Mom of two incredible sons, wife of 33 years and a Registered Nurse at a major Trauma Center; these have been my major life accomplishments as of today. Throughout all these experiences I have somehow been able to take a snapshot of these events along the way in my mind or with a camera. Joining RAS in 1989 has taken me down many paths in the world of nature. Backyard bird-feeding led to monthly RAS meetings which then turned into field trips while our kids were just getting comfortable with walking. Field trips led to RAS Board positions which made for more friendships and experiences. A camera would always accompany me on our adventures to record our experiences.

To this day I have never had a photography class. I just know what I like in images and through trial and error and turning dials and pushing buttons take countless photos in the hopes of getting just one that captures the moment. People always ask me “just what kind of camera are you using”? I will tell you but would say that without the interest or right “frame” of mind, it doesn’t matter what equipment you use, the story will not be there.

My Dad was an Official Photographer for the US Navy on Engebi Island during the war. Looking at his photo’s and captions definitely shows a hereditary link to photography.

Nature is my church, my time to exhale and my reality. It is my hope that through a photo I share through the list-serv or with family and friends it will pique their interest to look a little deeper into nature and all the incredible things it has to offer. You don’t have to travel far to find a piece of amazement, you just have to step outside, look and focus.
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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Lewis Barnett, Louise Reza: Proofreading.
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Carl “Spike” Knuth: Illustrations.
Ben Griffon: Web Posting.

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 June 10.

President’s Message

Lewis Barnett

The Ethical Birder

Birders have quirks. We wear funny hats. We speak an interesting (to us anyway) jargon. We have a laser-like focus on birds, even in some contexts when we shouldn’t. I’m reminded in this context of my wife’s reaction once when I executed a somewhat aggressive braking maneuver to get back to a field where a flock of Wild Turkeys were grazing so I could get a better look. We’re notorious for stopping on roads for “just a quick look at an interesting bird.” And sometimes we don’t pay as much attention to common courtesy and common sense as we ought to in the heat of the chase. I have been guilty of most of these things at one time or another – except I never wear funny hats.

I heard a story recently of a letter to the editor written by an irate landowner in a county in the western part of our state that is renowned as a birding location. He complained of many undesirable behaviors he had observed from birders, including unsafe driving practices, unsafe use of public roads by pedestrians, and unauthorized access to and “use” of private property. (If you want an explanation of the scare quotes, stop me at the next meeting.) It was unintentionally comical in its mode of expression, but for all that, the author’s admonition for restraint from visitors to the area was sound. We are good, but imperfect, people, and we could all of us, from time to time, stand to think more carefully about our actions.

Richmond Audubon is a chapter of the Virginia Society of Ornithology. In 2008, the VSO adopted their Principles of Birding Ethics, which they adapted from the American Birding Association’s document of the same name. These documents cover everything from respect for private property to the size of birding groups in sensitive areas. Both documents begin with this quote, which is a good place to start with personal ruminations on how we should bird:

Everyone who enjoys birds and birding must always respect wildlife, its environment, and the rights of others. In any conflict of interest between birds and birders, the welfare of the birds and their environment comes first.

I’ve put it on my calendar to reread these documents once a year. They embody much that is common sense and common courtesy, but it never hurts to remind ourselves of what these abstract notions look like in practice.

VSO Code of Birding Ethics: http://tinyurl.com/cfkpnbd

ABA Code of Birding Ethics: http://tinyurl.com/mysgts
RAS Programs Celebrate the JOY of BIRDING

Caroline Coe, Program Chair

May Program

Purple Martins and Gone to the Birds Festival

Join RAS to learn about Purple Martins, how you might become a Purple Martin host, or simply to find out more about a fascinating bird with a long-standing association with humans. Our presenters, Jimmy Fitzpatrick and Adolph White, are both members of the Purple Martin Conservation Association. These two are long time friends of Purple Martins in the Richmond area who will share with us some of their passion for these flying wonders.

Additionally, they’ll have information on this year’s Gone to the Birds Festival – the 6th – to be held Saturday, August 3, 2013 from 6:00 PM to 9:00 PM at the Historic 17th Street Farmers’ Market. RAS is proud to have been a sponsor of the festival since its beginning. Check out this link for more information about the festival:
http://gonetobirdsrva.com

The program will be on Thursday, May 16 at St. Luke Lutheran Church at 7757 Chippenham Pkwy. The program begins at 7 p.m. with coffee, dessert and conversation starting at 6:30.

June, July, August

There are no RAS Member Programs scheduled in June, July or August. Please consider attending the RAS picnic on June 22nd (see article on page 4) when we can take our passion and interest for birds and nature outdoors.

Our meetings will resume on Thursday, September 19, 2013.

Have some good program ideas that you think we’d enjoy? Contact me and we can discuss them.

Thanks, and have a good summer.
From the Kitchen Window

John Coe

“May is dawn shimmering with dew and sunrise on lawn and meadow, dancing with young leaves in every woodland, jubilant with birdsong in every treetop.” Hal Borland

May it be that spring is not just a mere measure of time from the vernal equinox to the summer solstice as noted on our calendar. May it be that there will be some cool sunrises when the mist hangs low and fresh breezes as evening time comes. Let it be that the beauty and wonder of spring: the flowers and frogs, the birds and the butterflies, the greening of the forest and field, the buzz of the bees, and the silence of the bats. Let it be that the summer does not come too quickly.

Let it be that the singing we hear in the morning is that of our birds returning from the south and not the song of the cicada emerging from the soil – they need to wait their turn, when summer comes.

Birds of winter have departed: the large number of Pine Siskins this season, our occasional Purple Finch, the Red-breasted Nuthatches, the dozens of White-throated Sparrows and juncos, the surprise Hermit Thrush, the Yellow-rumped Warblers. In their place we have towhees and thrashers, a lovely, trilling Pine Warbler, a phoebe in the woods by the creek. The cardinals, chickadees and White-breasted Nuthatches and titmice are nesting or setting up those arrangements. The bluebirds are sitting on 5 blue eggs; the woodpeckers are in nest holes nearby. The noisy, feisty Carolina Wrens have a nest nearby, too. The Red-shouldered Hawks are noisy and close; and the Barred Owls are nesting down by the creek.

The full moon in May is called the Flower Moon and occurs on the 25th. The full moon in June is named the Hot Moon and happens on the 23rd. The summer solstice is on June 21st and the long hot summer begins.

Annual RAS Picnic, June 22, 2013

Nelda Snyder will host our annual picnic for the 22nd consecutive year at her beautiful Varina home on Saturday, June 22. Come by 8:00 AM for the morning bird walk. The rain date is Sunday, June 23rd. 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. Nelda will provide charcoal, picnic tables and 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. Come join us for this RAS season finale.

Directions

From Richmond: Go east on Main Street, which becomes Route 5. At the Y-intersection of Rt. 5 and Osborne Turnpike, bear right onto Osborne Tpk. After 8 miles, Osborne becomes Kingsland Rd. at a 90° left bend. Proceed on Kingsland for 0.9 mi to Arrahatteck 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 Capitol 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 Arrahatteck 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- $2.75 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. 30 minutes from Stony Point Fashion Park.
Wood Thrush

Mary Elfner, Virginia Audubon Council and Team Wood Thrush

The Wood Thrush – seldom seen and increasingly seldom heard.

The Wood Thrush is a bird held in high esteem by many. So beloved that it has been named the official bird of Washington, DC (http://birds.audubon.org/wood-thrush-washington-dc).

Known best for its song, the Wood Thrush is a consummate songster and it can sing in harmony with itself. In the final phrase of its three-part song, described as the trill, it sings pairs of notes simultaneously, one in each branch of its y-shaped syrinx. The two parts harmonize with each other to produce a haunting, ventriloquist like sound.

This beautiful songster resides in deciduous forests of the Eastern US during the spring and summer breeding season (April to September), and migrates to lowland broad-leaved tropical forests from Mexico to Panama for the winter (October to March). And so we are fortunate to have this secretive species with us for about 6 months of the year.

The Wood Thrush needs moist soils with abundant leaf litter so that it can forage for its invertebrate food base by picking through the leaves. It will also eat fruits in increasing amounts as the summer progresses to prepare for migration.

Scientists who study this reclusive species, Hylocichla mustelina, report its declining numbers in part due to Cowbird nest parasitism at the edges of fragmenting habitat and to acid rain depleting calcium in the soil. Calcium in the soil translates into calcium in the invertebrates, such as leaf litter snails, that Wood Thrush eat (Source: Cornell, All About Birds, http://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/wood_thrush/id)

What can we do to help?
1. Protect larger tracts of habitat – it needs several acres of contiguous habitat to successfully breed,
2. Keep pets indoors to lessen disturbance while foraging and breeding, and
3. Learn more about how we can change our behaviors to address climate change (http://www.pnas.org/content/106/44/18452.short)

You can learn more about what we are doing in schools throughout Virginia to raise awareness of this species by visiting www.teamwoodthrush.org, a TogetherGreen Fellowship Program which is strongly supported by the Richmond Audubon Society.
Field Trips

Ellison Orcutt

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.)

May 4th  Saturday
42nd St. with Arun Bose
Start time: 7:00 am
Join Arun Bose to explore one of the best city limits locations for spring warbler migration. This beautiful section of the James River Park has a tree top pedestrian bridge that can produce eye level views of hard to spot warblers. Meet Arun at the 42nd st. lot off of Riverside Dr. A small $5.00 fee will be collected to benefit Richmond Audubon. For more information contact Arun at arun1bose@gmail.com.

May 5th  Sunday
Ashland Trolley Line with Bob and Linda Cole
Start time: 7:00 am
Join Bob and Linda for this annual spring walk, to see what is migrating through Ashland. Meet at 7:00 am in the Luck Chevrolet parking lot. Wear shoes/boots for possibly wet conditions. The walk is usually about 4 hours. Contact Bob or Linda Cole at (804) 798-6618 with questions or directions. No reservations are needed. Luck Chevrolet (516 S. Washington Hwy, Ashland, VA) is at the Intersection of Rt. 1 and Ashcake Rd. Please park in the dirt parking lot to the left and do not park among the new or used cars in the paved lot.

May 5th  Sunday
Bryan Park with Sue Ridd:
Start time: ½ hour after sunrise
Meeting location: Shelter 1, Joseph Bryan Park
Join Sue Ridd for early morning birding in Bryan Park to see what birds are starting to stir. For more information, call Sue at 270-5365.

May 11th  Saturday
Pocahontas State Park with Wendy Ealding
Start time: 7:45 am.
Join Wendy Ealding and a park interpreter to explore Pocahontas State Park’s Forest Exploration Trail. The mature forests of the park attract a great variety of spring migrants. Some migrants will still be moving through in addition to many breeding species singing on newly established territories. Meet Wendy at the boat dock parking lot at 7:45 am. The regular fee of $5 per car applies to enter the State Park but no additional fee will be charged for the walk. For more information contact Wendy at wealding@aol.com.

May 18th  Saturday
Dutch Gap with Betsy and Ben Saunders
Meet Betsy and Ben at 8:00 AM at the entrance to Henricus Historical Park/Dutch Gap Conservation area. Explore this great birding destination to see what birds are around. You never know what will turn up at Dutch Gap. For more information, contact betsyben65@yahoo.com.

June 2nd  Sunday
Bryan Park with Sue Ridd:
Start time: ½ hour after sunrise
Meeting location: Shelter 1, Joseph Bryan Park
Description: See May 5th walk for more info.

June 15th  Saturday
Dutch Gap with Betsy and Ben Saunders
See May 18th trip for more info.
I do not have a website for photos. If anyone is interested in a certain photo they can feel free to contact me at juliekazz@comcast.net

Nominating Committee Update

As of the Thrasher deadline, the nominating committee continues to work to put together an effective slate of new officers and committee chairs for Richmond Audubon. Current Legislation Chair Eileen Geller will move to the First Vice President position. Long-time member Sue Ridd has agreed to stand for the Secretary position, and Jack Esworthy is on the slate for the Development Chair position. We are still in discussion with candidates for the other positions. The complete slate will be distributed via the listserv and other electronic media when it becomes available.

The board will also present an amendment to the chapter bylaws regarding board membership, which reads:

By majority vote of members at a duly called board meeting, in person or by email proxy, the Board may establish an exception to the number of consecutive terms that may be served by an individual as an officer or a Standing Committee Chair, allowing a single additional two year term of service.

Should this amendment be approved by the membership, Lewis Barnett has agreed to serve an additional term as President.

From the Editor

Julie Kacmarcik is our featured nature photographer in this issue. Since joining RAS in 1989, she has served on the Board as Secretary, Thrasher Co-editor, Membership and Field Trips Chair (for 8 years). Julie uses a point and shoot camera but you can’t tell that by looking at her photos. She also has the uncanny ability to lure rare Western species of Hummingbirds to her Chester, VA yard.
NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY
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 C0ZX530Z