PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

It is early spring as I write this, but the world’s attention is focused elsewhere. Life has slowed down a good bit for many of us. Life in the time of the Corona virus has altered our lives, with many of our routine activities (work, shopping, restaurants, sporting events, getting together with friends) on hold. It comes as somewhat of a sobering shock to me when the paradigm within which I have lived for seven decades has been so radically altered. As a lifelong scientist, I have been aware of the likelihood of some disease, such as the Corona virus, becoming a pandemic and causing immense suffering and disruption of lives. It was just a matter of time. I guess I just always thought that it would happen “in the future.”

With this slowing down of my life, my self-quarantine, I find that I am seeing and hearing even more of the world around me than I usually do. And given my long-time passion for birds, I am more aware of them than ever before. Look and listen. Our world has changed, but theirs has not. I hear two male titmice incessantly calling, no doubt once again establishing their nesting territories that include much of my yard. Chickadees, nuthatches, wrens, robins, and bluebirds are part of the music of the neighborhood. The Downy woodpecker that lives in my backyard has once again taken to drumming on my downspout, attracting a mate or marking his territory. House finches vocalize everywhere around me, as they do every year. I hear a towhee calling “drink your teevee,” suggesting that once again I will see a pair raising young in the near future. A gnatcatcher just may be setting up house in the tree that had a nesting pair last year. And there goes a yellow-throated warbler, my first of spring, back from its winter trip down south. Spring migration is again gearing up.

Yes, our activities, our lives, have been altered, but the sounds and sights of the neighborhood birds are reassuring. Spring has sprung and our beloved birds have once again shown up, ready to regale us with their beauty and behavior, helping take our minds off of the viral invader that has descended upon us, and letting us know that some things have not changed. The world still is a beautiful place.

Len Smock - RAS President
BIRD OF THE DAY
FACEBOOK: @RichmondAudubon

Since Richmond Audubon had to cancel its monthly meetings as well as its many field trips, due to the Corona virus, we initiated our “Bird of the Day” program. Every day for as long as we are under field trip restrictions we are posting a picture of a “Bird of the Day” on our Facebook page. If you haven’t been following these posts on Facebook, check them out now. We hope that they connect you a bit with the world around us and the beauty of birds. Here are some of the first imagers posted on Facebook.
https://www.facebook.com/RichmondAudubon/

Len Smock, President
FROM THE EDITORS

Backyard birding has new relevance now that many of us confined to our homes. It would be a good time to put in a birdbath with running/dripping water. Even the Ruby-throated Hummingbird will visit the birdbath as long as the water is moving. Beyond the obvious observation that birds drink their bath water, why do birds take baths? Some experts believe that birds do that to keep their feathers in top condition for flying. Our beloved winter guest, the White-throated Sparrow is still with us and lately seems to spend more and more time at the bath and preening. It has a long journey to the boreal forest of Canada where it breeds and its flight feathers must be in optimum condition to successfully make that journey.

I want to thank all the faithful Thrasher readers who have been with us from black-and-white print, to partial color print to full color newsletter on the RAS website. The May-June 2020 issue of the Thrasher will be my last one as Co-Editor of the Thrasher. I did come out of retirement to do one more two year term but even the great ones like Michael Jordan and Brett Favre knew that they could do this only once.

Safe birding.

If you have ideas for newsletter content, please share it with us at: thrasher@richmondaudubon.org

Bob Schamerhorn & Naseem Reza - Co-Editors

FROM THE KITCHEN WINDOW by John Coe

“Almost the whole green world now comes to blossom, a feast for the bees, a treat for the eyes.”

- Hal Borland

The days of May come and go much too swiftly, unlike, say, February which moves along at a pace not unlike that of a snail. It’s like spring has been building up to a rush of blooms, and new growth, and emerging lifeforms, and great waves of birds – and it’s happening and passing by so quickly you are reluctant to blink, or take an eye-rest, for fear you may miss something.

I mean, woodpeckers alone can be a distraction of significant proportions, and the spring song of the cardinal, and strange new frog sounds, and flowers everywhere, and hummingbirds, and butterflies and dragonflies and even little bugs that you are not sure what they are.

So, take a long deep breath – away from the masked crowds – and grab the month of May. It’s a gem.

And then there’s June: the fullness of spring flowing into the lushness of June. So green, so full of flower. More new life – young birds -and maybe fireflies. The passing of spring into summer is a good time to take another walk in the woods and breathe in the fullness of nature.

The May full moon, the FLOWER moon occurs on the 7th– the last in a series of super moons that began in February.

The full moon in June is called the HOT moon or the strawberry moon and occurs on the 5th. June has our earliest sunrise and latest sunset. The summer solstice is Saturday the 20th. The hours of daylight will begin to wane.
JAMES RIVER PARK
PONY PASTURE
By Naseem Reza

The Pony Pasture section of the James River Park offers a wide range of birds throughout the year. In spring neo-tropicals like the Prothonotary Warbler return to nest in tree cavities lining the James River. Ospreys can be seen diving in the river for fish and of course there are Bald Eagles waiting to steal the catch. During winter months various water birds are easily seen on the river. On any given day the beautiful Bufflehead is there in good numbers among the numerous gulls, cormorants, ducks and geese. Also during winter, both kinglets and the Winter Wren are found here.

With 161 species of birds documented on eBird, Pony Pasture is one of the top hotspots in the entire Richmond Metropolitan Area but it has attractions beyond birds. Located on Riverside Drive within the city, it provides easy access, ample parking and restrooms.

The park trails are well maintained with benches strategically placed for clear views of the river. The soothing sound of rushing water provides an environment that both birds and birders can enjoy.
ADOPT A HIGHWAY

“The Adopt A Highway Signs have been put up at Dutch Gap. Thank-you for being part of “KEEP VIRGINIA BEAUTIFUL” Adopt A Highway Program”

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RAS FIELD TRIPS

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/

NO FIELD TRIPS. Field trips are on hold until relevant COVID-19 related executive orders expire. Currently, it is June 10, but could be extended.

MEMBER PHOTOS: WARBLERS

Prothonotary Warbler by Bill Wood
Yellow-throated Warbler by Matthew Crittenden
Bay-breasted Warbler by Jerry Uhlman

Black and White Warbler by Matthew Crittenden

Blackburnian Warbler by Pam Scrima

Canada Warbler by Bob Schamerhorn • www.iPhotoBirds.com
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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).

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

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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) online at www.RichmondAudubon.org.

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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