



The Naturalist

The monthly newsletter of the Historic Rivers Chapter

Virginia Master Naturalist Program

www.vmn-historicrivers.org

A Monthly Newsletter

Volume 2 No. 5 May 2008

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President's Message

Greetings!

This week has once again reminded me of the power of nature. There was a tree in my driveway; thankfully, my truck was tucked in the garage. The wind cut through my neighborhood like nothing I have ever seen. Yet days before there was a broad headed skink, literally sunbathing (front foot up-turned and it looked totally relaxed) in the holly bushes that house the rabbits that infest my yard.

Also this week is the week I spend yearly immersed in nature when I take my first grade friends on a field trip to York River State Park. It was so much more fun this year! With Joanne Medina and I in the crowd, all the cool things we have learned as Master Naturalists just flowed out. Like being able to identify a tree by its bark. The children became aware of the different bark on trees, and we taught the children how to really look, touch and remember. Joanne found a cool egg case on an ironwood tree. Later in the trail, we discovered it was an Assassin Bug egg case, as the new insects started emerging before us. The wonder of nature is a great treat to share with children. For me it was much more comfortable to name birds, frogs, toads, and trees -- thanks to the training and learning that has gone in our group! It was so fun to share and start an interest in nature in the children.

The power of nature, be it in wind or wonder! I am so fortunate to have friends like you all, with whom to share the joys of its discovery!

My best to you all as this spring unfolds.

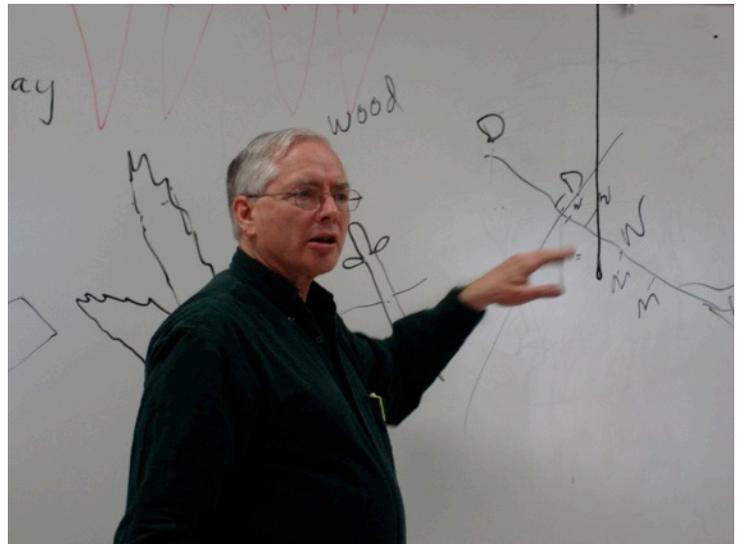
Kari Abbott, Member and President
Historic Rivers Chapter, Virginia Master Naturalist

Cohort III Starts August 28

Let your friends and neighbors know that our next training class begins Thursday, August 28. They can download applications from our web site:

<http://www.vmn-historicrivers.org/>

Aquatic Insects & Water Quality



Wednesday, May 14, 2008, 6 - 9 p.m. At Jamestown High School

Charlie Dubay, above, who presented our wonderful Winter Botany session in March, will present a program on "Aquatic Insects – Predictors of Water Quality" at our May 14 monthly program.

Meet in the bus parking circle at Jamestown High School on John Tyler Highway (Route 5 West) at 6:00 p.m. Charlie will meet us there and take us to his classroom.

We'll collect samples out in the field from a variety of habitats and then bring them inside to examine under microscopes in his classroom to see what the insects tell us about water quality.

Be prepared with bug spray or better yet, long sleeves and pants, as well as shoes that you don't mind getting wet. This is Advanced Training!

CHAPTER OFFICERS 2008

*Kari Abbott, President**Susan Powell, Vice President & Programs Chair**Linda Cole, Secretary**Judy Hansen, Treasurer**Shirley Devan, Newsletter Editor**Jordan Westenhaver, Historian**Jordan Westenhaver, Host**Patty Riddick, Membership**Cherie Aukland and Bruce Hill, Volunteer Service Projects**Susan Powell, Training**Clyde Marsteller, Advanced Training**Alice & Seig Kopinitz, Outreach Committee**Seig Kopinitz, Webmaster**Bruce Hill, Member-at-Large*

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NOTES FROM THE BOARD

At the April 9, 2008 Chapter meeting, the membership voted to approve dues of \$25 for this year. If you have not yet sent in your dues, please send them to Judy Hansen, Treasurer, 100 Carnoustie, Williamsburg, VA 23188

All meetings of the Board of Directors are open to members. The next meeting is May 19 at 6:00 p.m. at the Williamsburg Regional Library, Scotland Street, Williamsburg.

Many thanks to Jordan Westenhaver for taking on the Historian role for a while. And thanks to Bruce Hill for helping Cherie Aukland with Volunteer Service Projects.

Patty Riddick reminds all to turn in their hours for April 2008. You can't get certified unless you send in your hours! Send them to: pattyridick@cox.net

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Virginia Master Naturalist programs and employment are open to all, regardless of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, or marital or family status. An equal opportunity/affirmative action employer.

Upcoming VIMS Events

The VIMS After Hours lectures series takes on the topic of global climate change. This special series of After Hours lectures is brought to you by their regular sponsors as well as the VIMS Initiative for Coastal Climate Change Research. Please note that the May 14 and June 5 lectures will NOT occur on the last Thursday of the month.

Climate Change and National Security, Wednesday, May 14, 2008

Lt. Gen. Lawrence Farrell (USAF Ret.) will consider the threats that climate change poses to national security. Farrell, currently President and CEO of the National Defense Industrial Association, will highlight a recent report that he co-authored as part of a blue-ribbon panel commissioned by the Center for Naval Analyses. The report contends that climate change has serious consequences for US military operations and facilities both abroad and at home, including those in Hampton Roads.

Climate Change (aka Global Warming): Is it real or a hoax? Thursday, June 5, 2008

Join NASA scientist Bruce Wielicki as he examines the science and politics of global warming. Wielicki, a co-winner of the Nobel Peace Prize as a contributing author to the latest IPCC Climate Change Report, will describe climate change past and present, as well as what researchers predict for the future. He will also discuss key uncertainties in climate change science, why controversy persists, and where to go for solid information.

Climate Change and the Coast, Thursday, June 26, 2008

Hampton Roads trails only New Orleans atop the list of U.S. coastal areas at risk to the impacts of climate change. Join Dr. Virginia Burkett, who shared the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize as a lead author of the IPCC chapter on coastal climate-change impacts, as she explores how global warming is likely to affect coastal zones around the world, including Chesapeake Bay.

Lectures are free but you need to register. Call 804-684-7846.

Monthly Programs Count as Advanced Training

Monthly chapter meetings are open to ALL -- cohort I and cohort II. **Members earn Advanced Training Hours by attending monthly program meetings.** Mark your calendars:

May 14, 2008 -- Aquatic Insects and Water Quality

Wednesday, May 14, 2008, 6 - 9 p.m. At Jamestown High School. Charlie Dubai, who presented our wonderful Winter Botany session in March, will present a program on Aquatic Insects – Predictors of Water Quality.

June 11, 2008 -- Chemical Warfare in Plants

Wednesday, June 11, 2008, 6 - 9 p.m. At the Human Services Building. Dr. Jim Perry from VIMS will be our guest speaker.

July 9, 2008 -- Sea Turtles

Wednesday, July 9, 2008, 6 - 9 p.m. At the Human Services Building. Jack Musick from VIMS will be our guest speaker.

August 13, 2008 -- Coastal Virginia Wildlife Observatory

Wednesday, August 13, 2008, 6 - 9 p.m. At the Human Services Building. Brian Taber, a Founder and current President of the Coastal Virginia Wildlife Observatory will share with us the history, mission, and achievements of the CVWO.

More Advanced Training Opportunities

Each Master Naturalist needs 8 hours of Advanced Training to become certified and then another 8 hours each year after that. Check out these opportunities and mark your calendars. If you discover an event that you believe would qualify as Advanced Training, send information to Clyde Marsteller, Chair of the Advanced Training Committee, clydecedm@aol.com

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. For more information about activities at the State level, check the VNPS web site: <http://www.vnps.org/index.htm> For information about local Chapter events, visit their web site: <http://www.claytonvnps.org/>

VNPS Field Trip to George Washington National Forest, Saturday, May 17 at 10:30 am

This is the first of the Virginia Native Plant Society series of field trips for 2008 to some of the most botanically interesting preserves the state has to offer. We are making these trips yearly events to allow our members to visit some of our preserves, parks and Registry sites with expert guides. Reddish Knob, in the George Washington National Forest is one of the highest peaks in the state with sweeping views and mountain flora. Members of the Shenandoah Chapter will lead this trip. Limited to 20 participants. Easy to moderate. Only heavy rain will cancel trip. For more info and to register visit the VNPS state site at www.vnps.org

Time: 10:30 am to about 3:30 pm. Fee: \$10 per hike. Registration is required at least 10 days before the hike.

VNPS Field Trip to Blackwater Ecological Preserve, Saturday, June 28 at 10:00 am

This is the second of the Virginia Native Plant Society series of field trips for 2008 to some of the most botanically interesting preserves the state has to offer. Blackwater Ecological Preserve in Isle of Wight County, with an area of 318 acres, is situated on dry to mesic sand ridges and has two of Virginia's rarest plant communities - longleaf pine-turkey oak flatwoods and longleaf pine savannas. Preserve Steward Darren Loomis will lead this trip. Limited to 20 participants. Easy to moderate. Only heavy rain will cancel trip.

For more info and to register visit the VNPS state site at www.vnps.org

Time: 10:00 am to about 1:00 pm. Fee: \$10 per hike. Registration is required at least 10 days before the hike.

Wildlife Habitat "Train-the-Trainer" Advanced Training Workshop for Master Naturalists, June 10, 8:15 am - 4:00 pm

Because habitat improvement projects necessitate many "layers" of involvement and coordination among community partners, Master Naturalists need to feel comfortable with many audiences, including teachers, youth group leaders, Master Gardeners and the general public. Our goal is to give you the tools to: 1) understand how to work effectively with these audiences and answer commonly asked questions; 2) be able to identify habitat elements on a site that need improvement and recommend solutions; and 3) plan and conduct your own habitat program or workshop. This training will therefore include techniques for outdoor instruction, habitat mapping, and planning an agenda for different audiences.

Each participant will receive a training binder as well as numerous resource materials and publications from the Habitat Partners© program, which in-

cludes Schoolyard Habitat and Habitat at Home© components.

This program is sponsored by VA DGIF. There is no cost for the workshop, but participants must attend the FULL DAY to receive ALL materials.

Registration must be received on or before May 30. Registration form must be either mailed or faxed. Contact Shirley Devan who will email you the form.

Time: 8:15 am to 4:00 pm.

Location: Virginia Aquarium & Marine Science Museum, VA Beach, VA

Great Dismal Swamp Birding Festival, May 9-11, 2008

Activities include guided bird walks, refuge orientation tours, bird banding demonstrations, owl prowls, and more. Guided walks and refuge orientations are free but space is limited so please call to reserve your spot. For schedule of events and more information:

<http://www.fws.gov/northeast/greatdismalswamp/pdf%20files/Schedule%20of%20Events-08.pdf>

All events and activities are free. Space on bus tours and for guided walks will be limited. Registration for guided walks and tours: 757-986-3705

Location: Great Dismal Swamp National Wildlife Refuge

Mountain Lake Migratory Bird Festival -- May 16 – 18, 2008

The field trips and walks during this weekend will enhance Master Naturalists' knowledge of the migratory birds of Virginia. In May, the neo-tropical migrants will be on site and more readily visible and identifiable. In addition, there is a "Beginning Birding" walk/workshop, a Wildflower Walk, a Butterfly/Dragonfly Walk, a Geology Walk, and a Hummingbird Banding Program. All trip leaders are knowledgeable and enthusiastic birders and/or naturalists. Most events are 2 – 4 hours in mornings and afternoons.

Location: Mountain Lake, Giles County, VA. Most events and walks are around the hotel or in Giles County within short driving distance from the hotel.

The attendance is first-come, first-serve for activities. Most walks/trips have a limit of 15 participants. Advance Registration is required. Fee for weekend birding festival is \$35 per person, not including hotel accommodations. Additional info and registration forms: <http://www.mountainlakebirding.com/>

Tree Identification 1-Day Workshop for Teachers, July 12, 2008

Gain confidence in using the outdoors as a living classroom by developing skills to help you and your students identify a diversity of tree species using five simple steps.

Trees can be an integral, as well as simple method for teaching science through student inquiry. Trees are big and easy to see, each species with unique features that make them distinct from one another. Best of all, they do not move when students approach. But in spite of this, many of us do not feel confident when taking students outdoors to study, even in our own school-yard, and would like to be able to improve our identification skills.

During this workshop, you will learn the basics of tree identification. You will discover how to recognize tree characteristics, such as leaves, bark, twigs, and fruit, and you will learn to use a dichotomous key and simple classification techniques. You will practice your new skills in the field using exercises that you can easily duplicate with your students and will receive a training manual to help keep your memory fresh and aid you in making tree identification fun and interesting for your students. By the end of the workshop, participants will be able to identify at least five tree species that might be found near your

school. For more information and to register:
<http://nationalzoo.si.edu/Education/TeacherWorkshops/tree.cfm>

Location: Front Royal, VA

Cost: \$50, (\$10 nonrefundable deposit required).

Registration Deadline: June 27

Sponsored by Smithsonian/National Zoo.

Holiday Lake Forestry Camp -- June 16 - 21

The VA Dept. of Forestry will again offer an opportunity for teachers and other educators (including Master Naturalist volunteers) to attend Holiday Lake Forestry Camp, receiving about 35 hours of field forestry instruction and Project Learning Tree training (all modules). There might also be volunteer opportunities at the event—helping to teach a class, for example. The dates are June 16-21; location is Holiday Lake 4-H Center near Appomattox; the cost is only \$60. If interested, please contact Lisa Deaton at 804-328-3031 or lisa.deaton@dof.virginia.gov no later than April 15. Space is limited, so early contact is recommended.

Virginia Environmental Conference -- September 17 - 18, 2008

Location: Natural History Museum, Martinsville, VA

This weekend of training on Environmental Education is sponsored by Virginia Naturally. Save the date and look for more details in future newsletters.

Virginia Master Naturalist Statewide Conference October 17 - 19, 2008

Location: Wytheville Meeting Center, Wytheville, VA.

A fun-filled autumn weekend in a very lovely part of the state. We will meet at the Wytheville Meeting Center, but we'll have forays to the many surrounding recreational and natural areas, such as Hungry Mother State Park, New River Trail, Mount Rogers National Recreation Area, and the Big Survey Wildlife Management Area. The weekend will include time to exchange ideas with other chapters, plenty of advanced training sessions, and opportunities to get outside and enjoy fall in the mountains. This is the FIRST statewide Virginia Master Naturalist Conference. Consider if you would like to go so we can begin to make plans for our chapter to attend. Save the date and look for more details in future newsletters.

Volunteer Service Projects

The following projects have been 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 at aukland.c@cox.net or Bruce Hill at euplotes@msn.com Co-Chairs of the Volunteer Service Committee.

Diamondback Terrapin Barrier Construction Project on Fisherman Island NWR, May 13, 2008

This is a one-day project on May 13, 2008. Participants will be constructing barriers to prevent diamond-back terrapins from road hazards. The project will involve manual labor: carrying stuff, digging with shovels, hammering, etc. 10-13 staff people will be there, they will provide all tools; we should bring

work gloves, water and snacks. RSVP required by April 30th to Pamela Denmon: Pamela_Denmon@fws.gov

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 Trail

Work continues at the Native Plant Teaching Trail at New Quarter Park. Laurie acquired some native plants from the recent sale by the Native Plant Society and she'll need help installing them soon.

Contact Laurie at woowee@cox.net or call at 259-2169. See you on the trail.



Laurie Houghland and Ralph Will working at NQP Native Plant Garden

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. 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.

Contact: Sheila Kerr-Jones, skj1s@cox.net

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

Wildlife Mapping

York River State Park, Greensprings Trail or your own backyard. If you've completed the Wildlife Mapping Training program, visit already "mapped" areas regularly to record your wildlife observations.

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

Clean the Bay Day, June 7, 2008

Calling all naturalists who enjoy getting your hands dirty and your feet muddy! Got a kayak, dinghy, canoe, skiff, or any kind of boat? Please consider volunteering because you can get to those nooks and crannies that those of us with waders can't reach!

You can sign up to volunteer with the city/organization (Ft. Monroe, Hampton, JCC, Newport News, Poquoson, and York County among many) of your choice at:

http://www.cbf.org/site/PageServer?pagename=state_sub_va_hamptonroads_clean_volunteer.

Some cities/organizations may hold their clean ups on dates other than the 20th Anniversary date so please check that date. Volunteers who sign up through the website will receive information about the event in their area of interest.

Everyone can participate. There is a parental permission form on the website to be turned into Zone Captains the day of the event.

If you sign up for Ft. Eustis, Ft. Monroe, or New Quarter Park you can earn volunteer service hours (Volunteer Service Project 2007-vsp-011).

Children's Day at the Williamsburg Farmer's Market, June 7, 2008 8 a.m. to 12 noon; set up by 7:45 am, break down by 12:30 pm.

Historic Rivers Chapter will set up a presentation booth to provide information to adult market-goers about the VMN program with posters, handouts and friendly conversation; enchant the children with interactive teaching exhibits, such as wildlife mapping, insects, fossils, etc.

Jordan Westenhaver is chairing the project and needs volunteers who enjoy interacting with the public and with children and have some ideas for children's exhibits and/or activities. Please contact Jordan at jordancw@tni.net, or by phone at 253 0174 if you would like to participate. You will receive hour-for-hour service credit for participating in this fun project!

Butterfly Survey at Nansemond National Wildlife Refuge, June 17, 2008

This is a one-day project. Skilled Volunteers are needed for a butterfly survey to be conducted at Nansemond National Wildlife Refuge. Registration is required and spaces are limited. For more details contact Don Schwab at (757) 986-3480. The survey will take approximately 6 hours. Transportation to Nansemond MWR will be provided, departing from the Great Dismal Swamp NWR refuge office at 8:00 am. Teams will be assigned to various tracks through the NNWR. Participants should have some experience in identifying butterflies, teams will be led by an experienced butterfly counter.

Virginia Frog and Toad Calling Survey

Trained observers sample a route assigned by VA DGIF a minimum of 3 times per year. Contact Felice Bond for training and information: fbond203@cox.net

Craney Island Bird Monitoring, Conservation, and Management, May 14 and May 27

Monitor of beach and marsh nesting birds; carry out approved management and conservation action plans. Next trips are May 14 and May 27. Contact Shirley Devan, sedevan52@cox.net, 757-813-1322

Bobwhite Quail Habitat Restoration Project, May 15, 8 - 11 am

Enhance and restore habitat for Bobwhite Quail at New Quarter Park. This is a cooperative project with the John Clayton Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society and the Williamsburg Bird Club. Project has been approved by York County Department of Parks and Recreation. Next work days are Thursday, May 15 and Saturday, June 14. Contact Shirley Devan, sedevan52@cox.net, 757-813-1322 if you can help out.

Hampton Roads Bridge Tunnel South Island Research Project

This project is on hold until Project Leader Ruth Beck returns home from the hospital. For more info, contact Shirley Devan, sedevan52@cox.net, 757-813-1322.

Grandview Beach Preserve Research Project

This project is on hold until Project Leader Ruth Beck returns home from the hospital. For more info, contact Shirley Devan, sedevan52@cox.net, 757-813-1322

Great Dismal Swamp Butterfly Count, July 25, 2008, 8:00 am

The "4th of July" Butterfly Count will take place on July 25, 2008. The count is open to volunteers of all skill levels. Meet at 8:00 am at the Washington Ditch Entrance parking area. Team assignments will be made at that time.

Registration: Call refuge headquarters at 757/986-3705.

Location: Teams will be assigned to various tracks throughout the Great Dismal Swamp National Wildlife Refuge.

Congratulations to ...

As of April 2008 all members of HRC Cohort I have completed their VMN Certification. Congratulations Cohort I! [Per our Membership Chairperson, Patty Riddick]

Clyde Marsteller and Shirley Devan have renewed their certification for 2008. Congratulations Clyde and Shirley!

Cherie Aukland is the first member of Cohort II to complete her VMN Certification. Congratulations Cherie! Cherie is also the 100th certified Master Naturalist in Virginia. Stay tuned to learn what fabulous prizes she's won!

And to ...

Kari Abbott and Susan Powell are published authors! The peer-reviewed journal of the Virginia Association of Science Teachers, JOURNAL OF VIRGINIA SCIENCE EDUCATION, April 2008 issue features their article: "Collaboration Builds Solid Foundations for Inquiry-based Exploration in First Grade"

"W3* and U, Aquatic Adventures" (*Water, Wetlands, and Wildlife) (U means you!). The W3* curriculum provides science-based, sequential, experiential hands on learning for first graders at DJ Montague Elementary School.

Kari and Susan co-authored the article with Kelly A. Kelly, Science Coordinator and first Grade Teacher at DJ Montague School.

Photos from April Adventures of Historic Rivers Master Naturalists



Common Buckeye, Craney Island, 17 April 2008. Photo by Seig Kopinitz



Froglers get ready for Greensprings Adventure, 23 April 2008.



Alice Kopinitz & Larry Robertshaw, York River State Park, 2 May 2008. Photo by Shirley Devan



Green Frog. Photo by Cherie Aukland.



Killdeer on nest, Craney Island, 17 April 2008. Photo by Shirley Devan



Master Naturalists doing what they do best! New Quarter Park on the Native Plant Trail. Photo by Seig Kopinitz

A Steward's Guide to the Universe – Litter

By Clyde Marsteller, *Historic Rivers Chapter, Virginia Master Naturalist Member*

You all have seen the huge amounts of litter along our highways and byways. Have you ever considered how long it takes for the various kinds of litter to decompose? I wandered through God's Three Acres the other day and picked up random articles of litter to show the elementary school children how long each stays in the environment. I was astounded and a bit dismayed.

A piece of paper: 2 – 4 weeks

Candy wrapper (Mars Bar): 1 – 3 months

Aluminum can: 350 years

Soda (or beer) six pack holder: 450 years

Plastic shopping bag: 1000 years

Glass jar or bottle: ONE MILLION YEARS

Plastic bottle (water/soda): NEVER

Any Styrofoam product: NEVER

In my "Zoo" presentation I emphasize to the children that they are now the Stewards of our planet and I tell them the most lasting legacy they can give is to plant a tree during their lifetime. As an alternative I tell them that if their class (usually around 22 children) asked their families to recycle all of their newspapers for one year, the class could save the lives of 14 trees and save enough energy to heat a home for 5 months and save 7000 gallons of water.

A large canopy tree about 40 – 50 feet tall can clean the carbon dioxide put into the air by 4 cars in one year and then give off enough oxygen to support a family of four people.

The petroleum used to make 18 plastic bags could drive a car for one mile. Most individuals use 200 bags annually. With 301 million people in the United States, the amount of oil we consume in plastic bags is enough to drive more than 3 billion miles. On the other side of the coin, it takes four times as much energy to make one paper bag as it takes to make a plastic one. Please use cloth tote bags when you shop!!

All of these facts were provided by the National Arbor Society and Newport News Public Works Department.

Finally in these days of ever increasing gasoline prices the following was taken from the Daily Press:

Every ten miles you drive over 60 mph drops your fuel economy about 4 miles per gallon. This was based on a 400 mile road trip and it didn't make any difference what kind of vehicle was driven.

Steven King in his novel "IT" called plastic bags blown across the landscape and caught in trees and bushes "Junkyard Dandruff." Please brush the dandruff off our landscape and recycle it appropriately.

52. Use a commercial car wash that recycles water.

53. Don't buy recreational water toys that require a constant flow of water.

54. Turn off the water while you brush your teeth and save 4 gallons a minute. That's 200 gallons a week for a family of four.

55. Buy a rain gauge to track how much rain or irrigation your yard receives. Check with your local water agency to see how much rain is needed to skip an irrigation cycle.

56. Encourage your school system and local government to help develop and promote a water conservation ethic among children and adults.

57. Set a kitchen timer when watering your lawn or garden with a hose.

58. Make sure your toilet flapper doesn't stick open after flushing.

59. Make sure there are aerators on all of your faucets.

60. Teach your family how to shut off your automatic watering systems. Turn sprinklers off if the system is malfunctioning or when a storm is approaching.

<http://www.wateruseitwisely.com/100ways/se.shtml>

"OUR" National Champion Trees

Professor of Forestry at VA Tech, Dr. Jeff Kirwan sent this note to Larry Riddick:

"I just received word that the following trees in your area were declared national champions by American Forests:

Water elm at William and Mary

http://www.cnr.vt.edu/4h/bigtree/bigtree_detail.cfm?AutofieldforPrimaryKey=926

Pawpaw at Colonial Williamsburg

http://www.cnr.vt.edu/4h/bigtree/bigtree_detail.cfm?AutofieldforPrimaryKey=888

Florida maple in Carters Grove area

http://www.cnr.vt.edu/4h/bigtree/bigtree_detail.cfm?AutofieldforPrimaryKey=151

Would you please pass this information to others in your group, especially the ones who nominated the water elm and pawpaw? Also, if the owners could be contacted, that would be most helpful.

American Forests updates their big tree registry every two years. Virginia had the distinction of having more new champions than any other state, a tribute to our hard-working volunteers.

Thanks for all your help!!!"

A special hats off to Big Treerers and especially Team Kopinitz, Kopinitz, and Apperson and Team Gustafson, Gustafson, and Liddell

We're famous (or at least some of our trees are).

Stay tuned! We'll be measuring trees again in the fall.

Here Are the Next Ten Tips for Conserving Water

51. Avoid installing ornamental water features and fountains that spray water into the air. Trickling or cascading fountains lose less water to evaporation.

The Twa Corbies: A Ballad

The first written account of this ballad dates to 1611.

<http://www.contemplator.com/child/3ravens.html>

There were three ra'ens sat on a tree,
 Down a down, hey down, hey down,
 They were as black as black might be,
 With a down.
 The one of them said to his mate,
 Where shall we our breakfast take?
 With a down, derry, derry, derry down, down.

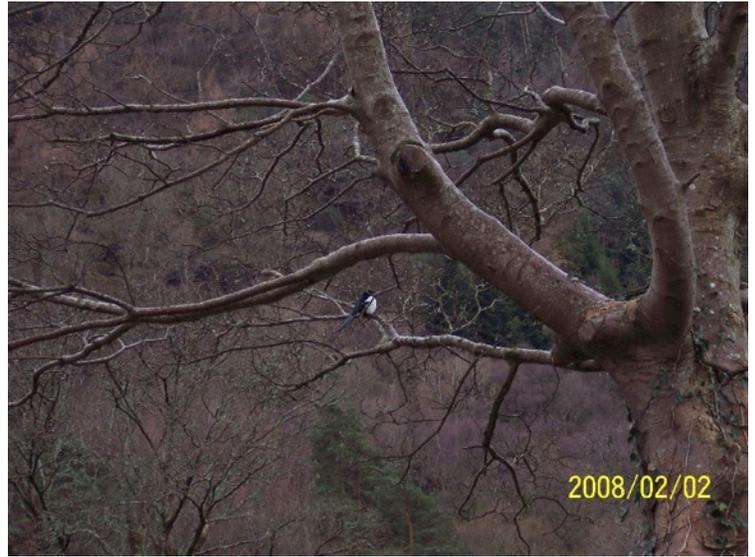
Down in yonder green field,
 Down, a down, hey down, hey down,
 There lies a knight slain 'neath his shield,
 With a down.
 This hounds they lie down at his feet,
 So well they do their master keep,
 With a down, derry, derry, derry, down, down.

His hawks they fly so eagerly,
 Down a down, hey down, hey down,
 No other fowl dare come him night,
 With a down.
 Down there comes a fallow doe
 As great with you as might she go
 With a down, derry, derry, derry down, down.

Article by Linda L. Cole, Historic Rivers Chapter, Virginia Master Naturalist Member

Association with blackbirds spans the centuries. In Celtic mythology, crows and ravens were associated with the war goddesses, Badb, Macha, and Nemain. The Irish hero, Cuchulainn, son of Lugh, was visited at his death by the Morrigan, who took the form of a raven perching upon his shoulder. Two ravens announced his entrance to Elysium fields. Ravens were believed to bear messages from the Otherworld and the Druids believed that some people could understand raven chatter because they could speak the raven's language. The kings of Cashel were entitled to a tribute of 1000 good cows, not the cows of ravens, because ravens hovering near cattle were believed to foretell of disease. Now that I've been to Ireland, I can suspend logic and embrace the ancients.

There are blackbirds EVERYWHERE! February clouds of blackbirds! Of course, naturalists understand that not every black bird is a blackbird. North American blackbirds belong to the family *Icteridae*, which includes the red-winged, rusty, and Brewer's blackbirds, the cowbirds, and the grackles. In Ireland, blackbirds (*Turdus merula*) belong to the family of chats and thrushes, *Turdidae*, most likely because of their song. The Irish blackbird or Lon Dubh is easily identified because it is all black with a bright yellow-orange bill. There are over 1.8 million blackbirds in Ireland with that number increasing in winter as Continental blackbirds seek the island's moderate climate compliments of the Gulf Stream.



Magpie, or *Pica pica*, in Ireland. Photo by Linda Cole

The winter Irish skies also are filled with gregarious members of the family *Corvidae*. One interesting fact about this family of avians – the sexes cannot be distinguished by their appearance – thankfully the birds themselves do not have that problem. They are social birds that will mob predators. Ravens are found in North America, as well as, Ireland. The Common Raven, while not common in the coastal plain of Virginia, is *Corvus corax* on both sides of the Pond. Here the American and Irish ornithologists agree. Ravens are completely black and aerially, or eerily, acrobatic. There are over 7000 ravens in Eire. The rook, *Corvus frugilegus*, is more populous than the raven with over 520,000 breeding pairs. The rook is not completely black but has a gray patch at the base of the bill and a steeper forehead than the raven. The jackdaw, *Corvus monedula*, has a gray shawl. Numbers of jackdaw are reported at around 210,000 in number. The most striking black bird in Ireland is the magpie or *Pica pica*, also a member of the family *Corvidae* with distinctive black and white plumage and a long tail. The 320,000 magpie, while beautiful, will kill and eat the young of other birds. While not specifically identified as scavengers, *Corvidae* have been known to eat carrion. Aerial acrobats, carrion-eaters, cannibals...no wonder the legends abound!

With so many black birds frequenting forest, farmland and cities, they are immortal within the stories of man. I wonder what ballads the birds sing about man?

[Population facts were obtained from www.birdwatchireland.ir]



Lady Slippers. Photo by Felice Bond.

Virginia Water Central: A Few Gems in Every Issue

By Kathi Mestayer, Historic Rivers Chapter, Virginia Master Naturalist Member

I've been getting *Virginia Water Central*, a monthly newsletter published by Virginia Water Resources Research Center (VWRRC) at Tech, since it was printed on paper and came in snail-mail. These days, you get it via email, and can read it on their web site (<http://www.vwrcc.vt.edu/watercentral.html>), which you might want to do, since it's a long one (the last issue was 36 pages).

Despite its length, it is well organized and illustrated, so you can skim the contents pretty quickly to find the "good stuff." Which there's plenty of. *Water Central* covers water- and wastewater-related legislative, supply, regulatory, news media, awards, and meetings.

Here are some highlights of the April issue, which I picked to give a sense of the range and type of coverage:

1. Front page, with reader-submitted photos of the state's waterways (nice shots, in color).
2. An article by the Director of the VWRRC on World Water Day and its relevance to Virginians.
3. A very long and comprehensive list of Legislation introduced, defeated, and passed into law in the latest legislative session. One item passed and signed was HB 1437/SB 710, which requires that localities which are non-attainment areas (not in compliance with Clean Air Act air quality standards) are required to maintain certain tree-canopy percentages during the land development process. Isn't that interesting?
4. "News-Making Issues" which include a state budget item allocating \$100 million to reducing water pollution from agricultural runoff. This is going to be a really big challenge, but very critical to Chesapeake Bay recovery.
5. An explanation, aimed at the educated layperson, of phosphorous and nitrogen loading from stormwater runoff, and why it is of environmental concern. Accompanying shots of duckweed and algae in Virginia surfacewaters.
6. Comparison table of national and Virginia data on key surface water quality parameters (dissolved oxygen, pH, bacteria, benthic impairment, PCBs, mercury).
7. Drought and water-level (surface- and groundwater) data for the state. "...all indications are that ground water recharge will be below normal prior to the onset of the 2008 growing season." So we're not out of the woods yet.
8. The "In and Out of the News" Section is one of the most interesting:
 - a. A survey of 20 rain gardens in Fairfax County; "the effectiveness of many gardens was reduced by poor design, construction or maintenance, and that more education on the technique was needed." Good to know if you're teaching people about rain gardens.
 - b. "A seven-acre parking lot expansion at Prime Outlets Mall in Williamsburg is being billed as the United States' largest pervious concrete project."
 - c. "...the City of Hopewell approved a plan by Osage Bio Energy LLC to a barley ethanol-production plant." Wait a minute! Isn't a brewery a barley-to-ethanol plant (with hops added)?
 - d. "The State Corporation Commission approved Virginia's first wind farm, in Highland County, with requirements to monitor bird or bat deaths...and pay penalties if raptors are killed." Hmmmm.
9. And, last but not least, the latest list of impaired waters in the state (those undergoing a state process of defining total maximum daily load (TMDL)

development and monitoring. Both Mill Creek and Powhatan Creek watersheds are listed as being impaired because of bacteria levels.

So, having spent about 20 minutes looking it over, I've picked up on a few interesting tidbits. Many of them would require a bit more digging on my part if I wanted the background on the issue, but just having a head's up on some of these developments is enough for others.

You, too, can get *Water Central*, by visiting their web site (<http://www.vwrcc.vt.edu/watercentral.html>). And nobody will know if you read every single issue or not. But once in a while, there's a real gem.



New Quarter Park Regional Picnic

By Patty Riddick, Historic Rivers Chapter, Virginia Master Naturalist Member

Historic Rivers Chapter of Virginia Master Naturalists was well represented at a recent picnic hosted at New Quarter Park. We were among numerous nature and outdoor focused organizations from the local region who met to get acquainted and share knowledge with each other about our programs and activities. The New Quarter Park staff put together a wonderful cookout for all those attending. Our volunteers included Alice and Seig Kopinitz, Shirley Devan, Patty Riddick, Jordan Westenhaver, and Susie Engle-Hill.



Left to right: Alice Kopinitz, Shirley Devan, Seig Kopinitz, Jordan Westenhaver, Susie Engle-Hill. Photo by Patty Riddick.

We were set up in the large picnic shelter with our banner, our brochures, our tri-fold board full of pictures, and many of our artifacts. The day began with an overcast sky and light drizzle allowing some kayaking to take place and ended up with strong winds, driving rain, and most participants huddled under shelter or keeping warm by the outdoor grill. We HRC hearty volunteers were bundled up in many layers, but we were smiling. Our board blew down, and we got very wet, but the day was not a total loss. We met members of bicycle clubs, hiking clubs, kayakers, birders, and many other nature lovers. A good time was had by all despite the weather. Highlights of the occasion were firing up the grill, eating Alice's delicious brownies, and being with our wonderful volunteers.

Wild Life Journal

By Clyde Marsteller, Historic Rivers Chapter, Virginia Master Naturalist Member

After graduation last year I decided to start a Wildlife Journal that would include observations I made in my backyard and field excursions as part of our HRC Cohort and my own ramblings. I was especially encouraged by my mentor Dr Bill Dimock and particularly by his descriptions of having to do sketches to illustrate his field notes as a grad student.

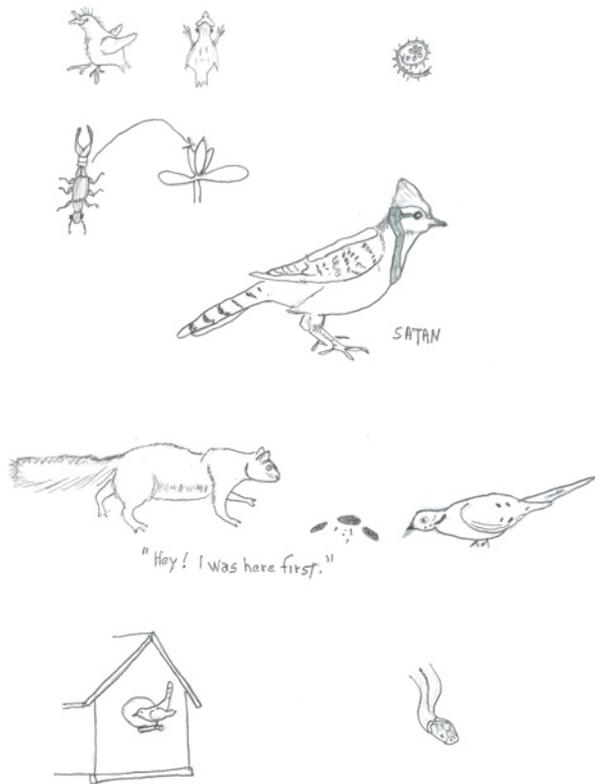
I thought I would share my Journal notes for May and June 2007.

May 27: Found a baby cardinal (pin feathers) on ground in front yard under the Japanese Red maple. Mother & Father dive bombed me. Put it in a Easter basket because of neighborhood cat and attached it to tree limb. It disappeared after two days.

May 28: Found a yellow centipede wrapped around her eggs under a piece of 2"x4" at my daughter's home in Poquoson. Centipede was long and extremely thin with many legs. Thought it was a millipede at first but it was too aggressive. Eggs looked milky white.

Goldfinches are back on Thistle Feeder. Males are now bright yellow.

Baby Blue Jay in backyard being fed by parents (makes me think about my childhood buddy – Satan the Blue Jay).



Sketches from Clyde's Wild Life Journal

June 14: I caught three snakes in church woodlot: Ring Neck, Worm and smooth Earth snakes.

List of backyard babies observed since about March till now:

Squirrels, Rabbits, Robins, Grackles, Cardinals, Brown Thrashers, House (red) Finches, House Wrens, Carolina Wrens, Blue Jays, English Sparrows, Red-

bellied Woodpeckers, Starlings, Mourning Doves, Flicker Woodpeckers, Gray Catbirds.

Large Earwigs are hiding head down in the growing tips of milkweed in Butterfly Garden. Why?

June 27: Worm Snake (Piglet) laid 5 eggs between June 20 and June 24. She is in process of shedding her skin. House wrens starting second brood in bird-house over Fish Pond.

Cannas, Lilies, gardenias, Hostas are blooming

Cardinals have now raised three broods; nests have been in : Pyrocantha (March), Holly (May), Trumpet Vine (June)

Robins eating peanut butter out of log feeder. Spotted a new woodpecker –red headed?

Reference : *Keeping A Nature Journal*

Clare Walker, Leslie Charles E. Roth

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Visitors to Our Butterfly Garden

By Patty Riddick, Historic Rivers Chapter, Virginia Master Naturalist Member

It was cool and misty on an early evening when we had our first guests visit our newly renovated butterfly garden. We had spent the previous two days planting in the butterfly garden in front of our house when there appeared three Mallards, two drakes and a hen. They waddled up from the road into our yard, then into the garden, and seemed quite comfortable with us nearby, even acting as though they expected a handout (which they DID NOT get). After checking out the purple coneflowers, the coreopsis, pentas, and sedum, they proceeded on their way. Life is good!



Photo by Patty Riddick.