



The Naturalist

The monthly newsletter of the Historic Rivers Chapter

Virginia Master Naturalist Program

www.vmn-historicrivers.org

A Monthly Newsletter

Volume 2 No. 7 July 2008

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President's Message

Greetings Everyone,

Happy 4th of July and summer to you all. The dog days of summer are not supposed to arrive until August! The heat has been interesting this year, and as everything, the reaction to the heat has been something to watch. My drought resistant plants are thriving in my yard, which is good since the grass is turning brown quickly.

This July brings us chances to get together not only for the monthly meeting July 9 on sea turtles which should be fantastic! We also have a great Ice Cream Social at Felice Bond's wonderful home again this year. The details are right next door on the front page.

The Board is taking a break in July so there will be no board meeting in July. Look for the board to return in August, ready to tackle the new cohort which begins the last week in August. My best to you all.

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



Sea Turtles for July 9 Program

Join us Wednesday, July 9, 2008, 6 - 9 p.m. at the Human Services Building on Olde Towne Road when Diane Tulipani from VIMS will talk about Sea Turtle Biology and Conservation. Diane is a Ph.D. student at VIMS studying Sea Turtles in the Department of Fisheries Sciences.

Ice Cream Social July 12

For the second year in a row, our own Felice Bond will open her home and host our annual Ice Cream Social Saturday, July 12 at 7:00 p.m.



Last year's event was a "natural" and culinary delight. Several people brought homemade ice cream and others brought all the fixings! Felice and Tom have a wonderful backyard that slopes down to a creek. So we'll have a chance to "naturalize" as well as enjoy ice cream and other goodies.

Here are directions FROM RT.199 W:

1. Follow Rt.199 W past Wal-Mart and Lowe's on your right.
2. Rt.199 W becomes Newman Rd. Pass the fire station on your right.
3. Go around an S curve and
4. Turn right onto Barlow Rd. Go about a mile.
5. Turn left onto Skimino Rd.
6. Turn left onto Shady Bluff Point into Skimino Landing Estates subdivision.
7. Turn right onto Creek Point Circle.
8. 203 Creek Point Circle is near the end of the cul-de-sac on the left.

Contact Felice at fbond203@cox.net if you need more directions. Also let her know what you can bring: ice cream, cookies, cake, drinks, toppings, paperware.

This is a fun event where we can visit and chat with each other in a relaxed environment.

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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 August 18 at 6:00 p.m. at the Williamsburg Regional Library, Scotland Street, Williamsburg.

Patty Riddick reminds all to turn in their hours for June 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 August 1 lecture 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>

2008 Public Tours Now through Aug 22, 2008

Friday mornings, 10:30 am-noon

Join our weekly public tour for a behind-the-scenes look at VIMS. These 1.5 hour guided walks generally include a tour of the VIMS Visitor's Center and Aquarium, a VIMS research laboratory, and our Teaching Marsh. The tours are most interesting for adults and older children. Please contact us in advance for reservations at (804) 684-7846 or via e-mail at susan@vims.edu.

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:

July 9, 2008 -- Sea Turtle Biology and Conservation

Wednesday, July 9, 2008, 6 - 9 p.m. At the Human Services Building. Diane Tulipani from VIMS will talk about Sea Turtle Biology and Conservation. Diane is a Ph.D. student at VIMS studying Sea Turtles in the Department of Fisheries Sciences.

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.

September 10, 2008 -- Exploring Estuarine Ecology at VIMS

NOTE: This program starts at 5:00 p.m and will end about 8:00 p.m. We'll be seining in the York River and then examining our catch in the lab and learning about the estuarine ecology of the York River. Be prepared for "wet work" in the river -- water shoes and shorts.

October 8, 2008 -- Sounds of Nature

Wednesday, October 8, 2008, 6 - 9 p.m. At the Human Services Building. What we're hearing and what we're not!

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, clydeccedm@aol.com

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.

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.

Virginia Environmental Conference -- September 17 - 18, 2008

Location: Natural History Museum, Martinsville, VA

Two days of training on Environmental Education is sponsored by Virginia Naturally. The conference theme, "Interpreting Virginia's Rich Natural Heritage" serves as a rallying call for inspired interpretation of our state's natural and cultural resources. The conference proceedings will feature examples of

community initiatives emphasizing the concept of "Think Global, Act Local." Registration is now open. Here's the link to more details:

<http://www.vanaturally.com/vanaturally/eeconference08.html>

Annual Virginia Citizens for Water Quality Summit, August 9, 2008, 9:30 am – 4:00 pm

Where: University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Virginia

What: Time to meet with fellow volunteer water quality monitors to share successes

Cost: There is no fee for this event. Boxed lunches will be available at a cost of \$9.50

Tentative Agenda:

Morning Session – Fish Kills, TMDLs, and Invasive Species

Afternoon Breakouts – Monitoring Techniques (e.coli and habitat assessment) and information sharing

For more information contact Stacey Brown at 804-615-5036 or stacey@vasos.org. Registration will begin June 20 at www.virginiacwq.org

Virginia Master Naturalist Statewide Conference October 17 - 19, 2008

Where: Wytheville, VA. Our home base will be the Wytheville Meeting Center, with field trips to many nearby natural areas.

Who: All Virginia Master Naturalist volunteers who have enrolled in or completed a basic training course are invited to attend. Chapter advisors are encouraged to come as well! We hope to see at least a few representatives from each of our 25 chapters, and the more the merrier.

What: This conference offers an opportunity to obtain advanced training in many natural resource topics, a venue for chapters to share their accomplishments and ideas with each other, and time to explore a beautiful part of our state. Located in the Southwest VA, Wytheville is a terrific spot for a fall getaway during prime leaf changing season. We'll have access to the National Forest, several state parks, a wildlife management area, and other wonderful natural areas. Some training topics to choose from will include public speaking skills, tips for working with youth, developing interpretive materials, Project Underground, wildlife data collection for DGIF, plus many more. Our field trip themes will range from environmental education to fish biology to forest ecology and more!

Fee: Still being worked as of July 1 but likely between \$120 - \$150. Stay tuned.

Tentative schedule:

Friday, October 17

Day: Pre-meeting field trip to Mount Rogers

Evening: Arrive by 5:30 pm. Registrations, supper, welcome and kick-off, program highlights from 2007, chapter "share fair" and networking session

Saturday, October 18

Morning: Concurrent classroom sessions

Afternoon: Field sessions

Evening: Banquet and keynote speaker

Sunday, October 19

Morning: Concurrent sessions in the classroom and nearby

Afternoon: Field sessions

Logistics: We will have on-line registrations and we'll send out an announcement when that becomes available. Volunteers will be responsible for their own lodging arrangements, but we'll provide a list of affordable hotels in the area that partner with the Wytheville Meeting Center to provide discounts. You might also consider camping or staying at a cabin in a state park such as Hungry Mother State Park. State park cabins fill up quickly, so make those plans soon.

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.

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

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, July 7 plus other July dates to be determined

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 days will be in the late summer. 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.

Butterfly Count at Chippokes State Park, July 12

Chippokes count is scheduled for July 12 and Teta Kain is the contact person: teta@vims.edu

Butterfly Count on Eastern Shore, July 20

Eastern Shore is scheduled for July 20. According to Hal and Lynn, the organizers, "The count takes place on July 20. Our group will gather at the Eastern Shore of Virginia National Wildlife Refuge visitor center at 9am. Depending on how many folks show up and what skill levels folks have, we'll split up into various teams and be assigned territories to cover for the day. Less skilled folks are paired up with folks who are more adept at identifying butterflies. Checklists are mailed back to us."

To sign up and get more info, contact hal.lynn@comcast.net

CANCELLED: Great Dismal Swamp Butterfly Count, July 25, 2008

This event has been cancelled because of the extensive damage done by the fires in the Swamp. They will conduct the count again next year.

Cohort III Starts August 28

Let your friends and neighbors know that our next training class begins Thursday, August 28. Give interested folks Shirley Devan's phone number: 757-813-1322. She'll send out an application package. Our web site should be up soon so folks can download the application from the web site. Stay tuned.

As before, there will be Volunteer opportunities associated with each class. 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 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 our wonderful speakers again!

Steward's Guide to the Universe: "Right to Dry"

Kathi Mestayer, Historic Rivers Chapter, Virginia Master Naturalist Member

While hanging my wet clothes up on the line to dry, I remember my grandmother, a post-WWII German immigrant who prayed to be struck dead while hanging up her sheets, because the sight and smell were the nicest thing she knew of. She didn't get her wish, but died a peaceful death, and left me with an appreciation for the clothesline, which is considered almost-primitive by today's standards.

But wait!

I recently read about the "Right to Dry" movement. Solar rights legislation" has been passed in Hawaii, Utah, and Florida, and a long list of municipalities and community groups, including five homeowners' associations in Virginia: Herndon, Reston, Manassas, and Fairfax, Charlottesville. Canada has legislation pending for the whole country. The Right to Dry website has art projects showing clotheslines, laundry tips, draft guidelines for clotheslines, and much more. Just click your way to: <http://www.laundrylist.org>.

This is truly an idea whose time has come!

Here Are the Next Ten Tips for Conserving Water

71. Landscape with Xeriscape trees, plants and groundcovers. Call your local conservation office for more information about these water thrifty plants.
72. Winterize outdoor spigots when temps dip to 20 degrees F to prevent pipes from bursting or freezing.
73. Insulate hot water pipes so you don't have to run as much water to get hot water to the faucet.
74. Wash your car on the grass. This will water your lawn at the same time.
75. Drop that tissue in the trash instead of flushing it and save gallons every time.
76. If you have an evaporative cooler, direct the water drain to a flowerbed, tree, or your lawn.
77. Make suggestions to your employer to save water (and dollars) at work.
78. Support projects that use reclaimed wastewater for irrigation and other uses.
79. Use a hose nozzle and turn off the water while you wash your car and save more than 100 gallons.
80. Encourage your friends and neighbors to be part of a water-conscious community.

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

Project Follow-Ups

Children's Day at the Williamsburg Farmers' Market

By Jordan Westenhaver, Historic Rivers Chapter, Virginia Master Naturalist Member

Location: Merchants Square, Williamsburg, June 7, 2008, 8:00 a.m. to 11 a.m.

Objective: Set up a destination booth with interactive teaching exhibits about local wildlife for children and provide information to adult market-goers about the VMN program.

Participating Members:

Jordan Westenhaver, chair
Sheila Kerr-Jones
Patty Riddick
Clyde Marsteller
Joanne Medina
Kathi Mestayer

Description of Activities: Jordan set up the tent with tables. One held a display board of HRC pictures and posters plus printed hand-outs. Clyde presided over a table of denizens of his suitcase zoo. In another area of the tent Sheila helped the youngest children make colorful butterflies to take home. Joanne's fennel plant with lively caterpillars and Patty's turtle shells from the Toolbox captured everyone's interest. Kathi provided an array of reference materials and native flowers from her yard. Seventy-six people entered to win the copy of Discover Our Wild Side donated by Jordan. We gave out books, DVDs, brochures, and coloring and project pages to take home. Five people took the application for Cohort III. We all answered questions about HRC-VMN.



Sheila Kerr-Jones helps a little one learn more about butterflies.

Evaluation: Team members rated the project as worthwhile and expressed that the Market is a good venue for our chapter. We have been invited to come again by the Market Manager.

Comments/Recommendations: This project was a successful collaboration by members of Cohorts I and II. Despite the record-breaking heat (90+ degrees) and a lower than usual turnout for the Market, we achieved our objective to entertain and educate the children and to inform the adults about our organization. Future exhibits would be an excellent way to increase our adult outreach efforts and could merit newspaper publicity. The question I am asked most frequently is to describe our volunteer opportunities; an exhibit that features specific projects in volunteer education, citizen science, and/or resource stewardship should be well received at the Market. Also, another Children’s Day is slated for October.

Craney Island Bird Monitoring, Conservation, & Management

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

Craney Island Visit 6/24/08. Visitors: Judy Hansen, Alice & Seig Kopinitz, Alex Minarik

We arrived at Craney about 8:30 and were shocked and dismayed to see that ALL of the pine trees opposite the office had been cut down to stumps.

Tern Site #1: Total of 7 birds on the ground. We hoped to see nesting, but we did not see that kind of behavior. There was some territorial activity when a killdeer went through. Mostly just walking and flying behavior.

Tern Site #2: Signs were up at the entrance to the road and blue tape strung across the signs. Water from previous week on the south side was about dried up. From that vantage point, we saw:

1. On the South side, 4 nesting birds on the road.
2. On the central cell, we observed 2 nesting birds on the road, 2 nesting birds just off the road, 1 nesting bird further from the road in the flats and 1 other possible in the same flat area.

Tern Site #3: After the “forced march,” we arrived at signs with blue tape strung across the road.

On the central cell, 3 nesting birds. There also appeared to be (viewing angle may have deceived us) a killdeer sitting (showing nesting behavior) not far away. No fussing or dive bombing towards this particular killdeer.

On the south cell, 3 nesting birds near the road, 2 nesting birds on the flat area beyond the road. Also 1 downy chick tucked under the shade of a log – the chick moved about and was tended to by an adult. But that’s not all, 2 downy chicks running around the flat area. We observed these chicks being fed by the adults.



Least Tern chick. Photo by Seig Kopinitz

Of note at site #3: As we crossed over the ridge, close to the parking area, we observed 2 willets in the same area the stilts were seen previously. These willets were acting very territorially, settled down after we passed by and acted up again on our return. When we returned only one of the willets tried to distract us. The other special note: the Common Nighthawk appeared to be nesting.



Female Common Nighthawk on nest. Photo by Seig Kopinitz.

Thoroughly Hokie Experience

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

Hello to all. I just returned from attending Master Gardener College at Virginia Tech in Blacksburg. For those of you who are not familiar with the College it is hosted by VCE (one of our sponsors) to provide advanced training to Master Gardeners throughout the state. It is a four day event featuring lectures, classes tours, social events, an auction, picnic and the chance to enjoy the unique hospitality of a university town including a trip to their Farmer’s Market. The theme of this years’ College was Land Stewardship. Classes ranged from use of native plants, invasive species, plant diseases, insect pests, to pruning classes taught by the Primo Prune Meister himself – none other than our own Larry Riddick. I focused on participating in a tour to the Pandapas Pond (see photo below) led by Dr Dendro aka Dr John Seiler, Phd., Department of Forestry at Tech and classes in wildlife/human interactions, plant diseases, insect pests, and two entomology labs.



The tour was the highlight of the College for me. Dr Seiler led us on a mile long walk around the Pond stopping every ten feet or so to point out specific trees, shrubs and flowers most of which are unique to the Ridge and Valley geological division of Virginia. I was again introduced to MAD HORSE (Maple, Ash, Dogwood and Horse Chestnut twig arrangement). I learned to ID five new (to me) plants: Black Alder (*Alnus glutanisa*), Striped Maple (*Acer pensylvanicum*), Silky Dogwood (*Cornus amomum*), Pignut Hickory (*Carya glabra*), and the Mockernut Hickory (*Carya tomentosa*). The surrounding hardwood/pine forest is dominated by Northern Red, Chestnut, and Black Oaks, Red Maple, and the ubiquitous Tulip Poplar. Pines are White, Virginia, and Black.

There were a gazillion (thanks Seig) butterflies feasting on the blossoms of Rhododendrons, Mountain Laurels, and Silky Dogwoods. The majority were Papilios: Tiger (yellow and black phases), Spicebush and Black Swallowtails, Purples (*Limnitis arthemis*), and Blues (*Everes comyntas*). We passed a troop of Cub Scouts led by a Park Ranger who had them netting pond life. They had a nice collection of newts, tadpoles, minnows and aquatic insects.

The sad part of the tour was to see the oaks literally covered with Gypsy Moth caterpillars (*Lymantria dispar*). They crawl down from the canopy during the heat of the day and hide in the crevasses of the bark near the ground. There were so many that the trees looked like they were covered with fuzz.

Can't end without telling you all about one of the best culinary experiences I have had in Virginia. We had been told of a restaurant in Catawba about 20 miles from Blacksburg. It sets in an idyllic 160 acre pastoral setting. Driving there took us on a two lane blacktop farm to market road winding through the heart of the Ridge and Valley landscape that Dr Johnson taught us about. After an hour I was thoroughly convinced we were lost when the restaurant suddenly appeared. It is a renovated farm house that serves family style meals that consist of heaping plates of fried chicken, country ham, roast beef, green beans, cole slaw, pinto beans, mashed potatoes and gravy, butter milk biscuits, fruit of the day, peach cobbler ala mode, tea, lemonade, soda, and coffee. The dishes are replenished as fast as they are emptied and you can take the leftovers home. The meal costs are \$14 (drinks & tax incl.) for adults and \$7 for children under twelve. I enjoyed the wait (20 minutes) for seating by sitting on a porch swing and watching the barn swallows flying over the farm pond and the meadow larks and assorted blackbirds catching insects the grazing cattle scared up. Fortunately Ellie and I were passengers so we got to doze off on the way back to the motel.

For those Hokie Alumni and parents whose kids & money go to Tech there is an off campus restaurant that is very inexpensive and serves great meals.

I didn't want to be guilty of any impropriety so if anyone is interested in the restaurants names contact me & we will chat.

For those who are interested in meeting Dr Dendro - google dendrology. The first website is Va Tech. Click on this and you will get Dr Seiler's home page. You can ask him any question you might have about trees and shrubs and get fact sheets about plants you know the common name of.

Eat well and live long, Ramblin' Clyde



Silky Dogwood, right, and Striped Maple, left.

It's a Jungle Out There! Visiting Costa Rica

by Susie Engle-Hill, Historic Rivers Chapter, Virginia Master Naturalist Member

Whenever I told anyone that I was headed to Costa Rica, they either said, "Wow! Sounds like paradise." or, if they'd been to Central America before, they had two words of advice, "Bug repellent." Still, I was excited and hoping to see tropical flowers and some exotic birds. Truthfully, I was a little anxious as well, wondering if I'd be able to withstand the onslaught of flying, crawling, and burrowing insects. Even my Honduran and Panamanian students, while exclaiming joy for my planned adventure, also warned, "Repellent!" So it was, in the wee hours of May 12, we took off for 9 days with our backpacks filled to the brim, including many packets of Deet wipes.

Our plan was to land in Costa Rica's capital city, San Jose, pick up our rental car, and drive to the montane cloud forest. 'Mirador de Quetzales', our destination, offered a strong possibility of seeing the endangered Resplendent Quetzal. After a night in the mountains, we'd descend the 11,000 foot peaks to the Pacific coast. In Baru, we planned an overnight jungle hike with a guide, a zip-line tour the next day, and then a night in a real bed at Hacienda Baru ecolodge. Our fourth night would come at the end of more adventurous travel. We were to drive to the end of the road at Sierpe, stash the vehicle, and hop aboard a small boat. The boat trip through the mangrove forests, around the Osa Peninsula, into the Pacific Ocean, would end at Drake Bay. We planned to spend 4 nights at Las Caletas, only accessible by boat. That would be our jumping off point for a visit to Corcovado National Park. After breakfast on our 8th day, we'd jump in the boat to return to the mainland, hoping our car was where we stashed it, and drive up the Pacific coast toward the airport. We weren't sure where we'd stay our final night in Costa Rica, but we were ready for adventure!

What we found exceeded all our expectations. The food was simple and delicious, the people were friendly and helpful everywhere, and the abundance and diversity of nature was astounding. Costa Rica is a small country in Central America about the size of WV (and the twisting, narrow mountain roads are similar!). It is bordered by Nicaragua to the north and Panama to the south and is one of the most stable countries in the region. Costa Rica has been able to successfully avoid the widespread violence that has plagued most of Latin America. After a bloody civil war in 1948, they abolished the military and established a democratically elected assembly. The literacy rate is 96%, as universal public education is guaranteed in the Constitution. Almost every village has a school and both elementary and high schools are free. Their main foreign policy objective is to foster human rights and sustainable development as a way to secure stability and growth. There is poverty in Costa Rica, but the economy is improving. Ecotourism, in which they were a pioneer, is extremely popular and tourism now earns more foreign exchange than bananas and coffee combined. There is an abundant variety of plants and animals and they've had the foresight to protect extensive areas (over 25% of their land) as national parks and refuges. Because of the varied terrain ~ high altitude cloud forest, coastal lowland jungle, coastlines on both the Caribbean and the Pacific ~ the biodiversity is incredible. Around 800 species of birds have been identified here, as well as an abundance of plants, reptiles, arthropods, and mammals. We were privileged to see Tapir, Tamandua, Three and Two-toed Sloths, White-faced Capuchin, Squirrel, Spider, and Howler Monkeys, Pica, and Coati during our brief time there. Hiking through the jungle is like strolling in an aviary ~ there are beautiful birds at every turn. Scarlet Macaw, Chestnut-mandibled Toucan, the Resplendent Quetzal, Magnificent Frigatebird, Brown Booby, Pale-billed Woodpecker, Red-legged Honeycreeper, Wood Stork, Laughing Falcon, and Potoo are just a fraction of the avian beauties we saw. Also, the brilliant, glistening flowers attract an amazing variety of butterflies. At Hacienda Baru, there was a Mariposaria (screened-tent butterfly house) on the property where they raised host plants and butterflies for release into the wild. We caught

glimpses of the famed Blue Morpho Butterfly in several areas of the country. The undersides of its wings were dusky brown, while the top was shimmering, iridescent blue. As it lumbered by, it seemed to appear (blue)... and then disappear (brown), with each flap of its wings.



Blue Morpho Butterfly

Since we were forewarned about the swarms of undesirable insects we might encounter, we were prepared. 'Eau de Deet' became our favorite perfume and made life in the jungle quite enjoyable. May is the beginning of the rainy season (when travel is less expensive), but we still enjoyed mostly sunny days. Several nights it sounded like we might be washed away in the torrents, but clouds cleared by morning. So if you weigh the bad roads and biting insects against the friendly people, expert guides, tasty food, and spectacular natural beauties...there's no contest. Costa Rica is Pura Vida!

Educational Outreach Training with DGIF

by Susie Engle-Hill, Historic Rivers Chapter, Virginia Master Naturalist Member

*Humankind has not woven the web of life.
We are but one thread within it.*

Whatever we do to the web, we do to ourselves. (Chief Seattle)

Did you know that the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (DGIF) sponsors a corporate certification program for businesses and industries with large tracts of land where a habitat improvement project can make a substantial contribution to the welfare of wildlife communities? Or that rural landowners can request on-site, technical assistance from a DGIF biologist in habitat management methods that benefit wildlife?

On June 10, Master Naturalists from the Hampton Roads area gathered at the Virginia Aquarium to learn about habitat improvement. Carol Heiser, Habitat Education Coordinator for DGIF, brought an all-day, well-paced workshop to 'train the trainer' ~ to train Master Naturalists to offer programs on habitat improvement. Since there is only one of Carol and many of us, she runs this Habitat Facilitator Training so that we can spread the gospel about conservation and habitat improvement and restoration.

Participants receive a full binder 'toolkit' of resources which we can use to educate homeowners, schools, or businesses who request assistance. This toolkit includes many DGIF publications, possible agendas for programs,

pages of websites, and DVD's on Rain Gardens, Outdoor Classroom, and Landscaping With Natives/Eradicating Invasives. This is a full day of training with hands-on activities, discussions, and lecture.

A personal benefit of attending this workshop in Va. Beach was being able to also visit the Aquarium afterwards. The workshop was completed by 4 pm, but that's not the most fun time to tackle a commute through the Hampton Roads Bridge Tunnel. So I hung out in the spectacular aviary until closing at 7 pm and communed with the herons, ducks, and woodpeckers. The Ruddy Ducks were in full breeding, blue-beaked color ~ gorgeous! One pine tree had 3 busy nests ~ Yellow-crowned Night Heron, Cattle Egret, and Black-crowned Night Heron. What a bustling site!

But I digress...Several of our Historic Rivers Chapter members have been to this workshop. Jim Booth also attended the day I was there. If you are interested in this kind of outreach, contact Carol at Carol.Heiser@dgif.virginia.gov.

Sweet Briar Sojourn

by Susie Engle-Hill, Historic Rivers Chapter, Virginia Master Naturalist Member

On May 3 - 4, 2008, the Biology Department at Sweet Briar College and VA Master Naturalist Program's Central Virginia Chapter offered the first ever Advanced Training Rally. Professional instructors gave workshops on a wide variety of natural history subjects and skills. The 3,200 acre campus of lovely Sweet Briar College provided indoor classrooms, conference space, and outdoor learning areas. Their chef also made delicious meals!

Mike Hayslett, Naturalist-in-Residence at Sweet Briar, and member of the Central Virginia Chapter VMN, was master of ceremonies. He and his well organized group offered interestingly varied workshops, nocturnal activities, and Sunday forays to the Blue Ridge Mountains. There was also a keynote speaker, Dr. Arthur Evans, who was available to sign his books Saturday evening. Attendees could register for lodging at the inn on campus, or select from a list of hotels in Lynchburg.

Intriguing workshops included such variety as:

- Searching for Early-season Amphibians in Wetland Habitats
- EEK! Environmental Education with Kids
- Insect-Plant Interactions (myrmecochory!)
- Mammal and Bird Tracks & Sign (scat!)
- Nature Journaling for the Artistically Challenged
- Shocking Fish Tails (electroshock sampling in the lake!)

Forays into the Blue Ridge on Sunday morning were exceptional. Sweet Briar packed us delicious box lunches, lest we faint from hunger while hiking. The Central VA Chapter has an infrared camera along the Appalachian Trail to gather data on wildlife diversity in the area. We were shown how they locate a site and set-up the camera, as we hiked along the beautiful AT. Later, we drove up to Wiggin Spring, also along the AT, for a visual feast of wildflowers. It was the right time of year to see spring ephemerals such as Showy Orchis, Pink Trillium, Bluets, Wood Anemone, Dutchman's Breeches, Yellow Ladyslipper, and Violets in blue, white, and yellow.

Because many birders were at a conference at Mountain Lake, there was no official bird hike offered. However, that didn't stop us from enjoying sightings of: Eastern Meadowlark, Eastern Bluebird, Blue Grosbeak, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Black & White Warbler, American Redstart, Bluegray Gnatcatcher, Wood Thrush, Scarlet Tanager, Indigo Bunting, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, and many more.

Kudos to the folks in Central Virginia for organizing a wonderful rally that brought VMN's from all over the state. It was a pleasure to explore the lake and marsh for fish, turtles, frogs, and salamanders; the old dairy barn for slithering reptiles, arachnids, and birds; the wide-open pastures for butterflies; the mountains for wildflowers; ...and all in the company of folks who get equally excited about bugs, birds, and bushes! The host chapter even provided a list of characteristics for us so we'd recognize each other...

"You Might Be A Naturalist IF:

- You know what the word "coleoptera" means
- You have to warn people before they open any container in your fridge
- The inside of your car looks like a science lab
- You've ever stopped to get a closer look at road kill. (bonus points if you ever took it home)
- You don't travel anywhere without a pocket full of ziplock bags
- Someone screams "SNAKE!" and you run towards it
- Most of your home library consists of field guides
- The major colors of your wardrobe are khaki and forest green
- You find the new R.E.I. catalog more thrilling than the Victoria Secrets catalog"

A Mr. Scott Production, c. 2005

Travelogue, Part I

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

This June, we took our annual trip to Ithaca a bit early. It's always lovely, and this spring was no exception. It was interesting to see: my first garlic mustard (who'd think a nonnative invasive would be a trip highlight? speaks volumes), the new Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology building, and a visit to the northernmost extent of the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

Ever wonder where that little finger that wends its way up north ends up? It's Wilseyville Swamp (photo below), unique in that it drains both north and south. The water that heads south ends up in "our" Bay. A long-abandoned railroad bed is the high-and-dry trail that runs along the edge, and the view is glorious.



At the "Lab of O" (as they call it), a new building sports a large display on ways to keep birds from hurtling into the kind of big glass windows that look out onto their swamp. There's also a bio-acoustics display, where you can play animal sounds and see images of their amplitudes, wavelengths, and other properties I don't know the words for. An interesting aside was our friend Peter who directs the Lab's Elephant Listening Project. He is now back in Gabon, wading through the swamps, eating canned sardines, trying to record elephant sounds that are too low-frequency (there's that other word) for humans to hear. Very glamorous work. He says the elephants they track are so quiet that when they are moving through the jungle that you can't hear them at all. They move from the front of their toes across their soles very gently. I like the image of elephants tiptoeing.

The stone volkswagen? Well, I think that speaks for itself! (photo below)



Well, we're back in the jungles of Williamsburg, with our own backyard dramas playing out daily. There's a black snake and two box turtles in the neighborhood, and everyone is now duly instructed to leave them alone!

Travelogue, Part II

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

Just got back from Dolly Sods!

Saw a goshawk (there was a poster saying they were logging sightings, so we made an entry in the Forest Service logbook), and a black-throated green warbler.

It's such a cool area; one day, we were in the clouds, and the other we hiked along meadows of dogbane, nodding onion, and huckleberries and saw a big, adult black bear about 50 yards away, ambling down the slope next to us. If what we saw was characteristic, they poop on the trail....