds were so much fun for him. Tim’s wife Jeannette gave me his bird records of many years, which were quite detailed and a delight to read... the birds and I will miss Tim.

So today's backyard count on December 14, 2010, with a skiff of snow on the ground and temperatures in the mid-30’s (Tim would have detailed by species and numbers down to the last feather – I will just share the highlights): Our regular residents were (juncos and white-throated sparrows) were here, too. Special appearances (for Tim): a pair of Red-tailed Hawks, Hairy Woodpecker, Pileated Woodpecker, Brown Creeper, Hermit Thrush, Fox Sparrow, Red-breasted Nuthatch, 3 Pine Siskins, and a Pine Warbler.

The Full Moon in January occurs on the 19th at 9:22 PM, and is named the Wolf Moon. The Full Moon in February occurs on the 18th at 3:36 AM and is called the Snow Moon, or The Hunger Moon.

Virginia Important Bird Areas (IBA) Program 2010 Update

-David A. Bryan, Outreach Coordinator, Virginia IBA Program

During this past year, the Virginia Important Bird Areas (IBA) Program of the National Audubon Society has been busy in forwarding our mission of engaging people for bird conservation in the Commonwealth's most critical habitats for breeding, migrating and wintering birds. The following are some exciting highlights of this past year's events and accomplishments:

- Helped to protect the 125 acre Blair's Wharf in the James River National Wildlife Refuge located within the Lower James River IBA
- Coordinated and conducted the first survey of the Central Piedmont IBA, focusing on the protected areas
- Expanded our Adopt-an-IBA Program to include eight bird conservation groups throughout Virginia
- Partnered with the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation to train birders from 5 Audubon Chapters and the Coastal Virginia Wildlife Observatory to identify and report Phragmites invasions throughout Virginia using an online conservation tool called LandScope – the valuable information collected will help DCR staff to ground-truth their own data and identify new stands of Phragmites to eliminate, thus continued on page 8
The Rusty Blackbird Winter Blitz, January 29 – February 13, 2011
Sergio Harding, Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries

The Rusty Blackbird has undergone precipitous population declines over the past 40 years. The species is a breeder in boreal forested wetlands of northern New England, Alaska and the Canadian Provinces and winters largely in the southeastern United States, including Virginia. Its elusive nature has contributed to our current lack of knowledge of many aspects of its ecology on both its breeding and wintering grounds. However, in recent years increasing numbers of researchers have taken up the challenge of identifying the causes of the Rusty Blackbird’s declines and of ultimately reversing these trends. For the past two years we have mobilized an all-out “blitz” to locate Rusty Blackbirds and create a map of wintering Rusty Blackbird “hot spots” that will help focus research, monitoring and conservation attention. We are looking to round out this effort with one last Rusty Blackbird Winter Blitz in 2011.

The Blitz is a project of the International Rusty Blackbird Technical Working Group, a Smithsonian-led partnership of state and federal agencies, universities and non-governmental organizations with a stake in Rusty Blackbird conservation. In Virginia, the Blitz is coordinated as a project of the Virginia Bird Conservation Initiative (VABCI) through a partnership of the VA Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, the Virginia Society of Ornithology, the Coastal Virginia Wildlife Observatory and the Virginia Important Bird Areas Program. In 2010, 207 birders in 31 states participated in the Blitz. Virginia ranked third among states in the number of Rusty Blackbird sightings reported. In this final year we hope to increase participation, expand coverage and identify new Rusty Blackbird sites, as well as collect information on the stability of known sites over time. Your participation in the Blitz is critical to generating information for Virginia, which will represent our state’s contribution to the range-wide assessment of the bird’s wintering status.

Participation in the Blitz is easy. As a Blitz volunteer, you will visit sites with potentially suitable Rusty Blackbird habitat and record your observations of the number of birds present, along with very basic habitat information. You are free to visit whichever sites you want, whenever you want and as often as you want during the Blitz period of January 29 – February 13. Sites can be targeted based on your knowledge of local habitat, of current occurrences or of past observations. There is a great deal of local knowledge in the collective membership of your bird club, and it is highly recommended that you coordinate with your club so that geographic coverage of suitable (and accessible) habitat is maximized. Blitz observations are submitted through Virginia eBird, so that they may be analyzed together with eBird Blitz observations from other states. If you are not already registered with eBird, this is a great opportunity to join.

You can find additional information on status, distribution and ecology of Rusty Blackbirds in Virginia, as well as links to Blitz instructions and results of the 2010 Blitz at www.vabc.org/rusty-blackbird.asp. If you have any questions about the Blitz, please contact the VA Blitz Coordinator at sergio.harding@dgif.virginia.gov.
preserving natural marsh habitats
- Began a partnership with the Virginia Living Museum to conduct five Together Green volunteer events, thus raising awareness for Audubon and bird habitat conservation
- Worked with the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries to monitor coveys of Northern Bobwhite quail, a declining species of Global Conservation Concern
- With partners at Richmond Audubon Society and Virginia Commonwealth University we have initiated a project called Team Warbler, an international alliance between the research and school communities of Richmond and Panama City that will engage academic communities at the college, elementary and middle school levels. Team Warbler focuses on the breeding and wintering habitat of the Prothonotary Warbler.

From the Powell and Stone Mountains IBA in the southwest to the Barrier Island Lagoon System IBA on the Eastern Shore, Virginia's 20 IBAs all face a large variety of threats and challenges. We would thus like to extend thanks to our donors, volunteers, adoption groups and to our public, private and non-profit partners in conservation for their help and support in furthering our mutual mission for bird conservation throughout the Commonwealth. We could not do it without you and thus ask for your continued support heading into 2011. Thank you!