Pre-meeting Dinner
Naseem Reza,
Chair—Hospitality Committee
hospitality@richmondaudubon.org,
Please note that there will be no pre-meeting dinner on May 17. Due to a scheduling conflict at St. Lukes, our monthly members meeting at 7:00 PM will be held at the First Unitarian Church where we do not have kitchen privileges.

The next scheduled pre-meeting dinner is set for September 20, 2012. Please check the July/August issue of the Thrasher for details.

I want to take this opportunity to thank all the RAS members continued on page 3

May Program
Mexican Endemics & More

Once again RAS members, Lou and Naseem Reza loaded up their trusty minivan and headed West, all the way to the Pacific Coast of Mexico. The purpose of the trip was to visit friends in Mexico but like birders everywhere, they were able to squeeze in some birding in Mexico and along the way. While Naseem was chasing endemics in Western Mexico, Lou was focused on taking pictures of people and the scenery.

Come to our May meeting and see a presentation on Western Mexico Endemics, beautiful cathedrals and as a bonus, the endangered wild Whooping Cranes of Aransas, Texas.

Our May meeting will be held on Thursday, May 17th at 7:00 PM at the First Unitarian Universalist Church, 1000 Blanton Ave, Richmond. Please note this is not our usual meeting place.
Why Richmond Audubon?
Lewis Barnett

I was thinking the other day about why I spend my time volunteering with Richmond Audubon. We all have a thousand demands on our time—work, family, church, hobbies, even the insidious lure of 200 channels of hi-def cable. What makes Richmond Audubon stand out among all the insistent calls for attention as worthy of some of my precious hours every month?

The mystery isn’t deep. It starts with my fascination with birds, and with the fact that in Richmond Audubon, I find community with others who share my fascination. Going on field trips and attending programs is an affirmation of one of the things that brings joy to my life. I’m sure it’s the same for many of you.

But the story carries on from there. You can’t love birds without carrying around a hefty knot of concern for their future in our over-developed world with its inward-looking culture. For me, that knot of concern started growing when, as a young man, I watched the night time landscape of the Catawba River valley in North Carolina transform from the nearly lightless sea of dark forests and lonely hamlets that I remembered from my childhood, into what these days seems little different from the light polluted suburbs of Richmond or any other city in our country. It was a clear indicator of the toll our growing population was taking on a corner of the natural world that I have deep connections to.

So the concern grew until it wasn’t enough to just send a few dollars a year to some excellently managed and philosophically sound conservation organization. It finally came time to put my boots on the ground, and Richmond Audubon was there with the opportunities. I gravitate toward citizen science and habitat improvement projects, and RAS has many opportunities that fit my talents and proclivities. We also have great opportunities for people interested in educational activities both for adults and for kids. If your interests tend toward policy, we have advocacy opportunities as well. And if it’s the membership meetings and those great pre-meeting dinners that really appeal to you—well, they don’t put

Presidents Message continued on page 3

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.
who provided the delicious menu enjoyed by so many this past year. Of course in addition to the food, RAS volunteers did the setup and cleanup for our monthly dinners. I really appreciate all the help in making the pre-meeting dinners such an enjoyable experience. Bon Appétit!

RAS Kids

Mary Arginteanu

Earlier in the year Southampton Elementary’s Garden Club, along with some other 4th and 5th graders and their teachers, were treated to a bird-ID slide show given by Richmond Audubon’s superb bird photographer, Bob Schamerhorn. The kids were shown photographs of common birds, grouped by category, such as Song Birds, Woodpeckers, and Birds of Prey, and asked if they could ID them. Amidst much jumping up and down and waving of hands, Mary Arginteanu’s (Miss Mary’s) Garden Club kids were able to make a surprising number of correct identifications. At the end there was a “quiz” accompanied again by much jumping up and down and frantic waving of hands. Judging from the enthusiasm of the audience, the show was a great success. At the end Miss Mary announced there would be a contest to see who could identify the most species of birds on the school grounds. No sooner did the kids hit the playground following the show, than I heard shouts of “Miss Mary, I saw a cardinal” or “Miss Mary, I saw a robin.” There was even a claim to having seen a blue bird (not impossible as there have been blue birds nesting on the school grounds).

© William H. Majoros

© Bob Schamerhorn, iphotobirds.com
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).

May 5, Saturday—James River Park – 42nd Street
The main section of the James River Park system is the hottest hotspot in central Virginia during Spring migration. Join Richmond Audubon's warbler experts for the best songbird weekend of the year. Meet at the 42nd Street entrance to the park at 7:30 AM. There will be a $5 fee for this walk to support the programs of Richmond Audubon Society. Email blbarnett3@gmail.com or call 920-4723 for details.

May 6, Sunday—Bryan Park with Sue Ridd
Meet Sue Ridd at Shelter #1 thirty minutes after sunrise for the monthly walk in Bryan Park. Call Sue with any questions at 270-5365.

May 12, Saturday—Henricus/Dutch Gap
Meet Ben Saunders at 8:00 AM at the entrance to Henricus Historical Park/Dutch Gap Conservation area. Prothonotary Warblers are the specialty species for Dutch Gap at this time of year! For more information, contact betsyben@juno.com.

May 18–20—Joint TOS/VSO 2012 Annual Meeting
Johnson City, Tennessee, Hosted by The Bristol Bird Club.

The Bristol Bird Club, a chapter of TOS and VSO, will be hosting the 2012 Joint Annual Meetings for the Tennessee Ornithological Society and the Virginia Society of Ornithology in Johnson City, Tennessee which is just a few miles south of the Tennessee-Virginia state line. More details at http://www.virginiabirds.net/2012_AM.html

June 2, Saturday—Belmead
Wendy Ealding leads this trip at historic Belmead Plantation in Powhatan County. Meet at 7:00 AM at the Powhatan Plaza Shopping Center (corner of Route 60 and Academy Road in Powhatan) so that we can carpool from there. Migration is winding down by this time, but this will be a good opportunity to look for shrubland breeding birds like Prairie Warbler, Yellow-breasted Chat and Blue Grosbeak. Contact info is: W Ealding@aol.com, phone 804-598-9243, to sign up. A $5 fee will be collected for this trip.

June 2, Saturday—VSO Piney Grove Field Trip
Again this summer the VSO and Center for Conservation Biology (CCB) are offering a field trip to The Nature Conservancy's Piney Grove Preserve, site of nesting Red-Cockaded Woodpeckers. http://www.virginiabirds.net/f_trips.html#piney

June 3, Sunday—Bryan Park
Meet Sue Ridd at Shelter #1 thirty minutes after sunrise for the monthly walk in Bryan Park. Call Sue with any questions at 270-5365.

June 9, Saturday—RAS Picnic
8:00 AM bird walk, followed by our annual pot luck lunch, at Nelda Snyder's home. Bring your own meat to cook on the grills and a dish to share (four or more servings). We will eat around noon. Directions and more details on page 3.

June 9 – June 17—2012 VSO Foray in Loudoun County
The upcoming 2012 foray will be held from June 9, 2012 to June 17, 2012 in Loudoun County, located in northern Virginia. The coming foray is being done to support the 2009 to 2013 Loudoun County Bird Atlas, organized by the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy. Contact Elisa Enders at elisaenders@hotmail.com or Susan Brown at susanbb@umich.edu for more details. Learn more about the Loudoun County Bird Atlas at www.loudounwildlife.org/Bird_Atlas.htm

June 15-17—VSO Summer Field Trip Front Royal
VSO summer field trip will visit some of the best birding areas around Front Royal in the Shenandoah Valley! http://www.virginiabirds.net/f_trips.html
 Officers / Committee Chairs and Co-chairs for 2011-2012

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Field Trips continued from page 6

June 16, Saturday—Eagle Tour of the lower James River
Book a 2-hour journey into the world of Bald Eagles for you and your guest! Contact Capt. Mike at 804-938-2350 or Mike@DiscoverTheJames.com. There are two trips, one beginning at 7:00 AM and the second at 9:30 AM. Audubon will share space with Sierra Club members. For a current schedule and to find out more about Bald Eagle Tours go to www.DiscoverTheJames.com! Cost is $45 per seat.

June 23, Saturday—Henricus/Dutch Gap
Meet Betsy Saunders at 8:00 AM at the entrance to Henricus Historical Park/Dutch Gap Conservation area. For more information, contact betsyben@juno.com.

July 1, Sunday—Bryan Park with Sue Ridd
Meet Sue Ridd at Shelter #1 thirty minutes after sunrise for the monthly walk in Bryan Park. Call Sue with any questions at 270-5365.
Annual RAS Picnic, June 9, 2012

The Snyders (Buz will be there in spirit) will host our annual picnic for the 21st consecutive year at their beautiful Varina home with a private pond and picnic area on Saturday, June 9. Come by 8:00 AM for the morning bird walk. The rain date is Sunday, June 10th. 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. The Snyders 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.

Our own Larry Rohr will be at the RAS picnic this year and present a magic show. Larry is a very skilled magician and very funny and entertaining, so a good time will be had by all. He will perform right after lunch, so don’t be late. 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 Arrahat-teck 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.. continued on page 7