



The Thrasher

Richmond Audubon Society

The next *Thrasher* will be the July/August issue

RAS Meeting in May, 2008

RAS meetings are 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 May 15: The program, entitled *The Best Birding in North America with Zeiss*, will be presented by Stephen Ingraham. This will be a virtual journey through a birding year in some of the best birding areas in North America. If you've ever been tempted to travel beyond Virginia to add to your life list, this just might tip you over the edge.

Dessert will be available after the meeting.

The Pre-meeting dinner will start at 5:30 p.m. There is a nominal fee of \$5.00. Call or e-mail me by the day before the meeting if you plan to be there for the dinner. 272-6674 / TROBERT804@aol.com.

Note: if you 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.) Reservations will not be accepted after the evening of the day before the meeting.

Entrée items for the pre-meeting dinners are provided by some of the attendees by pre-arrangement. If you would like to share one of your favorite dishes, let me know by the Sunday before. Bring your receipts so I can reimburse you at the dinner. Those who bring food are reimbursed for their expenses at the meeting if they provide receipts, and all 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 e-mail 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!

Jan Robertson, Hospitality Chair

Sandy Wynne, Program Chair

Annual RAS Picnic: Saturday, June 21. Buz and Nelda Snyder will host our annual picnic at their lovely home in Varina, which overlooks a private lake with a small beach. There is a shallow area, swim raft, boats, picnic area, and a cabin with changing rooms and half-bath. Come by 8:00 a.m. for the morning bird walk. Bring your own meat to cook on the grills and a dish to share (four or more servings). We will eat around noon. RAS will provide

drinks, ice, and utensils. The Snyders will provide charcoal, picnic tables, chairs, and condiments. Children are welcome, but please leave your pets at home. Besides your food and binoculars, be sure to bring fishing gear and your swimsuit. Rain date is Sunday, June 22.

From Richmond: Go east on Main Street; becomes Route 5. Bear right onto Osborne Tpk. at the Y-intersection with Rt 5. After 8 miles, Osborne becomes Kingsland Rd. at a 90° left bend. Proceed on Kingsland for 0.9 mi to Arrahattek Trail, a gravel road on the right. Take this road past the house to the end of the road at the lake. Travel time 18 minutes from Capital Square.

From I-295: Take the Varina exit, (Exit 22), Rt. 5, west toward Richmond. Proceed west on Rt. 5 to 1st traffic light, Strath Road. Turn left on Strath to the dead end at Kingsland Rd. and turn right. Go past intersections at Varina Road and Hoke-Bradley Rd. About one block (0.1 mi) on the left, turn onto Arrahattek Trail, and proceed as above. 10 minutes from Exit 22.

From Chippenham Parkway: At the end of Chippenham South keep straight on I-895 east (Pocahontas Parkway-\$2.50 toll). Take the first exit, Rt 5, stay in left lane and turn left at Laburnum Ave sign. At dead end turn left onto Osborne Tpk and proceed as above from Richmond.

Travel time: 30 minutes from Stony Point Fashion Park.

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Jan Robertson

President's Message: May / June 2008

A few days ago, I watched one of my all time favorite movies for the umpteenth time. Robert Redford stars in *Three Days of the Condor* as a bookish espionage agent working for "the company", aka the CIA. He reads books, feeding their plots into a computer. The machine analyzes the data, searching for clues revealing foreign spy operations. Agents refer to each other as "birds" because, upon joining the CIA, they are assigned avian code names for internal communications. Redford's character is "Condor". The plot thickens when he uncovers a secret organization – a CIA within the CIA, and becomes the unwitting target of political intrigue.

Would you believe that for years now our "company", RAS, has been openly carrying out ever larger, more complicated plots right here in our own community? As in the movie, RAS also has a network analogous to the "agents". Far from sinister, these operatives are "change agents"- a uniquely energetic,

dedicated group of enormously talented people. Their intention is to create an even larger and more powerful network, whose sole agenda is an ambitious, and ever more critical mission: "conservation". Unlike the movie though, there are no code names or hidden agendas, though there is sometimes a bit of political intrigue when it comes to legislation.

As a result of our expanding operations, we are organizing a network of new recruits. Programs will soon be available for several "agent trainees". They include Education Coordinators to show already-prepared presentations to schools, civic and community groups; Hospitality Assistants to help host our monthly pre-meeting dinners and coordinate post-meeting refreshments; Auction Assistants to help solicit sponsors and donations; Field Trip Captains; and RAS Kids helpers, to name a few. Most "missions" require a commitment of between 2 and 4 hours, once a week, once a month, or

once a year. You will find clues about these opportunities by scanning future issues of this newsletter, seeking out sign-up sheets at our monthly meetings, and on our website's "Volunteer" tab.

As far as I know, the only sleuthing going on in RAS is about identifying species using "tools of the trade" – binoculars, spotting scopes, and field guides. But you'll never know for sure unless you encounter first hand that RAS within the RAS. Redford / "Condor" resolved his conflict by letting his conscience be his guide. Now it's time to let your conscience be your guide. If you enjoy the field trips, monthly programs and other events that make RAS special, sign up to be a part of the success. Should you decide to accept this mission, you can even choose your own bird code name!

Pam Dummitt
Code name: The Chat

RAS Auction and Pot-Luck Dinner on Two Separate Dates

New for 2008, RAS has scheduled two separate dates, one for our Auction and another for our Annual Pot Luck Dinner. More information will be available in later editions of *The Thrasher* and up to date information can be found on the RAS website.

Richmond Audubon Auction *It's for the Birds*, Thursday, November 20, 2008, Bon Air Community Center, 5 to 9 p.m. Tickets are \$25 each and will go on sale in May. Auctioneer Doug Sinclair will be back by popular demand. The selection of items up for bids will be extraordinary. Hors d'oeuvres and wine will be served. Also consider joining in on the planning and execution for this, our major fundraiser. Contact an RAS Auction Co-chair: Bob Coles, 804-883-7570 / bob@bcoles.com or Caroline Coe, 804-276-1397 / cccoe@verizon.net. Share your talents and ideas. Mark your calendar now and plan on joining us this fall

2008 Annual Potluck Dinner & Year End Celebration, Thursday, December 18, 2008. New this year, we'll celebrate the end of the year, our active members and programs and our Auction success with a fun and flavorful potluck dinner. More information later.

The All New RAS Website

Thanks to years of information gathering and committee involvement, the RAS website was "perched" and ready for updating. This was accomplished in late 2007 and is now fully operational. Our rebuilt site now reflects the vast involvement and participation of our organization and membership. Within its many pages you will find quick links to current information and events such as *Field Trips*, *Members Meetings*, and *Birds In The News*. This resurfacing of the site arranges the content into relative areas such as *Membership*, *For The Birds*, *Resources*, *Administration*, and the all-new *RAS Kids* section with games and photos. Our award-winning newsletter "*The Thrasher*" is available for PDF download, as well as archives of previous issues, easy access to forms for changing addresses, mail

preferences, etc. Also bringing us into the digital age is the ability to join RAS, give a membership as a gift, or to make online donations with a credit card via our secure online shopping cart system. There are links to local birding locations, our supporters and partners, communication resources and other birding organizations as well. Plus additional bird-related information including: Bird Banding (with photos), Gardening, Checklists, Feeders, Houses and more. Both the *Administrative* and *Membership* areas contain information on how you can become a little or a lot more active in this dynamic, active conservation organization. So be sure to check it out at www.richmondaudubon.org.

Bob Schamerhorn

The Return of Dr. Ian Christopher (I. C.) Burdeez

Well, after at least a four year absence, the world-renounced (no – that's not a typo) ornithologist, Dr. Ian Christopher (I. C.) Burdeez, has returned. The not-so-good doctor has been traveling the country, looking for new species of birds. Doctor, what have you seen?

Well, Michael, I have seen a few new species lately. They are as follows: The Barackle (pronounced Bah-RAH-kle), the Hilla Wren, and the Cain Hawk. Let's start with the Barackle (my favorite). The Barackle is a large species of Grackle. It first appeared in Hawaii but has lately taken up residence in Illinois. Various birds have lately been seen in Wyoming, Mississippi, and Pennsylvania. There are growing reports, too, that this species will make its way to Colorado this summer, and eventually to Washington, DC. Its popularity among birders has been growing due to its sociable nature and its musical call, which sounds like, "it's time for a change, it's time for a change!" The Barackle has been seen in close proximity to the Hilla Wren. The two species often fight over territory.

Speaking of the Hilla Wren, this small, brown wren is almost as popular among birds as the Barackle. The female has been seen more often than the male, though the male (called the Billa Wren) does show up from time to time. The Hilla Wren was first sighted in Arkansas, then later in Washington, DC, and New York. The female is much more vocal than the male. Her call sounds like a rising, "EXPERIENCE, experi-ENCE, experi-ENCE!" The male's call is similar, but lower pitched. Both the Hilla Wren and the Barackle have a small patch of red, white, and blue on their left wing.

The final new bird is the Cain Hawk. This large species of hawk is red in color with white on top of its head. It's very popular in Arizona, where it was first spotted, though it has also been seen in Washington, DC. This unusual hawk approaches its prey from both sides, though more often from the right. Ever since its appearance in Texas in February, however, it has shown a tendency to attack more often from the far right. The Cain Hawk was thought for a long time to be a separate species from the Bush Hawk, though lately there has been some confusion in that area. Its screeching call sounds similar to "SAFERRRRR! SAFERRRRR!" The Cain Hawk has a small patch of red, white and blue on its right wing. The patch used to be closer to the shoulder, though recent generations of the bird have appeared with the patch closer to the wing tip, confusing many birders into wondering if this is really the same bird that they first saw in Arizona.

Thank you, Doctor. Well, that's my column for now, everyone. Maybe I'll come back to visit some time when I have some more news from the birding world or from Dr. Burdeez. Until then, this is Michael Shapiro, signing off. Good night, and good birding.

(All characters in this article are fictional and the work of the mind of Michael A. Shapiro, E.S.T., W.E*. Any resemblance to any real people or birds – living or dead – is purely coincidental. All rights (and lefts) preserved.

Michael Shapiro

*Elementary School Teacher, Writer-Extraordinaire

Travel Trivia: Kaka on the Hat



The visitor is a Kaka (no jokes!!), an endemic New Zealand Forest-parrot which RAS members Mike and Ann Brooks saw on Kapiti Island, a preserve off the southwest coast of the North Island that has been cleared of predators. There's no kaka on Mike's hat, either, just a Kaka!!

Photo by

Ann Brooks

RAS Field Trips and Workdays: May - June, 2008

Bird banding at Coastal Virginia Wildlife Observatory, First Landing State Park, Virginia Beach, VA. Weather permitting, the station is open 7 days a week from March 15 to May 31. For more information or to visit the site, contact Brian Taber at taberzz@aol.com or 757-253-1181. Visit the CVWO web site at <http://www.cvwo.org>.

Late Winter/Early Spring Pelagics: Sea birding with Brian Patteson. Check out Brian's website and choose a date for a memorable pelagic trip out into the Atlantic that is almost certain to add new entries to your Life List!! <http://www.seabirding.com/> Trips around Memorial Day are already full or nearly full. There are still several openings on our trips from Oregon Inlet (departing near Manteo) May 24, 25, and 26. For more information contact Brian at patteson1@embarqmail.com.

Friday May 2. WBW (Wetlands before Work) with Mary and Larry. Get in some early morning birding (7:00 a.m.) with Mary and Larry. Call 320-0138 for details.

Sunday May 4. 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! For more information, call Sue at 270-5365.

Friday May 9. WBW with Mary and Larry. Meet at 7:00 a.m. to get in some early morning birding - that bittern might still be around! Call 320-0138 for details.

Saturday May 10. James River Park - Henricus Park trip. Jointly sponsored by Hampton Roads Bird Club and RAS. Led by Arun Bose. Meet at 7:00 a.m. at James River Park 42nd Street entrance. For more information contact Arun at arun.bose@verizon.net

Sunday May 11. Canoe trip on Pamunkey River with Gary Rouse. Pre-registration is required; there is a limit of 14 people so sign up early. Cost - \$30 per person. Call John Roberts as early as possible to sign up, 329-6879.

Saturday, May 17. Presquile NWR 5365.

Workday. Come celebrate National Endangered Species Day, as well as International Migratory Bird Day, by helping for 3 hours at Presquile. Cyrus Brame will transport us in the pontoon boat and lead us to do some habitat restoration, including maintenance of the tree-planting project. The refuge will provide tools and materials, but bring whatever you want for snacks and drinks; the workday will be from 1 to 4 p.m. We need up to 15 volunteers; please pre-register and get the starting time and location by calling John Roberts at 329-6879.

Saturday May 24. Canoe trip at Merchants Millpond, NC. We try to get down to this birding hotspot at least twice annually when bird numbers are at peak. Great spot to see all sorts of warblers (especially Northern Parula); Anhinga and alligators can be added to the mix. Canoes can be rented at a nominal cost at the park. Bring water, snacks, insect repellent and sunscreen. Meet 7:30 a.m. at the McDonalds restaurant, at the intersection of I-295 and Rt. 10. For more information and to sign up, call Penny at 516-0862 (leave a message).

Sunday June 1. Bryan Park with Sue Ridd. Meet at 6:15 a.m. to see Bryan Park and summer birds. For more information, call Sue at 270-

Saturday, June 28. Lewis Ginter Botanical Gardens (LGBG) with Tyler Turpin. The walk will begin at 8 a.m.; \$6.00 for non LGBG members. Advanced registration is required, so please contact Tyler to sign up at 317-9478.

Sunday, July 6. Bryan Park with Sue Ridd. Meet at Picnic Shelter #1 at 6:30 a.m.

We are still working on trips for June, so check the RAS listserv [va-richmond-general@freelists.org] or the RAS website for any late breaking additions or impromptu field trips <http://www.richmondaudubon.org/ActivFieldTrip.html>.

*Penny Reynolds
Julie Kacmarcik*



Great Blue Heron with nesting material at the Pipeline Rookery in Richmond.
Photo by Al Warfield

Green Goes Mainstream

A 1970 Earth Day poster featured the lovable Pogo with his line, *We have met the enemy, and he is us*. Now 38 years later we've seen CEOs of major oil companies admit one after another that human beings' actions are having an impact on global warming – and it's no longer popular to deny that impact.

Though we consumers have learned to be quite cynical about advertising claims, we are also increasingly interested in green marketing initiatives and carbon-neutral solutions; and that provides new opportunities for businesses to engage us – but also lots of opportunities for the corporate clutter of jargon and overstated claims. The burden is on the corporate world to show it gives as much as it takes: a recent survey indicated that up to 86 percent of consumers believe companies should stand for something beyond profitability.

Scrutinize Corporate Claims: Look for a Trace of Humility and Social Responsibility.

1. In checking out the credibility of a company's environmental claims, look for evidence of other socially responsible actions a company has taken: Toyota and Ben & Jerry's are examples of companies that have benefited from taking social responsibility. Volkswagen Europe has run a campaign for car safety that included warnings on cell-phone use and drinking; this campaign added to the company's overall credibility.

2. Look for companies trying to move us from awareness of a product to the advantage phase – that stage where we're made to feel part of the solution by using a product. Notice how many grocery shoppers have begun buying reusable mesh or canvas grocery bags – the trend has reached "the tipping point." Branding is all about an emotional tie to a product or service – it's the secret behind

NASCAR drivers' support and fans' support for any celebrity. Being green has its fans as well.

3. Pay attention to what companies are doing (or not doing) because not all companies share the sense of social responsibility – but if they know we're paying attention, they'll take action. We can go to www.climatecounts.org for its "good list" and "great list" of companies taking actions to address climate change (learn why Burger King and Apple received failing scores while McDonald's and Dell made the "good list" of companies in their industry groups).

4. At Climate Counts, also learn the difference between "greening up" and simply "green-washing"; get a free pocket guide listing 56 major corporations ranked according to their seriousness about climate change.

In this big election year it's worth rediscovering the origin of Walt Kelly's line drafted for Pogo in the introduction to *The Pogo Papers* (1952-53), when Pogo describes his return to a diminished Okefenokee Swamp, home of the Pogo people: *"Herein can be found that rare native tree, the Presidential Timber, struck down in mid-sprout by the jawbone of a politician. Pogo returns to the swamp from a couple of political conventions to find his unfinished business being rapidly finished, once and for all, by rough and ready hands.... Some nature lovers may inquire as to the identity of a few creatures here portrayed. On this point field workers are in some dispute.... There is no need to sally forth, for it remains true that those things which make us human are, curiously enough, always close at hand. Resolve then, that on this very ground, with small flags waving and tinny blast on tiny trumpets, we shall meet the enemy, and not only may he be ours, he may be us."*

Martha Steger

Ukrop's Golden Gifts

If you spent \$100 or more at Ukrop's between February 4 and March 29, and use a UVC card, you will be getting a Golden Gift Certificate in the mail in May. Please indicate "Richmond Audubon Society" as your recipient of choice and mail the certificate to Donna Brodd, RAS Treasurer,

PO Box 26648, Richmond, VA 23261 by the last week in May. It will add funds needed to accomplish our conservation and education goals. For more information see the following:

<http://www.richmondaudubon.org/GoldenGiftsUkrops.html>

Virginia Audubon Council (VAC) Meeting, July 12, 2008 in Shepherdstown, WV

The next VAC meeting will be held in Shepherdstown WV hosted by the Potomac Valley Audubon Society. The VAC is made up of representatives from the six Virginia Audubon Chapters, and for this meeting we have invited the West Virginia Chapters to join with us. This would be a great opportunity to meet Mary Elfner, the new IBA Coordinator for Virginia, learn about National Audubon priorities and activities from NAS Policy staff, and to learn what VAC is all about. A highlight of the meeting will be "Chapter Sharing" – a chance to learn from and share activities with other chapters.

The meeting will be held at the Stone Soup Bistro, a local restaurant that has reserved a room for our meeting. Attendees will receive morning refreshments, and lunch for a nominal charge.

The VAC meets four times a year, usually in Virginia. John Coe is VAC President, Rick Skelton (Northern Neck AS) and Walt Simonson (AS Northern Virginia) are VPs, Lewis Barnett is VAC Representative for RAS, Al Warfield is VAC Secretary and Julie Simpson is Treasurer.

Contact John, Lewis or Al if you're interested in joining us in July. See Page 7 for contact information.

RAS Field Trip and Project Photos



Birders on Sunday, March 1 during the Bryan Park Bird Walk. We got a peek at a Great Horned Owl on the nest high up in a Pine tree.
Photos by Hal Tyler



Bathrobe Birding! Chester, VA. Julie Kacmarcik heard a dull thumping back and forth in the garage. In the corner was a Sharp-shinned Hawk near an explosion of feathers. The hawk was uninjured and easy to contain. His prey was headless and pretty well plucked over – possibly a Robin.



Cedar Waxwing in Peach Blossoms Spring 2008
Eastern Powhatan County
Photo by Jack Oliver



Humorous Photo by Naseem Reza at Swan Lake in Richmond, which was overrun with Canada Geese during an otherwise very successful Greater Richmond GBBC.



Saw Whet Owl, one of 3 banded one night recently at Powhatan WMA.
Photo by Julie Kacmarcik

Officers / Committee Chairs and Co-chairs for 2008-9

President	Pam Dummitt	president@richmondaudubon.org	353-3571
1st VP	Lewis Barnett	vicepresident1@richmondaudubon.org	320-7898
2nd VP	Caroline Coe	vicepresident2@richmondaudubon.org	276-1397
Secretary	Russell Deane	secretary@richmondaudubon.org	
Recording Secretary	Katie Holsback	secretary@richmondaudubon.org	249-4977
Treasurer	Donna Brodd	treasurer@richmondaudubon.org	262-7040
Past President	Al Warfield		
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Hospitality	Jan Robertson	hospitality@richmondaudubon.org	272-6674
Conservation	vacant		
Legislation	Margaret O'Bryan	legislation@richmondaudubon.org	746-5599
Field Trips	Penny Reynolds	fieldtrips@richmondaudubon.org	828-4911
Field Trips Co-chair	Julie Kacmarcik	fieldtrips@richmondaudubon.org	530-3660
Membership	Lori Rutledge	membership@richmondaudubon.org	310-9014
Cyberspace	Robin Ruth	cyberspace@richmondaudubon.org	231-5949
Programs	Sandy Wynne	programs@richmondaudubon.org	276-5520
Publicity	vacant		
Youth	Robin Ruth Mary Arginteanu	RASKids@richmondaudubon.org	231-5949 320-0138
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Important Notices

Richmond Audubon Society is a registered non-profit organization

The Thrasher is issued in Jan/Feb., Mar/Apr., May/June, Jul/Aug, Sept/Oct, Nov/Dec. pending circumstances.

Submit articles no later than the 15th of the month before each issue.
E-mail: thrasher@richmondaudubon.org

RAS membership meetings are on the 3rd Thursday of the month except June, July, Aug and Dec. Meetings held at St. Luke Lutheran Church at Custis Rd. and Chippenham Parkway unless notified.

RAS Board Meetings held on the 2nd Thursday on alternate months starting in Jan; RAS members welcome to attend, but let a Board member know due to space considerations. Most meetings are St. Luke.

Thanks to these Thrasher Volunteers:
Linda Warfield: Labels & proofreading
Patrick Hickey & Jean Adams: Mailing

The Thrasher is printed on recycled paper

From The Kitchen Window: May - June, 2008

Do you ne'er think what wondrous being these?
Do you ne'er think who made them, and who taught the dialect they speak, where melodies alone are the interpreters of thought?
Whose household words are songs in many keys, sweeter than instrument of man e'er raught.
Longfellow – Tales of a Wayside Inn

Even as evening ebbs, with the setting sun brushing the top-most leaves of the tallest trees, the songs of the birds out back are simply overwhelming.

Despite the rigors of raising young, winds and rain, itchy mites, pesky cowbird eggs, roaming cats, and slinky snakes, the day begins with cheerful song and ends with the same.

No matter the distant sound of a squealing wheel and the insistent "Pop Goes the Weasel" from the Ice Cream Truck across the way, the evening songs of the yard belong to the birds.

Birds come, and birds go. Since the beginning of the year 'til now (April 15), the birds observed from the kitchen window are listed below.

Year-round residents: Red-shouldered Hawk; Mourning Dove; Barred Owl; Red-bellied, Downy, Pileated and Hairy Woodpeckers; Northern Flicker; Blue Jay; American and Fish Crows; Carolina Chickadee; Tufted Titmouse; White-breasted Nuthatch; Carolina Wren; Eastern Bluebird; American Robin; European Starling; Eastern Towhee; Song Sparrow; Northern Cardinal; House Finch and the American Goldfinch.

Our visitors: Mallard Duck, Sharp-shinned and Cooper's Hawks, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Eastern Phoebe, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Brown Creeper, Golden and Ruby-crowned Kinglets, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Hermit Thrush, Gray Catbird, Northern Mockingbird, Brown Thrasher, Cedar Waxwing, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Pine Warbler, Chipping Sparrow, Fox Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, Red-winged Blackbird, Common Grackle, Brown-headed Cowbird, Purple Finch, Pine Siskin, and a Ruby-throated Hummingbird arrived on April 12.

The full Moon in May occurs on May 19 and is named the Hot Moon. The twin stars of Gemini shine brightly in the western sky.

The full moon in June occurs on June 18, and is called the Flower or Strawberry Moon. Look for the bright planet Jupiter near the full moon. The summer solstice occurs at 5:59 p.m. EDT.

John Coe

