RAS Meetings in March and April 2006

The meetings will be held at St. Luke Lutheran Church, beginning at 7:00 p.m. on the third Thursday of each month. The church is located at the intersection of Chippenham Parkway and Custis Road in South Richmond. The intersection is at a traffic light just east of the Huguenot Rd. exit.

Program for March 16: In response to requests by many of our members, the program in March will be a panel discussion on backyard birding. Panel members will include John Coe, Sue Ridd, and Jim Strawn, as well as representatives from Wild Birds Unlimited and Southern States, who will also have informative displays available on site. After the discussion of several interesting topics, there will be a question and answer period.

Program for April 20: RAS member Mary Arginteanu will present a program on one of our continuing conservation projects, referred to as MAPS (Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survival). MAPS is a long-term, nationwide study to learn what affects birds' breeding success and longevity. We think Richmond Audubon's eight-year participation in this study is citizen science at its best. Come learn what a hardy group of RAS volunteers do - very, very early in the morning on hot summer days - and why it's worth getting up at 3:30 a.m. to examine birds! See how the overall MAPS study can help professionals manage bird habitat, and help all of us understand trends in bird populations.

Dessert will be available after the meetings.

The Pre-meeting dinner for each meeting will start at 5:30 p.m. There is a nominal fee of $5.00. Call or email me by the day before the meeting if you plan to be there for the dinner. 743-1479 / lindawarfield@comcast.net.

Note for those who want to come but are unsure you can make it: get your name on the list. Too much food is better than not enough! (If you can't make it, you will not be responsible for the cost.) Because enough food must be available for the number of attendees, reservations will not be accepted after the evening before the day of the meeting.

Food for the pre-meeting dinners is provided by some of the attendees by pre-arrangement. You don't have to bring any food, but you are welcome to share one of your favorite dishes with our group. It will help spread out the work required. Keep all your receipts for any food you bring. The way it works is this: those who bring food are reimbursed for their expenses if they provide receipts (bring them to the meeting), and those who partake pay the $5.00 fee whether or not they bring food. We don't try to make a profit on the dinners. Call or email by the Sunday before the Thursday meeting to let me know what you plan to provide. This allows time to coordinate the dinner. Bon Appetit!

Linda Warfield
Hospitality Chair

Bird Sightings While Paddling the James River

The Varina Lions Club will hold its 14th annual Canoe-athon fund raiser on Sunday morning, May 14, from Osborne Boat Landing down river (with the tides), looping around the Presquile National Wildlife Refuge for a take-out at Shirley Plantation. Boaters (canoers and kayakers) will be paddling one of the most historic and beautiful stretches of the James, and bird sightings, especially birds of prey, can be numerous. At Shirley, adjacent to the mansion, we’ll enjoy a great barbeque lunch and take in the magnificent vista. Proceeds from this event will benefit the blind and hearing impaired. For details please contact RAS member Buz Snyder at 804-795-1446 or at Snyderfolks@Earthlink.net.
President’s Message: March/ April 2006

What do the Polar Bear and the Bald Eagle have in common other than both having white heads? Both are in the news because they are being affected by habitat changes. Current discussion revolves around removing the Bald Eagle from the endangered list and putting the Polar Bear on that list. The Polar Bears are being threatened because the warming of the Arctic ocean has reduced the availability of the ice floes upon which they live. The continuity of floes constitute their hunting ground and the warming water is creating open water between floes. The bears are starving. The plight of the Polar Bear may be a boon for conservation efforts. The image of the cuddly Polar Bear catches the imagination and sympathy of people.

For years the Bald Eagle was the symbol of the conservation movement as these birds faced extermination due to the effects of DDT on their egg shells, resulting in ever-decreasing hatches. Now, with the eagle population restored throughout its range, it is again under attack, this time from people competing for the eagle’s habitat. The Bald Eagle’s nesting sites are often on prime wooded waterfront property – the same place that people want to live. If the Bald Eagle is removed from the endangered list there will be no protection for those sites, possibly leading to prolonged litigation, and may well demonstrate once again how the loss of habitat is a major contributor to the decline of a species.

Please tell your Senator and Representative that you do not support efforts to gut the Endangered Species act.

The score card for conservation legislation in Virginia does not look good so far. Efforts to impose a moratorium on the landing of horseshoe crabs whose numbers are declining in the Chesapeake Bay and which provide food for Red Knots failed in committee. There was simply not enough support for the position of the conservationists. Virginia has signed on to provide funding for cleanup of the Chesapeake Bay but a commitment to continued funding is needed. Let your representatives know that you support long-term funding for restoring the health of the Bay.

Our challenge is to continue to inform our lawmakers that conservation efforts are important. As individuals we must write, email, phone, fax our lawmakers at both the state and national level and state our position on conservation issues. Then we must turn around and do it again, and again, and again. As organizations we must develop coherent positions on conservation issues and encourage our members to become active in the political arena. We increase our effectiveness by working with established groups such as the Virginia Conservation Network and the National Audubon Society but nothing is more important than individual communications with lawmakers. For those who have been writing, phoning, emailing - thank you. For those who have yet to become involved - start now. Remember, once our natural resources are gone, they are gone forever. They simply don’t come back as they were.

To stay on top of conservation issues subscribe to the emailed Audubon Advisory at audubonaction@audubon.org.

Ellen Ackerman

Learn How To Conduct Standardized Bird Surveys
For The Virginia Important Bird Areas Program

The Virginia Important Bird Areas (IBA) Program is offering two spring training workshops for volunteers to learn how to conduct point counts (a standardized bird survey technique) on potential or recognized IBAs in Virginia. This simple survey technique allows us to estimate abundance of bird populations as well as species diversity. Understanding changes in bird abundance over time is very important as it allows us to track the health of bird populations and then target conservation efforts where they will have the greatest impact.

There is currently a great need to acquire abundance information in many areas that are, or have the potential to become, IBAs. You can help with this important effort by becoming Point Count Certified for the Virginia IBA Program. After just one certification workshop, you can continue to contribute valuable information to the IBA Program for a lifetime. The data you provide will be used to assess which areas should become IBAs, determine which populations are in the most trouble, pinpoint where we should direct our conservation efforts, and track the impact (positive or negative) of our conservation activities on bird populations.

At each workshop participants will learn: A) The value of point counts and how we use the information to track bird population trends. B) How to use GPS units to determine and then locate survey points. C) How to conduct point counts and then practice these new skills in the field.

The workshops will be held in two beautiful locations in northeastern and southwestern Virginia:

- **April 22** (Earth Day!), 10am – 2pm: Manassas National Battlefield Park, a recognized IBA.
- **May 5** (1st day of VSO annual meeting), 11am – 3pm: Breaks Interstate Park, a potential IBA.

We already have, and will continue to have, many opportunities for certified volunteers to contribute to the IBA Program with their new skills.

Contact Aimee Weldon (aweldon@audubon.org or 804-752-5850) to register or for more information.
Proposed Removal of the Bald Eagle in the Lower 48 States From the List of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife

This Thrasher article is for your information and takes no position on this issue, but please read and decide.

In 50 CFR Part 17, RIN 1018-AF21, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), announced the reopening of the public comment period for the proposal to remove the Bald Eagle from the List of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife in the lower 48 States, under the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (ESA), as amended. The proposed delisting rule for the bald eagle was published on July 6, 1999 (64 FR 36545).

The document states that "the best available scientific and commercial data available indicates that the bald eagle has recovered.

The bald eagle population in the lower 48 States has increased from approximately 487 active nests in 1963, to an estimated minimum 7,066 breeding pairs today. This rule will not affect protection provided to the species under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act (BGEPA) or the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA). In addition, the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act will continue to provide protection to the Bald Eagle, if delisting under the ESA is found to be warranted. To help clarify the BGEPA protections provided to the Bald Eagle, the Service is also soliciting public comments on two related draft Bald Eagle documents under the BGEPA that are being published simultaneously with this proposed delisting rule. First, notice of availability and request for public comments on draft National Bald Eagle Management Guidelines (Guidelines) are being published. The Guidelines provide guidance on how to comply with the requirements of the BGEPA by avoiding disturbance to Bald Eagles under different land use scenarios. Second, a proposed rule is being published to add the definition of "disturb" to regulations at 50 CFR 22.3, which implement the BGEPA. These two documents are published separately in this part of the Federal Register and include additional information about submitting comments on them."

Comments must be received by May 17, 2006 in order to ensure their consideration. You may submit comments and other information, identified by RIN 1018-AF21, by any of the following methods: Mail: Michelle Morgan, Chief, Branch of Recovery and Delisting, Endangered Species Program, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Headquarters Office, 4401 N. Fairfax Drive, Room 420, Arlington, Virginia 22203. Attn: RIN 1018-AF21. E-mail: baldagdelisting@fws.gov. Include "RIN 1018-AF21" in the subject line of the message.

The Federal eRulemaking Portal: http://www.regulations.gov. Follow the instructions for submitting comments. Instructions: All submissions received must include the agency name and Regulatory Identification Number (RIN) for this rulemaking.

In summary of comments on the July 6, 1999 Proposed Delisting Rule, 17 issues were identified in the comment period after the original notice of the proposed delisting, and these issues were given responses by the Fish & Wildlife Service in the full document.

Another important section is Summary of Factors Affecting the Species. It is important to read these sections of the CFR article before arriving at conclusions. By comparing the NAS position with the statements made by Fish & Wildlife you should be able to decide whether you want to make comments. You can find the documents yourself, or send an email to warfield101@comcast.net and the articles will be emailed to you as attachments.

Annual Meeting, and Nominating Committee Report

The general membership meeting in April is our Annual Meeting, when we elect our officers and committee chairs for the next fiscal year which starts in May. The nominating committee is pleased to present the following nominees for RAS officers and committee chairs. Although there are individual nominees listed for all the positions, additional nominations can be made from the floor during the Annual Meeting, and there is plenty of opportunity to serve on a committee or two. Just let any of the board members know if you want to serve on a committee.

The Nominating Committee: Margaret O’Bryan (Chair) Caroline Coe Nelda Snyder Al Warfield

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Field Trips: March - April 2006

Saturday, March 4, 2006 – Dutch Gap Conservation Area, Chesterfield County: Meet Betsy Saunders at 7:30 a.m. for a favorite RAS bird walk into Dutch Gap. We’ll be looking for winter birds, resident species, and birds on the move early for spring. And we’re always on the look-out for the unusual sighting. Call Betsy at 272-0605 for more information.

Sunday, March 5, 2006 – Bryan Park with Sue Ridd: Sunday morning walk at Bryan Park with Sue Ridd. Sunrise is at 6:37 a.m. Meet Sue ½ hour after sunrise at picnic shelter #1. Questions, call Sue at 270-5365.

Wednesday, March 8, 2006 – 2nd Wednesday Walk with John Coe: A new location for a 2nd Wednesday Walk, we will explore Robious Landing Park on the James River near James River High School in Chesterfield County. Call John at 276-1397 for details and to sign up.

Sunday, March 12, 2006 – Curles Neck Farm, Henrico County: An RAS favorite birding destination in any season. Meet at the entrance to the farm at 6:30 a.m. and we’ll scan the fields, check the ponds, and look in the wetlands and forests for birds of all descriptions. Call John at 276-1397 for details and to sign up.

Friday, March 17, 2006 – Presquile NWR Volunteer Day: Presquile is RAS’s adopted National Wildlife Refuge and we’re always pleased to help. So join Cyrus Brame on the island and assist him in a number of activities. Bring a lunch and water. For more details, call Cyrus at 829-9020.

Sunday, March 19, 2006 – Harrison Lake Paddle, Charles City County: Sunset Paddle at Harrison Lake with Julie Kacmaric-BYOB (bring your own boat) and meet at the put-in at 4 p.m. Wear PFD-bring water, snacks and dress for the weather. For more info contact Jule at 530-3660.

Monday, March 20, 2006 – The first day of spring!! Rejoice and consider volunteering to lead a field trip.

Saturday, March 25, 2006 – Pocahontas State Park, Chesterfield County: Join Wendy Ealding for a walk and let’s look for some early spring migrants. Meet Wendy in the park at the CCC Museum (Old Nature Center) at 7:15 a.m. Wendy has a great ear and will be able to home in on those new spring arrivals. For more info contact Wendy at wealding@aol.com.

Saturday, March 25, 2006 – Lewis Ginter Botanical Gardens: Join Faye Taylor-Hyder for a winter bird walk in the gardens. Meet at the main entrance. A $6 admission fee is payable at the end of the trip; LGBG members are free. Please sign up by calling Faye at 745-5026.

Fridays starting March 31 through May 12, 2006 – The Wetlands before Work (WBW): Join Mary Aginteanu and Larry Robinson at the Wetlands entrance on Landria Drive at 7 a.m. Track spring arrivals before hitting the rock pile. For more information, contact Mary at 320-0138.

Sunday, April 2, 2006 – Daylight savings time begins. Spring forward an hour.

Sunday, April 2, 2006 – Bryan Park with Sue Ridd: Spring into Daylight Savings for Sue’s monthly survey of the park. Meet at picnic shelter #1 @ 7:24 a.m. EDT. Questions?, call Sue at 270-5365.

Saturday, April 8, 2006 – Vulcan Materials, Royal Stone Quarry, Goochland County: Tour a Certified Wildlife Habitat and observe wildlife co-existing with industry as RAS makes it’s 2nd annual trip out to Vulcan Materials in Goochland County. Sue Dudley will be our guide. We had a huge turn out last year and were treated to a slide show, goodies and a very interesting tour. Come see their Ravens and what strides they have made in establishing their habitat. Directions: Take I-64 west to the Rockville-Manakin exit (Exit 173), turn right and drive approximately 2 - 2 1/2 miles (see a Blue & White Vulcan Materials sign on the right). Turn right onto Johnson’s Road. Follow the road until you see the stone gate entrance. Park near the scale house. Meet at 8 a.m. Target bird: Rock pigeon. Questions: Call Julie @ 530-3660.

Wednesday, April 12, 2006 – 2nd Wednesday Walk with John Coe: A Starbucks start to a morning of birds. Trip will meet at the Starbucks on the south side of the Huguenot Bridge at 8 a.m. and then proceed to Bandy Field and the University of Richmond to check out the birds. Call John at 276-1397 for details and to sign up.

Friday through Sunday, April 21-23, 2006 – Weekend at False Cape State Park: Wash Woods EEC Lodge and Back Bay NWR: Weekend of birding and eco-study at the Wash Woods Environmental Educational Center, False Cape State Park, Virginia Beach. The bus into the park will leave Little Island Parking Area, Sandbridge, at 3 p.m. on Friday and return at 1 p.m. on Sunday. Please note that the emphasis for this trip will be educational and somewhat structured. To reserve the Wash Woods EEC lodge, a weekend “lesson plan” was required. Our chance to study the birds and ecosystems of the park will begin Friday evening with a Naturalist/Ranger-led discussion, continue with birding and observation on Saturday, and conclude with a Naturalist/Ranger-led hike on Sunday morning. Group size is limited to 20. No children or pets, please. No smoking. Cost $55.00 per person for all fees to include: two nights stay at the lodge, Naturalist hike and talks, bus transportation from Little Island park and some sundries. BYOB/F. For further information and a copy of the weekend events: Call or e-mail trip coordinator Brian Townsend: btowns9414@aol.com, office phone: 746-5245.

Continued on next page
Bermuda Square in Chester at Route 301 and Route 10 for our annual pilgrimage to the Great Dismal Swamp. The target bird is the Swainson’s Warbler. Be prepared for lots of walking, mosquitoes and ubiquitous bird song. No facilities; bring water, snacks, and bug spray. Contact Darrell at dpeterso@hsc.vcu.edu if you have any questions.

All of May - RAS Birdathon 2006:
Start, join or sponsor a team to support local conservation efforts. See article page 5 (below).

Sunday, May 7, 2006 - Bryan Park with Sue Ridd: Meet Sue to rack up big numbers of neo-tropical migrants as she does her monthly inventory of the park. Meet at Shelter #1 @ 6:38 a.m. Questions, call Sue at 270-5365.

Wednesday, May 10, 2006 - 2nd Wednesday Walk with John Coe: Springtime birding at 42nd Street entrance of the James River Park. The walk will start at 7 a.m. to catch the spring migrants. Call John at 276-1397 for details and to sign up.

Looking ahead:
Lewis Ginter Botanical Gardens: May 27 with Tyler Turpin.
2nd annual Mountain Lake Birding Festival: May 19-21 http://www.mountainlakebirding.com/registration.html
Piney Grove Preserve with Clark White for Red-cockaded Woodpeckers: Date TBD.

Remember that field trips are subject to change occasionally. Check the RAS listserv and/or website, or call the trip leader before you head out the door.

Note: all phone numbers in area code 804 unless indicated.

Julie Kacmarcik
Caroline Coe

Birdathon 2006

Spring will soon “spring forth” and with it the grand migration north of many of our favorite, colorful songbirds. We Auduboners celebrate spring and migration with our annual Birdathon. A Birdathon is a 24-hour marathon of bird watching. The goal is to see as many bird species as possible in that 24-hour period and collect money to support Audubon projects. Our Richmond Audubon teams will be in the field throughout May. Anyone can participate as a sponsor, a birder or both!

To participate as a birder in the Birdathon, you can bird on your own or create a team. To create your own team, contact other birders, choose a captain, and then contact Margaret Ebbs. Gather pledges from friends and family. Finally the fun part - bird up to 24 continuous hours on any designated Birdathon day! Send all bird lists to Margaret Ebbs or Caroline Coe (contact information below).

To pledge, you can pledge an amount per species or give a flat pledge. Individual team species lists will be combined to determine a cumulative Richmond Audubon Society species total. Per species pledges will be calculated based on this grand total. Last year’s species total was 170. ($.10 per species x 170 = $17.00; $.50 per species x 170 = $85.00)

Show your support of Richmond Audubon and its fight to protect birds, other wildlife and their habitats, by making a pledge. Our goal this year is to beat our 2005 Birdathon mark of $3,400. With your donation we can meet or exceed this goal.

Where the money goes: Your sponsorship will support conservation in Central Virginia and the birds, other wildlife and habitat they depend on. Last year, through your generosity in Birdathon donations, RAS gave $1100 to the James River Park for new signage and $2,300 for a joint Presquile NWR and Virginia Important Bird Areas habitat restoration project at Presquile NWR. Conservation in Central Virginia could use our support again. So form a Birdathon team, or make a pledge. Please join us in the celebration!

Birdathon Pledge Form

Name ____________________________ Address ____________________________
City, State, Zip ______________________ Telephone ______________________ E-mail ______________________

☐ I’ll support you with my pledge of ______ per species. ☐ I am happy to pledge ____________________.

☐ My gift of ___________ is enclosed. ☐ My employer matches gifts, matching gift forms are enclosed.

☐ I will give you an additional $ ________ if a team finds a ______________________ (bird species).

Make checks payable to Richmond Audubon Society.

Send checks and/or pledge form to: Margaret Ebbs, 4702 Gaardahl Drive, Sandston, VA 23150

The birder/team you sponsor or RAS will be back in touch with you to collect the money pledged at the beginning of June. Questions? Contact Caroline Coe, JohnCaroline@juno.com, phone 276-1397 or Margaret Ebbs, Mebbs525@juno.com.

THANK YOU for supporting the RAS 2006 Birdathon. Your gift is tax deductible as allowed by law.
From The Kitchen Window – March/ April 2006

“Oh, give us pleasure in the flowers today;
And give us not to think so far away
As the uncertain harvest; keep us here
All simply in the springing of the year.”                 Robert Frost

As winter fades into spring the pinks in the eastern sky early come early. The fading red bloom of the maples catch the glow along the tree line, and birds sing as light of dawn awakens the yard. The morning air is still chilled, and some mornings ice crystals trace the petals of newborn flowers, yet the sun is warm and the chill is soon forgotten. Springtime is special. Birds sing with inspired feeling as flowers open to the new light and green erases the bare gray stems. Springtime is change. Temperamental March marches into the fresh beauty of April, and our wish is to be a part of it - to scratch the soil, to plant our seeds, to listen to the sounds of fluffed-up birds and puffed-up frogs and toads and fresh-winged insects; to feel the warmth of the higher sun, to anticipate the harvest, to ponder change and what lies ahead. We fret uncertainty yet we anticipate the unknown.

The March full moon, called the “Worm Moon” or the “Egg Moon”, occurs on the 14th. The vernal equinox happens at 1:26 p.m. EST on the 20th.

April brings us daylight savings time beginning on the 2nd. Remember to spring forward an hour and don’t be late! (Interesting note: in 2007 daylight savings time will begin on the 2nd Sunday of March and end the 1st Sunday in November.) The April full moon, called the “Pink Moon” or the “Milk Moon”, occurs on the 13th, and the warblers and hummingbirds return.

John Coe
The Best of Flyways & Byways

A new book written by RAS’ own author and nature writer Jerry Uhlman, is now available for you to enjoy. The book consists of a collection of Flyways & Byways columns, the popular birding feature that appears in the Richmond Times-Dispatch. Flyways & Byways captures the pleasure and excitement of birding in our own backyards as well as far-flung corners of the world.

For seven years Jerry has written the nature and wildlife-watching column, which currently appears in the RTD Flair Section on the third Sunday of each month. The column originated in 1998 when RTD asked readers to suggest new topics for the newspaper. An email to Louise Seal, managing editor, recommending a birding column to cover a pastime growing in popularity led to a meeting with newspaper staff, and the rest is history: 93 columns covering avian behavior, conservation endeavors, astounding migratory journeys and discovery of unheralded hotspots along America’s flyways and distant byways. The nearly 200 page collection of vignettes and stories is available at www.flyways.com or through the Richmond Audubon Society, Box 26648, Richmond, VA 23261.

Ed: Having read Jerry’s book I can say that even if you have read most of the columns in the RTD, you will be pleased. It has lots of great stories I didn’t remember reading in the RTD.
Welcome to New Members of Richmond Audubon Society

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<td>Betty W. Loving</td>
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<td>John Keesling</td>
<td>Pat Wigfield</td>
<td>Kelly W. Chapman</td>
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<td>J. Malmquist Family</td>
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<td>GLEN ALLEN</td>
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<td>Earl M. Cole</td>
<td>Carl W. Loving</td>
<td>Emily Booth</td>
<td>Henry Iead</td>
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<td>Dan Fortuna</td>
<td>Doris/John Armstrong</td>
<td>Janice/David Coleman</td>
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<td>Harold Katz</td>
<td>Gordon Rice</td>
<td>Debbie Craig</td>
<td>Anna Schmidt</td>
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<td>Mary S. Crenshaw</td>
<td>Estelle Stiebel</td>
<td>WILLIAMSURG</td>
<td>Kom Schmidt</td>
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</table>

The members above joined RAS in 2006. Welcome, and please come to a meeting or field trip. Make sure to let someone know you are new to the organization.

Nelda Snyder, Membership Chair

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

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