GREAT BIG GREENHOUSE KIDS DAY IN THE GARDEN SUCCESS

RECENTLY HELD: JANUARY 21, 2017

By Jan Robertson

Joyce Caldwell (RAS Education Committee Chair), Jan Robertson, and June Bohrer (a Riverine Chapter Virginia Master Naturalist) teamed up this year to expand the RAS kid-friendly activities at the annual Great Big Green House Kids Day event. Approximately 200 enthusiastic children made seed cakes and took them home to feed their feathered friends.

We also displayed dollhouses featuring miniature birds and cats to emphasize the importance of keeping domestic cats indoors for their own health and to help save an estimated 1.4 to 3.7 billion birds, as well as other animals, that are killed annually in the U.S. by outdoor cats.* The children also decorated and stamped cards with a variety of bird images and hung these on a display tree in the Greenhouse to show their love and appreciation of birds.

RAS members and several Riverine Master Naturalists shared conservation literature and information about birding with families. The table displays also included a bird house made from a juice bottle and recipes for peanut-free and peanut butter suet cakes. A great time was had by the many families visiting our tables and the several RAS volunteers, including Diane Jadlowski and Kathy Warnkey as well as other Master Naturalist participants. (Cont. Pg. 4)

RAS MEMBER’S MEETINGS

WHEN: RAS membership meetings are on the 3rd Thursday of the month at 7:00 PM (except June, July, August and December). Come early for coffee, cookies and conversation beforehand starting at 6:30 PM.

WHERE: Held at St. Luke Lutheran Church • 7757 Chippenham Pkwy., Richmond, VA at the corner of Custis Road and Chippenham Parkway unless noted.

VISIT: www.RichmondAudubon.org for updates and additional information.
PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

We had a wonderful turnout for the Richmond Audubon Society’s showing of the documentary film, The Messenger, during the RVA Environmental Film Festival in February. If you were not able to join us, the film documents some of the many man-made dangers to birds and their habitats across the Americas and in Europe. This includes the dangers posed by tall skyscrapers with largely glass or reflective exteriors for bird strikes, light pollution and the problems it causes for migratory birds, vicious (but cuddly) killers roaming the streets like they own them (aka outdoor cats), and climate change, among other threats. The film also documents the people working to study these issues and come up with achievable solutions. The filmmakers suggest taking some of the following steps to help songbirds:

- Make glass and windows bird-safe (suggestions here: www.allaboutbirds.org/glass-action-advances-in-the-science-of-making-windows-safer-for-birds/)
- If you drink coffee, find a shade-grown variety
- Keep your cats indoors
- Help protect the boreal forest (see this article for more information: www.allaboutbirds.org/where-the-birds-come-from-the-push-to-protect-the-boreal-forest/)
- Make your yard or land you have access to more wildlife friendly
- Participate in citizen science projects, such as the Virginia Breeding Bird Atlas, the annual Christmas Bird Count or James River Bird Count, or our MAPS banding stations
- Share the information about the threats to birds with people who can do something about it (periodically visit www.audubon.org/takeaction to send messages to your representatives in Washington about conservation issues)

In conjunction with the showing of The Messenger, we were lucky to have Laura Greenleaf from the Virginia Chapter of the International Dark-Sky Association join us for our February RAS program to discuss light pollution and steps we can take to help minimize problems associated with humanity’s quest to light up the night. She demonstrated how lights often cause more problems than they solve, can waste energy and send “light polution” light up into the sky threatening wildlife and plants. Laura gave us solutions for working with municipalities, utilities, and even neighbors to help limit light pollution and to make lighting work better for us and other living things. To learn more about the steps you can take at your home (or to encourage your neighbors and local officials to take), visit www.darksky.org and www.darkvirginiasky.org to learn more.

Eileen R Geller - RAS President

RAS BOARD BRIEF

At the RAS Board Meeting in mid-January there was further discussion of efforts toward updating our website. Further planning for RAS hosting Virginia Society of Ornithology Annual Meeting, including field trips, menu, speakers, auction, vendors, and volunteer needs were also discussed. Several board members even made a visit the The Crossings to view the VSO meeting’s venue. We will need as many RAS volunteers as possible to host this event.

Please join us and support the RAS service committee that best fits your talents!

FROM THE EDITOR

If you are interested in contributing to a future issue, have an idea for an article, or would like to help on the committee, email: thrasher@richmondaudubon.org

Submissions are due on the 10th of the month preceding the publication date. Thanks to all who have contributed.

Bob Schamerhorn - Editor
UPCOMING MEMBERS MEETINGS

RAS Meetings held at St. Luke Lutheran Church, 7757 Chippenham Pkwy, Richmond, VA. The program begins at 7:00 pm, with coffee, cookies and conversation before, starting at 6:30 pm.

MARCH 16 • PROGRAM: MY BIG YEAR 2016
PRESENTED BY: KIM HARRELL

A local artist and naturalist, Kim birded from the mountains, to the coast, to pelagic off-shore trips to see a total of 326 species! She completed 700 checklists on eBird and managed to take incredible snapshots of a variety of bird species in all habitat types during her journeys. This is sure to be a great storytelling event with lots of great photography.

APRIL 20 • PROGRAM: THE AMERICAN WOODCOCK
PRESENTED BY: DR. LINDA ORDIWAY

Linda is a biologist for the Ruffed Grouse Society and her talk will be about their habitat needs and the effect of human development on American Woodcock populations. Affectionately nicknamed the “timberdoodle,” woodcock are an early-successional dependent species famous for their aerial acrobatics that need young forest with small trees as their primary habitat type. In recent years, this habitat type has gone into decline, and we will learn about what management techniques are needed to restore American Woodcock to their preferred landscape.

RAS AT THE BYRD THEATRE • RVA ENVIRONMENTAL FILM FESTIVAL

Thanks to all the RAS members who came out to support the 2017 RVA EFF. We had a great turnout with excellent public exposure for RAS! The movies covered a vast amount of issues from climate change and plastic consumption, to solar power. The RAS sponsored feature film “The Messenger” covered many of the struggles facing our songbirds. Children friendly films were also included. If you missed this year’s amazing films, no worries, the festival will be back next winter.

7 Things You Can Do to Help Songbirds If You’ve Just Watched The Messenger
1. Make Windows Safer, Day and Night.
2. Brew a Bird-Friendly Roast.
4. Save Half the Boreal Forest.
5. Embrace Your Patch.
6. Lend Your Eyes and Ears to the Cause.
7. Be a Messenger: Host a Viewing.
FAVORITE FOOD OF OUR FEATHERED FRIENDS

Most backyard birds will eat commercial suet cakes but this is what they really crave. Guaranteed to give you more happy feathered visitors.

In a Dutch oven melt 1 cup of lard and 1 cup of crunchy peanut butter. Stir in 2 cups of (dry, uncooked, not instant) oatmeal, 2 cups cornmeal, 1 cup flour, and ½ cup sugar. Add raisins or cranberries if you have them. Spoon into mini loaf pans or 13”x9” cake pan. Score and cut to fit your cage feeder when cold. Store in the refrigerator.

GREAT BIG GREEN HOUSE EVENT CONTINUED

Some notes about the change from our typical “peanut butter on pine cones” bird food activity:

We had concerns about the growing number of children with peanut allergy. However, in experimenting with recipes, we found that the birds did not like a millet-heavy seed blend that lacked fat. After several tries, we came up with a recipe using lard, oatmeal, corn meal and a seed blend.

This new mix was easily molded in canning jar lids and could be unmolded immediately for the children to take home. Holes for hanging the cakes were made with drinking straws. This and the peanut butter suet recipe are presented here.

*Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service study estimates (2013)
PEANUT-FREE BIRD FOOD “COOKIES”
Dissolve 1 envelope of unflavored gelatin in ½ cup of warm water.
Stir in ¼ cup corn syrup, ¾ cup flour, 1 cup (not instant) oatmeal and 1 cup cornmeal.
Work in 1 cup softened lard.
Add 2 cups wild bird seed and mix with hands until well blended. Mixture should be the consistency of stiff cookie dough. Add a little more oatmeal if too wet or lard if too dry as necessary.
Press the mixture into Mason jar lids. Place on the paper plate or parchment covered cookie sheet. Push down on the lid, then pull up on the ring band to unmold. Lift the lid off with a knife. Make a hole for hanging the “cookie” with a straw. Be sure the straw goes all the way through. Let the “cookies” dry overnight before hanging. Cookie cutters can be used for molding but unmolding can be tricky. Store bird food in the refrigerator.

For a special bird treat, cut an apple in half horizontally and place the bird seed “cookie” between the apple halves. Use yarn on a tapestry needle to thread through the center of the bottom half of the apple, the “cookie” and then the top of the apple.

Hang your feeder in the outer ¼ of a tree or bush and at least 6 feet above the ground.
This recipes makes 15 Mason jar lid “cookies”. Lard is available in the cooking oil section of most supermarkets.
RAS FIELD TRIPS
Check the RAS Listserv or the RAS website for information and any late breaking news about field trips.

MARCH
March 4th at 7:00 AM • Saturday • Curles Neck Farm with Ellison Orcutt. There is high turnout for this trip so we ask that you register beforehand. A $5 donation is appreciated. Meet at the Curles Neck Farm entrance off Route 5 by 7 a.m. Carpooling will be encouraged once on site. The Curles Neck Rd. entrance is a right three miles east on New Market Rd (VA-5) from I-295. Contact: Ellison at Mr.Ellyo@gmail.com or call (804) 339-6976. Registration required.

March 5th at 6:40 AM • Sunday • Bryan Park with Tyler Turpin. Meeting location: Shelter #1 Joseph Bryan Park. Join us for our regular first Sundays bird walk. See what birds have made the Northside their home for the winter. Contact: Tyler at tylerturpin@verizon.net

March 18th at 8:00 AM • Saturday • Deep Run Park with Lewis Barnett. Deep Run Park is located in the West End of Henrico County. This under birded park offers walking trails in a mature forest and around a pair of small ponds. Within an region with heavy residential development, this park offers valuable habitat to the area's birds. Join Lewis to discover who's stirring on the first day of spring. Deep Run Park's address is 9900 Ridgefield Parkway, near its junction with Gaskins Rd. Meet at the first parking lot on the right at 8am. Contact: Lewis at blbarnett3@gmail.com.

March 25th at 9:00 AM • Saturday • Youth Birding at Byrd Park with Ellison Orcutt. A morning of birding dedicated to young birders and young at heart who are curious about birding. Come explore the ponds and woodlots of Byrd Park which offers a chance to see a wide variety of species and learn about the hobby of birding, plus some of the techniques and equipment involved. All skill levels are encouraged and parents should plan to join their children or at least remain at the park. Extra binoculars will be available to share. Meet at rotary adjacent to Swan Lake. This is located at Shields Lake Dr. and Amelia St. For more information and to RSVP contact: Ellison at Mr.Ellyo@gmail.com.

APRIL
April 2nd at 6:55 AM • Sunday • Bryan Park with Jan Frye Johnson. Meeting location: Shelter #1 Joseph Bryan Park. Join us for our regular first Sundays bird walk. See what birds have made an early sprint migration. Contact: Jan at Jan@byrdnyrd33@gmail.com

April 2nd at 2:00 PM • Sunday • Harrison Lake Fish Hatchery with Tyler Turpin. Meet at the observation deck. Come explore Charles City County, known to be a good birding location year round. We hope to find migrating shorebirds at the fish ponds. The fish hatchery is located at 11110 Kimages rd. Charles City, Va 23030. Contact: Tyler at tylerturpin@verizon.net

April 9th at 8:00 AM • Sunday • T. Potterfield Memorial Bridge/James River Floodwall with Ellison Orcutt. Come explore the James River in downtown Richmond and walk the new pedestrian bridge that joins the southside with Brown's Island. With spring migration underway, this trip will offer a variety of species. Meet Ellison at 7:45 AM at the Hull St. lot, just south of the Mayo Bridge (14th St) at the intersection of Hull St. and E. 1st St. Contact: Ellison at Mr.Ellyo@gmail.com.

April 15th at 8:00 AM • Saturday • Dutch Gap with Lewis Barnett. Meet at the entrance to Henricus Historical Park/Dutch Gap Conservation area. We’ll be on the lookout for spring migrants and returning breeders like the Prothonotary Warbler. Contact: Lewis at blbarnett3@gmail.com

April 29th at 7:30 AM • Saturday • Ashland Trolley Line with Bob and Linda Cole. Join us on this annual spring walk, to see what is migrating through Ashland. Meet at the Luck Chevrolet parking lot (516 S. Washington Hwy, Ashland, VA at the Intersection of Rt. 1 and Ashcake Rd. Please park in the parking lot to the left of the Ashcake entrance, which faces Ashcake Rd. Do not park among the new or used cars in the lot). The walk is usually about 3-4 hours. No reservations are needed. Rain date is Sunday, April 30th. Contact: Bob or Linda Cole at (804) 798-6618.
OFFICERS & COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSONS OF THE RICHMOND AUDUBON SOCIETY

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ABOUT THE RICHMOND AUDUBON SOCIETY
Richmond Audubon Society (RAS) is a chapter of The National Audubon Society (NAS), becoming a member of either Society, enrolls your membership in both (NAS and RAS by zip code). Renewals are processed through The National Audubon Society.

AFFILIATES: Chapter of the Virginia Society of Ornithology (VSO) and the Virginia Conservation Network (VCN).

MAILING ADDRESS: Richmond Audubon Society
P.O. Box 26648 • Richmond, VA 23261

PHONE (Message Line): 804-601-4917

WEBSITE: www.RichmondAudubon.org

FACEBOOK: www.facebook.com/RichmondAudubon/

MEET-UP GROUP: www.meetup.com/RAS-Meetup/

TWITTER: www.twitter.com/@RichmondAudubon

LISTSERV: www.freelists.org/list/va-richmond-general

NONPROFIT: RAS is a registered nonprofit 501 (C) (3) charitable organization. Donations are tax deductible.

NEWSLETTER: “The Thrasher” is issued bimonthly (January, March, May, July, September, November.) Submissions due by the 10th of the month prior. The newsletter is available for download (PDF) from the RAS website or by special request for a hard copy.

RAS BOARD MEETINGS: Second Thursdays of January, March, May, July (annual strategic planning session), September, and November. Board Meeting start times and locations vary, members are welcome to attend, contact the President or Secretary in advance.

AUDUBON SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Yes, enroll me (us) as member(s) of both National Audubon and Richmond Audubon Societies at the address below, at the introductory rate of $20.00. A subscription to the NAS “Audubon” magazine is included.

Name_________________________________
Address ______________________________
City __________________________________
State_______ ZIP _____________________
Phone ________________________________
E-mail ________________________________

Enclose a $20.00 check payable to National Audubon Society for Individual/Family Membership and write “X53” as the memo.

Send check and application to:
Richmond Audubon Society
P.O. Box 26648, Richmond, VA 23261
X53
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