



The Naturalist

The monthly newsletter of the Historic Rivers Chapter

Virginia Master Naturalist Program

www.vmn-historicrivers.org

A Monthly Newsletter

Volume 1 No. 5 July 2007

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President's Message

Greetings All,

As the heat of summer arrives and things begin to swelter, our group is really hot too. I'll keep things short and simple in this summer heat.

Everything is going along quite well -- the new class schedule is falling into place; the projects are getting going; we have two people who have their forty volunteer hours and are now Master Naturalists; our web page rocks; our public outreach is working, ...life is good.

Our July Meeting is going to be interesting. Dr. William Dimmock will talk about butterflies, as there are a lot of them fluttering about. We should all be able to create a top ten list after the meeting. There will be sign ups at the meeting for projects, and of course fellowship and bonding.

My best to you all, and hope to see you on July 11th.

Cheers

Kari Abbott, President

Historic Rivers Chapter Member

Virginia Master Naturalist

Upcoming Club Events

July 11: Club's monthly meeting at 6:00 p.m. Find out about projects and upcoming events.

July 11: Dr. William Dimmock, Extension Agent, Agriculture and Natural Resources Horticulture, will speak to us from 7:00 - 9:00 p.m. on butterflies.

August 8: Ice cream social at Felice Bond's home. More info later!

September 5: Fall Cohort Training Class begins

September 12: ALL MEMBERS are invited to hear Hugh Beard, naturalist and award-winning science teacher, present our session on Taxonomy, Biology, and Citizen Science to our fall class. Start time is 6:00 p.m.

All events at Human Services Building, Olde Towne Road in Williamsburg.



Carolina Wren family. Photos by Felice Bond.

CHAPTER OFFICERS

Kari Abbott, President

Susan Powell, Vice President & Programs Chair

Linda Cole, Secretary

Judy Hansen, Treasurer

Shirley Devan, Newsletter Editor

Anne Marie Castellani, Historian

Patty Riddick, Membership

Gary Hammer, Projects

Alice & Seig Kopinitz, Outreach Committee

Seig Kopinitz, Webmaster

June 13 – Chesapeake Bay Impact Crater



Scott Bruce, Ground Water Characterization Specialist for the VA Department of Environmental Quality, presented a great program for our club Wednesday, June 13. Scott is shown above in the middle of the photo with club members Patty and Larry Riddick, Ann Lipp, Felice Bond, Susan Powell, hiding behind Kari Abbott, and Judy Hansen.

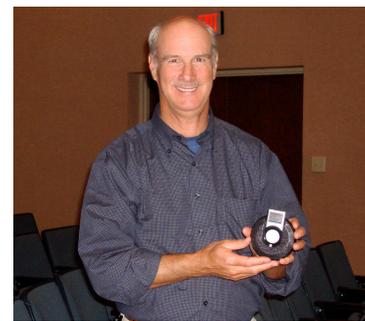
Scott described the “bolide” that hit in the area of the Chesapeake Bay about 35 million years ago. At that time the shore line of the Atlantic ocean was in the Richmond area. The bolide was about a mile in diameter and was speeding toward the earth at about 60,000 miles per hour. Ground zero is where Cape Charles, VA is located today on the Eastern Shore.

The bolide penetrated 300’ of water, 2000’ of sediment, and more than one mile of basement rock. It fractured bedrock to a depth of seven miles.

The crater has an inner rim and outer rim. The inner basin is 25 miles in diameter; the outer basin is 56 miles in diameter. The disruption boundary is 85 miles in diameter. The splash was about 30 miles high and created a tidal wave approximately 1500 feet tall. It is the 6th largest impact crater in the world. Thanks, Scott, for a “mind-bending” presentation!

For more information on the Chesapeake Bay Impact Crater, visit the following web sites:
<http://marine.usgs.gov/fact-sheets/fs49-98/>

May 9 – Learning Bird Songs



Bill Williams, above, Director of Education at W&M’s Center for Conservation Biology, presented a program about bird songs of local birds May 9. Using a PowerPoint presentation, his iPod Nano with portable speakers, and the Bird Jam software to play bird songs, he described how and why birds make sounds. He challenged the group to identify bird songs and calls as he played them from his iPod. Thank you, Bill, for a great learning experience.

Notes from the Board

1. President Kari Abbott reminds us all to turn in our volunteer hours and advanced training hours to Patty Riddick at email: membership@vmn-historicrivers.org or pattyriddick@cox.net
2. Kari also reported that each member needs to fill out a new Emergency Contact Form listing a first and an alternate emergency contact. You should have received one from Patty Riddick by email. These forms are to be signed and returned to Patty. Two copies of all forms will be prepared and made available for use on every class and field trip. Without this signed form, the member will not be allowed to attend the event.
3. If you’ve been invited to speak with a group in your role as a Virginia Master Naturalist member, you should submit it to the Board to let us know what you’re doing in representing the chapter. Remember to submit your hours to Patty! You should complete a “Speaking Engagement Form” whenever you’re requested to speak publicly. You’ll find the form on the website. This is different from an ongoing project with multiple dates and activities. Use this form when you’re doing a “one time” speaking event! Thanks and congratulations for spreading the word about Virginia Master Naturalists.

VIMS “After Hours” July 26

Turning the tables on cownose rays – Thursday, July 26, 2007

Recent efforts to restore native oysters to Chesapeake Bay have suffered significant setbacks due to predation by cownose rays. In response, a team of marine scientists, watermen, and seafood-industry representatives has renewed its efforts to sustainably manage rays in the Bay. Join Mr. Bob Fisher of the Sea Grant program at VIMS as he describes the problematic history of ray-shellfish interactions and explores potential solutions—including development of a ray fishery, and exclusion of rays from shellfish beds by fences, cages, and chemical repellents.

Date: Thursday, July 26

Time: 7:00 - 8:00 p.m. **Location:** McHugh Auditorium, Waterman’s Hall, VIMS, Gloucester Point, VA.

Registration for this free public lecture series is required because of limited seating space. Call 804-684-7846 or on line at: <http://tethys.vims.edu/events/registration.cfm>

Wolf Spider Encounter

By Judy Hansen

I was going next door to visit my neighbor, Ann Riggensbach, when I saw an unusual spider on her front door. I asked Ann for a jar, and captured it to take home and identify. It was dark brown and had an unusually large body. After looking at it in the jar, I noticed there was also a tiny spider in the jar too. Then later, I saw two tiny spiders in the jar with the very large one. I got out a magnifying glass, and discovered that the large spider was a wolf spider, and a female, because her body was completely covered with tiny spiders. Hatchlings! Picture below is from the internet that shows a closer look at the tiny spiders riding around on their mother's back. Upon advice from Kari Abbott, I let Momma and hatchlings out in my garden, to continue their adventures. The clear close up photo is used by permission from www.cirrusimage.com. There are great photos of insects, butterflies, moths, and flowers at that website. So be on the lookout - you never know who is going to appear at your front door.



Photo of Wolf Spider with baby spiders on her back.

Birds, Birds, and More Birds!

Written by Larry Riddick, Photos by Patty Riddick

Okay, you serious birders, top this: 1000 birds representing 170 different species in two hours! Patty and Larry Riddick recently visited Sylvan Heights Wa-

terfowl Park and Eco-Center and did just that. Well... we didn't actually take a count, but the brochure provided the numbers, and after meandering through aviaries representing every continent except Antarctica, we had no reason to doubt them.



The Yellow Knobbed Curassow, (South America) above, and The West African Crowned Crane, below, display their fancy feathered "dos."



Sylvan Heights is located in Scotland Neck, NC, where it was founded in 1989 as a breeding center for waterfowl. It currently conducts breeding programs for many birds including 19 of the 44 species listed as globally threatened by Birdlife International. The waterfowl park was just opened to visitors last year, and about 1000 of the center's 2500 birds are on display. It supposedly has the world's largest collection of waterfowl, including 30 species that can be seen nowhere else in the United States. Its seven separate outdoor aviaries provide unobstructed and close up viewing of the birds. Large signboards include pictures and narrative descriptions of nearly every species.

Mike and Ali Sommerset are the founders and proprietors of Sylvan Heights. British expatriates (She's from Edinburgh, Scotland, Sheila), they have dedicated their lives to preserving endangered birds, and have settled on eastern North Carolina for their work largely because of the ideal climate for their birds. We had the opportunity to meet and chat with both of them as we wandered the park, and their enthusiasm for their work is contagious.



Above: The White-Headed Duck (Eurasia), above, uses his swollen blue beak to attract the ladies. The Radjah Shelduck (Australia), below, makes his presence known with a rapidly squeaking and clicking call.



The center is definitely kid friendly. Bags of food are for sale in the gift shop, so they can feed the birds. There is an area featuring exotic birds such as emus, toucans, kookaburras, and eagle owls. Mike says this is a special area of interest for many kids after they've had their fill of birds with webbed feet or long legs. There are also a well-equipped playground and a shaded area with picnic tables and drink machines, all inside the park.

Although the landscape is literally a work in progress, interesting and attractive gardens are already in place. Most of the plant material is labeled. Efforts are also underway to incorporate a beaver-built wetland into the park area and encourage and support local wildlife therein.

For those who may be interested in visiting Sylvan Heights, here are some suggestions:

- Visit the Sylvan Heights website (www.shwpark.com) to get updated information such as hours of operation and ticket prices before you go. (Patty and Larry paid \$5 apiece for senior tickets. What a deal!) While you're at the website, browse the newspaper articles for interesting and informative background.
- Check the weather beforehand. The gift shop, bathrooms, and some exhibits are indoors, but all the birds are outdoors and in the open.

- Get directions off the internet. The park entrance is on US 258 just north of downtown Scotland Neck. It's easy to get to, but Google showed us a way to avoid Franklin, Virginia, probably saving us 15 minutes or more. Google estimated a 2 hour and forty minute trip. We made it in less than 2. Of course, it would be 20 or 30 minutes longer for folks in the Williamsburg area.
- Take a picnic lunch. As mentioned, there is a shaded picnic area in the park, and picnicking is encouraged.

Patty and Larry picked up some additional brochures at the park and will gladly provide them on a first come first served basis.

Breeding Bird Foray

The Results Are In!

By Bill Williams, Director of Education, Center for Conservation Biology and Board Member, Williamsburg Bird Club

At York River State Park 15.5 miles of coverage over 16 hours, 40 minutes found 12 confirmed breeding species and another 21 on territory or paired. Of special note were Wild Turkey, Northern Bobwhite, Great Blue herons at nests, a juvenile Bald Eagle, 5 Eastern Screech Owls, a Great Crested Flycatcher nest, at least one pair of agitated Black-and-white Warblers. The YRSP team included Kari Abbott, Mary Apperson, Hugh, Keely, and Brenner Beard, Anne-Marie Castellani, Alice and Seig Kopinitz, Tom McCary, and Susan and Alex Powell. Hats off to Mary for getting us into the "back country."

We were able to document the presence of 75 species at Chippokes Plantation and 67 species at York River. Among those at Chippokes 16 were confirmed as breeders with another 18 showing territorial behavior associated with breeding. We traveled 28 miles (21 via car, 7 by foot) over 13.75 hours there. Highlight species included Wild Turkey, Northern Bobwhite, an ephemeral Mississippi Kite, Barred and Eastern Screech Owls, Red-headed Woodpecker, American Redstart, a Louisiana Waterthrush with young. Many thanks to Cathy Bond, Dave Hewitt, and Jane Frigo for their efforts at Chippokes.

These results have been forwarded to Andrew Dolby at Mary Washington University for compilation with results from across the state. The data will also be given to the respective state park managers for their files.

This project proved to be a wonderful synthesis of talents between the Williamsburg Bird Club and the Historic Rivers Master Naturalists. Thanks all around!!

Check Out Our Web Site

www.vmn-historicrivers.org

Seig Kopinitz, Webmaster, has loaded up our web site with great documents, links, photos, and references. There's even a "members only" section. If you have not yet logged in with your magic password, plan on clicking over there soon and book mark that page. He's looking for feedback too, so let him know your ideas.

A Born Naturalist

Continued from June newsletter

By Clyde Marsteller

[Clyde's stories take place in the Allentown-Bethlehem-Easton area of the Lehigh Valley and the Delaware Water Gap region of the Blue Ridge Mountains in Pennsylvania from 1943 to 1961. In last month's issue we learned about Clyde's pet Blue Jay, Satan, and the disastrous science project. See Satan's picture and the "Eulogy to a Blue Jay" on page 8. Clyde's story continues below.]

I grew up loving the outdoors. Even as a toddler I remember posing with fish Dad caught and game he shot. When I got big enough to tag along he & I would walk from Miller Heights to the Lehigh Canal in Freemansburg. At that time the canal locks were still in place and the Nancy Run Creek ran into the canal. As a result there were long stretches of deep pools. The water was absolutely clear and you could see schools of sunfish, bass & the occasional pickerel from the tow path.

Our favorite fishing spot was at the set of locks where the creek ran into the canal. You could sit on the locks and the water was about 6 feet below. Dad

would tie me to him with a piece of clothes line just in case I might fall in. He would cut a willow switch and tie a fishing line on it that had a hook & float attached. We would catch grasshoppers, caterpillars and salamanders for bait.

The first fish I ever caught was a "Sunnie". The railroad ran along the opposite side of the canal & the Lehigh River was on the other side. The towpath was wild and overgrown with trees & bushes. It was filled with all kinds of critters and was a little boy's idea of heaven.

The Nancy Run Creek was an overgrown spring fed creek that held an occasional native brook trout. The reason it didn't have as many fish in it then as it does now was because Willow Park would drain its' swimming pool into it once a month. The warm heavily chlorinated water would always kill a number of trout. I'm surprised that any survived at all.

I caught my first Nancy Run trout when I was 12 yrs old. My Boy Scout troop was helping cleanup the creek along the Freemansburg Road. I had brought a fishing pole along and during our lunch break I was fooling around with it. I remember casting a worm to the opposite bank and as it tumbled past a muskrat hole something long & black shot out and suddenly I was hooked up to a foot long brookie. I ran backwards pulling it out of the water and fell on it. I was the hero of the day. I carried it home at the end of the pole for everyone to see. Shortly after I got home we got a visit from the local Game Warden. Someone had called him because trout season had closed the week before. He gave me a warning but let me keep the trout.

The very first fish I caught by myself was in North Bangor. It was 1946 and I was 8 years old. We were visiting Uncle Mike & Aunt Mary over the weekend. I had a metal "telescope" rod (one section slid into the other). Mike suggested I try fishing in the small meadow creek behind his country store. I dug up some worms (and small water melon plants he had just planted) put them in a can.

With SNAFU following me I walked down the lane to look for the creek. There was a culvert where it ran under the road. It had cement parapets on both sides. I remember the side facing upstream has a big crack in it. I baited the hook and let the line float into the culvert. I set the rod in the crack & walked to the other side to see if I could spot any fish. I heard SNAFU barking and when I looked back I saw my pole bouncing up and down. When I tried to reel in the line I could feel a fish tugging on the other end. I finally pulled out a silver fish about 10 inches long. The head had a number of barbs and bumps on it. I found out later it was a horned creek chub.

The next day one Mike's neighbors, Put Lambert, told me I should fish behind his house. I walked down a dirt lane to the creek. It was crystal clear and about a foot deep. There were several pools in it. As I walked up to the first I could see a beautiful

fish about 6 inches long hovering in the water near the tail end of the pool. I crept up and dangled a worm in front of it. As quick as a wink it grabbed it and ran upstream. I lifted my pole and pulled out a thrashing native brook trout. That was 50 years ago and I was still catching trout out of the same creek in the 1990s.

After many summers of exploration I found the springs that fed that little stream and I believe they in turn are fed from the slate mine hole that dominates the area. Dad and I spent many a misty summer morning and hazy lazy summer evenings sneaking along that meadow stream stalking those little brookies.

One summer I heard a story that a couple of years previous someone had dumped some goldfish into the mine hole. Now I was strictly forbidden to fish or climb the mine hole and slate dump because of its sheer sides and its depth. It was reputed to be at 300 ft deep. The thought of catching a gold fish intrigued me so much that I finally snuck away to the only access to the mine hole a tiny flat area near the road. It was filled with hundreds of tiny sunfish. It was almost impossible to get a bait more than a foot below the surface. I finally threw a couple of worms to one side and quickly threw my line in on the opposite side. It sunk out of sight probably 10 feet deep. Suddenly my line tightened & started to move. I hauled back and something big pulled back. After a few minutes I landed a silver and black goldfish(carp) about 15 inches long and 21 pounds in weight. I threw it back because I knew Uncle Mike would never believe I caught it in the creek.

The next time Dad came up I begged him to take me up to the mine hole to see if we could catch one of those "gold fish". We walked around the perimeter and at a drop off about 30 ft above the water we tied ourselves to a tree and started fishing. It wasn't too long before we both hooked into foot long beautiful white and gold goldfish. They were huge with gossamer tails & fins. We had taken a bucket with us and we took the fish back to Mike's. We finally released them back into the minehole. I'm sure they're still swimming there to this day.

The most vivid memories of North Bangor and Uncle's store and house are sitting on the front porch in the spring time and as it begins to get dark the mountains would suddenly ring with sound. It would swell and roll down the slopes. It was so loud you could feel it hit you. It was the sound of millions of frogs – spring peepers, wood frogs, leopard frogs and bull frogs singing at once. I'm told they are almost all gone now killed by acid rain and global warming.

During late summer about the time they would cut and bale the hay I would wait for the thunderstorms. They would roll off the mountain and you could see the sheets of rain rushing at you like a gray wet curtain. I would run up the street to the Twarning's dairy barn and climb up into the hay loft and lay on the fresh hay and listen to rain cascade

off the slate roof. The barn had lightening rods and in my young mind I knew I was absolutely protected from the lightening. If I lay quiet for a while the barn rats would come out and run up and down the rafters. I would lay on my back and watch the swallows fly in and out feeding their babies. If I was really lucky I could spy the big old resident barn owl high in the ceiling blinking at me. The sweet smell of hay was like perfume and shortly I would fall asleep listening to the lowing of the cows & the thunder rolling over the sound of the rain.

In the winter time I would lay in bed under a warm feather tick and listen to the sound of the wind blow around the house rattling the windows. Then just as I was starting to doze off I would hear the lonely whistle of the steam engine train in the distance. As it approached the road crossing it would sound it's deep horn and pretty soon it would come thundering down the track. Its huge headlight would sweep into my window and as it passed the whole house would shake. The sound of the wheels would click clack by and I would snuggle deep into the feather tick and dream of riding the rails to far away places.

Mike had a Purple Martin house on a pole in the backyard. The birds would arrive like clock work in the late spring. They are beautiful big swallows and will dive at you if you walk too close to their home. I loved to listen to them sing a sort of burbly song and watch them swoop gracefully over the meadows. At the base of the pole the ground was covered with wings & parts of the insects they captured. They were partial to dragonflies and beetles.

There was an apple orchard next to the store and in the late summer I would gather them and Aunt Mary turned them into wonderful apple pies, dumpings, and apple sauce. She baked & I ate like a little piggy.

I'm convinced that when God calls me home, I'm going to find that Heaven is really North Bangor and the frogs are still going to sing, the martins are flying, the creek will be filled with trout. There will be the smell of apple pies baking with Grammy until things cooled down and the creatures disappeared.

A "Pearl" to Celebrate 30 Years of Marriage

By Seig and Alice Kopinitz

At one of our meetings we were all given copies of "Discover Our Wild Side" booklets of Virginia Birding and Wildlife Trails published by DGIF for three

geographic regions. We chose to try the Mattaponi Loop on June 10, 2007 (our 30th wedding anniversary).

Stop #1 – The Nature Conservancy's Cumberland Marsh Preserve. This stop consists of a boardwalk and observation area as well as three trails. This trip was to "check things out" so we did not do any of the trails. The brochure indicated late fall is the prime viewing time so we plan to return then.



We photographed critter that we would appreciate some help in identifying. These six-legged creatures, on leaves of water lily plants, were 2 to 3 inches long. Any help?

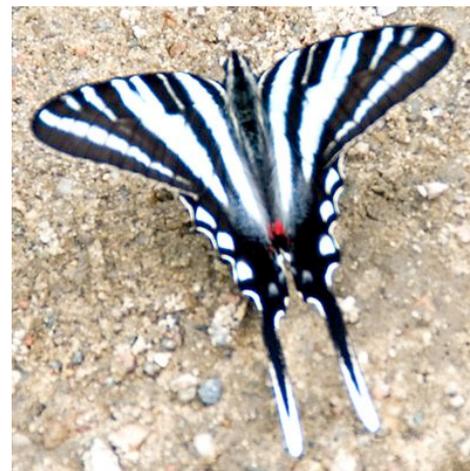


We have seen these White Tail Plathemis lydia dragon flies before, but they are very hard to photograph. Insect guides are frustrating.

Stop #2 – Glens Campus, Rappahannock Community College. School was not in session, and we had to search for the trail. The pond at the end of the path seemed to be a drainage pond. There were crayfish mounds, and mushrooms of note. There were LOTS of tiny frogs around at our feet, and a Carolina wolf spider *Hogna carolinensis* with eggs on board. It was so large that we initially thought it was a crayfish.



Alice posed with this tiny frog in her hand.



A very pretty Zebra Swallowtail butterfly finally stayed still for a photo.



These bright blue dragonflies were really all around us.



We also found this somewhat larger frog or toad as we were leaving. It is about 2 ½ inches tall.



Carolina wolf spider *Hogna carolinensis* with eggs on board.



This Prothonotary Warbler *Protonotaria citrea* was tending this nest in a snag at the edge of a swamp.



Possibly a Spring Azure butterfly or a moth, but the pale blue was fantastic.

Stop #3 – Dragon’s Lair. Here, the different species of trees were labeled – a helpful tool and a task we might consider. There were folks fishing in the stream so we wandered further THROUGH THE POISON IVY. Seig found a Prothonotary Warbler going in and out of a tree hole. We just watched the parenting for some time until the fishermen came our way. A Zebra Swallowtail Butterfly *Eurytides marcellus* danced around the parking area teasing the photographer.

Stop #4 – Waterfence Landing. This area is for boating and fishing, but we wanted to check it out and it is a stop on the trail. Our reward for stopping here

was a complete snakeskin. It was just there! We did not see the snake.

Stop #5 – Melrose Landing. This is another area for boating and fishing and we found another treasure here. Lying on the ground was a swallowtail butterfly – sad to say it was not alive, but what a nice specimen. How do you preserve such things? Would this be an appropriate thing for the Box?

Stop #6 – King and Queens Fish Cultural Station. This site is closed on the weekends. We were able to drive around the fish hatching pools, but we found no sign of trails or anything else so we did not stay. Probably, better to visit during the week when workers are there.

Stop #7 – Walkerton Landing. There were two osprey nests close to the bridge. Both offered excellent viewing. While very interesting, we were even more intrigued with the swallows and their nests attached to the under sides of the bridge. These birds seemed to be both raising young and building nests.



Swallows were all over the area. They were building mud nests.

After Stop #7, it was getting late so we decided that the rest of the trail (Stops 8 and 9) would have to wait for another time. When we returned home, we had traveled about 150 miles. We really enjoyed this trail and look forward to finishing this one and trying some of the others.

Based on this first experience, we would highly recommend these trails to others.

Advanced Training: Are You a Tenner?

Article by Frank Budny, Master Naturalist in Galveston Bay area of Texas.

Historic Rivers Chapter member Judy Hansen sent this along as an example of an Advanced Training opportunity our chapter might consider adopting or modifying for our needs. What do you think?

You have probably heard the term "Tenner" mentioned, especially if you've attended any of the advanced training opportunities during the past year. You may have wondered, what is a Tenner? Basically, a Tenner is a chapter member who has demonstrated, usually by testing, that he or she can iden-

tify the top ten items in a specific category related to the nature of our area.

We, as Master Naturalists, study many different aspects of the natural environment of the Galveston Bay Area. The amount of information available to us can be overwhelming. However, a Master Naturalist should be able to recognize and identify at least the top ten items in each category. The Tenner Program is intended to assist you in achieving this goal.

Tenner categories can be developed for natural organisms, inorganic materials, plants, animals, features, and facts of the Galveston Bay Area. They are prepared by one or more Master Naturalists who have an interest and expertise in a particular subject.

The Tenner lists are subjective and are intended to be an appropriate representation of the top natural things found in the Galveston Bay Area. Selection is based on the judgment of the people assembling the list. Criteria include observation frequency, native or non-native, year around or seasonal, human impact, and appeal. The lists are not all inclusive. This is only a beginning and members are encouraged to expand their knowledge beyond the top ten.

To qualify as a Tenner, a member will need to be able to recognize the top ten items or organisms in a category. The member will need to identify the items visually from a picture, a description, or in the field, know the common and scientific names and some basic facts about the items. Independent research may be required. In some cases, for Tenners offered as part of a workshop, the member may be required to present a short report on an assigned item from the category.

Tenner opportunities will be offered with each advanced Training program or workshop. Members, who chose to do so, can take a test to demonstrate that they have grasped the major items covered by that training opportunity. A member, who cannot attend a workshop, may also qualify by doing independent research and passing the test. The tests are available to any chapter member outside to the training. We plan to put the Tenner lists and the tests on the Galveston Bay Area Master Naturalist website in the near future.

Top ten lists already exist for several areas including seashells, diurnal raptors, wetland plants, and bugs. These lists and the tests associated with them will be available shortly on the Chapter website. Other Tenner lists are being planned.

The Tenner program is strictly voluntary. The tests are simple and are actually fun to take. The emphasis on the top ten is intended to make our members at least a little comfortable in each of the many areas to which we are exposed. It also should encourage you to pursue further information on those areas that you find particularly interesting. After all, the more you know about a subject, the more interesting it is.



Osprey Pandion haliaetus. Darn that power wire.



Thought to be swallows, but by the guidebook, they look like Eastern Kingbirds.



A photo of Satan, the Blue Jay, bathing in the kitchen sink.

Eulogy to a Blue Jay

By Clyde Marsteller

I took a child of nature
and raised it for my own
And by little acts of Kindness
Seeds of Love were sown.

Those flashing wings of azure blue
His wild and raucous sound
The worlds of sky and earth he knew
only by love were bound.

Within that breast a wild heart beat
untouched by worldly care
Yet he loved a man a selfish man
this child of God so fair.

He gave to me his very being
his love a precious thing
Perched on my shoulder every night
a song of life he'd sing.

Puffed up and vibrant he would fly
above my bed each morn
And tidings of a new day come
upon his wings were borne.

But now my life is emptied
of this bit of little bliss
There is a dark and lonesome void
left by Death's cruel kiss.

He symbolized a link between
God's natural world and mine
But to God I give him
O Lord he's wholly Thine.

His grave beneath the willow lies
marked by the laurel green
A little bit of life now stilled
O Death your aim unseen.

To be alone is not life's way
Through love our lives are made
Yet for gift of life & love
the price of death is paid.