



The Naturalist

The monthly newsletter of the Historic Rivers Chapter

Virginia Master Naturalist Program

www.vmn-historicrivers.org

A Monthly Newsletter

Volume 1 No. 9 November 2007

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President's Message

Hi Everyone,

So many great things are going on! Thank you to the wonderful people in Cohort II who have stepped up and are chairing and working on committees! Your help is making this a greater group, and I appreciate your willingness to participate. There are other opportunities out there so everyone can belong.

The weather has been just grand of late, and has made being outside a easy, great thing! At the last Project Learning Tree workshop I took the group on a habitat walk. We turned over a decomposing log (a Master Naturalist thing to do) as I was showing them how to do this properly (something I did not know before this class) and there were two different types of salamanders right there! Oh it was a thrill!

Other grand happenings: our Volunteer Service Projects committee, chaired by Cherie Aukland, is off and running. The project at New Quarter Park sounds like a gold mine – garden, a classroom, a stunning exhibit – it is exciting. The Bird Class at Coventry, the Zoo in my Luggage classes, so many worthwhile projects are going on.

I want to bring everyone up to date about our **ANNUAL MEETING December 12, 6 - 9 p.m.** at the James City County Community Bldg., Rooms A & B (on Longhill Road (new location for cohort II))

Our first ANNUAL MEETING is an important one, and a tradition we will start this year. There are several things that will go on at this celebratory event.

1) The "graduation" from Master Naturalist in Training to Master Naturalist Member is a big one, and the presentations of new name tags, and certificates will take place at the ANNUAL MEETING. The first cohort remembers the joy of this step, so it is important to celebrate...hopefully with as many Master Naturalists will be there as possible.

2) The election of officers (President, V.P., Treasurer and Secretary) will take place at this meeting, and the membership approves the committee chairs. At the Board Meeting in October everyone of your officers and board members expressed an interest in staying on through the completion of next year. If anyone has interest in the new class in serving on the board, there are two at large positions available, and the Nominating Committee (Kari Abbott, Shirley Devan, Susan Powell) would like to hear from you before Nov 15th. These "at large" positions are good positions to volunteer for if you would like to be involved in our organization, see how the board works, and how the decisions are made. Good training if you would like to be an officer in the future. There are several committees which could use people to help and the chance to join in will be made available at the Annual Meeting.

3) We eat dinner together and have a good time celebrating the good things that have gone on this year. This is a family event and your family is warmly welcome to join celebrate your accomplishments. Since it is near the holidays, the board thought it would be nice to have someone else cook since the holiday season is looming. We

decided to let California Tortilla cater the event. Check your November 3 email for a spreadsheet with all the choices. Please email your responses to me so we can have things organized by 15 November. We will verify your orders. A few folks are going to bring desserts, like cookies and holiday treats (everyone is welcome to participate). This is not a formal occasion, but a nice warm get together.

4) Master Naturalist certification and milestone awards will be presented to Master Naturalists who have earned them. Again another thing to celebrate.

5) And last, but not least, Stephen Living, Watchable Wildlife Specialist from VA Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, will do a presentation to bring the year to a nice close and start us into a new year with more things to achieve. Another great presentation to hear. I look forward to seeing you all December 12 if not before.

As always my best to you all. Cheers,
Kari Abbott, Member and President
Historic Rivers Chapter, Virginia Master Naturalist



Cohort II exploring the results of seining at VIMS.

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

Cherie Aukland, Volunteer Service Projects

Clyde Marsteller, Advanced Training

Alice & Seig Kopinitz, Outreach Committee

Seig Kopinitz, Webmaster

Our Web Site is Being Redesigned



Historic Rivers Chapter

www.vmn-historicrivers.org

Seig Kopinitz, Webmaster, is redesigning the chapter web site in light of new software on the server at our ISP. Tune in every now and then to see the progress. Thanks for your patience.

Upcoming Events

November 17: It's on Saturday! Attending Monthly Chapter Meeting will earn Volunteer Service Hours because we'll be mapping the wildlife at Greensprings Trail. Tailgate breakfast @ 9:00 am.

FOR THOSE WHO STILL NEED THE REQUIRED BIRD WALK:

November 10: Bird Walk at New Quarter Park. 8 - 10 am. Leader will be Hugh Beard.

November 24: Bird Walk at New Quarter Park. 8 - 10 am. Leader will be Bill Williams.

Schedule for Fall VMN Training Class

November and December sessions for the Fall training class are listed below. Unless otherwise noted, classes begin promptly at 6:00 p.m. and end (for sure) by 9:00 p.m. **Note that our location in November and December will be Room A at James City/Williamsburg Community Center (JCWCC) 5301 Longhill Road. Phone: 259-4200.**

Master Naturalists from the first class are welcome to sit in the classes, but the new trainees get seats around the tables. There are a limited number of Volunteer Service opportunities left for assistance with this training. See page 4 for details.

November 7: Herpetology; Instructor Tim Christensen, Member of Historic Rivers Chapter of VMN and member of VA Herpetology Society

November 14: Mammalogy; Instructor Bo Baker, VA Living Museum

November 21: no class -- Thanksgiving Eve

November 28: Ichthyology; Instructor Bob Greenlee, VA DGIF Fisheries Biologist

December 5: Ecology; Instructor Dr. Lou Verner, VA DGIF

December 12: Holiday Get Together with Stephen Living, VA DGIF. We will have a short "Annual Meeting" as required by our By-Laws at some point in the evening. Families are welcome to join us at JCWCC. We have arranged for our dinner to be catered and delivered by California Tortilla. Review Kari's message on page 1 for "what to do"!

Notes From Our Members

Your editor encourages you to send notes about your observations around your yard or in your travels around the area. Send to: sedevan52@cox.net.

Thanks to Kathi Mestayer and Kari Abbott for the following notes and a photo:

October 9: From Kathi Mestayer: Redstarts out the back window! Plus we have a weber grill in the back yard. There's a little ash-catcher tray underneath it, and the birds have started taking dustbaths in it. I have seen wrens, titmice and cardinals waiting in line to flap around in the ashes. They get a seat on the edge of the tray, and then flap like mad, surrounding themselves in a cloud of dust, then fly off to preen. There's also a dish on the ground nearby with water in it that they bathe in quite often. The water has been especially well-used in this dry autumn. I change it every other day, and it's often empty from splashing by then.



November 1: From Kathi Mestayer: Here's a little frog (above) on the edge of our plastic-lined whiskey-barrel lily pond. She must've laid a thousand eggs this summer, in three distinct batches. Lots of tadpoles. Yesterday, a squirrel perched at the edge of the barrel and ate one of the water lily leaves at leisure. And last night, a big hawk flew right over the house, scaring the beejeezus out of our parrot. We walked through the house into the front yard, and found tiny little bits of fur falling down like snowflakes. My guess is it got one of the little squirrels.

November 3: Kari Abbott reports "We just had a immature Red-shouldered Hawk pause in our dogwood tree. The whole family watched, as he waited to decide where to fly off to next. It was a great thrill.

VIMS After Hours

... will resume January 31, 2008 after the November and December holidays!! Web address: <http://www.vims.edu/afterhours/index.html>

News from the Program and Training Committees

The Chapter Board has determined that the training for Cohort III will start in September 2008 instead of February. The extended warm weather in the fall and the schedule as we've experimented with it this session seems right for that decision. Susan and the Training Committee will likely tweak the schedule a bit for next time. So please give us your feedback.

This schedule change will allow ALL chapter members to focus on achieving their volunteer project service hours and give the chapter an opportunity to invite some subject matter experts to speak at our regular monthly program meetings. NOTE: Chapter meetings are open to ALL -- cohort I and cohort II. Members earn Advanced Training Hours by attending monthly program meetings [except November 17 when you earn Volunteer Service Hours].

This is what's coming up for our monthly chapter meetings through May 2008 [subject to change but we hope not]. Mark your calendars for:

November 17, 2007 -- Wildlife Mapping

Saturday, November 17, 9 a.m. - 12 noon. Wildlife Mapping at Greensprings Interpretive Trail. Bring your own food and join the tailgate breakfast party. We will discuss the map developed for wildlife mapping at Greensprings Trail as well as how to collect and report data. Then, we will walk through the mapping sites to collect and record data. Members can earn volunteer service project hours when they attend this program.

December 12, 2007 -- Holiday Party +++

Wednesday, December 12, 6 p.m. - 9 p.m. As Kari described in her message on the front page, this is a combo Holiday Party, Annual Meeting, Graduation, and Monthly Meeting. Remember to send Kari your choice from California Tortilla.

January 9, 2008 -- Birding & Citizen Science

Wednesday, January 9, 2008, 6 p.m. - 9 p.m. At the Human Services Building on Olde Towne Road. Ruth Beck, ornithologist and recently retired professor of biology at William and Mary, will speak to our group about Ornithology citizen science projects in 2008. Ruth will talk about projects she is involved with including nesting terns at Craney Island, the Hampton Roads Bridge-Tunnel, and Grand View Beach. She will talk about how our Chapter can help her with her citizen science research.

February 9, 2008 -- SPIDERS!!

Saturday, February 9, 2008, 1 - 4 p.m. at Williamsburg/James City County Regional Library on Croaker Road. Barbara Abraham is associate professor of biological science at Hampton University and she is Hampton Roads' only arachnologist.

She's also the only female arachnologist in Virginia, said Brent Opell, president-elect of the American Arachnological Society. Her expertise is called on for a variety of duties, from providing spider-expert answers for news media and museums to consulting on lawsuits and textbooks.

She's documenting the species of spiders in the Great Dismal Swamp, which range from the orb weavers that make intricate webs to wolf spiders. She's also been tapped to help attorneys in a case in which someone was reportedly bitten by a brown recluse spider. Plus, she's working with the state Department of Game and Inland Fisheries to document and locate habitats for invertebrates in Virginia. (from Daily Press: 'Spider Lady' spins excellent reputation. published on 8/8/2001)

March 15, 2008 -- Winter Botany

Saturday, March 15, 2008, 9 a.m. - 12 noon. Winter Botany will be our focus when Charlie Dubay, science teacher at Jamestown High School, opens his classroom to us to discuss identification of trees in winter. Then we will walk the Greensprings Trail and use our skills to identify trees and other plants.

April 9, 2008 -- Forest Health & Invasive Species

Wednesday, April 9, 2008, 6 - 9 p.m. At the Human Services Building on Olde Towne Road. Chris Asaro, Forest Health Specialist, VA Dept. of Forestry, will describe the Impact of Invasive Species on Forest Health in Virginia.

May 14, 2008 -- Aquatic Insects & Water Quality

Wednesday, April 9, 2008, 6 - 9 p.m. At the Human Services Building on Olde Towne Road. Charlie Dubay, Jamestown High school will present a program on Aquatic Insects - Predictors of Water Quality

June, July, and August programs are still tentative but are in the works. So stay tuned. Meanwhile, mark your calendars for these outstanding programs. You'll earn advanced training hours for each one.



Jerry Moum and Bruce Hill examine aquatic specimens under the microscopes at VIMS Nov 3.

Save These Dates for Advanced Training

Each Master Naturalist needs 8 hours of Advanced Training to become certified and then another 8 hours each year after that. Even if you have your 8 hours already, Master Naturalists are curious folk and eager to learn. Check out these opportunities and mark your calendars.

If you come across an event that you believe would qualify as Advanced Training, send information to Clyde Marsteller, Chair of the Advanced Training Committee, clydeccedm@aol.com

Turning a New Leaf

[This is approved for Advanced Training.]

Friday, November 9, 2007; 8AM to 6PM

Northern Virginia Community College

8333 Little River Turnpike, Annandale, Virginia

Cost: \$105

Additional information will be posted on www.ChesapeakeLandscape.org.

To register, contact: Jane Cooke, (410) 634-2847, ext 41, jc.cooke.cclc@gmail.com.

Who Should Attend: Landscape architects, designers, and contractors, Arborists and tree care companies, Lawn care companies, Nurseries (wholesale and retail), Botanical gardens, Natural resource managers, Developers, Civil engineers and Planners, Master Gardeners, Master Naturalists, Homeowners welcome

The Chesapeake Conservation Landscaping Council is a coalition of individuals and organizations dedicated to researching, promoting, and educating the public about conservation-based gardening and landscaping practices in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed.

Presentations and Concurrent Session Topics:

- *Keynote Address:* Ecologically Smart Landscaping for the Chesapeake Basin: Good for Business and Good for the Environment
- Achieving Green Development through Partners in the Public and Private Sectors
- The Where (Location), What (How To Install) And Who (Do It Yourself) About Raingardens
- Diversify Plant Communities to Promote Beneficial Insects
- The Woods in Your Backyard: Learning to Create and Enhance Natural Areas Around Your Home
- Economics of Conservation Landscapes and Green Development

- Stormwater Management in Ultra Urban Environments
- Native Plant Nursery—Changing Economics, Markets and Evolution of the Industry
- Alternatives to Traditional Plantings
- Community Greens: Shared Parks in Urban Blocks
- Stream Construction & Planting: Strategies, Techniques
- Eco-Friendly Lawns
- Garden Design: Beauty of Expression and Environment
- *Closing Plenary: Gardening for Life*

Presentation by Scott Weidensaul, Naturalist and Author

Williamsburg Regional Library, Tuesday, October 9, 2007 at 7:00 PM.

There was an unavoidable delay in getting this approved. Any HRC member who attended this presentation will be given Advanced Training hours credit. Please submit hours to Patty Riddick.

VA Society for Ornithology Field Trip Weekend VA Beach, December 7 – 9, 2007

[This is approved for Advanced Training.]

Friday, December 7: 1 pm - ~ 5 pm. = 4 hours Advanced Training. Field Trip to Whitehurst Tract, one of the many good birding areas in Virginia Beach. The Whitehurst Tract is a patchwork of marshes, weedy and cultivated fields, narrow freshwater impoundments, and pine woodland. This affords the possibility of a wide variety of bird species.

Saturday, December 8: 8:00 am – 12 noon. = 4 hours Advanced Training. Saturday field trip to the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel (CBBT) Islands will leave promptly at 8:00 AM from the parking lot of the CBBT visitor center. Those staying at the hotel may want to meet near the hotel entrance at 7:00 to form carpools. The trip should end about noon. Participants should bring spotting scopes, lunch, snacks and beverages and be prepared for winter weather. Participation on this trip is limited to the first 45 people who sign up since there is a requirement to pay a security guard to accompany each group of 15. The cost is \$10 per person. A security information form will be mailed to each person who registers for the trip. The completed form must be returned to the trip coordinator no later than Monday, November 26, 2007.

Sunday, December 9: 9:00 am - ~ 3 pm = 6 hours Advanced Training. Back Bay NWR/False Cape State Park. The tram trip at Back Bay will begin at 9:00

AM. Those staying at the hotel may want to meet near the front entrance at 7:30 to form carpools. This will be a nearly full day trip. Participants should bring spotting scopes as well as lunch, snacks, and beverages. After a leisurely tram ride with many stops to view a variety of shorebirds and waterfowl, a good amount of time will be spent birding and lunching at False Cape State Park. The tram will leave False Cape at 1:00 PM. for a slow return back to the Back Bay NWR Visitor Center. This year the trip will be limited to the first 24 participants who register and there will be a charge of \$10 per person for the tram.

Contact: Clark White, 757-875-7649. Web site: <http://www.virginiabirds.net/>

Effective Tools and Techniques for Improving Water Quality in the York and Small Coastal Watersheds

Thursday, November 1, 2007, 8:30 am—3:00 pm

Virginia Institute of Marine Science [VIMS], Waterman’s Hall, Gloucester Point, VA

Any HRC member who attended this program will be given Advanced Training hours credit. Please submit hours to Patty Riddick.

11th Annual Wings Over Water Festival. A celebration of Wildlife & Wildlands in Eastern North Carolina. Nov 6-11, 2007 at the OBX

[This is approved for Advanced Training.]

Numerous birding and natural history events spread over six days on the Outer Banks. Advanced registration and payment for each trip is required. For info: <http://www.wingsoverwater.org/>

Virginia Native Plant Society (VNPS) and local John Clayton Chapter.

All programs and activities sponsored by the state and local chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society are approved for Advanced Training for HRC members. Next event:

Thursday, November 15, 2007; 7:00 p.m.

[This is approved for Advanced Training.]

Libbey Oliver will be the speaker, and her talk, “Williamsburg Farmers Market on its Fifth Anniversary,” is about the challenges of sustainable agriculture in today’s world. Libbey is the Director of the highly successful Farmer’s Market.

Location: Quarterpath Recreation Center, Quarterpath Road, Williamsburg, VA. Quarterpath Road is about a mile south of the convergence of Lafayette St., U.S. 60 Bypass, and York St. Heading east on

York St. from that intersection, turn right onto Quarterpath Road at the Yorkshire Steak and Seafood Restaurant; Quarterpath Recreation Center is on the right, just a short distance down that road.

Contact person: President Helen Hamilton, 564-4494. Check the Web site regularly to learn the latest upcoming events: <http://www.claytonvnps.org>

Richard Louv "Saving Our Children From Nature Deficit Disorder" presented by James River Association

[This is approved for Advanced Training.]

[From the announcement distributed by James River Association]

Environmental education plays an important role in both fostering stewardship of our natural resources, such as the James River, and in improving the health and therefore the quality of life of our children. Recent research shows a critical link between children’s exposure to the out-of-doors and some of the most pressing health issues facing families and society today: attention deficit (hyperactivity) disorder, obesity, stress management, learning and depression.

According to Richard Louv, author of the landmark book *The Last Child in the Woods: Saving our Children from Nature Deficit Disorder*, “direct exposure to nature is healthy for childhood development—physical, emotional and spiritual. Even creativity is stimulated by childhood experiences in nature.”

Two opportunities to hear Richard Louv Nov. 10:

Saturday, November 10: 1 – 3 p.m. at VCU School of Business Auditorium at 1015 Floyd Ave., Richmond, VA. Tickets are \$10.00 per person.

Saturday, November 10: 6 – 9 p.m. at Virginia Living Museum in Newport News. Tickets are \$75.00 per person and include COCKTAILS, HORS D’OEUVRES AND DINNER plus one year membership in James River Association.

For tickets or more information, please contact Sherrie Tribble, Special Events and Projects Manager, at 804-788-8811, ext. 202 or email at stribble@jrava.org.

All Master Naturalist in the Historic Rivers Chapter have the opportunity to attend these lectures. These events are open to the public on first come, first served basis. Reservations and tickets are required.

December 1, “Walk and Talk,” New Quarter Park.

10:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon
[This is approved for Advanced Training.]

Guest Speaker is Stephen Living, DGIF Watchable Wildlife Specialist. Topic is “Watchable Wildlife” in New Quarter Park.” The park will also be celebrating the addition of the park to the Virginia Birding and Wildlife Trail.

Steward's Guide to the Universe

By Shirley Devan, *Historic Rivers Chapter, Virginia Master Naturalist Members*

This is the first of what we intend to be a monthly column about our role as Master Naturalists and stewards of our environment. I'm starting it off with personal "water" moments, and Susan Powell will follow up next month with another column about water. We hope you will chime in and volunteer to write a column or respond to one. We hope you'll find them educational, engaging, and helpful.

Jerre Johnson first lit the fire in me about our water shortage. This was in the geology class he taught for Cohort 1 last February. Then on the Geology Field trip in April, Jerre reinforced the issue – water is our scarcest resource – here and now, where we live in James City County and Williamsburg! We'll run out of water here long before we run out of oil in the Middle East.

Jerre challenged each of us to do something about the water supply locally – how we use it, how we waste it, how to save it. That challenge coincided with an article I read in a Sunday edition of *The Washington Post*. Michelle Singletary writes a weekly column in the Business Section about family finances. Each year she sponsors the "Penny Pincher Award" in which she asks readers to send in the most unusual ways they pinch pennies to save money. She gave one of her awards to the reader who saved the water he ran in his shower while waiting for the temperature to warm up so he could step in the shower. Then he used the water to flush his toilet. WOW! What a great idea.

Since then I've been saving the cold water that had been flowing down the drain while I waited for hot water. In our house, it's a long wait because the shower is upstairs and the water heater is in the garage. Since the toilet is right next to the shower, it is an easy thing to flush the toilet and pour the water in the tank before it starts filling up.

Also, this summer, we replaced all the toilets in our house [mid-1980's vintage] with low-flush toilets. In addition to being higher and easier on our middle age knees, they use only 1.6 gallons per flush.

OK – so how much water do I save? I measured the water saved from the shower while waiting for hot water and was astounded to find it was 2 gallons!! So let's assume that I take a shower every day of the year – 360 days. (The other five days I hang out in my jammies all day with pillow hair and no shower – or I'm on vacation.) That means I save 720 gallons per year from going down the drain. Save even more water – shower every other day!!

Now I could use that water for any number of things. I could put it in the cat's water bowl. I could save it to wash the car. I could pour it in the bird bath or water the flowers during the drought.

But a bucket with two gallons of water is heavy and carrying it down the stairs for those purposes makes even more wear and tear on our middle age knees. So I just leave the water by the toilet and use it to flush once a day.

If the new toilet uses 1.6 gallons per flush, then I've prevented 576 gallons of water from being pumped into that toilet in one year. [360 days x 1.6 gallons. Let's assume I'm away on vacation 5 days a year.]

Now, before I get all excited and wrench my arm while patting myself on the back, I have to remind myself that my other half has yet to adopt the shower water-saving habit. Also, the other toilets in the house don't benefit from having a daily shower next to them. So there is a lot of room for improvement in our household, and we are working on it conscientiously.

But my husband and I have come up with another plan to save water in our bathrooms. "Wait, wait, don't flush!" is a familiar refrain in our house.

Check out this web site that Susan Powell turned me on to:

<http://www.wateruseitwisely.com/100ways/se.shtml#top%23top>

for over 100 ways to save water. We'll run 10 each month. Here are the first 10.

1. There are a number of ways to save water, and they all start with you.
2. When washing dishes by hand, don't let the water run while rinsing. Fill one sink with wash water and the other with rinse water.
3. Evaporative coolers require a seasonal maintenance checkup. For more efficient cooling, check your evaporative cooler annually.
4. Check your sprinkler system frequently and adjust sprinklers so only your lawn is watered and not the house, sidewalk, or street.
5. Run your washing machine and dishwasher only when they are full and you could save 1000 gallons a month.
6. Avoid planting turf in areas that are hard to water such as steep inclines and isolated strips along sidewalks and driveways.
7. Install covers on pools and spas and check for leaks around your pumps.
8. Use the garbage disposal sparingly. Compost instead and save gallons every time.
9. Plant during the spring or fall when the watering requirements are lower.

10. Keep a pitcher of water in the refrigerator instead of running the tap for cold drinks, so that every drop goes down you not the drain.

Let us know how you save water! The more we know, the more we save. Thanks for your contribution.

Volunteer Service Projects

Our board has a goal of having each member of Cohort I become certified before the end of 2007. That means eight hours of Advanced Training and 40 hours of Volunteer Service. Look for a list of Advanced Training opportunities elsewhere in this newsletter. Meanwhile, listed below are the Volunteer Service Projects already approved. Feel free to contact the "go to" person listed for each event and find out how you can join in and earn those hours.

Meanwhile, if you have a service project that you think will fit with HRC VMN talents, contact Cherie Aukland, Chair of the Volunteer Service Committee: aukland.c@cox.net

Acorn Collection for VA Dept of Forestry

This is a citizen science project that you can do each fall. Citizens can help preserve native Virginia tree species by collecting acorns and seeds from 15 species and delivering them to the nearest Virginia Department of Forestry (VDOP) office.

Species needed, and the total weight of each being sought by the VDOP:

- Bald Cypress (seed): 300 lbs
- Black Oak: 2,000 lbs.
- Black Walnut: 5,000 lbs.
- Chestnut Oak: 3,000 lbs.
- Chinese Chestnut (seed): 3,000 lbs.
- Chinkapin (seed): 300 lbs.
- Hazelnut (seed): 200 lbs.
- Northern Red Oak: 5,000 lbs.
- Pin Oak: 1,000 lbs.
- Sawtooth Oak: 1,000 lbs.
- Southern Red Oak: 500 lbs.
- Swamp White Oak: 1,000 lbs.
- Swamp Chestnut Oak: 1,000 lbs.
- White Oak: 5,000 lbs.
- Willow Oak: 500 lbs.

Generally, the best time to collect acorns is the last week in September through the first week of October. Lawns or paved areas can make ideal collection sites. Single trees located in these areas make identifying the acorns easier. Always identify the tree and mark the non-plastic bags so the nursery will know what species you have collected. Do not combine

acorns from different species of oaks in the same bag.

Whom to Contact:

<http://www.dof.virginia.gov/mgt/acorn-collect.shtml>

Location: Anywhere you can collect acorns

Timeframe: Ongoing, annually

Wildlife Mapping at Greensprings Trail

Saturday, November 17, 9 a.m. - 12 noon. Wildlife Mapping at Greensprings Interpretive Trail. Bring your own food and join the tailgate breakfast party. We will discuss the map developed for wildlife mapping at Greensprings Trail as well as how to collect and report data. Then, we will walk through the mapping sites to collect and record data. Members can earn volunteer service project hours when they attend this program.

School Tree Counting Project

Counting the number of trees that are within 100 feet of the school for all of the James City County Schools for Dr. Jeff Kirwin at VA TECH. Volunteers will:

1. Go to the school site and count, measure, and record the types of trees and saplings within 100 feet of the school building.
2. Report data back to Dr. Kirwin for loading into the school site web page.

Contact: Kari Abbott, bearsbaskets@cox.net

Location: James City County Schools

Time Frame: One time project. The project will take about 1/2 day for each school and there are 8.

New Quarter Park Native Plant Teaching Garden

The New Quarter Park Native Plant teaching garden will serve primarily as an educational tool for York County citizens and other visitors to the park. The garden will serve as an avenue to convey the importance of natives to the health of the environment and the local wildlife. Members of the VMN will contribute to the work of transplanting, weeding of invasive plant species, cleaning out unsightly debris and then the ongoing maintenance of the garden. All plants in the garden will come from the park itself. VMN may help construct a brochure describing the plants in the area.

Contact: Laurie Houghland, 259-2169, woowee@cox.net

Location: New Quarter Park, Trail #1

Time Frame: One time project; will include ongoing maintenance. Initial planning and removal of debris and some invasive plants to occur Fall 2007; transplanting of other plants will begin in Spring 2008.

After School Bird Club at Coventry Elementary School in York County

Volunteers will be educational resources to help support an after school education program [bird club for 4th and 5th graders] between October 2007 and May 2008.

Contact: Susan Powell, 757-564-4542. Smapowell@cox.net

Location: Coventry Elementary School, York Co.

Time Frame: This after school bird club meets every other Tuesday, but HRC members are not needed for all dates. Contact the "go to" person to see where you can help.

Trail & Garden Maintenance, York River State Park

This is an ongoing service project you can do anytime. Organized days are Tuesday mornings and Friday afternoons, but you can go out any time. Contact Mary Apperson at the Park, phone 566-3036 or email: Mary.Apperson@dcr.virginia.gov

Christmas Bird Counts

The Hampton Roads Bird Club will conduct its annual Audubon Christmas Bird Count Saturday, December 15. Their count has 13 areas. The Williamsburg Bird Club will conduct its count Sunday, December 16. Their count has 6 areas. Volunteers can assist in defined geographic areas in counting the number of birds and the number of species. You will be assigned to an area with an experienced birder. Audubon requires a fee of \$5.00 from each participant to cover the cost of recording and publishing the data. You'll receive a copy of the full report published by the National Audubon Society.

Contact: Bill Williams for the Williamsburg count; 757-229-1124, jwwil2@wm.edu

Contact: Hayes Williams for the Hampton Roads count; 804-693-4417

Williamsburg Land Conservancy Wildlife Mapping

This project is on hold. We'll let you know when it's ready to go.

Project Toolbox [Master Naturalist in a Box!]

A collection of field guides, books, and other local information to assist any Master Naturalist who is out in the field in an interpretive capacity [Greensprings Trail comes to mind!!!]. Contact Larry Riddick to help complete this important cog in our contact with the public, larryriddick@cox.net

The Old Flounder Guy

By Clyde Marsteller, Historic Rivers Chapter, Virginia Master Naturalist Member and Major, Medical Service Corps, US Army (retired)

In 1966 I was stationed at the Medical Field Service School at Ft Sam Houston as an enlisted instructor.

My weekends were spent hunting and fishing from Hill Country to the sea coast at Padre Island.

My father (The Old Man) had retired from Bethlehem Steel and he and Mom had purchased a motorhome. They took Willie Nelson's advice to get "On The Road Again."

The two intrepid travelers first crossed the country and drove northwest to pick up the Alaskan Highway to visit my brother who was stationed at Ft Richardson, Alaska. On the way they endured numerous flat tires, a punctured radiator, a broken axle, an angry moose and millions of blackflies and mosquitoes. After visiting for a couple of weeks they panned for gold, went salmon, trout, and grayling fishing and climbed glaciers. Finally they drove back to the "Lower Forty" and headed for San Antonio to visit their oldest son (me). They endured scorpions and rattlesnakes in campgrounds in Arizona and New Mexico, dust storms in the panhandle and had ringside seats as the rangers caught a wanted fugitive.

Arriving at our home, I took leave and the two families drove to South Padre Island for a week's fishing trip.

Dad and I had heard of the Texan practice of "gigging" flounder and we were eager to try it. Being dumb Yankees and not asking advice we bought frog gigs and ended up one night on the Intercoastal Waterway at Aransas Pass.

The idea behind gigging a flounder lies in the fact that at night the fish swims out of the deep boat channel and settles in the sand in about two feet of water. The gigger slowly wades with a lantern in one hand and the gig in the other. You look for a dimple in the sand where the fish has dug itself in and its gills make a saucer-like depression. The object is to stab the gig thru the center of the depression thereby pinning the flounder to the bottom. You then balance gig and lantern in one hand and with the other you run your hand under the fish pinning it against the gig handle. You get to the shore as quickly as possible and throw gig and fish as far up the shore as you can. While you are doing this you have to keep an eye open for stingrays who don't take kindly to being stepped on.

On my first try an 8 pound plus flounder obligingly swam up to my feet and stopped. I immediately made like Tarzan yelled and stabbed with my gig. Several things happened at once. One I forgot about refraction and stabbed the fish in the tail instead of its head. Two, the frog gig was okay for frogs but

was twisted into scrap metal by a ticked off flounder. Three, I dropped my lantern and realized I had a big angry fish with a mouthful of teeth thrashing around my bare feet. I pushed the gig and fish to shore and heaved everything on the bank. The "Good Old Boys" sitting by their bonfire came to help. They told me I had giggered a "Horse Blanket" (a BIG flounder).

All this time Dad was sharing a bottle of whiskey and stories of his Alaskan adventures with his new friends. He was about three sheets to the wind but when he saw my flounder he grabbed his gig and lantern and headed for the water. He got a few yards out when a large freighter sailed past. Its big propellers sucked the water away from the shore. In an instant dad was standing on wet sand wondering where in the h--- the water had gone. All around him fish were flapping and the gang on shore was yelling at him to stick 'um. As he looked up a wall of water was rushing at him. As the ship passed its wake came in. In another instant he sobered up, yelled, and high stepped for shore. I have never seen a human move so fast. Later on as we finished off the whiskey he made me promise I would never tell this story until he "passed on." The Old Flounder Guy went "home" in '91 so now you have heard the tale.

Eastern Shore Birding and Wildlife Festival October 5-7, 2007

By Alice and Seig Kopinitz, Historic Rivers Chapter,
Virginia Master Naturalist Members

We attended the Eastern Shore Birding and Wildlife Festival in early October. I guess the one lesson we did learn though was that it really isn't a good idea to stay at a B&B where breakfast isn't served till 9:00 a.m. when most of your day's first events are timed to be up with the birds. Oh well, our host fixed us a brown bag.

This article is about our first event, a visit to the famous Kiptopeke Hawk Observatory, one of the best in the nation. It was started by volunteers in 1977. Our class/event was hosted by Brian Taber, the current president of the Coastal Virginia Wildlife Observatory (CVWO). The CVWO operates the hawk observatory, a hawk banding station and a songbird banding station at Kiptopeke and leads a number of other wildlife programs (see <http://www.cvwo.org/> for more information.). Brian told us about the various raptors including eagles, hawks, and falcons that migrate down the Eastern Shore flyway. From the observatory tower, we could see that the sky above us was indeed alive with hawks.

We were hoping that at least one raptor would be caught and banded so that we could see one of these birds up close and personal. After Brian's overview, Jeff Birek, the CVWO hawkcounter (he is employed

by CVWO full time during the migration to count the raptors) described the work that he does there.

At the banding station a short distance from the observatory tower, there is a set of nets and wires that employ a lure-bird (covered with a protective vest of leather) used to capture raptors. The raptor thinks there is a nice lunch waiting for him below. When the raptor tries to get "lunch" he is captured and banded. Jeff said that if a bird was captured during the talk it would be brought from the banding station to the tower for us to see. As he began to talk to us, he got a call that someone was bringing up a bird for us to see.

Shortly, a Sharp-shinned Hawk arrived in a Pringle potato chip can with only feet observable. Jeff carefully removed the bird. He explained that there were different size cans for different sized birds – this being the smallest.



Above: A Sharp-shinned Hawk *Accipiter striatus*



A Sharp-shinned Hawk *Accipiter striatus* looks warily at Jeff Birek.

After letting everyone get a good look at the hawk, he was released to continue his journey. Shortly, he

received another call. Another hawk, this time a Cooper's Hawk *Accipiter cooperii*. What a treat – two raptors!

After this bird took off, another raptor was on its way to the viewing platform – a Red-shouldered Hawk *Buteo lineatus* and then a Merlin *Falco columbarius*. We felt very privileged to see this scenario played out four times for four different raptors all within the space of about an hour. I should add that these birds were younger birds



This Cooper's Hawk *Accipiter cooperii* looks the part of Top of the Food Chain.



A Red-shouldered Hawk *Buteo lineatus* just waits for his chance to strike.



This falcon, a Merlin *Falco columbarius*, is small but deadly.

We thoroughly enjoyed every class we attended throughout the festival and hope that we will be able to attend next year.