FIRST RAS ADOPT-A-HIGHWAY CLEANUP

Saturday, June 16, at 8:00 AM

Richmond Audubon has recently agreed to adopt the public roads leading to the Dutch Gap Conservation Area parking lot and the Dutch Gap Boat Ramp. We will be holding our first clean up event on Saturday, June 16, 2018. We will meet as soon after 8:00 AM as we can in the parking lot of the Dutch Gap/Henricus Historical Park Visitor Center. Note that the entrance gate to the park does not open until 8:00 AM, so you may have to wait a few minutes to get in. We will take a brief bird walk out to the river overlook before getting organized for the clean up. Participants should bring sun/bug protection, water and a snack. VDOT provides safety vests, trash bags, and gear for safely picking up trash. After we have completed two clean up events, VDOT will install a sign indicating Richmond Audubon’s involvement in the program along the route we clean up. For further information about the event, contact: Lewis Barnett by email: lbarnett3@gmail.com or call (804) 920-4723.

HELP MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

RAS MEMBER’S MEETINGS

WHEN: RAS membership meetings are on the 3rd Thursday of the month at 7:00 PM (except June, July, August and December). Come early for coffee, cookies and conversation beforehand starting at 6:30 PM.

WHERE: Held at St. Luke Lutheran Church • 7757 Chippenham Pkwy., Richmond, VA at the corner of Custis Road and Chippenham Parkway unless noted.

VISIT: www.RichmondAudubon.org for updates and additional information.

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PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

When people learn that I’m the president of the Richmond Audubon Society, I often get a few follow up questions. Usually, there is a request in there to identify a bird that someone saw recently and of which the person can only describe as “little and gray” or “it sounds like it is playing Beethoven’s Fifth.” I also had one recently that was described as “like a blue jay but with the head of a pigeon.” Occasionally I get one that I actually can identify from the description--like when my father asked me about a little black and white bird that would often be upside down on a tree in front of their house. I showed him a picture of a nuthatch, and we had a winner!

More often than not, people are very interested in the birds they see, and while they want to learn more, they maybe don’t know how or where to look. It can be difficult and daunting to get a correct ID when you are a novice birder. I am in no way a subject matter expert here. I’ve only been birding for about a decade, and I still consider myself a novice. With time and practice, I am slowly picking things up and can even identify a few things my ear now!

When I meet someone who wants to learn more, of course the first suggestion is to join Richmond Audubon! Our field trip leaders are very knowledgeable and can usually answer questions about what we see or hear on the trails. Beyond that, I recommend the Audubon app for your smartphone or tablet. It is a free resource. In addition to the great photos and detailed descriptions, users can search based on characteristics of a bird (like “little and gray”) and can scroll through the results to see if they can make an ID. As for guidebooks, I know that Sibley’s and Pederson’s guides are the gold standard, but I prefer to carry a guide put out by the Smithsonian that uses big colorful pictures. It’s just what works better for me!

What suggestions do you have for novice birders?

Eileen R Geller - RAS President

BOARD BRIEF

At the March RAS Board meeting we discussed the recent Annual Appeal Letter and possibilities of RAS merchandise. Education reported on the success of The Great Big Greenhouse event and the upcoming Duncan Memorial United Methodist Church’s Nature Day Camp program. A location for this summers “Block Party” is also being decided upon.

RAS’s 2018 sponsorship of the Richmond Environmental Film Festival (www.RVAEFF.org) was a great connection opportunity for us and will consider future involvement in that event.

WCVE Explore the Outdoors – Bird Beak Buffet - event scheduled for May 20, 1:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. Two or three volunteers needed.

RAS will try and work with Joseph Bryan Park to support their nature signage needs.

Bird-A-Thon will kick off in April to be announced.

Board replacements for positions that are approaching the end of their term will be announced and a Nomination Committee will be formed. Next RAS Board Meeting May 10th, 2018.

FROM THE EDITOR

As my committed service to RAS as the Thrasher Editor comes to and end this fiscal year, the opportunity to be of service to our organization will become available. It just takes just some basic desktop publishing skills and a bit of persistence to gather and organize some information and images. Thrasher Editor is an official RAS Board position, so the position also includes a chance to experience the inner workings of our service projects and financial gifts to the local birding community. Please consider giving the gift of a little time and effort to our organization. I will gladly assist anyone interested in taking over this vital position.

Bob Schamerhorn
- RAS Thrasher Editor
UPCOMING MEMBERS MEETINGS

RAS Meetings held at St. Luke Lutheran Church, 7757 Chippenham Pkwy, Richmond, VA. The program begins at 7:00 PM, with coffee, cookies and conversation before, starting at 6:30 PM.

MAY 17

PROGRAM: TRACKING WHIMBREL: MOVING TOWARD THE CONSERVATION OF A MIGRATORY SHOREBIRD

PRESENTED BY: BRYAN WATTS

Maintaining migratory species that depend on many countries scattered over large geographic areas is one of the great conservation challenges of our time. Success depends on 1) identifying the network of critical sites and 2) managing site-specific threats. Prior to the development of size-appropriate satellite telemetry, very little was known about migration pathways and/or connectivity for whimbrel using the Western Atlantic Flyway. Since 2008 we have deployed 50 satellite transmitters on whimbrel throughout the flyway to identify migratory routes and critical satellite transmitters on whimbrel throughout the flyway to identify migratory routes and critical staging areas, and to link specific breeding and winter territories. The extreme flight capability of this species allows for the reliance on relatively few staging sites making these sites of high conservation value. The tracking effort has 1) illuminated the annual cycle of this declining population, 2) identified unknown migratory pathways, and 3) suggested some possible causes of ongoing declines. We have used the information to build a prioritized blueprint for conservation. The clear, emergent message of this work is that whimbrel connect many locations and cultures throughout the hemisphere and that their recovery depends on our ability to bring this community of cultures together around a single goal.

2018 BLOCK PARTY (NON-ATLAS-ERS WELCOME TOO!)

SATURDAY, JUNE 23 AT 9:00 AM

Back by popular demand, the Richmond Audubon “Block Party” will be on Saturday June 23rd starting at 9:00 a.m. We’ll be canvassing some high-priority blocks for the Virginia Breeding Bird Atlas survey in Ashland/Hanover area. We’ll meet at Poor Farm Park, located at 13400 Liberty School Road, Ashland, VA 23005, and we may survey a few other places in the morning, as well. After our survey, we’ll head in to Ashland for lunch! While this is ultimately aimed at getting some good breeding bird data for the VBBA2 Survey, we’d also like for this event to be a relaxed event aimed at fostering fellowship among our membership. Please join us!
ST. AUGUSTINE ALLIGATOR FARM ZOOLOGICAL PARK

by Kathy Warnkey

You will probably never be able to stand closer to nesting native herons, egrets, ibis, spoonbills and wood storks than at this alligator park/zoo. I visited the Farm in early April this year, and it was magical to watch the birds courting, sitting on their nests, and feeding their young without fear.

The birds are here because the hundreds of alligators that swim beneath the branches of the oak trees keep tree-climbing predators like raccoons from attacking their nests. A broad wooded boardwalk allows you to walk through the tree tops looking into the branches to observe courtship behavior and nesting activity up close. The staff actually has to trim back the tree limbs continually or otherwise the birds would build their nests over the boardwalk itself. Sometimes the birds land on the railing of boardwalk and allow you to take amazing, close-up photos. The tricolored herons and snowy egrets were particularly lively. There is the constant background sound of squabbling, with minor eruptions as the close-roosting birds defend their territory.

The best time to observe nesting wading birds is March through June, but I have visited in January and many birds were roosting here. The Alligator Farm is located just south of downtown St. Augustine.
RAS EVENTS SCHEDULE

Check the RAS Listserv or the RAS website for information and any late breaking news about field trips or join our MEET-UP GROUP: www.meetup.com/RAS-Meetup/

MAY

May 5th Saturday • 42nd St. with Arun Bose  
Start time: 7:00 AM  
Warblers! Join Arun to explore one of the best city limits locations for enjoying the spring warbler migration. This beautiful section of the James River Park has a treetop pedestrian bridge that can produce eye level views of hard to spot warblers and other migrants. Meet Arun at the 42nd st. lot off of Riverside dr. A small $5.00 donation per person will be collected to benefit Richmond Audubon. For more information contact him at email

May 6th Sunday  
Bryan Park with John Fones  
Start time: 6:30 AM , ends at 10:30 AM  
Meeting location: Shelter 1, Joseph Bryan Park  
Join John for early morning birding in Bryan Park. This historic park in Richmond's Northside always has an abundance of birds. Migration will be peaking and resident birds will be busy with the breeding season. For more information, contact John at Johnefones@icloud.com

May 12th Saturday  
Dutch Gap with Lewis Barnett  
Meet at 8:00 AM at the entrance to Henricus Historical Park/Dutch Gap Conservation area.  
Explore this great birding destination to see what’s breeding and what’s still migrating. Early birders meet at 7:00 AM at the Dutch Gap Boat Landing parking lot. Sleepyheads join us at 8:00 at the main Henricus/Dutch Gap entrance gate. For more information email Lewis at: blbarnett@gmail.com

JUNE

June 3rd Sunday  
Bryan Park with Janice Frye  
Start time: 6:30 AM , ends at 10:30 AM  
Meeting location: Shelter 1, Joseph Bryan Park  
See May 1st walk for more info. Contact Janice for more information at: byrdnyrd33@gmail.com

June 16th Saturday  
Dutch Gap with Lewis Barnett  
Meet at 8:00 AM at the entrance to Henricus Historical Park/Dutch Gap Conservation area.  
Explore this great birding destination to see what’s breeding and what’s still migrating. Early birders meet at 7:00 AM at the Dutch Gap Boat Landing parking lot. Sleepyheads join us at 8:00 at the main Henricus/Dutch Gap entrance gate. For more information email Lewis at: blbarnett@gmail.com

Note:  
If anyone would like to plan and or lead a Richmond Audubon Society field trip please contact John Ditto at Richaud.fieldtrips@gmail.com. Most field trips are at local Richmond area parks. Field trips are posted in the Thrasher for the following 2 months. Please check the RAS calendar for monthly updates. Thank you.
OFFICERS & COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSONS OF THE RICHMOND AUDUBON SOCIETY

President
First Vice President
Second Vice President
Secretary
Treasurer
Bird-a-Thon Chair
Conservation Chair
Cyberspace Chair
Development Chair
Education Chair
Field Trips Chair
Hospitality Chair
IBA/VAC Representative
Legislation Chair
Membership Chair
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Ellison Orcutt
Wes Teets
Lori Schamerhorn
Lewis Barnett
Lewis Barnett
Mary Elfner
Ben Griffon
Abbey Walter
Jan Robertson & Kathy Warnkey
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vacant
Len Smock
James Shelton
Mario and Gail Grasso
Lewis Barnett
Kim Harrell
Diane Jadlowski
Bob Schamerhorn
Ellison Orcutt

president@richmondaudubon.org
vicepresident1@richmondaudubon.org
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secretary@richmondaudubon.org
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thrasher@richmondaudubon.org
RASkids@richmondaudubon.org

ABOUT THE RICHMOND AUDUBON SOCIETY

Richmond Audubon Society (RAS) is a chapter of The National Audubon Society (NAS), becoming a member of either Society, enrolls your membership in both (NAS and RAS by zip code). Renewals are processed through The National Audubon Society.

AFFILIATES: Chapter of the Virginia Society of Ornithology (VSO) and the Virginia Conservation Network (VCN).

MAILING ADDRESS: Richmond Audubon Society
P.O. Box 26648 • Richmond, VA 23261

PHONE (Message Line): 804-601-4917

WEBSITE: www.RichmondAudubon.org

FACEBOOK: www.facebook.com/RichmondAudubon/

MEET-UP GROUP: www.meetup.com/RAS-Meetup/

TWITTER: www.twitter.com/@RichmondAudubon

LISTSERV: www.freelists.org/list/va-richmond-general

NONPROFIT: RAS is a registered nonprofit 501 (C) (3) charitable organization. Donations are tax deductible.

NEWSLETTER: “The Thrasher” is issued bimonthly (January, March, May, July, September, November.) Submissions due by the 10th of the month prior. The newsletter is available for download (PDF) from the RAS website or by special request for a hard copy.

RAS BOARD MEETINGS: Second Thursdays of January, March, May, July (annual strategic planning session), September, and November. Board Meeting start times and locations vary, members are welcome to attend, contact the President or Secretary in advance.
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