Piping Plover – Endangered Species Encounter
Lori Schamerhorn

A get away winter vacation can offer sighting of birds that can spur interest beyond one’s expectations. That was the case for me during a birding trip to Hunting Island State Park, South Carolina on brisk day in December 2014.

Scanning the beach, I spotted a small shore bird. It moved along the beach in a rhythmic pattern ---- run-run-stop, run-run-stop, pick, pick. I snapped away with my camera. Checking the photos in my viewfinder and referencing a bird guide, I identified the bird as a Piping Plover (Charadrius melodus).

My curiosity got the best of me and I started searching the Internet for information about piping plovers. Both the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services (USFWS) and the Great Lakes Piping Plover (GLPIPL) Recovery Effort, which is a partnership between university, government, state organizations, and countless volunteers provided extensive detailed information about piping plovers and recovery efforts. These organizations are the source of the data below.

Piping Plovers nest and breed in three areas in North America, Great Lakes, Great Plains and the Atlantic Coast. In 1986, the Piping Plover populations were federally listed as threatened and endangered. The North Great Plans and Atlantic Coast populations are threatened, and the Great Lakes population is endangered. The GLPIPL population includes the States of IL, IN, MI, MN, NY, OH, PA, and WI and Canada (Ont.)

Historically, Piping Plovers nested throughout the Great Lakes (estimated population 500-800 pairs). The decline in their population is attributed to habitat destruction due to heavy beach development (recreational, residential, and commercial), nest disturbance and predation. In the summer of 1986, only 16 breeding pairs were recorded. Due to the GLPIPL Recovery Effort, there has been a steady increase in the GLPIPL population. By 2000, the breeding population increased to 30 nesting pairs. In 2014, 70 breeding pairs were recorded.

Looking at my photos, I noticed that the Piping Plover had color bands and flags on its legs. As a volunteer bird bander, I understood the importance of reporting banded birds; and I wondered where the bird was banded. I e-mailed the band information and photos to the USFWS. The USFWS indicated that the Piping Plover was a breeding adult from the Great Lakes population, which was confirmed by the University of Minnesota (UMN). UMN identified the plover as a female. She hatched in 2013 on North Manitou Island in Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore, MI and she returned to breed in 2014 at Grand Marais, MI in the Upper Peninsula and was given her unique pattern of band colors at that time.

Continued on page 7
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
804-601-4917
www.RichmondAudubon.org

Richmond Audubon Society is a registered non-profit 501 (C) (3) charitable organization. Donations are tax deductible.

Thanks to these Thrasher Volunteers:
Lewis Barnett, Louise Reza: Proofreading.
Gail and Mario Grasso: Mailing List.
Ben Griffon: Web Posting.

President’s Message - Spring Cleaning
Eileen Geller

There’s so much to love about the return of spring. Warmer weather, spring blooms, and, of course, spring migration. One thing that surprises me every year when spring rolls around—I actually enjoy doing a little spring cleaning! There’s something refreshing about clearing away the cobwebs and dust and getting rid of some of those items I’ve accumulated over time that I just don’t use anymore.

Richmond Audubon Society has recently done some spring cleaning, as well. Turns out we’ve accumulated a lot of interesting things over the years, and those things have made their way into our storage unit. We’ve cleaned some of those items out, and we’d like to make them available to anyone who might want or need them (including another organization who might be in need of some of these items).

At our May meeting, we’ll have a little RAS Yard Sale. You may find a book or some artwork that sparks your interest. We also have some projector screens and electronic equipment. And lots and lots of clipboards! Bring a checkbook or cash and make a donation (of your choosing) in exchange for any of the items.

Happy spring!

RAS Annual Picnic moves to new location

The Snyders have hosted our annual picnic for the last 24 years and even after Buz passed away, Nelda continued to be our gracious hostess at her beautiful Varina home. We got spoiled by freshly brewed coffee before the early morning bird walk, spring fed water accompanying the picnic fare, a lake for fishing and swimming and most importantly the Snyders’ warm and generous hospitality.

Our new location is the Carillon Pavilion in Byrd Park and the date is Saturday, June 11. More picnic details will be forthcoming on the RAS website.

Earlier this year, Nelda sold her house and moved to a retirement community in Mechanicsville. I hope you will join me in wishing her the best in her new habitat.

She can be reached at nsnyder03@gmail.com or 804-417-5192.

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.
Thursday, May 19, 2016: Nest in Peace

We welcome Joyce Caldwell, our RAS Education Chair, to share her passion for birds as she teaches us about bird nests. Birds use a variety of twigs, leaves, grass, and other materials to construct their nests. It’s remarkable that they can fashion such ordinary materials into extraordinary cradles, some so distinctive they are recognizable immediately, others just an educated guess as to the species of bird that made them.

Joyce will show us the types of nests birds make, the variety of nesting materials they use, the challenges they face, and the things each of us can do to help birds nest in peace.

On display will be the nests of birds that breed in the Richmond area: from the woven pine needle nest of our beautiful Eastern Bluebird and the leafy-mossy dome of the jaunty Carolina Wren to the hidden hanging basket of the Red-eyed Vireo, the delicate lichen-covered masterpiece of the Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, and more.

RAS does not have programs in June, July or August. Spend your free evenings outdoors, in nature, with friends and family.

We meet at St. Luke Lutheran Church, 7757 Chippenham Pkwy, Richmond. The program begins at 7:00 pm, with coffee, cookies and conversation before hand starting at 6:30 pm.

Please contact me with program suggestions! RAS Program Chair, Caroline Coe, 804.276.1397 or eccoe@verizon.net

Annual Birdathon

Each year, Richmond Audubon sponsors a Bird-a-Thon as one of our major fund raisers. Crack teams of intrepid birders criss-cross the state over a frantic 24 hour period of their choosing, identifying by sight and sound as many species as they can. Your mission, should you choose to accept it, is to pick one of the teams to back and make a donation to show your support!

Learn more about the participating teams, or make your donation to one of the teams below:

Birdzerk!
Crazy Coots
The Good, the Bad and the Ugly Ducklings
Purple Martians

Piping Plover Stewardship in Atlantic Canada
Submitted by Diane Jadlowski

20 November 2015 – Human activities on beaches threaten the recovery of endangered Piping Plovers in Atlantic Canada. One of the main objectives of Bird Studies Canada’s Piping Plover Conservation Program is to reduce human-caused threats on about 30 nesting beaches in Nova Scotia and southeastern New Brunswick.

Motorized vehicles pose one of the most serious threats to nesting plovers and chicks. Annual monitoring of threats on beaches consistently shows that New Brunswick has one of the highest levels of vehicle use in the region. Since 2013, surveys in southeastern NB have detected a small but steady decrease in the average number of vehicles on beaches. Tracking threats in conjunction with biological indicators helps inform targeted educational outreach activities and enforcement efforts by provincial and federal partners.

This project was undertaken with the financial support of the Government of Canada.

Save the Date!
The RAS Annual Picnic will be held on June 11, 2016 at the Carillon Pavilion in Byrd Park. More details will be available closer to the date on the website and Facebook. But there will be a field trip in the morning with a potluck lunch.
Rufous Motmot at Mindo, Ecuador ©Lou Reza

American Woodcock at Powhatan State Park, VA ©Lewis Barnett

Choco Toucan at Rio Silanche, Ecuador ©Naseem Reza

Chestnut-crowned Antpitta at Refugio Paz de las Aves, Ecuador ©Lou Reza

Southern Lapwing at Kichwa Anangu Community, Yasuni National Park, Ecuador ©Lou Reza

Collared Aracari at Milpe, Ecuador ©Naseem Reza
Piping Plover and other Plovers

All photos taken by Lori Schamerhorn

Great Lakes Piping Plover - Female, Hunting Island State Park, SC

Snowy Plover at Fort De Soto Park, FL

PIPLYouthSigns - submitted by Diane Jadlowski. Also see page 3

Semi-palmated Plover - Winter plumage at Fort De Soto Park, FL

Black-bellied Plover - Breeding plumage at Chincoteague NWR, VA

Wilson’s Plover at Fort De Soto Park, FL
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 1st Sunday
Bryan Park with Jan Frye
Start time: ½ hour after sunrise
Meeting location: Shelter 1, Joseph Bryan Park
Join Jan for early morning birding in Bryan Park. Migration will be peaking and resident birds will be busy with the breeding season. For more information, contact Jan at byrdnyrd33@gmail.com.

May 7th Saturday
42nd St. with Ellison Orcutt
Start time: 7:00 am
Warblers! Join Ellison to explore one of the best city limits locations for enjoying the spring warbler migration. This beautiful section of the James River Park has a treetop pedestrian bridge that can produce eye level views of hard to spot warblers and other migrants. Meet Ellison at the 42nd st. lot off of Riverside Dr. A small $5.00 donation per person will be collected to benefit Richmond Audubon. For more information contact him at mr.ellyo@gmail.com.

May 11th Wednesday
42nd St. with John Coe
Start time: 7:00 am
Couldn’t make it on Saturday May 7th? Meet John at the 42nd st. lot off of Riverside Dr at 7:00 am (by the yellow gates). For more information contact him at (804) 276-1397.

May 14th Saturday
Dutch Gap with Lewis Barnett
Meet Lewis at 8:00 am at the entrance to Henricus Historical Park/Dutch Gap Conservation area. Explore this great birding destination to see what’s breeding and what’s still migrating. Lewis will introduce folks with how to record observations for the Breeding Bird Atlas. For more information, contact Lewis at blbarnett3@gmail.com

May 15th Sunday - Start time: 10:00 am
Bethel Beach NAP
This Natural Area Preserve in Mathews County sits on the western shore of the Chesapeake Bay. Barrier beaches, salt marshes and the open waters of the Chesapeake make it a great birding opportunity. Make a day of it and explore some of the other hidden gems of the western Chesapeake. Bethel Beach is about 1.5 hours east of Richmond. Contact Ellison for more information or directions at mr.ellyo@gmail.com.

June 4th Saturday
Lickinghole Creek Craft Brewery with Lewis Barnett.
Start time: 9:00 am
Join Lewis for a walk on the site of Virginia’s only Farm Brewery. Located on Little Lickinghole Creek in Goochland County, the property boasts a variety of habitats and birds. After the walk participants will head to the patio to try some fine craft beer. Meet at the brewery at 9:00 am. Contact Lewis Barnett (blbarnett3@gmail.com, 804-920-4723) for more info and to coordinate carpooling. The brewery is located at 4100 Knolls Point Dr, Goochland, VA 23063.

June 5th Sunday
Bryan Park with Adolph White
Start time: ½ hour after sunrise
Meeting location: Shelter 1, Joseph Bryan Park
See May 1st walk for more info. Contact Adolph at whitea60@verizon.net for more info.

June 8th Wednesday
Radcliffe Conservation Area with John Coe
Start time: 7:00 am*
Join John for some some birding along the Appomattox River in Chesterfield County. This county park sits below the dam of Lake Chesdin and features trails along the river and swamp. Meet John at 7:00 am* at the Starbucks in Oxbridge Square Shopping Center (360 & Courthouse Rd). Radcliffe is just west of Colonial Heights. The address is 21501 Chesdin Rd S. Chesterfield, VA 23803. If you wish to meet John at the park or for more information, call him at (804) 276-1397.

June 11th Saturday - RAS Picnic - see page 3

June 18th Saturday - 8:00 am
Dutch Gap with Lewis Barnett
See the May 14th trip for more info.

June 18th Saturday - 9:00 am
Tucker Park with Paul Bedell
Join Paul for a variety walk along the James River in Goochland County. In addition to birds, you'll be on the lookout for dragonflies and butterflies, too. Don’t worry if you don’t have experience with these flying insects, that’s what Paul is for. Meet Paul at the park at 9:00 am. It’s located at 2746 Maidens Loop, Maidens, VA 23102, off of Highway 522 just north of its intersection with the James River. For more info contact him at pbedell@richmond.edu.
From the Kitchen Window - John Coe

“It is always sunrise somewhere; the dew is never dried at once; a shower is forever falling; vapor is forever rising.” John Muir

And so, as I watch from our kitchen window, the new green of late spring, so very green in the morning sun, is deepening – sunrise arriving so much earlier now.

The street down the hill and across the creek is now hidden behind a screen of green and even the sounds from the highway, not so far away, are lost in the trees. The freshness in the air, the burst of flowers, the sounds of bird romance, and the green - new life.

The winter birds have gone, or soon will be, as I write this in mid-April. A single Pine Siskin feeds with the goldfinches and a few juncos and White-throated Sparrows are still around. Soon the juncos will be building nests and raising young in the mountains of Virginia and beyond, and the white-throats will be up in Canada singing “Oh, sweet Canada, Canada, Canada,” their “home song”.

Some of the birds of summer have arrived and more will be coming as the miracle of spring migration again happens and our trees are alive with new sounds and colors. Open the window and listen, and take a walk in the woods.

The full moon in May is on the 21st and named the Flower Moon. Mars is at opposition at the full moon and will be at peak brightness.

Piping Plover – Lori Schamerhorn

Continued from page 1

The female Piping Plover that I sighted was one of the 2014 breeding birds recorded in the Great Lakes. Piping Plovers winter in coastal areas of the United States from North Carolina to Texas. They also winter along the coast of eastern Mexico and on the Caribbean Islands from Barbados to Cuba and the Bahamas. I was floored and elated to have sighted this female GLPIPL. Incredible! More importantly, my sighting provided valuable feedback to the recovery efforts. And recent great news! The GLPIPL Recovery effort reported 73 pairs of GLPIPL for the 2015 breeding season, a record high since 1986.

The last words of the UMN contact were, “If you continue to see her please let me know.” With those words and my interest to participate in GLPIPL’s recovery efforts, I will continue to report banded shore birds to USFWS and other organizations. Who knows, maybe, just maybe I might see another GLPIPL or PIPL from one of the other two breeding populations.

What can you do? Get involved, give birds space, keep dogs leashed and connect with GLPIPL Recovery Effort or other shorebird recovery effort. The birds will be grateful and we, along with generations to come will be graced by their beauty and wonder. Peep!

More information on Piping Plovers can be found at the sites below:

http://www.fws.gov/midwest/endangered/pipingplover/piplnestingspairs.html
http://www.waterbirds.umn.edu/
https://glpipl.wordpress.com/about/banding-crew/
http://www.fws.gov/northeast/pipingplover/overview.html

From the Editor

This issue of the Thrasher is the last one I will be editing but I hope to remain engaged as a Thrasher contributor and an avid supporter of the Richmond Audubon Society.

It has been an exciting 4 years for me to bring you content that is timely and interesting. The most rewarding experience has been to initiate 2 pages of color photographs in every issue of the print Thrasher that is aimed at our members who prefer paper over screen.

My sincere thanks to those who have contributed to the Thrasher and to all who have enjoyed reading it in either format.
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  

Name _____________________________  
Address ____________________________  
City ___________________  
State____ ZIP _____________________  
Phone __________________________  
E-mail ____________________________  

Make check payable to National Audubon Society and write “X53” on the check.  
Send your check and application to: Richmond Audubon Society, P.O. Box 26648, Richmond, VA 23261 X53

Officers / Committee Chairs for 2015-2016  

President Eileen Geller president@richmondaudubon.org 804-747-5143  
1st Vice President Ellison Orcutt vicepresident1@richmondaudubon.org 804-339-6976  
2nd Vice President Ben Saunders vicepresident2@richmondaudubon.org 804-272-0605  
Bird-A-Thon Lewis Barnett treasurer@richmondaudubon.org 804-320-7898  
Conservation Mary Elfner conservation@richmondaudubon.org  
Cyberspace Ben Griffon Cyberspace@richmondaudubon.org 804-767-0131  
Development Jack Esworthy development@richmondaudubon.org 630-940-9698  
Education Joyce Caldwell education@richmondaudubon.org 804-560-3444  
Field Trips Ellison Orcutt fieldtrips@richmondaudubon.org 804-339-6976  
Hospitality Vacant  
IBA/VAC Rep Vacant  
Legislation Vacant  
Membership Mario and Gail Grasso membership@richmondaudubon.org 804-379-2001  
Past President Lewis Barnett pastpresident@richmondaudubon.org 804-320-7898  
Programs Caroline Coe programs@richmondaudubon.org 804-276-1397  
Publicity Diane Jadlowski publicity@richmondaudubon.org 702-308-1953  
Secretary Vacant  
Thrasher Editor Naseem Reza thrasher@richmondaudubon.org 804-272-1145  
Treasurer/Finance Lewis Barnett treasurer@richmondaudubon.org 804-320-7898  
Youth Robin Ruth (interim) RASkids@richmondaudubon.org 804-231-5949