Pre-meeting Dinner

Naseem Reza, Chair
Hospitality Committee
hospitality@richmondaudubon.org,
Please join us for dinner
before the meeting at 5:30 PM
on Thursday, March 17. Please
note that there will be no
pre-meeting dinner on April 21.
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 reimbursed. There
is a $5 charge to cover drinks,
paper products and fill in food
continued on page 2

March Program:
Team Warbler Project

The primary objective of this project is to promote
a partnership between Virginia Commonwealth
University, its local Audubon Society, and Richmond area schools
with International Audubon partners and schools in Panama through
the Audubon Important Bird Area network. Team Warbler members
and partners are interested in research and conservation of migratory
birds, including songbirds, shorebirds, and raptors that rely on
essential habitats along migratory routes spanning ‘the Chesapeake Bay
to Panama Bay and back’. In order to conserve these shared resources,
coastal communities in both Virginia and Panama have a similar stake
in ‘Saving the Bay(s)’. Recognizing that both communities share similar
challenges, and that collaboration and mutual support is the most
effective approach to meeting those challenges, is a primary theme
of Team Warbler’

Our March meeting will be on Thursday, March 17th at 7:00 PM
at St. Luke Lutheran Church, located at Custis Road and Chippenham
Parkway.
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: thrasher@richmondaudubon.org. Images to accompany articles are encouraged, and should be at full size with a resolution of 300 dpi.

Pre-meeting continued from page 1

Winter Wonderland

Lewis Barnett

It has been a winter of rare wonders for birders in Richmond. Martha Gail, the feisty Allen’s Hummingbird I wrote about for the last newsletter is going strong, thanks to Julie Kacmarcik’s faithful attention, and we will no doubt soon be saying goodbye to her as she starts her cross-country trek to her breeding grounds on the west coast. Nearly as surprising has been the White-winged Crossbill that has been a regular visitor to a feeder on Richmond’s north side for several weeks now. I’d like to extend the thanks of Richmond’s birding community to Julie and to Todd Dixon, the two home owners who have so graciously kept us informed on their unusual guests, and who have put up with a steady stream of strangers with binoculars and cameras eager to catch a glimpse. We should all bear in mind that we are visitors, and respect the wishes of our hosts regarding our access to their homes.

The days are getting longer, and the birds are showing signs of the turning of the seasons at long last. I spotted a Goldfinch with a bit of gold flashing in its feathers the other day, and the Song Sparrows are singing again in my neighborhood, along with many other species singing with more gusto. Soon we’ll be out scouting for migrating warblers and enjoying warmer weather. It’s not too soon to be thinking about forming a Bird-a-thon team to help out Richmond Audubon with our Spring fund-raiser. As I said at the January meeting, it isn’t so much how many birds you think you can find, it’s more how many friends and neighbors you can cajole into supporting your team, and we all have an even playing field in that regard. Look for more information at the March meeting.

Bon Appétit!
Western Grebe at Lake Anna
Rick Cox
On February 8, 2011, I made one of my regular visits to Dike 3 on Lake Anna. I only live 1/2 mile away. To my surprise, I saw a bird that I was not familiar with and proceeded to take some photographs to help with its identification. When I arrived home, I looked the bird up in one of my bird books. I did not see anything that matched my photos and that would be in this area. It looked like a Western Grebe but I thought it was another one of my mis-identifications. I emailed the photo to the Richmond Audubon members for a proper ID. All of them agreed that it was a rare Western Grebe and in the next couple of days many of them made their way to Lake Anna to look for themselves.

Sadly on February 10, the Western Grebe dove for a fisherman’s baited hook and ended up swallowing it. A detailed account of this mishap can be found at this link http://www.wildlifecenter.org/wp/rare-visitor/.

Postscript from Joyce Bathke, Stafford Co/Fredericksburg
On February 14, the Western Grebe was brought from the Virginia Wildlife Center to Lake Anna. He (yes, a male) was released in a cove across the lake from Lake Anna State Park. He quickly swam away from shore, stretching his wings frequently. It was exciting to see the bird you watched swallow a fish and hook just a few days earlier, take to the water and swim away. Mid-morning today he was in the same area, eyeing some shad the nearby gulls were diving for.

Thank you to Dave and Georgia Paton who made the two trips to the Wildlife Center. The staff at the Virginia Wildlife Center were great! Many thanks to each one of them.

Nominating Committee Solicits Input
In preparation for the Annual Meeting of Richmond Audubon in May, the Nominating Committee solicits nominations for the following board positions: President, First Vice President, Conservation Chair, Development Chair, Education Chair, Field Trips Chair, Newsletter Committee Chair, and Cyberspace Chair. In addition, the Development Chair is vacant. If you have an interest in any of these positions, questions about the duties of a position, or suggestions on members that the committee might contact to gauge interest, please contact a member of the Nominating Committee. Members are Eileen Geller (chair, legislation@richmondaudubon.org), Steven Dunn (membership@richmondaudubon.org), and Lewis Barnett (president@richmondaudubon.org).
Tuesday Twitters — Come join us in our discoveries of nature

by Diane Jadlowski

The Tuesday Twitters bird once a week and travel all over Virginia. We have been to the James River, Henricus Historical Park/Dutch Gap, George Washington’s Birthplace, the battlefields, the Blue Ridge Mountains, and many more places. We take note of flora and fauna, historical sites and even learned to play disc golf on one of our outings. There are great opportunities to take pictures also.

We usually meet on Tuesday afternoons in winter and Tuesday mornings in summer but sometimes we change days and go on a Saturday or a holiday so I maintain an email list to let everyone know what is happening and to see if you can join us. Email me at djadski@gmail.com.

Birds are an intimate part of our natural world and so fun to watch their behavior and record sightings. Thanks to many people this is an excellent opportunity for citizen science. We send our information to eBird which is based at The Cornell Lab of Ornithology. The Cornell Lab of Ornithology and National Audubon Society have teamed up to make this important database happen and to continue this tool that maintains a huge database of bird information. They track movement and see problems and trends in areas via this data. It reveals new species in areas and the danger of extinction in others.

eBird has some great features. You can keep track of your bird lists as some people want to remember the species they have seen. You can explore dynamic maps and graphs to study what is happening to our environment and the movement of birds: even reveal possible problems in certain areas. Most important you can help contribute to science and conservation. Share your sightings and join the eBird community. Check it out at http://ebird.org/content/ebird.
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.)

March 6, Sunday, 7:00 AM. Bryan Park with Sue Ridd. 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.

March 9, Wednesday, 7:00 AM. Second Wednesday Walk with John Coe, James River Park Flood Wall. This month we will explore the James River Park Flood Wall area. Meet at Flood Wall Parking Lot on the south side of the Mayo Bridge. Contact John for details at (804) 276-1397 or email: johnwcoe@verizon.net.

March 12 & 26, Saturday, 10:00 AM to 12:00 PM. Great Blue Heron Rookery Tour. Come join us as we guide a tour to this natural wonder in the midst of the City of Richmond! The Great Blue Herons are currently courting, nest-building and breeding in preparation for egg-laying and raising their chicks. Every week will bring its own set of sights and sounds for the whole family to enjoy, so please bring your scopes and binoculars and benefit from a morning outdoors! Guided Tour fee is $5.00 per person for the benefit of Audubon and the James River Park System. Meet in the grassy area just west of 14th Street. Please carpool and park at the small lot closest to the Rookery, in Shockoe Bottom, or in the lot on the east side (Closest GPS Address: 292 S 12th St, Richmond, VA 23219). If you park in this latter location, please park head-in and with a note on your dash stating you are at the Heron Rookery walk.

April 3, Sunday, 7:15 AM. Bryan Park with Sue Ridd. Meet at Shelter #1. For more information, call Sue at (804) 270-5365.

April 13, 7:00 AM. Wednesday, Second Wednesday Walk with John Coe, John J Radcliffe Appomattox River Conservation Area. Tour the John J Radcliffe Appomattox River Conservation Area for birds and wildflowers. Meet at Starbucks in Oxbridge Sq. Shopping Center (Hull and Courthouse Rd.) at 7:00 AM to carpool or meet at the park at 7:30 AM. Contact John for details at (804) 276-1397 or email: johnwcoe@verizon.net

April 23, Saturday 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM. 14th Street Fish Festival—FREE EVENT, Celebrate the annual return of spawning shad, herring and rockfish with music, art, dance, biology, food vendors and fishing. Kids can release fish into the canal at 12:30 PM at the South end of Mayo (“14th St”) Bridge. Lots of parking. Sponsors: James River Park System (Richmond Recreation, Parks & Community Facilities) and the Friends of the James River Park System (804) 545-8911 – RichmondGov.com and JamesRiverPark.org.

April 30, Saturday at 8:00 AM to 9:45 AM. Bird Walk at Lewis Ginter Botanical Gardens. 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. Lewis Ginter Botanical Gardens Members FREE – Special Non-Member Cost: $6.00. Contact: Tyler Turpin at (804) 317-9478 or tylerturpin@earthlink.net. Lewis Ginter BT is located at 1800 Lakeside Ave, Richmond, VA 23228-4700.

May 5, Saturday, 6:30 AM, 42nd Street, James River Park, warblers and spring migrants. Meet at 42nd Street Lot. Contact Arun Bose if you have any questions at (804) 335-8813 or email: arun1bose@gmail.com.
From The Kitchen Window—Spring Forward
John Coe

And so, each day a little earlier little rainbows dance across the kitchen walls—crystal prisms on the window catch and bend the morning sunbeams and from the window sights and sounds of early spring are clear. March breezes rustle the golden leaves on the beech trees—remnants of last year waiting to be pushed off by new spring growth. The cardinals and titmice sing their love tunes and the bluebird’s melodious notes bubble through the windows.

This winter was cold and lingered so, yet we forget winters past when cold and bitter were normal. But always come March and then April and the lengthening days and the greening of the scene. Grasses grow and flowers bloom and the birds sing and this rush of awaking life flows through our windows and through our senses.

The White-throated Sparrows and the juncos will soon leave our yard, and so the sapsucker and the brown creeper and the Yellow-rumped Warblers that wintered here and visited our feeders. And soon will come the birds of summer returning from their migrations and winters is places south of here, many from Central and South America. And this spring will pass.

Come early April a man can admit that he has nothing whatever to do with the opening of a bud or the sprouting of a seed. Spring is as independent of human management as sunrise or the phases of the moon.

Hal Borland

The full moon in March, named the worm moon, occurs at 2:10 PM on the 19th. On March 13th, 2 AM standard time becomes 3 AM as we “spring forward” an hour. Spring begins with the vernal equinox at 7:21 PM on the March 20th.

The full moon in April, known as the egg moon or pink moon, occurs at 10:44 PM on the 17th.

Post Script: Hal Borland, who wrote in the early 1960s when climate change was not a world-wide concern, if he were writing today might see that man indeed has something to do with altering the timing of spring’s arrival.

Crestwood Elementary School Nature Fair and Plant Sale

On Saturday, April 30th from 1:00-4:00 Crestwood Elementary School will hold a free public event for families. There will be wildlife encounters! Children will be able to observe birds, sea life, reptiles, insects, lemurs, a Capuchin Rainforest Monkey, an African hedgehog, a wallaby and a petting zoo with farm animals. There will be over 25 “hands on” nature oriented exhibits. The Richmond Audubon Kids Group will be participating. Join in on a nature scavenger hunt, try geocaching, enter in a fishing derby and move through our nature obstacle course and maze! Live music will be provided by the Richmond Indigenous Gourd Orchestra. Vegetable, flower and herb plants will be sold at attractive prices. Rain or Shine. Crestwood Elementary School, 7600 Whittington Drive, crestwoodpta.org, 804-402-6434.
RAS Kids At Kids Day In The Garden
Gooey hands and warm hearts prevailed at the Richmond Audubon booth on Kids Day at the Great Big Greenhouse as close to 200 children stepped up to make peanut butter pinecone birdfeeders and learn a little more about the birds in their backyards. This third annual event, held on Saturday, January 22, could not have happened without the wonderful cadre of volunteers from both RAS and Master Gardeners.

Birders and gardeners—a perfect pairing—helped with the birdfeeders, talked about pollination (butterflies and bees), provided games, coloring pages, and the ever popular bird puppets, helped children plant narcissus bulbs, and answered questions and handed out literature about birds and pollinators.

Other exhibitors at Kids Day included the SPCA’s Tail Wag’n adoption van, Clifford the Dog, Broken Road Farm’s travelling petting farm, Chesterfield County’s anti-litter program, and more, plus local vendors with unique products and some darn good food.

Doug Hensel, manager of the Great Big Greenhouse, said that this was the best Kids Day ever and that he received many nice compliments from parents. He was, as always, as helpful and accommodating to RAS as could be, providing birdseed and pinecones and a choice spot for our booth. Kids Day strengthened both the RAS presence in Richmond and our good partnership with the Great Big Greenhouse. Thank you again to all the volunteers and contributors who made it such a success!

RAS Kids has two more events coming up, and we would welcome volunteer help at these: Arbor Day at the Carillon on Saturday, April 16, and the Crestwood Nature Fair at Crestwood Elementary School on Saturday, April 30 (see page 8). Please contact Joyce Caldwell at jbmcaldwell@verizon.net if you would like to help.

Any Old Iron?
If you have old or extra binoculars, consider donating them to RAS kids. We have several trips planned to the Floodwall and the Heron rookery as well as Pony Pasture. Our supply of binocs is slim. Contact me Mary Arginteanu mary.arginteanu@gmail.com or bring to an RAS meeting. Thanks.
April Program: Oaxaca and the US Southwest—Birds and More
Photographs taken by Al and Linda Warfield, including music by local musicians and appropriate birdsongs.

The April 21st meeting of RAS will be held at the Unitarian Church at 1000 Blanton Avenue at 7:00 PM. Because of the change in venue, there will be NO PRE-MEETING DINNER.