



The Naturalist

The monthly newsletter of the Historic Rivers Chapter

Virginia Master Naturalist Program

www.vmn-historicrivers.org

A Monthly Newsletter

Volume 2 No. 6 June 2008

Advanced Training

Three "Save our Streams" workshops in June
Page 3

Volunteer Service Projects

Clean the Bay Day is June 7.
Page 4

Box Turtle at Peasant Run

Plus how to keep cats away from your bird bath!
Page 5

Sensory Overload in Fauquier County

Felice Bond and Shirley Devan on Trillium Trail
Page 6

Steward's Guide to the Universe

Ecological footprint
Page 7

Follow-Ups on Volunteer Service projects

"Landscaping with Nature" and Craney Island
Page 8

President's Message

Greetings Everyone,

As the spring warms up I hope you all have had time to go out and see the spring flowers, find a cool insect, or spot a wonderful bird! I am glad that those in our group who were wandering in China are safely home, and not hurt in the earthquake. I am sad Larry Robertshaw is leaving, but do wish him well in his journey to Arizona. I hope all the rest of you are safe and able to enjoy the wonders that nature is sharing with us this spring.

My best to you all.

Kari Abbott, Member and President

Historic Rivers Chapter, Virginia Master Naturalist

Cohort III Starts August 28

We have seven applicants for Cohort III. 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/>

As before, there will be Volunteer opportunities associated with each class so you can earn some volunteer service hours. We need two volunteers per class for classroom management -- set up, break down, meet/greet class members, distribute material during the class, take notes if necessary, bring snacks for the group, etc. Volunteers should plan to arrive by 5:30 and be prepared to stay until the classroom is cleared out at 9:00 p.m.

Contact Shirley Devan (sedevan52@cox.net) if you can help out on a Thursday evening between August 28 and November 20. A bonus: you get to hear the session again!

"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. Please join us and the mystery will be revealed!

New Certified Master Naturalists



Left to right: Patty Riddick, Membership Chair, Kari Abbott, President, Cherie Aukland and Larry Robertshaw, newly certified Master Naturalists from Cohort II.

Cherie Aukland and Larry Robertshaw received their certifications at the May 14 Club meeting. Also, recently "certified" are Mary Apperson, Kathi Mestayer, and Susan Engle-Hill. They will receive their certificates at the June 11 meeting. Congratulations to all!

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NOTES FROM THE BOARD

If you have not yet sent in your annual dues of \$25, 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 June 16 at 6:00 p.m. at the Williamsburg Regional Library, Scotland Street, Williamsburg.

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

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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. All lectures start at 7:00 pm in McHugh Auditorium on the VIMS campus. Please note that the June 5 and August 1 lectures will NOT occur on the last Thursday of the month.

Reservations to this free public lecture series are required due to limited space. Please register online or call 804-684-7846 for further information.

<http://www.vims.edu/afterhours/index.html>

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.

Climate Change Past, Present, and Future, Friday, August 1, 2008

Dr. Robert Correll, Director of the Global Change Program at the Heinz Center in Washington, D.C., will frame global warming in its historical context, looking at changes over the last 400,000 years from cores into Greenland and Antarctic ice. Correll is a Senior Policy Fellow with the American Meteorological Society and Chair of the Arctic Climate Impact Assessment. He was previously Asst. Director for Geosciences at the National Science Foundation, and chaired the committee that oversees the U.S. Global Change Research Program.

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:

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

Save Our Streams, June 14, 24, or 26, 2008

Sponsored by James City County. Be a water monitor. Learn about the quality of our streams and gather useful data. Volunteer 4 hours every 3-4 months. Free training and equipment. All are welcome.

Three training sessions:

June 14, 9 am –12 noon

June 24, 8 am –11 am

June 26, 8 am –11 am

For more information or to sign up, call 259-1460 or email stormwater@james-city.va.us

John Clayton Chapter Native Plant Walk at Stonehouse Elementary School, Wednesday, June 25 at 10:00 am

Jan Newton will lead a walk through the Habitat Garden at Stonehouse Elementary School, 3651 Rochambeau Drive, Williamsburg. The habitat contains over 70 species of native small trees, shrubs, perennials, and ferns. Wheelchair accessible. Call 757-566-3646 to register.

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.

John Clayton Chapter Big Tree Drive Around, Saturday, July 12

Byron Carmean will lead a drive through western Gloucester County. Please call Mary Hyde Berg to register and for details -- 804-693-3568.

John Clayton Chapter Native Plant Walk at Stonehouse Elementary School, Thursday, August 21 at 10:00 am

Jan Newton will lead a second walk through the Habitat Garden at Stonehouse Elementary School, with later season wildflowers on display. Wheelchair accessible. Call 757-566-3646 to register.

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 includes 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

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 Bruce Hill at euplotes@msn.com Chair of the Volunteer Service Committee.

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

Clean up anytime during the first week of June and bring your CLEAN THE BAY trash to New Quarter Park's overflow parking lot on Saturday morning before noon. No household trash, please! This is for CLEAN THE BAY DAY

only and trash will be weighed and sorted for record-keeping purposes.

York County staffers Molly Nealer, Recreation Supervisor, and Laurie Halperin, Recycling/Beautification Coordinator, are heading up the event and hope to make the 20th Anniversary CLEAN THE BAY DAY the biggest and best in York County history!

Remember, we live close to the Bay wherever we live in Greater Williamsburg and York County. Every bit of litter will wash into a waterway and from there to the Bay if we don't pick it up. Only you can help up Preserve a National Treasure, the Chesapeake Bay, by participating in CLEAN THE BAY DAY.

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

2008 Virginia Society of Ornithology Breeding Bird Foray, June 2008

The 2008 Breeding Bird Foray has as its primary objective the collection of much-needed data on the distribution and abundance of avian species associated with forested riparian areas. Avian communities in this habitat type are currently under-surveyed by the road-based North American Breeding Bird Survey (BBS). The Foray will take place by canoe and kayak in order to survey areas with otherwise limited land access. The surveys are unique in being one of only a handful in the country to be conducted in this manner.

Volunteers will participate as data collectors and/or paddlers in breeding bird surveys along selected river segments using canoes and kayaks. Volunteers will stop at pre-determined points along these segments and conduct 6 minute counts of all birds detected by sight and sound. Please refer to <http://fredvso.umwblogs.org/> for detailed information.

Surveys will take place during the month of June. Each river segment will be surveyed once during this time. It is up to volunteers to schedule the exact date on which they will conduct their surveys. Volunteers are also encouraged to paddle their chosen river segment ahead of the survey date in order to familiarize themselves with access points, survey point locations, etc. Volunteers should take weather and river conditions into account in scheduling their surveys, including wind speed, water levels and flow, and timing of the tides. Volunteers can expect to put two full days into this project (one for scouting and one for surveying a river segment); on survey days, they should be at their first survey point on the water by official sunrise. The project will be completed by the end of June.

Both skilled birders and skilled paddlers are encouraged to participate, but a person need not be both, as birders can be matched to paddlers. Surveyors should be capable of identifying Virginia breeding bird species by sight and sound, and should have good eyesight and hearing. Paddlers should be experienced and have access to a canoe or kayak. Paddlers should have direct experience with a particular river segment or should have enough experience to feel comfortable navigating a new stretch of river.

Contact: Andrew Dolby, Virginia Society of Ornithology. Email: adolby@umw.edu

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.

Trail and 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, New Quarter Park 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

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, & Management, June 11 & 18

Monitor Least Terns and other nesting birds; carry out approved management and conservation action plans. Contact Shirley Devan, sedevan52@cox.net. 757-813-1322

Bobwhite Quail Habitat Restoration Project, June 14, 10 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 day is 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 & Grandview Beach Preserve Research Project

These projects are 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.

Box Turtle at Peasant Run



From Kathi Mestayer May 20: Peasant Run (Mestayer house) reports a box turtle in the front yard, and a nest of red-shouldered hawks down the street. This weekend, we staked out the yard across the street from the hawks, and watched the parents feed them, and the babies sticking their heads and wings up, covered in fuzz and remarkably large. We also placed lots of greenbriar on the ground around the birdbath to discourage cats from using it as a feeding station, which seems to work well, knock wood.

Sensory Overload in Fauquier County

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

A member of the Williamsburg Bird Club invited us to join her on her annual pilgrimage to the G. Richard Thompson Wildlife Management Area in Fauquier County May 7. Alex Minarik has visited this spot the first week in May for over 10 years. After our day in the woods, we now understand why.

This property of the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (DGIF) is northwest of Warrenton, VA and at the far northwest corner of Fauquier County near Linden, VA. The Appalachian Trail runs through it and there are several access points from the top of the mountain and the bottom of the mountain where a lake attracts fishermen and fisherwomen.

A 5:30 a.m. departure and a three-hour drive deposited us at the Trillium Trail on top of the mountain. We were more than ready to stretch our legs and see the bountiful species of this WMA, famous for the mountainside of large-flowered trillium, which were at their peak the day we visited. Not just a few plants, but a mountainside full of trillium (from white to deep pink), may apples, yellow and purple violets, and wild geranium. Several areas of yellow ladyslippers attracted amateur and professional photographers alike. We found several spots with showy orchis.

At every turn we discovered a new natural wonder: black cohosh, cinnamon fern, garlic mustard, golden ragwort, ironweed, Jack-in-the-pulpit, meadow rue, perfoliate bellwort, rattlesnake fern, rue anemone, showy orchis, skunk cabbage, Solomon's seal, Solomon's plume / false Solomon's seal, spring beauty, sweet Cicily, trout lily, and wood-betony / lousewort.

As we wandered the fire road twisting down the mountain, we had trouble deciding whether to look down or up! Our eyes and ears were bombarded with beautiful flowers and birds. Felice, with her camera gear, got as many photos as she could of the birds and flowers. Shirley was focused on expanding her list of year birds in Virginia. Alex found some great birds and was a great help in getting Felice and her camera and Shirley and her binoculars on them – Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Kentucky Warbler, Worm-eating Warbler, Cerulean Warbler, Scarlet Tanager, Black-throated Blue Warbler plus many of the “usual suspects” we have in our area. American Redstarts became the “default” bird and we often had to filter out the Redstarts to ID the other great birds.

Five hours and about 4 miles later we dropped our backpacks and pulled our lunches from the car trunk. With still two hours before our departure time of 4:00 p.m. Alex decided to head to Sky Meadows State Park about 10 minutes away. Our search for reported Bobolinks in the fields along the way was unsuccessful, but we did find a Raven, Eastern Meadowlarks, American Kestrel, Eastern Kingbird, Common Yellowthroat, nesting Tree Swallows and Eastern Bluebirds at the Park.

On the way home, we tallied our lists: 27 species of birds and 24 species of wildflowers. We even heard a Cope's Gray Tree Frog at the WMA.

We agreed with Alex that the Thompson WMA is a well-kept secret – at least here in the Coastal Plain. Many thanks to Alex Minarik for sharing a favorite spot with us and for driving. Felice and I will go back next May for sure.



Yellow Ladyslippers at Thompson WMA. Photo by Felice Bond.



Kentucky Warbler at Thompson WMA. Photo by Felice Bond.

A Steward's Guide to the Universe – Your Ecological Footprint

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

Confused about your footprint? I'm not really confused about my #9s down below but what's the difference between my carbon footprint and my ecological footprint.

Kari turned me on to the Virginia Naturally web site where I learned that my carbon footprint measures the amount of carbon emissions my lifestyle generates while the ecological footprint measures the amount of nature (acres) needed to support my lifestyle.

Here's the link: <http://www.vanaturally.com/footprint.html>

I printed the questionnaire from the above web site to calculate my ecological footprint. I answered questions such as: how often I eat animal-based foods; how much of my food is processed, packaged, and not grown locally. Then they wanted to know about the size of my house and how many people lived in it. Then came the car questions: how far do I travel on public transportation each week; how far do I drive my car each week; how many miles per gallon does my car get.

The survey wanted to know how many hours I spend flying each year. [None if I can help it!!] Then the survey asked how much waste I generate compared to my neighbors.

Wow! I just calculated my ecological footprint – 36.65 acres!! Unfortunately it's half again as much as the national average – 24 acres. The big culprits are my shelter footprint and my food footprint. I'm not downsizing until I have to – about 30 years from now if I have anything to do with it. We can do better with buying locally grown food, but the Farmer's Market is the same day as the Bird Walks and Field Trips! What's a birder to do? We'll work on that.

Ways to reduce your ecological footprint
(www.vanaturally.com/vanaturally/pdf/tipcard.pdf):

1. Assess your ecological footprint.
2. Buy locally grown and manufactured goods.
3. Be a smart driver and clean air champion. Keep your car in tune to reduce air pollution.
4. Plant a shade tree. Trees cool our cities, filter the air, buffer noise and provide homes and food for wildlife.
5. Save energy to conserve non-renewable fuels and protect air & water
6. Reduce, Reuse, Recycle
7. Be Water-Wise. Return clean water to your watershed to keep the land productive.
8. Recycle historic buildings & used sites
9. Enhance healthy wildlife habitat
10. Be a concerned citizen & support environmental programs

Calculating my carbon footprint is more complicated. I'll save that for another time. I'm too depressed already. You can try it. Here's the link:

http://www.vanaturally.com/vanaturally/carbon_footprint.html

Here Are the Next Ten Tips for Conserving Water

61. Next time you add or replace a flower or shrub, choose a low water use plant for year-round landscape color and save up to 550 gallons each year.
62. Install an instant water heater on your kitchen sink so you don't have to let the water run while it heats up. This will also reduce heating costs for your household.
63. Use a grease pencil to mark the water level of your pool at the skimmer. Check the mark 24 hours later. Your pool should lose no more than 1/4 inch each day.
64. Cut back on rinsing if your dishwasher is new. Newer models clean more thoroughly than older ones.
65. Use a screwdriver as a soil probe to test soil moisture. If it goes in easily, don't water. Proper lawn watering can save thousands of gallons of water annually.
66. Avoid over seeding your lawn with winter grass. Once established, rye-grass needs water every three to five days, whereas dormant Bermuda grass needs water only once a month.
67. Do one thing each day that will save water. Even if savings are small, every drop counts.
68. When the kids want to cool off, use the sprinkler in an area where your lawn needs it the most.
69. Make sure your swimming pools, fountains, and ponds are equipped with recirculating pumps.
70. Bathe your young children together.

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

An Ornithology Trifecta

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

The House Finches gave up on the hanging basket nest by the front door. Too much human traffic in and out. I saved the nest and 3 eggs for our toolbox (along with the cowbird egg). The rainspout Robins have hatched out their brood. The nestlings are two days old. I called Ellie to watch the parents feed them. As soon as a parent lands a couple of fuzzy heads pop up and wide open mouths appear. I wonder if they are able to keep track of who was fed last? Again the change in Ellie is amazing or maybe it is just the mother instinct. She now talks about "our" babies and checks on them frequently during the day to make sure they are all right. The Mourning Dove babies have also joined the world. They are the ugliest nestlings I have ever seen. They are living testimony to the speculation that birds are descendants of dinosaurs.

In the backyard I now have two young Brown Thrashers who have identified me with suet and peanut butter. These two "teenagers" are fearless and barely wait until I replenish the suet log. There is another Robin's nest in the ivy on my Loblolly. This explains the daily fight I see to see whose birdbath is it: The rainspouters barely hold their own while the Ivy crowd lives closer. The House Wrens are now feeding their brood in the butterfly garden birdhouse. They are doing a job finding caterpillars. Go guys!

The neighborhood Starlings have brought their kids to visit the feeding station. The youngsters are still trying to get Mom & Dad to feed them and chase

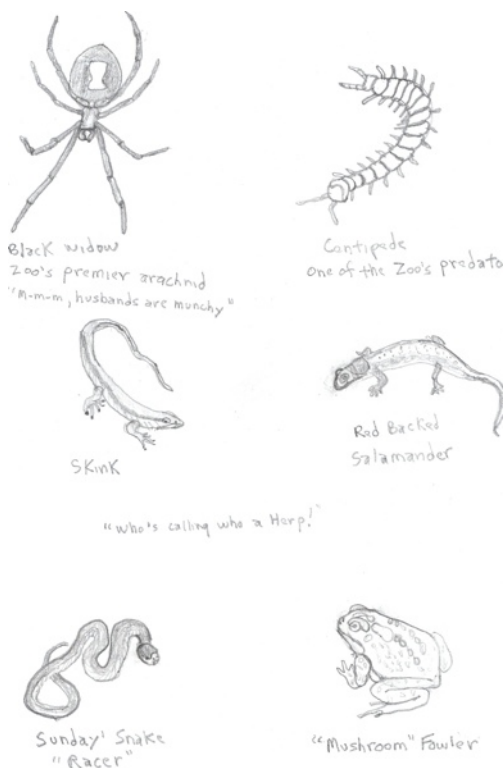
the parents around the yard until the oldsters lose their tempers and peck them. Not too different from some folks I know.

My accipiter, the Cooper's Hawk, took another Mourning Dove by the feeders. My next door neighbor says he saw a "Chicken Hawk" nail a squirrel that got clipped by a car. He said he had stopped at the stop sign at the end of our block and watched the drama. I'm sure it was our resident Red Tail. Just goes to show the food chain is alive and well. Thank goodness we are apex predators.

Don't Mess With Maggots

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

Yesterday I threw out an old casserole that had been living in our freezer for a while. This morning I went to the compost pile where it now resides and found it was a seething pile of maggots. This is great I thought, now I have instant Zoo food for my predators. I don't have to trap ants or pull the wood-pile apart for termites. I hurriedly scooped several tablespoons of the squirming mass into a collection canister and headed for my den. I happily shoveled a teaspoon of the disgusting things into the living quarters of the red backed salamanders, centipedes and the skink. I put the canister in the small refrigerator in the garage for future meals. About an hour later I thought I had better check on things. To my horror I found the maggots had climbed out of the animals' quarters and were busily creeping around on the den floor. There was also an unpleasant odor in the air like something had crawled into a corner and died. Realizing my marital status was in jeopardy I cleaned up my mess by picking the maggots up and throwing them into the biggest container I could find - Mushroom the Toad's terrarium. To my amazement he was eating them as fast as I could throw them in. After I got things under control I checked the other animals and found I had overloaded their ability to gobble up their entree. A teaspoon was too much for their small gullets. They did a mighty job on the ones they could handle. I next went to check on the small refrigerator. When I opened the door the smell was so bad it knocked me back. For a brief moment I thought I was back in the morgue doing my autopsy training. Don't mess with maggots!



Project Follow-Ups

Landscaping with Nature, April 12

Susan Powell, Helen Hamilton (VNPS/MG), Philip Merritt (landscape architect) and Kathi Mestayer collaborated on a one-day class on "Landscaping with Nature" April 12. They had seven students, and a lively discussion of habitat (Susan), natives and non-natives (Helen, with special bonus segment on converting lawn to garden space), landscaping with natives (Philip) and managing a wooded area (Kathi). The student reviews were excellent, and we all learned a lot from each other, like how neighborhood association rules can have an impact on habitat landscaping. The class is now ready to go for other groups, as the need arises. This first class was given through WALT (Williamsburg Area Learning Tree).

Craney Island Bird Monitoring, Conservation, & Management

Members of Master Naturalists and Williamsburg Bird Club visited Craney Island 6 times in March, April and May. While Ruth Beck is in the Rehab Center in Charlottesville, we are her research team at Craney and we are visiting every week during May, June, and July to monitor nesting shore birds such as Least Terns, Black-neck Stilts, Gull-billed Terns, and anything else that nests there. Ruth took us there March 25 and trained us in her protocols.

HRC Master Naturalists who have participated in one or more visits are: Kari Abbott, Felice Bond, Shirley Devan, Susie Engle-Hill, Bruce Hill, Sheila Kerr-Jones, Alice & Seig Kopinitz, Susan and Mike Powell, Patty Riddick, Larry Robertshaw (and spouse Sylvie Robertshaw), and Jordan Westenhaver. We've had wonderful assistance from Bill Williams (who taught our ornithology session) and Alexandra Minarik from the Williamsburg Bird Club.

Each visit has its own highlight -- the Harbor Seal observed in the Elizabeth River April 17 was exciting for all who saw and recorded it. We found the first Least Tern egg May 14. Then May 22 we counted 43 Least Tern nests. May 27 we observed 50 Least Tern nests and the terns are still exhibiting courting behavior. As Ruth Beck said, "the female always chooses." We saw several males offering fish to females. In some instances we could almost hear the female say, "bring me a bigger fish!"

The other highlights of the May 27 visit were good looks at Black Skimmers and Gull-billed Terns as well as baby Killdeer running around in the road. The next HRC visits will be June 11 and 18 to count and observe Least Terns. Little ones should be scurrying around by then.



Left to right: Alex Minarik, Kari Abbott, Susan Powell, and Shirley Devan conduct a "sweep" looking for Least Tern nests May 14. Photo by Mike Powell