Jerry Uhlman believes he is a very lucky guy: For over 25 years he has enjoyed a delicious potpourri of birding, travel, photography and free-lance writing.

As a birding novice when his wife, Sylvia, and he moved to Richmond, he took advantage of many RAS field trips to hone his bird identification skills, leading to an all-consuming passion.

Not long after Jerry became a focused birder, he began taking shots of birds with a point-and-shoot Canon camera. In those early days, 12-15 rolls of film got you, maybe, 12-15 good pictures. Nowadays, he travels with a Canon Rebel T2i with a 100-400 zoom lens hanging from his shoulder. Digital equipment has changed the art and science of photography so that anyone can expect to take high quality shots.

Jerry’s passion for birding has taken him on birding treks throughout most of the United States and more than two dozen countries in Europe, Africa, and Central and South America. Among his more memorable trips are: Ivory Coast during a surprise coup d'état, a gut-wrenching 4-wheel vehicle breakdown in California Gulch along the Mexican border, and a harrowing flight from Cancun to Havana on a rickety Cubana Airlines plane.

Travel and birding inspired Jerry to write about his experiences in the field. One of his earliest projects was to compile a regional birding guide for the Richmond area with the help of RAS birders, a guidebook that continues to be a popular resource to find local hotspots. For over 15 years he's written a birding column called “Flyways and Byways” for the Richmond Times-Dispatch, which still appears the third Sunday of each month. His birding sagas have appeared in a number of magazines, most often in BirdWatcher’s Digest.

Yes, Jerry Uhlman believes—no, he knows—he has a charmed birding life...

See page 4 for Jerry’s favorite photos
President’s Message

Lewis Barnett

The more things change

I recently picked up a copy of Wild America, the travelogue co-authored by legendary American ornithologist Roger Tory Peterson and his British counterpart, James Fisher. It is a beautifully written narrative, tracking the 30,000 miles the two men traveled in 1953 in Peterson’s brand new Ford station wagon. On Peterson’s part, it is a loving and somewhat wistful portrait of a landscape and fauna that he knew intimately and loved. For Fisher, it was a grand journey of discovery, as this was his first introduction to North America and its wildlife. Anyone who has traveled our continent in search of birds will find familiar scenes and experiences in their prose.

I was struck by one passage early in the book. Peterson wrote, When James and I drove south along the New Jersey coast, I was shocked to see how things had altered since the war’s end. The sandy coast, the dunes, and the estuaries are now one continuous line of flimsy beach dwellings, bathhouses, billboards, and hot dog stands. Even Barnegat and Brigantine, wild beaches that resounded to the calls of plovers and curlew when I knew them, are now almost completely built up. Only one stretch of pristine seashore remains – Island Beach – ten miles of barrier island, acquired just in the nick of time by the state of New Jersey.

This is a scene that has been continuously repeated anywhere there is buildable water frontage in the intervening years. At this time of year, when our General Assembly is in session, this is a reminder that we can’t depend on our wild places staying wild without constant attention and education regarding their value, both to their wild ecosystems and to us, their human stewards. I encourage you to attend our January membership meeting, which will focus on environmental issues in the upcoming session, and to take action by participating in Lobby Day at the general assembly, or by communicating your views to your representatives.

Publication Schedule
The Thrasher is issued six times a year. Please submit articles to thrasher@richmondaudubon.org no later than the 10th of the month before each issue. Deadline for the next issue is February 10.
January and February Programs

Caroline Coe, Program Chair
Cccoe@verizon.net  -  804-276-1397

Thursday, January 16, 2014

Join us to hear what opportunities and challenges we as conservationists face in the 2014 Virginia General Assembly session. A Virginia Conservation Network (VCN) spokesman will bring us information on this year’s session which convenes on Wednesday, January 8, 2014.

This is a must-attend meeting where we can learn more about some VCN and Virginia priorities:

- alignment with local governments and farmers in support of a ban on uranium mining and milling that protects drinking water for us all.

- call for a more balanced, efficient transportation system, never been more relevant as lawmakers struggle to plug the fiscal pothole left by billion-dollar highways.

- Virginia’s renewable energy laws which must be reformed in order to create jobs and clean kilowatts here at home.

Join us at 6:30 pm for pre-meeting coffee, cookies and conversations. The meeting will start at 7:00 pm.

Thursday, February 20, 2014

The February program will give us a jump start on our birding by ear skills so we’re ready and eager for the arriving birdsong of returning migrants.

Dr. Larry Underwood and colleagues will join us and share some of the secrets. Dr. Underwood is a biologist, author, birder and professor, and is the principal scientific advisor to iKnow Songs, an app for learning and identifying birds song.

Join us on February 20th at 6:30 pm for pre-meeting coffee, cookies and conversation. We meet at St Luke Lutheran Church, 7757 Chippenham Pkwy at Custis Road. The meeting will start at 7:00 pm.

Looking ahead to March, John and Caroline Coe will give a program on their 101-day Grand Adventure to Alaska.

Peace in these hectic times!!

Our Winter Guests II

These winter guests will not come to your backyard unless your estate includes a large body of water. Fortunately Central Virginia provides these ducks with many suitable habitats in our lakes and rivers. As you can tell from the pictures, on page 5, most duck species display a very different plumage depending on their gender, with males being brighter. More than 10 duck species make the Richmond area their winter home, the most common being the Ring-necked Duck, Hooded Merganser, Gadwall and Bufflehead. Not widespread but locally common are the Northern Shoveler, American Wigeon (no picture), Northern Pintail and Ruddy Duck. Less common but definitely worth seeking out are the Lesser Scaup and Redhead. And once every few years, we are fortunate to have the Canvasback visit and delight us with its uncommon beauty.

See page 5 for pictures of the paired duck species. Special thanks to Lori and Bob Schamerhorn and Steve Baranoff for providing most of the pictures.
Jerry Uhlman’s Favorite Photos

American Flamingo, Cuba

Red-necked Grebe, Montana

Northern Bobwhite, Chincoteague NWR

Greater Prairie-Chicken, Nebraska
Our Winter Guests II

Canvasbacks at Mid-Lothian Mines Park, Chesterfield

Photo by Bob Schamerhorn- www.iPhotoBirds.com

Ring-necked Ducks at Byrd Park, Richmond

Photo by Bob Schamerhorn- www.iPhotoBirds.com

Northern Pintails at Palo Alto, CA

Photo by Steve Baranoff

Redheads at Fountain Lake, Richmond

Photo by Naseem Reza

Hooded Mergansers at Short Pump, Henrico

Photo by Bob Schamerhorn- www.iPhotoBirds.com

Lesser Scaups at Fountain Lake, Richmond

Photo by Naseem Reza

Ruddy Ducks at Innsbruck, Henrico

Photo by Bob Schamerhorn- www.iPhotoBirds.com

Gadwalls at Dutch Gap, Chester

Photo by Naseem Reza

Northern Shovelers at Chincoteague NWR

Photo by Lori Schamerhorn

Buffleheads at Swan Lake, Richmond

Photo by Bob Schamerhorn- www.iPhotoBirds.com
Field Trips

Ellison Orcutt

These are all the RAS trips that have been submitted as of the publication date. Check the RAS listerv (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 5th, Sunday
**Bryan Park** with Sue Ridd:
Start time: ½ hour after sunrise
Meeting location: Shelter 1, Joseph Bryan Park
Brief description: Join Sue Ridd for her regular early morning bird walk in Bryan Park. See what birds have made the Northside their home for the winter.
For more information, call Sue at 270-5365.

January 5th, Sunday
**Dutch Gap** with Lewis Barnett
Meet Lewis at 8:00 am at the entrance to Henricus Historical Park/Dutch Gap Conservation area. Explore this great birding spot to see what winter birds are around. You never know what will turn up at Dutch Gap.
For more information, contact Lewis at president@richmondaudubon.org.

January 8th, Wednesday - 8:00 am
**Dutch Gap** with John Coe
Weren't able to get out to Dutch Gap over the weekend? Well, John Coe hopes you can join him for one of his signature 2nd Wednesday walks. Meet John at 8:00 am at the Starbucks on Rte. 10 and Jefferson Davis Highway (12501 Jefferson Davis Hwy, Chester, VA). For more information, contact him at johnwcoe@verizon.net.

January 11th, Saturday 7:00-10:00 am
**James River Winter Count** with Richmond Audubon.
Help the Richmond Audubon Society inventory the bird species of the James River Parks system. It will be followed by a count compilation and light brunch at Betsy and Ben Saunders' home. All skill levels are welcome.
For more information about participating in this long running count contact Julie Kacmarcik at juliekazz@comcast.net.

January 25th, Saturday
**Bethel Beach NAP** with Arun Bose
This Natural Area Preserve in Mathews County sits on the western shore of the Chesapeake Bay. Barriers beaches, salt marshes and the open waters of the Chesapeake make it a great birding opportunity. Make a day of it and explore some of the other hidden gems of the western Chesapeake. Bethel Beach is about 1.5 hours east of Richmond. Please contact Arun to RSVP for this trip and for more information. He can be reached at arunbose@gmail.com.

January 26th, Sunday - 8:00 am
**Mid-Lothian Mines Park** with Wendy Ealding
Join Wendy to enjoy birds and history all at once.
Mid-Lothian Mines, in Midlothian, is a fairly new park that in recent years has become a great spot for winter waterfowl. In addition to birds, the site provides interpretive information about one of Virginia's original coal mines. Meet Wendy at 8:00 am in the parking lot adjacent to the pond. The park is on N Woolridge Road, just a short distance south of its intersection with Midlothian Tpk. Contact Wendy for more information at wealding@aol.com.

February 1st, Saturday - 8:00 am
**Dutch Gap** with Lewis Barnett
Meet Lewis at 8:00 am at the entrance to Henricus Historical Park/Dutch Gap Conservation area. For more information, contact Lewis at president@richmondaudubon.org.

February 2nd, Sunday
**Bryan Park** with Sue Ridd:
Start time: ½ hour after sunrise
Meeting location: Shelter 1, Joseph Bryan Park
Description: See January 6th walk.
For more information, call Sue at 270-5365.

February 15th, Saturday - 8:00 am
**Lewis Ginter Botanical Gardens** with Tyler Turpin
See the birds of Lewis Ginter Botanical Gardens. Meet in the rotunda of the visitor center at 8:00 am. Cost will be $7.00 for non-Ginter members. As part of the Great Backyard Bird Count Tyler will continue birding the city, meet him along the way. 10:30 am at Browns Island, 11:45 am at Pony Pasture, and 1:30 pm at the ponds of Stony Point Office Park. Contact Tyler Turpin at (804) 317-9478 or email tylerturpin@earthlink.net to sign up.
From the Kitchen Window

John Coe

"Nature does nothing uselessly." Aristotle

A look out the kitchen window as morning light reveals night's artistry. The trees sparkle with frozen water tears as a light rain falls on icy branches.

From the window-- nature can brush us lightly with soft winter beauty, or be a beast and break our limbs and take our comforts, or fool us with spring-like warmth. The wonder as I watch from the window: the birds apparently can read nature's highs and lows and winds and fronts and changes afoot, all without the guidance of the weather channel.

Today is cold and there is sleet on the ground and ice on the trees. Beneath the cedar where I have spread bird seed there is lively activity - lots of scratching and leaves dancing up and about. The sparrows and juncos, cardinals and doves are in the mix, and this frosty day brings in the towhee, Fox Sparrow and Brown Thrasher.

The feeders are at full capacity with the occasional dispute about seating among the chickadees, titmice, house finches and nut hatches. The blue jay will bring order. And up on the deck where I have cedar berries and holly and suet logs, the woodpeckers and bluebirds and robins and cedar waxwings and yellow rumps. And today the Hermit Thrush and Ruby-crowned Kinglet have joined - and most unusual, a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker was eating the cedar berries.

There is joy on a wintry day from the kitchen window. Happy New Year! The full moon in January called the wolf moon occurs on the 15th. In February, the full moon occurs on the 15th and is named the snow moon, also the hunger moon. And watch for the groundhog on February 2.

From the Editor

For this issue we invited Jerry Uhlman to share his favorite photos with our readers. As you can tell from his pictures on page 4, we are the beneficiary of Jerry's extensive travels and fine camera work.

In Winter Guests Part II, Ducks Rule. I will be remiss if I don’t point out that the Mid-Lothian Mines Park in Chesterfield County is hosting as many as 7 species of winter guests in mid-December, including three Canvasbacks.

Great Backyard Bird Count Survey at James River National Wildlife Refuge

On Sunday, February 16, The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Richmond Audubon join forces for this annual survey of wintering birds in a remarkable habitat bordered by Powell’s Creek and the James River. Meet at the refuge information kiosk, 4550 Flowerdew Hundred Road, Hopewell, VA, at 7:30 am. Contact Lewis Barnett (blbarnett3@gmail.com, 804-920-4723) for details.
Chapter Membership Application

Yes, please enroll me (us) as a new member(s) of both National and Richmond Audubon Societies at the address below, at the introductory rate. A subscription to the NAS magazine, Audubon is included.

☐ Individual/Family Member(s) $20 enclosed
☐ Student/Senior Member $15 enclosed

Name ____________________________________________
Address __________________________________________
City __________________________ State ___ ZIP __________
Phone __________________________ E-mail __________________________

Make check payable to National Audubon Society and write “C0ZX530Z” on the check. Send your check and application to:

Richmond Audubon Society,
P.O. Box 26648, Richmond, VA 23261

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