Join us for our November Pot Luck Dinner, Silent Auction & Program
Caroline Coe, Margaret O'Bryan, RAS Auction Planning Committee
Sandy Wynne, Program Chair

Thursday November 19, 2009, 6–8:30 PM, St. Michaels Episcopal Church, 8706 Quaker Lane, Bon Air, Virginia. NOTE: NOT our usual meeting place, but the location of our last November meetings.

Pot Luck Dinner
RAS will provide a turkey and ham, cider and coffee, and have wine available for purchase; you’ll bring a favorite dish to share.

Jan Robertson can use your help that evening, contact Jan at hospitality@richmondaudubon.org or 804-272-6674.

Silent Auction
Included that evening will be a limited silent auction offering some of our signature Richmond Audubon Items.

Raffle
Zeiss Sports Optics has generously donated a fabulous pair of binoculars for our Audubon raffle: Zeiss Conquest 10x30, Binoculars. Raffle tickets can be purchased for $5 or a book of 5 tickets for $20. We will have the drawing that evening but you do not need to be present to win! A quality pair

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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
Submit articles no later than the 15th of the month before each issue to thrasher@richmondaudubon.org. Images must be at full size and at 300 dpi.


Thanks to these Thrasher Volunteers: Ben Griffon, Patrick Hickey: Labels & Mailing. Lewis Barnett, Claire Bose, Naseem Reza: Proofreading

RAS membership meetings are on the 3rd Thursday of the month except June, July, Aug and Dec. Meetings are held at St. Luke Lutheran Church at Custis Rd. 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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The Thrasher is printed on recycled paper.

President’s Message
Lewis Barnett

As I write this, we are sliding gently into autumn. The furnace kicked in for the first time at our house over the past weekend. The dogwoods in the neighborhood are well into their wardrobe change, and the maples are beginning to tinge red. I’ve been fretting for a few days over the deadline for this piece. I haven’t been able to get outside much over the past few weeks, and writing about missing Fall migration just seemed a little peevish. Change of seasons? Done to death.

We had a nice, clear, warm day today, and I was able to slip away from the office early enough to spend an hour in the back yard before dark. Practically the first thing I saw was the first-of-season (for the yard, anyway) Yellow-Bellied Sapsucker—an auspicious start for an evening! It was foraging along a bare branch at the top of a black gum tree. As I watched, the bird seemed agitated, or at least more active than I’m used to Sapsuckers being. It took me a few moments to realize it, but the bird was hawking for insects! Definitely not used to Sapsuckers doing that! This went on for several minutes before the bird moved on. The rest of my hour was pleasantly spent, with visits from all the usual suspects, and a couple not so usual. But I kept thinking about that crazy Sapsucker, catching bugs on the wing, for all the world like an overgrown Phoebe.

As night fell, I retreated back inside and sought out my copy of The Birder’s Handbook by Ehrlich, Dobkin and Wheye, to see if I had a real phenomenon on my hands. As you would expect, “bark gleaning” was the symbol for the Yellow-bellied Sapsucker’s foraging style, but the secondary feeding style listed underneath the icon was “HAWKS.” So, no paper in The Raven for me. But it was still such fun to see a familiar old friend do a new trick for me. Thanks, welcome back, and I’ll look forward to seeing you through the chilly months.

Hummingbirds & no apology!
Joe Lively

Those county festivals are something else. One display in Nottoway County, really drew folks in. The odor of freshly made Brunswick Stew wafted through the trees, down the hollows and across town. People, who missed breakfast were particularly affected. Well of course I ate too much. When I finally regained my composure, I probably looked like I felt—stuffed. No apology!

That reminds me of our hummingbirds. If you look closely at the remaining birds, you will notice that they are becoming little butterballs. Really, that’s good! Our little friends are about to depart on a marathon journey to the tropics. They are converting

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of binoculars that will delight any birder or outdoor enthusiast, the Conquest binoculars are noted for their state-of-the-art technology, ruggedness, and use of corrosion resistant materials; they’re waterproof and come with the Zeiss lifetime warranty. We’ll have door prizes throughout the evening. Come and be surprised.

Many of you have generously supported our auction fundraiser in the past. This year we’re again asking for your support for:

**Birds: RAS supports citizen science with its volunteers and funds.**

This summer RAS volunteers helped band over 550 nestlings as this ongoing Prothonotary Warbler project yields valuable information about the lives and habits of this beautiful species.

**RAS Kids: No Child Left Inside—the next generation**

Swansboro Elementary School dedicated their Outdoor Classroom, a RAS KIDS led initiative with a ribbon cutting ceremony, Arbor Day, April, 2009.

**Habitat: RAS dollars and volunteers work along the James River to make a difference.**

“RAS continues to support Presquile and James River NWRs through habitat restoration, building projects, bird counts and interpretative trips for the public, and their advocacy, continuing advice and council.” Cyrus Brame, ORP, Eastern Virginia Rivers National Wildlife Refuge Complex.

**Outreach: RAS programs and field trips.**

RAS offers frequent birding field trips, meetings, and an annual picnic.

Please join us for good food, a lot of fellowship, some signature silent auction items and fundraising, the Raffle, and *How to Be a Raptor.*

**Event Co-chairs:**

Margaret O’Bryan, catbird329@comcast.net
804-746-5599

Caroline Coe, ccccoe@verizon.net
804-276-1397

*Hummingbirds continued from page 2*

much of the flower nectar and sugar water into fat. That fat will provide a long-term energy source to sustain them as they fly South. Can you imagine something so tiny flying as many as 3-3,500 miles? Part of that flight will carry them over 600 miles of open water. Those little hummers need all the help they can get.

A number of people have asked when I take my personal feeders down. During the population peaks of June and late August, there are as many as 20 large feeders hanging to supplement the flowers in my hummingbird gardens. I gradually take these large feeders down, as we move to the last days of September. Now four small feeders are hanging, one on each side of the house. These are maintained all winter. They provide for the last of the Ruby-throated hummingbirds that

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IBA in Focus – The Great Dismal Swamp

David Bryan, Virginia IBA Outreach

Located in the extremities of southeastern Virginia, the Great Dismal Swamp IBA exemplifies an Important Bird Area as it truly provides essential habitat for many breeding, migrating and wintering birds. This IBA, representing the largest remaining block of a swamp ecosystem which once spanned over one million acres, is characterized by saturated peatlands, deep organic soils, and fire-adapted woody vegetation. The IBA is unique in that it includes various forest communities of global importance, such as cypress-bay, maple-bay-gum, and the beautiful white cedar forests, all of which depend upon local relationships between fire and water. The area is truly a sight for any naturalist to see!

Due largely to the diverse swampy habitat and multiple forest types, the Great Dismal Swamp IBA harbors one of the most abundant and diverse bird populations in the Commonwealth. In fact, over 200 species of birds are known to use the IBA at some point in their annual cycle, while 96 have been reported nesting on or near the refuge. Among these annual winged inhabitants of the swamp is the rare Wayne’s Warbler, a rare coastal subspecies of the Black-throated Green Warbler. Additionally, the IBA supports the only known coastal plain population of Swainson’s Warblers and significant numbers of high priority Neotropical migrant species such as the Prothonotary Warbler, Worm-eating Warbler, Prairie Warbler, and Wood Thrush. While the Spring migration and breeding season is definitely the IBA’s “busy season”, the IBA is also vital in the Winter as it provides a stopover point for waterfowl and hundreds of thousands of migrating passerines. For example, large flocks of vulnerable Rusty Blackbirds, estimated to occur in the thousands, depend upon the wooded wetlands of the IBA and as many as 23,000 Snow Geese and over 5,200 Tundra Swans (25-30% of the statewide population) have been recorded on Christmas Bird Counts.

Like all of Virginia’s IBAs, the Great Dismal Swamp faces several threats to its rare plant and animal communities. Before becoming subject to anthropogenic pressures, the IBAs diversity of forest habitats was produced in large part due to varying hydrologic gradients and the natural interplay between fire and water. Not surprisingly then, the primary threats to the IBA include long-term suppression of fire and artificially controlled water regimes that impact natural hydrology, thus leading to great shifts in the distribution, abundance, and diversity of rare habitats.

Fortunately, due to its importance for birds and other wildlife, the Great Dismal Swamp IBA has become a focal point for land acquisition and restoration efforts. Presently the US Fish and Wildlife Service owns and protects the Great Dismal Swamp NWR (~75% of the IBA) and has been a leader in restoration efforts such as prescribed burns and the use of water control structures. Other large landowners include the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, The Nature Conservancy, the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, and the City of Chesapeake. Hopefully these conservation-oriented landowners will continue to work together with the Virginia IBA Program in order to protect this vital habitat and its priority bird populations for years to come!

Error and Apology

Lewis Barnett, President, Richmond Audubon Society
Arun Bose, Thrasher editor

Richmond Audubon Society would like to apologize for any inconvenience caused by the erroneous date for the October membership meeting published in the September/October issue of the Thrasher. When the error was discovered, we did post corrected information to the Richmond Audubon e-mail list and to the web site, but we regret that we were unable to notify paper-mail only subscribers to the Thrasher in a timely fashion.
Hummingbirds continued from page 3

will be with us through the first week in October. Plus, four times my family has experienced the enchantment of having “winter humming bird” stay with us. My grandchildren and I want that magic to happen again.

Another question I received: Are feeders really doing any good for hummingbirds at this time? The total number of hummers migrating is beyond our imagination. Biologically speaking, feeders hardly make a dent in feeding the

I love my birds and want to give an edge to any hummingbird that passes my way, so they will all return next spring.

No apology!

masses. Most survive quite well without ever seeing a feeder. Why then, do I leave feeders hanging? Human emotion often influences our reactions. I love my birds and want to give an edge to any hummingbird that passes my way, so that they will all return next spring. No apology!

Hummingbird lovers wishing to pick up copy of my new book: Hummingbirds And Flowers They Love, you may order online at www.hummingbirdsandflowers.net. A portion of the proceeds will be donated to RAS.

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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 additions or impromptu field trips, www.richmondaudubon.org/ActivFieldTrip.html.

November 1, Sunday, Bryan Park Bird Walk. Meet at Shelter 1 one-half hour after dawn. Wear layers of clothing. For more information, call Sue at 804-270-5365.

November 8, Sunday, Curles Neck Farm, 7:00 AM. John Coe will lead this trip to one of the best birding locations in the area. Meet at the gate at 7:00 AM. Call or email John for information johncoe@verizon.net or 804-276-1397.

November 14, Saturday, Lewis Ginter Botanical Gardens, 8:00 AM. Join Tyler Turpin for walk on the trails at Lewis Ginter. Meet in the rotunda of the visitor center. Cost will be $6.00 for non Ginter members, finish around 9:30 - 9:45 AM. Contact: Tyler Turpin at 804-317-9478 or email tylerturpin@earthlink.net to sign up. 4 persons need to have signed up by 9 PM of the Wednesday before the trip or trip will cancelled. Rain date: November 21.

November 21, Saturday, Chesapeake Bay Beaches, Mathews County. Join us for a walk on the beaches in Mathews County. We will be looking for bay ducks. Bring water, snacks, dress in layers. Contact Art Baker at 804-730-9127 or albaker@earthlink.net for details.

December 9, Wednesday, 2nd Wednesday Walk at Henricus Park. Join Joe Coe for a bird walk on the 2nd Wednesday of December. Call or email John for information johncoe@verizon.net or 804-276-1397.

December 20, Sunday, Hopewell Christmas Bird Count. 71st year the Hopewell count has been held. If you wish to participate please contact Arun Bose at arun1bose@gmail.com or 804-355-8813.


January 16, 2010, Saturday, Westmoreland State Park and Popes Creek for ducks and Tundra Swans. Meet at the Brook Run Shopping Center at 8 AM near the Goodwill trailer. Return time would be mid- to late afternoon. Bring lunch and water/hot beverage. Dress warmly. For more information call Adrienne Dery at 804-262-7072 or Sue Ridd at 804-270-5365.
**the Thrasher by mail or online?**

**NEW MEMBERS** who joined through National Audubon and not via a direct application to RAS: If this is your first issue of The Thrasher, you need to send a response by one of the methods below in order to keep it coming to your mailbox.

1. Online: (www.richmondaudubon.org/forms/FormEThrasherDelivery.html)
2. Written response to: RAS, PO Box 26648, Richmond, VA 23261 (See Information to Include).
3. Call the RAS phone number (804) 257-0813 and leave a message with your information (see below).

**Information to include:**
- Your name (from your mailing label)
- Your address (with 9-digit zip)
- Phone number and e-mail address so we can contact you
- The 12-digit account number or other code at the top of your mailing label located on the newsletter that is currently sent to you (e.g., 00123456789, or whatever is listed at the top of your label; you can leave out the leading zeros.)
- Whether you want to receive the Thrasher by mail or only read it online.

We want you to get your issue of the Thrasher in the mail if you want to receive it that way. Please respond, even if you intend to read it online. We need to know which of our many NAS members are really interested in RAS. We also want to reduce our costs, but not at the expense of your enjoyment.

New members coming to RAS through National Audubon will get at least one issue of the Thrasher in the mail so they will have a chance to see it before making their decision. If you come through RAS directly we will send the Thrasher automatically if you requested that on your application.

**EXISTING MEMBERS:** If you got this issue you don’t need to send a response. You will continue to receive the Thrasher unless you send a response indicating otherwise, or your subscription lapses. Please stay abreast of your expiration date and keep your membership current. This is shown on your Audubon Magazine label.

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**Natural Systems Are at Risk**

Glenda C. Booth, gbooth123@aol.com
Advocacy Chair, National Audubon Society

Climate change from heat-trapping greenhouse gas emissions is already affecting Virginia’s birds, fish, wildlife and natural systems. Warmer air and water will alter the composition of species in the Chesapeake Bay region and rising sea levels could inundate coastal areas. More extreme weather events will dump more pollution into the Commonwealth’s waterways.

Over 100 of Audubon’s state offices and chapters recently signed onto a letter to the U.S. Senate requesting that senators include funding to protect resources from climate change. Auduboners wrote, “We urge you to work with your colleagues to ensure that the Senate passes comprehensive climate and energy legislation that reduces greenhouse gas emissions and dedicates 5% of the total allowance value adaptation in order to safeguard fish and wildlife, and the natural resources on which we all rely.”

“Outdoor recreation... contribute[s] $730 billion to the economy and support 6.5 million jobs...”

Healthy natural systems provide clean water and clean air and protect communities from catastrophic weather-related disasters, ranging from hurricanes to floods to forest fires. Outdoor recreation, including hunting, fishing, camping, climbing, hiking, paddling, backcountry skiing, mountain biking, wildlife viewing, and other activities contribute $730 billion to the economy and support 6.5 million jobs, according to the Outdoor Industry Foundation. The economic value of the natural environment is far higher when the vast range of ecosystem services is also included; conservative estimates put these benefits at trillions of dollars annually.

**Time To Speak Out**

Audubon has always stood for birds, wildlife and healthy habitats. Now is the time to speak out for strong climate legislation and the resources we need to protect the natural resources that we love.

**Contact Virginia’s Senators**

Virginia citizens need to tell our senators that we want:
- Strong climate legislation this year to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- Legislation that protects birds, wildlife, natural resources and ecosystems by dedicating 5% of revenues for wildlife and habitat protection and adaptation.

These funds would increase the resources of the Land and Water Conservation Fund, the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act, [continued on page 7]
the Endangered Species Act and other successful conservation programs, national wildlife refuges and other protected lands and waters. Addressing climate change is not complete without funds for healthy ecosystems.

Contact your Senator
The Senate will consider global warming legislation very soon, this fall. Now is the time to act. Here’s how to reach our U.S. senators:


You can also send an email at your senator’s web site or through Audubon’s Action Center, www.audubonaction.org.

For fact sheets on global warming, visit http://www.audubon.org/globalWarming/GetTheFacts.php.

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the weeds will turn brown and, just maybe, and it will snow.

November’s Full Moon, named the Beaver Moon, as the beavers are then storing their food for winter, will occur on the 2nd. The Leonid Meteor Shower peaks on the 17th. And the Pleiades star cluster, also known as the Seven Sisters, is now very much a part of the winter sky.

The Full Moon in December, named the Cold Moon, or The Long Night Moon, occurs also on the 2nd. There will also be a full moon on the 31st which makes it a Blue Moon…two full moons in the same month.

The Geminid Meteor shower peaks on the night of the 13th. There will be no moon so it should be quite visible. The Winter Solstice occurs on December 22nd at 12:47 PM.

Happy Fall and Winter!
John Coe
From The Kitchen Window

John Coe

The kitchen window took the summer off. Travels hither and yon...new places, new adventures, new birds, and an occasional return home to refresh contacts with family, friends, the dumb cats, cut the weeds, pay the bills and to reintroduce ourselves to our bird friends...like, feed them.

Looks like it was a good summer for our backyard birds. Lots of young bluebird fledglings.

The Chickadees, titmice, nuthatches, wrens, doves, and finches all seem abundant and happy; as well as the cardinals, woodpeckers, crows, and Blue jays. We also had Brown Thrashers and catbirds, and our resident Red-shouldered Hawk and Barred Owls. A Coopers Hawk nested near by, and the Chipping Sparrow pair raised one cowbird and one of their own...only saw one Song Sparrow young...it didn't have a tail.

"Beauty before me, I return
Beauty below me, I return
Beauty all around me, with it I return
Now on the trail of beauty, there I return."

Navaho prayer song

The hummingbirds were active and fairly numerous, but I don't believe we had any of our migratory summer visitors nesting in our trees. Hopefully they were there and we just missed them.

But, from the window the change of seasons is there. The Virginia creeper leaves are brilliant red creeping around the yellow leaved branches of the tulip tree, and the dogwood is blushing burgundy...most of its red fruit gone or scattered on the ground by flocks of American Robins nosily flashing in and out of the trees.

The sounds of robins and blackbirds passing overhead, the smell of damp leaves. The feel of cool breath, the mist over the creek, pretty much says summer is past, fall is here and winter is coming. Very soon the leaves will fall, the birds of winter will come,