Northern Bobwhite by Len Smock

"Come forth into the light of things. Let nature be your leader."

William Wordsworth
COVID 19 Our in-person monthly meetings and field trips, have been halted temporarily for the health of our members until further notice. With field trips still on hold we encourage everyone to bird on their own with social distancing and masks. Check out our website, Facebook and Freelist for future information.

____________________________

**President's Message** by Mary Elfner

I want to take a minute and reflect on two people who worked tirelessly for the Richmond Audubon Society: Margaret O'Bryan and Lewis Barnett. Both have left us (Margaret on January 29, 2016, and Lewis on January 21, 2021). Both were past presidents. And both have left a birding legacy in Richmond and beyond. We miss them very much. You can read more about them here:

https://www.therecorderonline.com/articles/margaret-maggie-bremner-obryan/

https://www.thecollegianur.com/article/2021/02/computer-science-professor-lewis-barnett-remembered-for-kindness-passion-for-birding

If you wish to donate in their honor, you can do so through our website: [http://www.richmondaudubon.org/donate/](http://www.richmondaudubon.org/donate/)

Or through the Birdies for Charity program: [https://www.pgatourcharities.org/index.cfm?action=campaigns.donate&campaignID=17](https://www.pgatourcharities.org/index.cfm?action=campaigns.donate&campaignID=17)

Together, past present and future, we all make a strong Richmond Audubon Society.
Richmond Audubon Society Virtual Meetings

Don’t forget we have NO meetings in June, July and August!
Next meeting will be September 19th. More details later on Facebook, webpage and Freelist

Birdies for Charity!

This year, we have the opportunity to receive a 10% bonus on every charitable gift we receive through Birdies for Charity presented by TowneBank. Birdies for Charity is a fundraising program offered by the Dominion Energy Charity Classic and PGA TOUR/PGA TOUR Charities, Inc. that strives to make a difference in our community by maximizing charitable contributions.

Our hope is to maximize every dollar we receive and thus, we are asking that you make your annual gift to Richmond Audubon Society through the Birdies for Charity platform this year. **When you make your gift, we will receive your entire contribution plus an additional 10%.**

GIVE BY CHECK: Make your check payable to PGA TOUR Charities, Inc. and write “Richmond Audubon Society” in the memo line. Please mail your check to the following address: Dominion Energy Charity Classic707 East Main Street, Suite 1025Richmond, Virginia 23219 Attn: Birdies for Charity. PGA TOUR Charities, Inc. will mail you a donation receipt for tax-deduction purposes.

GIVE ONLINE: Visit [this donation link](#) and enter a donation amount. Follow the prompts to fill out the billing information form and confirm your gift. You will receive a confirmation email immediately from PGA TOUR Charities, Inc. that will serve as a donation receipt for tax-deduction purposes. Please note, Mastercard, Visa and American Express are accepted and credit card fees will be taken out for online donations. Charges will be reflected on your bank statement as PGA TOUR Charities, Inc.

**Thank you in advance for your generosity!**
Honoring Margaret O’Bryan

Thanks to a generous donation by Wayne O’Bryan, in honor of Margaret, Bramble Hill is now owned by the Virginia Society of Ornithology (VSO). The Richmond Audubon Society has generously donated a custom memorial bench in Margaret’s honor that was placed at Bramble Hill in July. Written upon it is:

Margaret “Maggie” O’Bryan
1945 – 2016
Three thing in human lives that are important
First is to be kind
Second is to be kind
Third is to be kind

Bill Would Fix Damage Done to Refuge Systems

WASHINGTON, D.C.- Rep. Rob Wittman (R-VA-01) and Rep. Mike Thompson (D-CA-05), co-chairs of the Congressional Wildlife Refuge Caucus, announced the introduction of the bipartisan Refuge System Protection Act. This legislation grants authority to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to collect civil damages to repair and restored damaged wildlife refuges.

“The First District of Virginia is home to unique and special ecosystems. As a former state health official who conducted field research in the Chesapeake Bay, I am aware of the ecological challenges facing Virginia waters, wetlands, and refuges and I know the importance of taking care of our environment for future generations. Providing for the protection and security of these resources is absolutely vital.” said Wittman. “This legislation will help ensure that our nation’s refuges are protected for years to come.”

“Wildlife refuges represent some of the very best of our nation’s public lands. Sadly, when they are damaged, the USFWS must use taxpayer money to conduct needed repairs instead of holding the responsible parties financially responsible. That’s why I introduced the bipartisan Refuge System Protection Act that would allow USFWS to seek civil damages from people who damage refuges. Those fines will be used to restore our public lands,” said Thompson. “This process is more efficient, saves the taxpayer money, and is already used by agencies like the National Park Service. I’ll work to ensure we pass this important bill to preserve our wildlife refuges.”

Wildlife refuges sustain thousands of dollars in damage each year and the USFWS has no way under current law to recover the costs needed to conduct repair. In fact, between 2014 and 2016, at least 1,787 acts of vandalisms and 127 acts of arson were committed to refuges, which cost more than $395,000. This bipartisan bill gives the USFWS authority to collect civil damages from those who damage refuges.
responsible and use those funds to repair damages. Wildlife refuges nationwide host more than 48 million visitors each year and generate $2.4 billion for local economies. This legislation puts wildlife refuges on par with other public lands that already have such protections.

Let your Congress people know how you feel. Write or call them.

**It’s Summer… Where Did the Birds Go?**

From the [Summer 2021](#) issue of Living Bird magazine.

*Originally posted July 2013; updated May 2021.*

In the dog days of summer, birds seem to disappear—the dawn chorus wanes and an odd silence takes hold in woodlands. Many birds look bedraggled, no longer sporting their bright breeding colors. A lot of birders hang up their binoculars until fall migration. (July and August are typically the two lowest months for eBird checklist submissions.)

But there’s no reason to stop birding. The birds are still there, they’re just keeping a low profile, because they’re replacing their feathers. Knowing what’s going on in the post-breeding lives of birds can help you keep finding species late into the summer.

**Silent Summer**

Birds sing for two basic reasons: to attract a mate and to defend a territory. By July, many baby birds in North America have fledged, and even birds that have multiple nests per year have finished by early August.

Some birds may continue singing for a while to help their young learn their local song dialect. But many birds, such as American Robins and Red-winged Blackbirds, stop holding territories and start to join flocks—and territorial singing just isn’t compatible with flocking. One by one, each species drops out of the morning chorus.

**Lying Low During Molt**

After breeding, the molting season kicks in, heralding major changes in both the appearance and behavior of birds. Molt is the systematic replacement of feathers. All birds do it—from hummingbirds to penguins. They have to molt in order to survive, because feathers wear out from physical abrasion and bleaching from the sun. Once a year (in the late summer for temperate species) birds grow an entirely new set of feathers through a complete molt.

As birds grow new flight feathers, they are particularly vulnerable to predators. During wing molt, several of their flight feathers will be less than full length, producing gaps in their wings that render them less maneuverable and powerful in flight. To avoid attracting the attention of predators, many birds—such as sparrows, warblers, and thrushes—lie low, calling infrequently and hiding in vegetation.
Drakes Go Incognito

Brightly colored male ducks have an extra trick to avoid being conspicuous to predators during molt. Waterfowl, including loons and grebes, lose all of their primary and secondary feathers at once, rendering them flightless for about a month. To help them hide when they can’t fly, male ducks grow a special set of camouflaged feathers, called eclipse plumage. In July, you may notice all the Mallards in a local park look scruffy and mostly brown, like they’re all females. Shortly after their wing feathers have regrown and they are able to fly again, drakes will regrow their brightly colored body feathers.

Molting Strategies

Groups of birds employ different strategies to fit molt into their annual schedule. Most of eastern North America’s songbirds, including Chestnut-sided Warbler, Baltimore Oriole, and Indigo Bunting, begin replacing their flight and body feathers shortly after their young fledge. They tend to undergo this complete molt on or near their breeding grounds, migrating south after they have a new set of feathers.

Some songbirds in western North America, however, begin their migration and fly south a bit before molting. Western summers can be extremely dry and desolate. Many species—including Western Kingbird and Lazuli Bunting—head off on a partial migration to the Mexican Monsoon region (southeast Arizona, New Mexico, and northwest Mexico) to molt. The monsoon rains brings an abundance of insects on which to feed. After molting their flight feathers, these birds continue their migration farther south to their wintering grounds.

Birding During Molt

Spotting molt in action is just a matter of taking a minute to look carefully at the feathers. Birds in heavy molt tend to be scruffy overall. Look for contrast between new and old feathers, and gaps in their wings where old feathers have been dropped and new ones haven’t grown in yet, like a jack-o-lantern’s gap-toothed smile. See Two Tips for Telling a Bird’s Age by Its Molt Patterns for more on this.

With an appreciation of molting, you’ll see that a motley looking bird in late summer is really another incredible stage of a bird’s life cycle. And you’ll appreciate how birds prepare for the long journeys of their fall migration.

Let’s Call’Em the “Bird Days” of Summer

Ironically, the silence and secretive behavior of birds make them harder to find just at the time of year when birds are most abundant, because populations of adults are augmented by all the new young birds.

“Instead of the ‘dog days’ of summer’ think of them as the ‘bird days’” and make sure to go birding, says Jenna Curtis, program coordinator for eBird. “Summer is a very important time for bird populations, but it can be difficult to research. Where do birds go when they’re done nesting and not defending territories? What happens to young birds after they fledge? These are important
questions that birdwatchers can help to answer. You may be the only person to count birds in your yard or town! Those checklists fill an important gap in our understanding.”


**What a Songbird Lost at Sea Taught Me About Survival**

Aboard a mission to explore the alien life of the deep ocean, a chance encounter with a migratory bird offered a point of connection—one that has felt poignant this past year. Read all about this amazing experience.


**Study Finds Songbirds CAN Taste Sugar**

Do songbirds have a sweet tooth? This month, an international research team including the Cornell Lab published a new study in the journal *Science* revealing that songbirds, which account for more than 40% of the world's bird species, can actually taste sweetness.

During experiments where researchers offered plain water and sugar-water, songbirds chose the sugar-water, regardless of whether their main diet consisted of seeds, grains, or insects. This is a remarkable finding, since songbirds are the descendants of meat-eating dinosaurs and are missing a key protein that allows humans and many other animals to taste sweetness. Instead, songbirds evolved to taste sugar by using a different taste receptor! Pretty sweet, don’t you think?


**Northern Bobwhite**

Also known as Virginia quail or bobwhite quail, the Northern Bobwhite is native to the United States, Mexico, and the Caribbean. The clear, whistled “bobwhite” call was once a common sound throughout the birds' range. It's rare today; populations plunged between 1966 and 2014, resulting in an overall decline of 85 percent, according to the [North American Breeding Bird Survey](https://www.allaboutbirds.org/articles/north-american-breeding-bird-survey).

**Habitat loss** and the increased use of *pesticides* are thought to be the culprits behind this steep decline—a worrisome trend also noted in other birds sharing similar habitats, including *Loggerhead Shrike*.

Northern Bobwhite populations are non-migratory, particularly where there is good habitat available. This species is a popular game bird and is the well-studied subject of many different
management programs. (For example, the University of Missouri Extension Service provides recommendations for landowners who want to increase quail on their property.)

Fortunately, Northern Bobwhites can respond positively and quickly to habitat management changes on working lands, and ABC-supported projects are focusing on bringing back the numbers of this bird. (Read more about ABC's work with landowners in the Oaks and Prairies Joint Venture to restore habitat for Northern Bobwhite and other birds).

ABC also joins forces with other groups, including the Northern Bobwhite Conservation Initiative, to create habitat for the bobwhite and other bird species found in similar habitats, including Painted Bunting, Prairie Warbler, and Dickcissel.

https://abcbirds.org/bird/northern-bobwhite/

Hear the Many Different Hoots of the Barred Owl

The increasingly common owl has more than a dozen calls, including one that sounds like a monkey. The emphatic hoots of a pair of Barred Owls resonate in the still of a February night. So-called for the stripes on their breast, Barred Owls are among the largest owls in North America. They're also the most vocal. Their signature hooting sequence has been memorably described as “who-cooks-for-you?! who-cooks-for-you-all?!”

But this is just one of more than a dozen Barred Owl calls, ranging from a “siren call” to a “wail” to a wonderfully entertaining “monkey call.”

Although the Barred Owl’s calls have long been heard in Eastern forests, it is a relative newcomer to the western US. During the 20th Century, its breeding range has expanded into the North and the West, and down as far as northern California.

The exact reasons behind the expansion aren't certain. But new riparian forests, fire suppression, and the planting of shelter-belts in the northern Great Plains are some of the human impacts that have likely played a role.

No matter what accounts for the Barred Owl’s dramatic sweep across the continent, the bird – and its extraordinary voice – seem here to stay.

https://www.birdnote.org/listen/shows/barred-owl-calls
10 Fun Facts About the Barred Owl

A large owl of the eastern, central, and, increasingly, northwestern United States, the Barred Owl is one of our more common owl species. As with most owls, the Barred is primarily nocturnal, but it is known to call and hunt during the day. Easily identified by its heavily streaked chest, round, tuftless head, and big, black eyes, the Barred Owl can be found in forested areas throughout its range year-round, including in more urban environments. Read on to learn more about this bird, and when you're done, check out these other fun facts about owls.

1. If you're out in the woods and hear someone calling who cooks for you, who cooks for you all? you're actually hearing the distinctive call of the Barred Owl. If you hear what sounds like maniacal laughing afterward, that's usually two Barred Owls performing a courtship duet.

2. Barred Owls prefer nesting in tree hollows, but they will also use nests abandoned by other animals, from squirrels to Red-tailed Hawks, and nest boxes located in forest habitat.

3. These hefty owls can become incredibly territorial once they establish a nest—and especially when they begin rearing chicks. Barred Owls are known to chase away intruders by aggressively hooting or attacking and striking with their talons. (There's even a theory that a Barred Owl was the culprit in a famous murder case.)

4. Barred Owls prefer mature forests that have both an abundance of prey and trees with cavities. Barred Owls hunt from a perch, where they sit and wait, scanning and listening for prey, and then silently swoop down when they pinpoint their meal.

5. Barred Owls mostly eat small mammals like mice and voles, but sometimes they go fishing for crayfish and crabs. If a Barred Owl eats enough crayfish, the feathers under its wings can turn pink—just like a flamingo, which gets its hue from the high volume of shrimp in its diet.

6. Barred Owls are largely sedentary, but in the past century, they have gradually expanded their range. The expansion began west across Canada and then south into the states of the Pacific Northwest, reaching California by the 1980s. This poses a problem for the bird's smaller cousin, the Spotted Owl, which is endangered and also relies on old-growth forests. Barred Owls force Spotted Owls from their territories and can also hybridize with them.
7. Barred Owls mate for life, and they usually have a single clutch of two or three white eggs each year. During the incubation period, which lasts somewhere between 28 and 33 days, the female sits on the eggs while the male hunts for food.

8. After they hatch, young Barred Owls can stick around the nest for up to six months, which is unusual for owls. During this time, the young owls rarely stray far from each other and are often seen sitting side by side.

9. Hatching order often determines chick size: The oldest of a Barred Owl clutch tends to be the largest, with the other chicks being progressively smaller. Adult owls can grow to an impressive 20 inches tall—big enough to terrify an unsuspecting person wandering in the woods.

10. Chicks leave the nest at four to six weeks old, but they don't go far. Once they clamber about their nest trees (or a nearby tree if they fall to ground), they use their bill and talons to grab hold while flapping their wings to keep balance. At 10 to 12 weeks, they begin flying.

Bonus Fact! Historians believe that Harriet Tubman, an avid naturalist, used the Barred Owl’s call as a signal for people seeking to use the Underground Railroad. Depending on the call she used, freedom-seekers would know whether it was okay to come out of hiding.

Newsletter

“The Thrasher” is issued bimonthly (January, March, May, July, September, November.) Articles and photo submissions are due by the 10th of the month prior. The newsletter is available for download (PDF) online at www.RichmondAudubon.org

All articles are excerpts from internet unless byline is noted.

Any suggestions, comments, or ideas for the newsletter send to thrasher@richmondaudubon.org

Thanks and have a great birding day!
Diane Jadlowski
Editor

Salton Sea by Diane Jadlowski
## OFFICERS & COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSONS OF THE RICHMOND AUDUBON SOCIETY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Email</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>President</td>
<td>Mary Elfner</td>
<td><a href="mailto:president@richmondaudubon.org">president@richmondaudubon.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Vice President</td>
<td>Wes Teets</td>
<td><a href="mailto:vicepresident1@richmondaudubon.org">vicepresident1@richmondaudubon.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Vice President</td>
<td>Doug Rodgers</td>
<td><a href="mailto:vicepresident2@richmondaudubon.org">vicepresident2@richmondaudubon.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td>Pam Scrima</td>
<td><a href="mailto:secretary@richmondaudubon.org">secretary@richmondaudubon.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treasurer</td>
<td>Eileen Geller</td>
<td><a href="mailto:treasurer@richmondaudubon.org">treasurer@richmondaudubon.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bird-a-Thon Chair</td>
<td>VACANT</td>
<td><a href="mailto:membership@richmondaudubon.org">membership@richmondaudubon.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservation Chair</td>
<td>Patty Bell</td>
<td><a href="mailto:conservation@richmondaudubon.org">conservation@richmondaudubon.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cyberspace Chair</td>
<td>Lee Williams</td>
<td><a href="mailto:cyberspace@richmondaudubon.org">cyberspace@richmondaudubon.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development Chair</td>
<td>VACANT</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education Chair</td>
<td>Valerie Gohlke</td>
<td><a href="mailto:education@richmondaudubon.org">education@richmondaudubon.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field Trips Chair</td>
<td>Wes Teets</td>
<td><a href="mailto:fieldtrips@richmondaudubon.org">fieldtrips@richmondaudubon.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hospitality Chairs</td>
<td>Lynne Evans &amp; Kim Harrell</td>
<td><a href="mailto:hospitality@richmondaudubon.org">hospitality@richmondaudubon.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IBA/VABBA2 Rep.</td>
<td>Ellison Orcutt</td>
<td><a href="mailto:iba@richmondaudubon.org">iba@richmondaudubon.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legislation Chair</td>
<td>James Shelton</td>
<td><a href="mailto:legislation@richmondaudubon.org">legislation@richmondaudubon.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Member at Large</td>
<td>Jason Bulluck</td>
<td><a href="mailto:legislation@richmondaudubon.org">legislation@richmondaudubon.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Membership Chair</td>
<td>Liz Sher</td>
<td><a href="mailto:membership@richmondaudubon.org">membership@richmondaudubon.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past President</td>
<td>Len Smock</td>
<td><a href="mailto:pastpresident@richmondaudubon.org">pastpresident@richmondaudubon.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programs Chair</td>
<td>John Ditto</td>
<td><a href="mailto:programs@richmondaudubon.org">programs@richmondaudubon.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publicity Chair</td>
<td>Diane Jadlowski</td>
<td><a href="mailto:publicity@richmondaudubon.org">publicity@richmondaudubon.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thrasher Editor</td>
<td>Diane Jadlowski</td>
<td><a href="mailto:thrasher@richmondaudubon.org">thrasher@richmondaudubon.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth Chair</td>
<td>Ellison Orcutt</td>
<td><a href="mailto:RASkids@richmondaudubon.org">RASkids@richmondaudubon.org</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ABOUT THE RICHMOND AUDUBON SOCIETY

RAS MEMBER MEETINGS: Third Thursday of the month except June, July, August and December (virtual are being planned)

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

For information on late breaking news, meetings, and field trips check the RAS Listserv or the RAS website. Join our FACEBOOK page or MEET-UP group.

PHONE (Message Line): 804-601-4917

WEBSITE: www.RichmondAudubon.org

FACEBOOK: www.facebook.com/RichmondAudubon/

MEETUP 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.
RICHMOND AUDUBON SOCIETY Membership Application

Yes, enroll me (us) as member(s) of both National Audubon and Richmond Audubon Society at the introductory rate of $20.00. Write “X53” as the memo and mail to address below. A subscription to the National Audubon Society “Audubon” magazine is included.

Name_________________________________________________________________

Address _______________________________________________________________

City ___________________________ State _______ ZIP __________

Phone __________________________ E-mail ______________________________

Make check payable to: National Audubon Society

Send check and application to:

Richmond Audubon Society
P.O. Box 26648, Richmond, VA 23261
X53