Hal Tyler
RAS Member and Nature Photographer

My interest in photography started early because my Dad was a serious amateur photographer. I have early memories of spending time in his photo darkroom helping him develop his prints and film. His camera and film were available for me to use.

In my teens Dad gave me a Speed Graphic and soon I was working for the high school newspaper covering sports. Later that helped me land a job on the college newspaper and eventually a job as senior photographer for my college yearbook.

Later, even though photography has a special pull for me, family and job left little time for much more than occasional family candid shots.

In 1997, I picked up my camera again and quickly discovered that my passion for photography was still there. I found that my love of nature, travel and photography have a wonderful connection. Now photography, for me, is a celebration of the world in which we live.
President’s Message

Close Encounter

Lewis Barnett

Early this fall, I had one of those up-close experiences with nature that really stick with you. As I was stepping into the car to leave for work, I heard an odd noise coming from the screened porch of my next-door neighbors’ house. I couldn’t see anyone on the porch. If someone had fallen, or if someone was skulking around there, it bore investigating, so I took a look. As I walked closer the noise was repeated, and as I closed in, it became clear that the source was a large bird inside the porch. It turned out to be a Red-tailed Hawk. How it came to be in there was a mystery, but it was struggling to get out and having no success.

I hesitated for a few moments to observe the situation. The bird was flapping against the walls, scrabbling with its talons against the screens in an attempt to find a way out. There seemed a very good possibility that it could injure itself if left where it was. I first tried propping open one of the doors, then stepping back to see if the hawk would discover the way out. That quickly appeared fruitless, as the opposite side of the porch with its views of the woods behind the house seemed much more enticing.

I moved at that point around to the back door of the porch, and as I entered, I noticed that the patio furniture was covered with canvas covers. I understood that an agitated Red-tailed, with those impressive talons, wasn’t a creature I should be in close contact with if it could be helped, but just leaving things as they were didn’t feel right. I picked up one of the covers, and holding it in front of me, started herding the hawk toward the open door. This got us close to the door, but going out on its own didn’t seem like it was on the hawk’s agenda. In the end, with the bird staring me in the eye, I carefully wrapped the canvas around it, covering it completely, picked the bundle up, and released the bird out the door.

The hawk sailed about thirty feet and landed on the ground. It collected itself for a moment, gave one look back at me, and then took off for the trees across the street. In retrospect, there is probably something I ought to have done instead of handling the situation directly—called a rehabilitator, for example. But at the time, it seems like delay might have had bad consequences. I hope I have done no harm. I know I have a memory that will last a long, long time.
RAS Programs Celebrate the JOY of BIRDING

Caroline Coe, Program Chair

November Program

Thursday, November 15, 2012.

This is our annual RAS Pot Luck Dinner and “Show and Tell”. We ask each person who comes to bring a dish to share. RAS will provide a turkey and ham, the plates and utensils, and drinks. So pull out your favorite recipe or make that last minute stop by the store on your way to the meeting, and plan to join us for a 6 PM dinner. Please label your dishes so we can return them to you.

Our program after our meal will be pictures and stories that we each share. Pick up to 5 of your best or most memorable pictures for the year, or a short video, and send them to Lewis Barnett, blbarnett3@gmail.com. Lewis will put them all together and we’ll let everyone tell their own story with the pictures! No pictures? but a story to share? Let us know and we’ll add your name to the agenda, too. The number of folks who have shared has grown each year; please “show and tell” your story & pictures.

December Program

December 2012.

Remember that we do NOT have a December RAS Program. Consider participating in the Hopewell Christmas Bird Count on Sunday December 16th.

And, looking forward, mark your calendar for Thursday, January 17, 2013. RAS Legislative Chair, Eileen Geller, is planning an evening with an update on significant legislation before the Virginia Legislature, and a brief presentation by Richmond Region Energy Alliance, a non-profit conservation organization that helps homeowners make their homes more energy efficient. More information will be available in the January/February Thrasher.

Please contact me with questions or suggestions, 804.276.1397 or cccoe@verizon.net

Photo by Bob Schamerhorn • www.iPhotoBirds.com

Red-eyed Vireo
From the Kitchen Window

John Coe

“Every human being looks to the birds. They suit the fancy of us all. What they feel they can voice, as we try to; they court and nest, they battle with the elements, they are torn by two opposing impulses, a love of home and a passion for far places. Only with birds do we share so much emotion.” Donald Peattie

...and so, as I watch out the window, the leaves of summer falling past in autumn colors... Tree limbs will soon be bare and the summer green lawns and forest floor will be brown – and crunchy – on a fall afternoon.

As I write this in early October, some of the birds of summer are still stopping by our yard on their way South. From the downstairs window, we can watch them feed and bathe, attracted to the water drip in our birdbath. I installed a water line from our rain barrel to the birdbath and the slow drip of water really catches the attention of the passing birds.

We have seen Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, Scarlet Tanagers, Northern Parulas and Redstarts on the move through. Other RAS’ers have seen and photographed several other songbird species on their water baths with dripping water, too.

It’s really fun to watch, but can keep you from doing chores. Not bad!

Our year round birds are all here and don’t seem to mind sharing the food and water with those passing through, and they will be just as hospitable to our winter feathered friends who are arriving soon. That is except for “Bomber”, our mocking bird, who takes up residence each winter and who has an attitude problem about sharing; but somehow they all work it out.

So, fall is fun, winter is on its way. Our wooly bear caterpillars indicate the winter will be somewhat cold in the beginning, quite mild in the middle and March may come in like a lion. (Really quite a lot of information for a small furry caterpillar that plans to winter over in our woodpile!)

From the Kitchen Window we wish all a merry and peaceful Christmas season.

The full moon in November is the Beaver Moon and occurs on the 28th.
Winter begins on December 21st; and the full moon, named the Cold Moon, occurs on the 28th.
An old saying goes, "children are to be seen and not heard," but the opposite may be true for the Red-eyed Vireo. Despite being one of the most common birds of the Eastern deciduous forests during breeding season, the Red-eyed Vireo is heard far more frequently than it is seen. It is fairly loud for a small bird, but most often stays in the tree tops, hidden in among the leaves. It moves methodically through the canopy, making it hard to detect as it forages for insects. Yet, its persistent song is prominent and almost endless. Nearly every resource of ornithological information notes this bird's incessant singing characteristic. It often sings continuously throughout an entire day. It is said that this Vireo holds the record for singing frequency by any North American species. Often more than 20,000 songs in a single day! The vireo's song is a series of phrases inter spaced with short pauses. It seems to be endlessly repeating the same question and answer. There is also a wide variety of interpretations as to what their vocalizations say or sound like. Here are a few:

"Look up, Way up, Tree top"
"Here I am where are you?"
"Sewee, Seewit, Seewit, Seeewee"
"Where are you? And here I am"
"Here I am, In the tree, Look up, At the top"
"Here I am, Up here, See me? Look up, Here I am, See me?"

"Here I am, Where are you? Over here, Look up now, Do you see?"
"Hey you, Up here, Look up"
"Cheer-o-wit, Cher-ee, Chit-a wit, De-o"
"See-me, Here-I-am, Way-up, Tree-tops"

Unless this vireo is pretty close, its telltale red eyes are difficult to see. However, its white eye stripes, gray cap edged with black, and greenish back with white underparts are helpful in identification. It has thick blue-gray legs and a stout bill with a slight hook at the end. It is yellowish on the flanks and undertail coverts. When the weather turns cold, it heads for South America and the woodlands are a little bit quieter as a result.

To hear the song of the Red-eyed Vireo, please go to http://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Red-eyed_Vireo/sounds
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.)

November 4th, Sunday ½ hour after sunrise Bryan Park with Sue Ridd:
Meeting location: Shelter 1, Joseph Bryan Park
Brief description: By this time many of our neo-tropical migrants should have moved through but finding stragglers is always exciting. Late migrants like sparrows should be arriving to enjoy a “southern” winter.
Preferred contact information: For more information, call Sue at 270-5365.

November 10th, Saturday 7:30 am-10 am Belmead Estate with Wendy Ealding:
Join Wendy Ealding to explore the historic grounds of the Belmead Estate in Powhatan County. A small $5 fee per participant will be collected for this trip, all of which will be donated to the property for its continued preservation. Meet Wendy at 7:30 am at the Powhatan Plaza Shopping Center to carpool. The shopping center is on the corner of Academy Road and Route 60 in Powhatan, 12 miles west of the intersection of 288 and Route 60.

November 17th, Saturday 8:00 am Dutch Gap with Betsy and Ben Saunders
Meet Betsy and Ben at at the entrance to Henricus Historical Park/Dutch Gap Conservation area. For more information, contact betsyben@juno.com

November 17th, Saturday 8 am-9:30 am Lewis Ginter Botanical Gardens with Tyler Turpin
See the birds of Lewis Ginter Botanical Gardens. Meet in the rotunda of the visitor center. Cost will be $6.00 for non-Ginter members. Contact: Tyler Turpin at (804) 317-9478 or email tylerturpin@earthlink.net to sign up. Unless 4 people have signed up for the November trip by 8 pm on Wednesday the week of the trip, the trip will be canceled.

November 18th, Sunday 7:30 am Curles Neck with John Coe
One of our favorite birding locations, Curles Neck Farm in Henrico County, is excellent in any season and November is one of the best months. There is usually high turnout for this trip so we ask that you register beforehand. Please call John at (804) 276-1397 to register or if you have any questions. A $5 fee will be charged for this trip. Meet John Coe at the Curles Neck Farm entrance.

December 1st, Saturday 8 am Floodwall with Arun Bose
Meet at the Floodwall parking lot on Hull St. between 1st and 2nd Street (Just south of the Mayo Bridge).
In the winter the rocks below the Floodwall are an excellent place to look for uncommon wintering gulls, waterfowl and perhaps Bald Eagles.
For more information contact Arun at arun1bose@gmail.com

December 2nd, Sunday ½ hour after sunrise - Bryan Park with Sue Ridd:
See write-up for November 4th.

December 15th, Saturday 8:00 am Dutch Gap with Betsy and Ben Saunders
See write-up for Ben and Betsy for November 17th.

December 16th, Sunday Hopewell Christmas Bird Count.
Participate in one of the great success stories in citizen science. Around the country birders will be getting out to conduct winter counts of birds. These long running efforts allow scientists and the public to monitor the status of bird populations. The beginnings of what is now titled the Hopewell Christmas Bird Count, started in 1929. Since 1944 the count has run consecutively every year and 2012 will mark the 68th straight count! All skill levels are welcome. For more information contact Arun Bose at arun1bose@gmail.com.
Gone to the Birds Festival 2012

The Fifth Annual Purple Martin Gone to the Birds Festival 2012 was another huge success. It brought more people down to Shockoe Bottom in downtown Richmond than ever before. Our chapter helps to sponsor this festival every year and we had a blast teaching people about the birds and how they migrate. The festival was well attended by local organizations spreading their word on how you can help Mother Nature and appreciate all that she has given us. It was great to see people coming from all over to see the birds land in these few Bradford Pear trees in the middle of a busy city. I talked with a young couple just getting started in birding and citizen science that came down from DC just to see this phenomenon. Richmond Audubon Society chapter received great coverage from the TV news channels and newspapers. Special thanks to Sue Ridd and all the other volunteers for all their hard work that helps make it a huge success. See you all next year!!

From the Editor

Hal Tyler is our featured nature photographer in this issue. Hal and his wife Ann have been active RAS members since 2005.

Also in this issue, we kick off a series on Commonly heard but not easily seen Birds, with Bob Schamerhorn’s article on the Red-eyed Vireo on page 5.
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

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