



the Thrasher

Newsletter of the Richmond Audubon Society

JULY/AUGUST 2011 VOLUME 38, ISSUE 4



Photo © Al Warfield

Feeding Hummingbirds by Al Warfield

I realized after seeing several RAS Listserve posts that many people don't know some of the important pieces on feeding hummingbirds. Therefore, I decided to put what I know from several years experience into an article. Take what you need from it. You may have a different opinion, but that's OK too.

1. For hummingbird (HB) nectar, use 4 tbsp sugar to 1-cup water to make the liquid, not the red stuff you buy commercially. (The red dye makes no difference in attractiveness, and may be harmful.) Some people boil the water first but you don't need to. Sugar doesn't need heat to dissolve, and HBs don't need protection from bacteria and molds they are exposed to anyway. (If you must heat the water, let it cool to the outside temperature before putting out). Unless you get lots of hummers, put a little in the feeder, and the rest of it in the fridge in a glass jar. Change it often, but especially if cloudy or has mold in it. Bring it in and at least rinse between fillings.

2. We have found that when the hummingbirds stop coming, changing the liquid can bring them back very quickly.

3. Clean the feeder with a small amount of diluted bleach and detergent if it gets moldy, and then rinse it very thoroughly until you can't smell any bleach. Do this only when really necessary, or at the end of the season.

4. An ant trap above the feeder helps keep ants out — add water to it. Small birds like to drink from the cup, so keep water in there. You can buy an ant trap at a bird feed store, or make it from a small plastic cup and a dowel or synthetic wine cork. See page 4 to learn how.

5. We hang the feeders from the gutters on the eaves of the house using a bent coat hanger wire. That keeps squirrels and raccoons off too. Just cut the wire to size, straighten it, and bend one end to fit your gutter,

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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

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.

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

The Thrasher is printed on recycled paper.

Thanks to these Thrasher Volunteers:
Ben Griffon, Anne Dunnburg, Patrick Hickey: Labels & Mailing, Lewis Barnett, Pam Dummitt, Naseem Reza: Proofreading.

President's Message Thank You

Lewis Barnett



© Naseem Reza

You know that Richmond Audubon regularly asks you for your financial support, primarily through our annual auction and appeal letter, and our Bird-a-thon. Like Public Broadcasting, the work that our organization does in our community and for the conservation of our natural world is primarily

supported by the generosity of Members like you.

Richmond Audubon has also been working hard to find external funding to augment your support for what we do, and we have had some small success over the past year. We are still mired in a very tough fund raising environment, but our programs seem to resonate with foundations and other granting bodies.

RAS Kids received a \$2500 grant from **The North Face Explore Fund** to support their outdoor programs for kids from Richmond's inner city schools. The goal of the Explore fund is "to inspire and enable the next generation of explorers by funding non-profit organizations that are working to re-connect children with nature." The "No Child Left Inside" focus of RAS Kids dovetails well with that goal. **REI**, another outdoor outfitter, is also supporting RAS Kids summer programs.

Our members who have been so closely involved in preserving the Purple Martin roost site at the Shockoe Bottom Farmer's Market received \$200 in **National Audubon Chapter Collaboration** funding to purchase and plant a new generation of roost trees as the Bradford Pears begin to fade.

Our banding programs have just received good news in the form of a \$2000 grant from the **Norcross Wildlife Foundation** that will help purchase a new canoe, motor, new nets, and other equipment used in the MAPS banding program and the Prothonotary Warbler nest box program.

I want to express Richmond Audubon's thanks to our members who took the initiative to develop proposals and shepherd them through the granting process: Robin Ruth, Mary Arginteanu, Caroline Coe and Sue Ridd (if I have left anybody out, please call me out at the next

continued on page 2

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.

Presidents message continued from page 2 membership meeting!). We have this support for our programs because these dedicated individuals took the time to look for the opportunities and put together the applications. I'd also like to thank Robert Knox, who has now assumed the role of Development Committee Chair.

Richmond Audubon Society is successful due to this combination of dedication volunteers, generous members and the effective way we have pursued and utilized external funding. Thanks again to everyone who has made this possible!

Hummingbirds continued from page 1 the other with a small hook. Use care in hanging it — not too close to a window.

6. If there are some trees or other perches within about 10 feet of the feeder, that gives the birds a transition to the feeder.

7. Also, they like flowers nearby, especially in early April when the males are looking for a good area to attract females.

8. In late summer, into late-September, Ruby-throated hummers feed heavily and may be there all day. They are getting ready for migration. Keep fresh food in the feeders and keep them clean.

9. Occasionally a hummer will stay longer than September. You may want to leave your feeders out until December and see if you get any late Ruby-throats or western hummers that come here for the winter. Rufous, Black-chinned Allen's, and a few others have been encountered.

Email list connection (RAS Listserv)

Diane Jadowski, Publicity Chair

Want to be in the know with the latest, greatest local up to date information in the Richmond area BY the members and FOR the members? Subscribe now for Richmond Audubon Society (RAS) email list connection (RAS Listserv). RAS Listserv is an email based message delivery system accessible to RAS members and non-members that broadcasts a message from any subscribed RAS Listserv member to the entire group that has signed up for it. This communication tool is regularly used to post bird sightings, to update field trip changes, announce upcoming RAS meetings or to ask questions.

To join for free

- Go to our website RichmondAudubon.org
- **CLICK** on "Membership" at the top of the page
Scroll down to the end of the first paragraph under "Benefits"
- **CLICK** on "RAS Listserv"
- Scroll down to "To Subscribe:" and **CLICK** on the designated place and an email with "subscribe" in the subject line will come up on your screen. Then just **SEND** the email. ***Important to confirm*** to activate account so when you receive the confirmation email a few minutes later you simply **CLICK** on **REPLY**. You must complete this step or you won't be subscribed and won't receive any emails.

It is that easy!

Officers / Committee Chairs and Co-chairs for 2010-2011

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Make an Ant Trap for your Hummingbird Feeder

Al Warfield

Components: (Figure 1)

1. A plastic cup, 2-3" diameter and about 2" deep, from applesauce that comes in individual servings (or equivalent). The brand I find useful is White House, but you can find others that work the same. It will probably be made of polyethylene or polypropylene. Because food came in it the container is safe for the birds.
2. Two screw eyes, about 1/4" diameter. You can get them from craft supply, hardware stores, etc.
3. One small S-hook big enough to handle the HB feeder.
4. A dowel cut square on at least one end, 1/4 to 3/8" diameter, or a synthetic wine cork that is not damaged too much from opening the bottle. Diameter is not at all critical.
5. A small gasket – a little larger than the dowel or wine cork. (I use gasket material from auto parts stores.) You can cut it roughly to size with scissors. This will only contact the water, not the nectar, but since other birds may drink from it, be careful what you use.

Assembly:

1. Drill a hole in the center of the cup bottom with a 1/16" bit.
2. Cut the dowel to about 2.5-3" long, or use a synthetic wine cork.
3. Drill 1/16" holes in the centers on each end of the dowel or wine cork. (Figure 2)
4. Drill a 1/16" hole in the center of the gasket.
5. Screw one screw eye into one end of the dowel or wine cork. (Figure 2)
6. Screw the other screw eye through the hole in the cup, starting at the bottom so that the point shows inside the cup. (Figure 2)
7. Place the gasket on the screw eye point and flatten it against the bottom.
8. Place the dowel (or wine cork) hole over the point of the screw eye in the cup and tighten until the dowel (or wine cork) is flat against the gasket at the bottom of the cup. (Use the flattest end of the dowel for this for the best seal.)
9. Insert the S-hook into the eye of the screw eye on the cup bottom and secure it with needle-nose pliers. Leave the bottom of the S-hook open for the feeder to hang there.
10. Hang the assembly on the wire used to hold the feeder, and add water to test for leaks.
11. Tighten the dowel or wine cork further to fix any leaks. Don't use any sealer to seal the dowel against the container. That could be unsafe for birds drinking the water. I have never had a problem with leaks except after a long use period. In that case, replace the dowel or cork.
12. Hang the feeder on the S-hook. The finished ant trap with feeder attached and filled with water and nectar are shown in Figure 3.



Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3

continued on page 5



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 news about field trips (www.richmondaudubon.org/ActivFieldTrip.html.)

July 3, Sunday, 6:30 AM. Bryan Park with Sue Ridd. Come see Bryan Park from a different point of view. Each season has its own cast for your birding interests! Meet at Shelter #1. There is a Bryan Park trip on the first Sunday of each month, starting about 1/2 hour after sunrise. For more information, call Sue at (804) 270-5365.

July 30, Saturday, Lewis Ginter Botanical Gardens, 8:00 AM to 9:45 AM. Meet in the rotunda of the visitor center. You must sign up in advance; there must be at least four people signed up by 9:00 PM the Wednesday before the trip or it will be cancelled. **Lewis Ginter Botanical Gardens Members FREE; Special Non-Member**

Ant trap continued from page 4

Rinse the water cup out and use bleach on the dowel if mold or algae are present. Again, rinse very thoroughly. Synthetic wine corks should not have this problem. This trap should last several years, and it's cheap and easy to replace. Problems with ants will not exist if you keep it filled with water. Enjoy

New Thrasher Content Deadline

Arun Bose, Thrasher Editor

To facilitate a more timely mailing and anticipate any last minute production issues the RAS Board has decided to move the deadline for receiving content for publication to the 10th of the month prior to issue. See page 2 to for a listing of specific dates.

Cost: \$6.00. Contact: Tyler Turpin at (804) 317-9478 or tylerturpin@earthlink.net. Lewis Ginter BT is located at 1800 Lakeside Ave, Richmond, VA 23228-4700.

August 3, Saturday, Lewis Ginter Botanical Gardens, 8:00 AM to 9:45 AM. See above for details.

August 6, Saturday, Purple Martin Festival
We look forward to again hosting the annual Purple Martin Festival at the Historic 17th Street Farmers' Market roost. I went ahead and sent an email blast to all 18,000 of our feathered friends who visited us last year with a personal invitation to attend this year's festivities. Join representatives from the PMCA, RAS, NAS, VSO, DGIF and other conservation organizations that can be found to answer your questions about these marvelous birds. We look forward to a great roost and hosting all of the bird watchers who come to see them. For information email Sue Ridd at s.ridd@att.net or visit www.richmondaudubon.org/PurpleM-MAIN.html

August 7, Sunday at 6:30 AM, Bryan Park with Sue Ridd. Meet at Shelter #1. For more information, call Sue at (804) 270-5365.



© Julie Kacmarcik

Godspeed Martha Gail! Westward bound April 16 2011

Many readers will be familiar with the story of Martha Gale, a hatch year female Allen's Hummingbird that first showed up in the Kacmarcik's yard on November 20, 2010. Very similar to the more frequent (but still scarce in Virginia) Rufous Hummingbird, she was banded and the identification confirmed. This occurrence is only the 3rd record of an Allen's Hummingbird in Virginia. Below is a short summary of her visit.

After a full week of checking for Martha Gale it looks as though she had started her westward trek. The last confirmed sighting was the evening of 15 April, 2011. Saturday morning no MG — just male and female [Ruby-throated] hummers, the weather Saturday afternoon was tornadic... all other checks for her throughout the week came up empty.

It has been an awesome run. She appeared seemingly out of nowhere 20 November 2010 feeding on Mexican sage in my garden, it was a surprise to see her the next day and then the next day and then it turned into "please just stay till you're banded" as she was (November 26, 2010 by Bruce Peterjohn and David Holmes) and then "please stay till the Hopewell CBC" and "hey, how about if you hang around for family here at Christmas", then, "let's start the New Year with MG" and "oh heck can you tough it out for the Great Backyard Bird Count"? and on and on and on.

She had over 140 visitors from as far away as Michigan, New Hampshire and Ontario. She had fans ages 11-83+. Unknowingly she became a source of inspiration to many people who have contacted me by phone, letters and email. Mike and I have been given selfless gifts and MG made a pretty good haul on sugar donations and feeder accessories. She has become a household word in the area and made the local newspapers several times.

Who would think a 3.88 gram body of feathers could mean so much to so many folks...? We miss seeing her (a lot!!!) and awaiting her pre-dawn appearances, but wanted her to do what she needs to do...migrate to have a brood of her own.

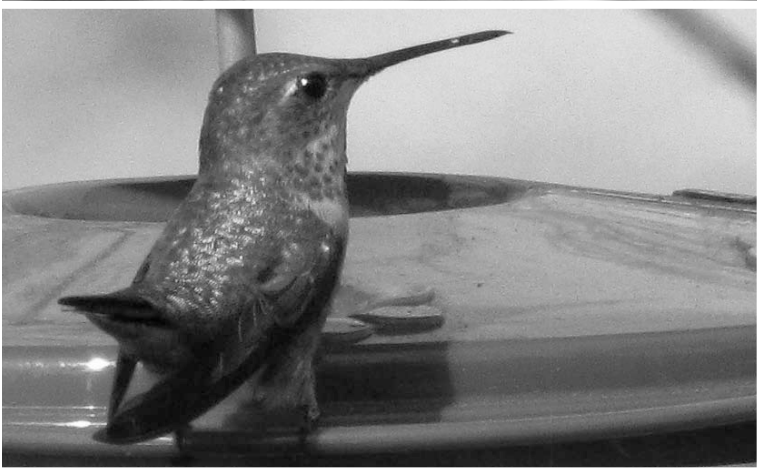
Bruce Peterjohn wrote and said this of her migration"

"Friday would have been a good day for migration in front of the advancing frontal system. So she is probably winging her way west each day. Migrating at this time of the year should not pose many food-related issues for her. The return rate for winter hummingbirds is in the range of 1 in 6 for this region, with the birds remaining for the entire winter showing a greater likelihood of returning;"

MG has been a great experience for Mike and Me. We learned so much and met so many people, even if just through email or journal entries in the MG log.

You know we will be looking for her as the autumn rolls around. Much thanks to all who have been MG cheerleaders and offered encouragement to us. For those of you in withdrawal you can see her on YouTube http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e2GK1e_R4G8.

Best to all,
Julie and Mike Kacmarcik



Crazy Coots Birdathon Big Day

Lewis Barnett

The Crazy Coots (Lewis Barnett, Steven Dunn, Eileen Geller, Kim Harrell, Kim's friend Eric, and Pete Walker) did our big day on May 14. The day started out bleak and rainy — not terribly promising for spotting lots of birds.

We got started dark and early at the Wetlands and were rewarded with a pair of Green Herons chasing around the pond and a Great Horned Owl calling as dawn began to lighten the sky. Things started slowly at the next stop, the 42nd Street section of James River Park, but picked up considerably before we moved on. Key finds were a Mourning Warbler singing strongly from the woods leading to the Reedy Creek Meadow, an Olive-sided Flycatcher pointed out to us by Jan Frye from the bridge (thanks, Jan!), and an Eastern Screech-owl just uphill from the bridge being mobbed by a sizable and voluble bunch of birds including a couple of Swainson's Thrushes. Throw in a couple of Canada Warblers, and a Kingfisher being chased by a Ruby-Throated Hummingbird, and we had a pretty good outing there.

At Crewe's Channel, we picked up Prairie Warbler, Pine Warbler, Red-headed Woodpecker, and got nice looks at a Summer Tanager building a nest as well as pairs of Blue Grosbeaks and Indigo Buntings all simultaneously in the field of view. The creek was very full, and shorebirds were scarce. Those we picked up at the Shirley impoundment — nothing unusual, but we got most of what we expected there. The big treat at Shirley were two singing Dickcissels. All told, the team tallied 105 species. Not bad for a cloudy, rainy day late in migration — only three off of last year's total of 108. We missed a few species that we expected, like Great Egret, Peregrine Falcon, Flicker, and Scarlet Tanager.

So, the final standings for this year's Richmond Audubon Society birdathon: The Good, The Bad and the Ugly Ducklings: 114 species, The Crazy Coots: 105 species, Birdzerk: 60 species. Thanks to everyone who participated. I hope you will make a donation in support of your favorite team. It will support the youth, education and conservation programs of the Richmond Audubon Society.

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 Individual/Family Member(s) \$20 enclosed
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Address _____
City _____
State _____ ZIP _____
Phone _____
E-mail _____
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