the
Newsletter of the Richmond Audubon Society

Thrasher

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2012 VOLUME 39, ISSUE 1

Pre-meeting Dinner

Naseem Reza,
Chair—Hospitality Committee
hospitality@richmondaudubon.org,
Please join us for the dinner before the meeting at 5:30 PM on Thursday, January 19 and February 16. You do not have to bring food but you are welcome to share one of your favorite dishes—made by you or from a local deli. Keep all your receipts for any food you buy if you want to be reimbursed. There is a $5 charge to cover drinks, paper products and fill in food items. Call 804-272-1145 or e-mail me by the Monday

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Thrasher illustrations
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January Program:

Nathan Lott, Executive Director of the Virginia Conservation Network.

Culpeper Star Exponent

Join us Thursday, January 19th for our annual legislation meeting. Nathan Lott, the Executive Director of the Virginia Conservation Network, will be presenting a program on the key issues in front of the Virginia General Assembly this year. Mr. Lott oversees the Virginia Conservation Network's core programs and development. Since he joined VCN in 2006, the network has focused on promoting a 21st century energy policy for Virginia and has expanded outreach to sportsmen through its partnership with the National Wildlife Federation.

Mr. Lott previously worked as public relations specialist for the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation and as a managing editor at Menasha Ridge Press in Birmingham, Alabama. He is the author of 60 Hikes within 60 Miles: Richmond, and a board member for the State Environmental Leadership Program.

The January meeting will be at 7:00 PM at St. Luke Lutheran Church, located at Custis Road and Chippenham Parkway.

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. 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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President's Message

Birding, Social Media and Conservation

Lewis Barnett

© Naseem Reza

I'm sitting listening to Steve Martin's fine new Bluegrass album, Rare Bird Alert, which ties into my theme in more than just the obvious way. Though somewhat philosophically resistant to what I've seen going on with social networking, I've been dabbling and pondering how it fits in with Richmond Audubon's mission. I've had a Facebook account for more than a year, but post sparingly. It's good for some things, but not for what most people seem to use it for, in my humble opinion (IMHO), as they say. Used correctly, however, it can be a powerful tool.

My case in point is National Audubon's recent social media blitzkrieg, Birding the Net, the heart of which was a Facebook app. I'm pretty sure I wasn't the only Richmond Audubon member to get swept up in that frenzy. If you weren't and are wondering what I'm talking about, here's the nickel tour. For four weeks or so, various web sites that had agreed to cooperate with National were home to beautifully (and sometimes comically) animated virtual birds, which Facebook followers of National Audubon Society could collect. There were a total of 34 birds, each with informational profiles on National's web site. The birds were "released" gradually, with clues to their whereabouts "tweeted" on Twitter by two NAS staffers masquerading as Flo (Florida Scrub Jay) and Ruf (Rufous Hummingbird). You clicked on a bird you had found and it was added to your Birding the Net life list. So what's the point? The first participant to spot all 34 of the birds won a trip to the Galapagos Islands. A few others won really nice camera rigs or binoculars.

People got really wrapped up in the game. You could tell by how hard they griped on Twitter or the NAS Facebook page about glitches or percieved inequities in the game. There was cooperation and competition, gloating and commiserating online. I got sucked in despite of my ambivalence about the platform. My own moment of glory came when I happened to be looking the right way when the first clue for the Arctic Tern came out. I was briefly #2 on the leader board. I made a screen capture just to preserve the memory. (I finished somewhere down past #300 at

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Publication Schedule

The Thrasher is issued six times a year. Submit articles no later than the 10th of the month before each issue. Deadlines for each issue are listed here >

- December 10th for Jan/Feb issue.
- February 10th for Mar/Apr issue.
- April 10th for May/Jun issue.
- June 10th for Jul/Aug issue.
- August 10th for Sep/Oct issue.
- October 10th for Nov/Dec issue.

Email articles to: thrasher@richmondaudubon.org. **Images to accompany articles are encouraged, and should be at full size with a resolution of 300 dpi.**

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the end of the game.) Some of the folks playing were birders, others were just "netizens" who like a good on-line scavenger hunt, and they were really the target of the campaign. It got Audubon on their radar screens, it had them scouring the species accounts for clues, and it got many of them thinking about getting into the field to see the real-life counterparts of the virtual birds they were chasing.

It was a brilliant campaign. It was timed to coincide with the opening of The Big Year, and piggybacked on a lot of the publicity for the movie. In spite of some technical glitches, it was well conceived and well executed. 9507 people were active participants in the contest. National reported big increases in "likes" on Facebook, followers on Twitter and in visits to the NAS web site. How this might all translate into members, giving, and most important, to boots on the ground for conservation projects remains to be seen, but my gut tells me that the buzz surrounding the contest probably got Audubon in front of a more diverse bunch of eyeballs than anything they've done in recent memory.

Still, it's obvious that there's a good sized core of current Audubon supporters who didn't participate and don't see the point. And that's fine. They've already gotten to us. Birding The Net was for the folks we don't already reach through more traditional means, and I think that's the big lesson for chapters like Richmond Audubon. We want to be a big tent, to spread our love of birds to the wider public, and to do that, we need to be where they live. Social media is one way we can do that. Everybody doesn't have to "like" Richmond Audubon on Facebook – but if someone who does use Facebook asks you how to find us, remember that we're on there!

Oh, and I promised "more than just the obvious" tie-in to Rare Bird Alert. Martin composed several of the songs while filming The Big Year. The guy has serious banjo chops. I just wish he wouldn't sing!

Pre-meeting continued from page 1

of the meeting week. Please let me know what you will be bringing. NOTE: If you would like to come for the dinner but are not sure if you can make it, give us your name by mid-day on Wednesday. If you cannot make it to the dinner, you will not be responsible for the $5 charge.

Bon Appétit!

Officers / Committee Chairs and Co-chairs for 2011-2012

President	Lewis Barnett	president@richmondaudubon.org	804-320-7898
1st Vice President	Robert McLemore	vicepresident1@richmondaudubon.org	804-556-2757
2nd Vice President	Caroline Coe	vicepresident2@richmondaudubon.org	804-276-1397
Secretary	Pete Walker	secretary@richmondaudubon.org	804-387-1071
Treasurer/Finance	Pam Dummitt	treasurer@richmondaudubon.org	804-929-3899
Past President	Pam Dummitt	pastpresident@richmondaudubon.org	804-929-3899
Bird-A-Thon	Lewis Barnett	president@richmondaudubon.org	804-320-7898
Development	Robert Knox	development@richmondaudubon.org	804-262-7864
Thrasher Editor	Arun Bose	thrasher@richmondaudubon.org	804-335-8813
Education	Betsy Saunders	education@richmondaudubon.org	804-272-0605
Hospitality	Naseem Reza	hospitality@richmondaudubon.org	804-272-1145
Conservation	Lori Kam	conservation@richmondaudubon.org	804-310-9014
Legislation	Eileen Geller	legislation@richmondaudubon.org	804-747-5143
Field Trips	Lewis Barnett (interim)	fieldtrips@richmondaudubon.org	804-320-7898
Membership	Steven Dunn	membership@richmondaudubon.org	804-647-0208
Cyberspace	Lewis Barnett (interim)	cyberspace@richmondaudubon.org	804-320-7898
Programs	Linda Warfield	programs@richmondaudubon.org	804-276-5520
Publicity	Diane Jadlowski	publicity@richmondaudubon.org	702-308-1953
Youth	Robin Ruth	RASkids@richmondaudubon.org	804-231-5949
IBA /VAC Rep	Margaret O'Bryan	IBA@richmondaudubon.org	804-262-1656

Field Trips

Lewis Barnett

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.)

January 1, Sunday – 7:45 AM. Bryan Park with Sue Ridd. Come explore Bryan Park. Wear longjohns so you'll be comfortable! For details, contact Sue Ridd at (804) 270-5365.

January 7, Saturday – 8:00 AM, Monthly walk at Dutch Gap Conservation Area with Betsy and Ben Saunders. Start the new year off right with Betsy Saunders at a favorite local hotspot. Meet at the first observation platform. Call Betsy at 272-0605 for more information.

January 11, Second Wednesday Walk – 8 AM, Bryan Park. Join John Coe at Bryan Park. Meet at Shelter #2 at 9:30 AM. For details, email johnwcoe@verizon.net or call 276-1397.

January 14, Saturday – James River Winter Bird Count. This is our annual winter species inventory of the James River Park System. The post-foray brunch will be held at the home of Mary Arginteanu and Larry Robinson. There will be a one suet cake entrance fee once again as well as the request of a brunch item and/or beverage to share. Contact Julie Kacmarcik (juliekazz@comcast.net) to participate.

January 28, Saturday – 8:00 AM, Floodwall with Arun Bose. Meet at Hull Street parking lot. Call or email Arun Bose for more details. (804) 335-8813, arun1bose@gmail.com.

February 5, Sunday – 7:35 AM. Bryan Park with Sue Ridd. Meet at Shelter #1. For more information, call Sue at (804) 270-5365.

Friday February 3 through Sunday, February 5, VSO annual field trip to the Outer Banks, NC. See http://www.virginiabirds.net/f_trips.html for details.

February 8, Second Wednesday Walk – 9:30 AM. Floodwall. Join John Coe at the James River Park Floodwall Trail. Meet at 9:30 AM at the Semmes Avenue parking lot. For details, email johnwcoe@verizon.net or call 276-1397.

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February 17–20, Great Backyard Bird Count. The Great Backyard Bird Count is an annual four-day event that engages bird watchers of all ages in counting birds to create a real-time snapshot of where the birds are across the continent.
See http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc/ for details.

February 18, Saturday – Great Backyard Bird Count program. Come for any or all of these trips. Begin at **Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden**. Meet Tyler Turpin at 8:00 AM in rotunda of Visitor Center. Next is **James River Park System.** Meet at Belle Isle parking lot (next to Tredegar Ironworks) at 10:30. We will look at **Brown's Island.** Next is **Pony Pasture,** meet at parking lot at Riverside Drive at 11:45, and at 12:45 PM we will count at Hugenot Flatwater and then reconvene at 1:30. for the final stop at the office park pond behind the Stony Point Shopping Center.

Please contact Tyler Turpin at tylerturpin@earthlink.net or 804 317-9478. Cost is $6.00 for non-Lewis Ginter Botanical Gardens Members. James River Park portions are free.

February 19, Sunday – Great Backyard Bird Count Survey at James River National Wildlife Refuge. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and RAS join forces for this annual survey of wintering birds in a remarkable habitat bordered by Powell's Creek and the James River. Meet at the refuge information kiosk, 4550 Flowerdew Hundred Road, Hopewell, at 8:00 AM. Contact Lewis Barnett (blbarnett3@gmail.com, 804-920-4723) for details.

February 25, Saturday – 8:00 AM, Monthly walk at Dutch Gap Conservation Area with Betsy Saunders. Meet at the first observation platform.

From The Kitchen Window

John Coe

…and the snow will come…the spiders in the window and the woolly bear caterpillar 'neath the woodpile told me so.

There may be much, or not so much. Here in Richmond, half way between the north and the south and half way between the mountains and the sea, forecasting the weather is not an easy call…even the spiders and caterpillars have been fooled. What will be will be. I really like the view from the window when snow is falling. And when it blankets the yard and the forest out back… the birds come. Only when it snows do the towhees and the Fox Sparrows come to join the juncos and sparrows feeding on the scattered seeds.

And the bluebirds and robins and Cedar Waxwings and the Yellow-rumped Warblers and the Pine Warblers…and a lone Hermit Thrush, often join our regular resident bird friends on our deck to feast on the greens and berries and suet left over from Christmas decorations.

…and the sapsucker taps away on the hickory tree, while the little Brown Creeper works its way up the white oak.

…and outside the window the Ruby-crowned Kinglet searches each branch for insects on the dormant azaleas.

When the snows come and the winds blow and the night turns very cold, some of our feathered friends may have needed our helping of food and water to survive. Most of our wild critters can manage these extremes of weather quite well, even without our handouts.

But mostly we provide food, water, and cover for our wild friends because we enjoy watching them… from the kitchen window.

The Full Moon in January, called the Wolf Moon, occurs on the 9th.

The Full Moon in February, named the Snow Moon, sometimes the Hunger Moon, occurs on the 7th.

And, then there's Leap Day on the February 29th.

Happy New Year.

"Snow sculptures the rough contours of the land in cold perfection… and spikes of ice, like frozen tears, cling to stark black branches…as the earth sleeps through the white silence of winter. …and the spring shall come."

By Dean Walley

Bluebird House Helpers Needed

Betsy Saunders

On January 21, 28 and February 4, Richmond Audubon will be helping families build bluebird houses at the following Chesterfield libraries, Midlothian, Clover Hill, Bon Air, Chester, LaPrade and Meadowdale. We will conduct a 10 AM and a 2 PM program each day. Programs will last approximately an hour and a half. We have volunteers to oversee these programs, but need a couple of extra hands at each session. If you can help, please contact Betsy Saunders, 272-0605 or betsyben@juno.com.

In Search of a Thrasher Editor

Arun Bose, Thrasher Editor

The May / June issue of *the Thrasher* will be my last as editor. I wanted to get word out so there is time to find nominees for the 2012/2013 election slate. Contact the RAS President, Lewis Barnett (president@richmondaudubon.org, 804-320-7898) or myself (thrasher@richmondaudubon.org, 804-335-8813 if you are interested or know of someone else who is.

2012 Conservation Legislative Priorities

Eileen Geller, Legislation Chair, Richmond Audubon Society

Tough economic times and an agenda driven by the Republican leadership in the statehouse means that conservation issues probably will not get top billing in this year's upcoming General Assembly session. When lawmakers return to the Capitol on January 11, 2012, the GOP will have a majority in the House of Delegates and a 20-20 split in the Senate. The Governor has already announced belt-tightening measures relating to state agencies, including the consolidation and cuts of some conservation agencies, and it is likely we will see proposals for more cuts to programs and services relating to conservation work in Virginia.

That means those of us who care about conservation issues will need to be more vigilant in making sure our voices are heard this session. We are up against powerful lobbying interests—as has been evident for months now, with industry already very busy lobbying hard to lift the ban on uranium mining in Virginia. Powerful grassroots organizations are also working to advance their political agendas, including a growing number of people and organizations working to remove Virginia's Sunday hunting ban.

But, we can still advance conservation priorities, if the issues are framed in the right light. For example, land conservation in the form of Civil War battlefield preservation leads to increased tourism revenues for Virginia. Research shows that visitors to the many statewide Civil War sites stay in Virginia longer and spend more tourism dollars here than do other visitors. Given that we are currently in the midst of the Sesquicentennial of the Civil War, the climate may be on target to secure funding and conservation policy for battlefield land.

Solar energy businesses are also eager to locate to states that incentivize solar energy through mandatory solar energy and renewable energy portfolio standards. Likewise, Virginia reportedly has the 4th largest wind capacity potential on the east coast. Research by the Virginia Coastal Energy Research Consortium (VCERC) shows that the costs of offshore wind power are equal to or better than new nuclear or coal-powered generation, while having the added benefit of being immune to fluctuations in fuel prices or to increases in costs due to pollution. Plus, by investing in offshore wind, Virginia stands to see economic gains in the form of new jobs from manufacturing and installation of the wind turbines. VCERC estimates that investing in wind power could bring as many as 1,000 high-skill jobs to the Hampton Roads area. And, recent research has shown that coal subsidies—in the tens of millions of dollars each year—are not actually creating any new jobs. In fact, more and more coal-related jobs are lost every year. It is time to put that money to work in a way that creates jobs and limits environmental impact.

Uranium mining has already been teed-up by the industry to be a major issue this year. The industry claims Virginia stands to gain thousands of jobs and tens of millions of dollars in revenues. However, the environmental costs to Virginia could exceed any economic impact by more than five-fold. The human health risks of uranium mining are still unknown. And with the City of Virginia Beach's water supply located directly downstream from the proposed mining sites, millions of people stand to be impacted by water tainted with uranium "tailings"—the highly radioactive remnants of uranium mining. As of November, at least 24 governmental organizations—cities, counties, towns, and regional councils of government in Virginia and North Carolina—had passed resolutions in support of keeping the ban on uranium mining in Virginia. However, with powerful industry lobbyists already on the ground for months, much work needs to be done to convince lawmakers that Virginia needs to keep the ban. More information about uranium mining and its potential impacts can be found at www.keeptheban.org.

2012 marks the 40th anniversary of the Clean Water Act. The Clean Water Act, enacted by Congress in 1972, created a system of state-administered permits as a means of controlling pollution, which at that time was completely overwhelming America's waterways. The permit programs were predicated on attaining water quality standards set by the states themselves. Virginia cooperated with other Chesapeake Bay-area states in 1987 to reduce runoff pollution feeding into the Bay. While progress has been made under both programs, much work remains to be done to meet the goals set by the Clean Water Act and the Chesapeake Bay Agreement.

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Early in 2012, Virginia has a major proposal due to the EPA on controlling runoff pollution entering the Chesapeake Bay. This proposal is called a "Watershed Implementation Plan" or "WIP." Success in cleaning up the Bay and reducing new pollution going into the waterways will require the full participation of local governments, who oversee land use, building codes, stream buffer ordinances and water utilities. It will take millions of dollars in allocations to localities in 2012 to pay for the storm and wastewater treatment upgrades and projects contained in the WIP that are critical to restoring the rivers and streams feeding into the Chesapeake Bay. With 2012 being the 40th anniversary of this "watershed" legislation, it is important to remind lawmakers what neglecting our environmental priorities can lead to, and also how long it can take and how expensive it can be to clean up environmental messes left behind by such neglect. If you would like to get involved promoting Virginia's conservation priorities this year, contact your legislators. Follow Virginia Conservation Network on Twitter (@VCNCAorg) and Facebook (www.facebook.com/VCNCAorg), or visit the Virginia Conservation Network's website, www.vcnva.org, and sign up for email updates and to be part of a legislative contact team. Now, more than ever, is the time to speak up for conservation.

Volunteers Needed for Lobby Day

Are you available January 23, 2012? That's the day Virginia Conservation Network has set aside for "Conservation Lobby Day," a day to try to make conservation a priority for Virginia's legislators. Join VCN, the Garden Club of Virginia, the Sierra Club and countless other conservation organizations to take conservation priorities to the Capitol. Visit www.vcnva.org to register!

Tips for Contacting Your Legislators

Letters and phone calls from constituents are very important during the General Assembly Session. Legislators are quick to note "back-home" support for conservation goals. Keep current with the General Assembly website (http://leg6.state.va.us) to check the status of a particular bill.

What to write or say:

- Write to the legislators who represent you. Elected officials are really only interested in the opinions of their constituents, so remember to include your return address, as well.
- Address only one issue per letter. A letter that addresses one specific topic will have more impact that one covering a lost list of issues.
- Ask for something specific. As the legislator to take a particular stance on a specific bill. Always ask the legislator for a written response outlining his or her stance on an issue.
- Make it personal. Tie the issue to your personal experience and use your own words. Form letters really do not work.
- Be courteous and, where appropriate, express appreciation. Rudeness will get you nowhere. Legislators like to know when people are paying attention and appreciate the positive steps they have taken.

How to find out who represents you: http://conview.state.va.us/whosmy.nsf/main?openform Visit this link and enter your address. Virginia's Senate and House of Delegates districts were recently redrawn, so it doesn't hurt to confirm who represents you.

Send Mail To:
The Honorable [use full name]
P.O. Box 406
Richmond, VA 23218
Dear Senator/Delegate [name],

Send Email To:
Email addresses are listed on the General Assembly website (http://legis.state.va.us)

To Contact by Phone:
For Delegates, all Richmond phone numbers are (804) 698-10__. The last two digits are the delegate's district number. E.g. Del. John O'Bannon (Henrico), District 73, is (804) 698-1073. For Senators, all Richmond phone numbers are (804) 698-75__. The last two digits are the senator's district number. E.g. Sen. Walter Stosch, District 12, is (804) 698-7512.

February Program

The February 16 program presented by David Bryan will be at 7:00 PM at St. Luke Lutheran Church, located at Custis Road and Chippenham Parkway. Members will remember him from his work with Mary Elfner and the IBA program. He will tell us about increasing and improving habitat for Northern Bobwhite quail, which are declining in numbers. Topics will include;

- Quail population changes across their range
- Quail trends in Virginia
- Other species in decline: Prairie Warbler, Field Sparrow, etc.
- The reason: habitat, habitat, habitat
- The Virginia Quail Action Plan
- Quail life cycle
- Quail habitat needs.

Support your local Audubon chapter

We need your support again this year. Like us on Facebook. Check out our RAS web page (www.richmondaudubon.org) to learn more about us. Join us on a field trip or at a meeting. Volunteer to help with an event, or to serve on a committee. Or make a donation.

And this year you can donate on-line – just click the DONATE link on our web page. Or you can mail it to Richmond Audubon Society, P.O. Box 26648, Richmond, VA 23261. Please make a donation today. **With your help we can continue our outreach and help protect birds and habitat for future generations.**

Thank you.
Lewis Barnett
Caroline Coe
Margaret O'Bryan

Donate from your phone!

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:

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