



THE NATURALIST

The monthly newsletter of the Historic Rivers Chapter
Virginia Master Naturalist Program

<http://historicrivers.org>

A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

Volume 3 No. 8 August 2009

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Message from the president

Night of the Black Lights and Owls!

“We live in the Age of Beetles. Using sheer numbers as a criterion for success, beetles are the most successful animals on Earth. If single examples of every plant and animal species were placed in a row, every fifth species would be a beetle and every tenth species a weevil (one type of beetle).”

~ *An Inordinate Fondness for Beetles*
by Arthur V. Evans and Charles L. Bellamy

If you like insects (and I know that you do!) then you should plan attend the “Night of the Black Lights and Owls” starting at 7 pm on Saturday, August 22nd and continuing through 9 am on Sunday August 23rd at the VCU Rice Center. The night will be filled with observing, cataloguing and collecting moths, beetles, and other insects that are attracted to ultraviolet and mercury vapor lights. In addition, we will venture into the nearby woods in search of owls.

On hand for the night is Arthur V. Evans, entomologist, lecturer, photographer, and author, whose books include the *National Wildlife Federation Field Guide to Insects and Spiders of North*

America, An Inordinate Fondness for Beetles and *What’s Bugging You? A Fond Look at the Animals We Love to Hate*. He is currently at work on *Introduction to Insects of Virginia and the Carolinas* and *Field Guide to Beetles of Eastern North America* both of which are sure to be of enormous interest to master naturalists.

If you wish to stay for the entire night, then you can bring your own tent to camp outside, or you can bring your sleeping bag and plan to spend the night in the new LEED Platinum Education Building at the Rice Center. LEED stands for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design. It is the internationally recognized green building certification system used by the US Green Building Council to rate the design and construction of green, energy efficient buildings. Platinum is the highest sustainability rating possible. Ann Wright, the Life Science Outreach Education coordinator and organizer of this event, will lead tours through the building for those who are interested.

If you would like to read more about Arthur Evans and his research interests, then I recommend his blog at (<http://arthurevans.wordpress.com>) which includes such topics as insect camouflage, natural history collections, and Darwin the Beetle Man.

CHAPTER

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Adrienne Frank, and Gary Driscole

Message from the president, continued from page 1

If you want to learn more about beetles, then I recommend this fascinating website dedicated to educating people about beetles. The address is www.fond4beetles.com, and the site is filled with project ideas for educators and students, as well as suggested books, artwork, and photographs of beetles.

In Other News.....

If you haven't seen it already, you may be pleased to know that Dr. Lou Verner, Watchable Wildlife Biologist with DGIF, wrote an encouraging article about the Virginia Master Naturalist program. It appears in the August 2009 issue of "Virginia Wildlife." (You may recall that Dr. Verner usually presents our Ecology Lecture at the end of Basic Training.)

In the article, he describes how the program has had a positive impact on Virginia's citizenry, its public lands, and its natural resources. He describes the training program, the volunteer service projects that have been undertaken by various chapters, and the accomplishments and monetary benefits of the Master Naturalist Program to Virginia.

His article couldn't have come at a better time since we are actively recruiting for our newest training session.

The July Picnic Was a Huge Success!

I would like to extend a big "Thank You" to those who helped with and attended the picnic last month. I think everyone would agree - It was a huge success with delicious food and great company! In attendance were a few folks who will be part of the new training cohort. Also in attendance were a few folks from our sister chapter on the Peninsula.

I would particularly like to thank Barbara Boyer and her hubby and official Grill Master, Charlie, for helping to purchase the food and especially for manning the grills. Thanks, Charlie! The hot dogs were superb!

Thanks also to Alice Kopinitz and Shirley Devan for all their hard work in planning and organizing the event.

Remember, there is no official general membership meeting planned for August. However, I hope to see you all at the *Night of Black Lights and Owls* event!

Regards,

Susan Powell, President

Historic Rivers Chapter

VA Master Naturalist Program

Basic Training for Cohort IV Starts

August 25

August 25: Introduction to VA Master Naturalist and the Nature of Naming

September 1: Risk Management (Jeremy Johnson) and Biology Basics – Bruce Hill

September 15: Habitats – Susan Powell

September 26 – Saturday Field Trip – Wetlands Ecology at York River State Park

September 29: Plant Biology – Charlie Dubay at Jamestown High

October 6: Dendrology – Dr. Stewart Ware

October 20: Geology – Dr. Jerre Johnson

October 24 – Saturday Field Trip – Geology Field Trip with Dr. Johnson

November 3: Indigenous Cultures – Dr. Aleck Loker

November 14 – TBD

November 17: Interpretive Skills and Field Methods – Steve Living

December 1: Entomology – Dr. Barbara Abraham

December 9: Wednesday, Chapter's Annual Meeting and Holiday Gathering. Michelle Prysby will be our speaker.

January 5: Herpetology – Tim Christensen

January 16: Field Trip – TBD

January 19: Ornithology – Bill Williams

February 2: Mammalogy – Bo Baker (to be confirmed)

February 13: Saturday – Freshwater Ecology in the morning; Winter Botany in afternoon – Charlie Dubay at Jamestown High

February 16: Fishes of VA – Bob Greenlee (to be confirmed)

March 2: Ecology – Dr. Lou Verner (to be confirmed)

firmed)

March 10: Wednesday, Graduation for Cohort IV at Chapter's regular Monthly Meeting.

-Shirley Devan-



Angier Brock

Barbara Boyer

have completed their initial 40 hours of service work and 8 hours of advanced training.

Time Sheets

Jeanette Navia asks that you continue to send in your time sheets using the same Word doc form as before. You do not need to include travel time for Advanced Training, but please do include hours for Volunteer Service. Travel time for volunteer service goes toward your milestone hours.

Notes from the Board

All meetings of the Board of Directors are open to members. Jeanette Navia reminds all to turn in their hours for June 2009. You can't get certified unless you send in your hours!

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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.

Partnerships

The Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (VDGIF) and eBird are proud to announce a partnership between eBird and the Virginia Birding and Wildlife Trail (VBWT).

The VBWT is celebrating its 5th anniversary this year and staff with the VDGIF Watchable Wildlife program is working to enhance the VBWT's website for users and increase its value as a conservation tool. Working with eBird, helps fulfill both goals.

VDGIF staff hoped to provide users with site specific checklists and a way to record their own observations for a VBWT site. After investigating several methods to provide this functionality, it became apparent that an ideal framework for this task already existed with eBird.

eBird, a real-time, online checklist program, has revolutionized the way that the birding community reports and accesses information about birds, their distribution, and sightings. Launched in 2002 by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and National Audubon Society, eBird provides rich data sources for basic information on bird abundance and distribution. A state specific Virginia eBird portal, sponsored by the Virginia Society of Ornithology and the Coastal Virginia Wildlife Observatory, also provides access to local birding information and expertise. eBird provides its users with the ability to explore a variety of data and to record their own observations, adding to a valuable pool of information.

The Virginia Birding and Wildlife Trail, established in 2002, was the 1st statewide trail of its kind. It identifies the best locations for wildlife viewing within the Commonwealth and connects them through a series of 65 loops. The VBWT provides a valuable trip planning tool for the wildlife viewing enthusiast. Grouping the sites together in loops also provides a discrete entity for the local promotion of sustainable tourism. By helping localities realize the financial benefit of their wildlife habitats the VBWT strives to provide another tool for the preservation and conservation of those habitats. "Discover our Wild Side", the VBWT guide is an award winning publication that provides detailed maps, directions and descriptions of the 65 loops that comprise the VBWT. The entire VBWT is also listed site-by-site on the VDGIF website <http://www.dgif.virginia.gov/vbwt/>

Given that the VBWT works to identify the premiere wildlife viewing locations throughout the Commonwealth it wasn't surprising to discover that 98 VBWT sites were already established as Hotspots by eBird users. Watchable Wildlife staff coordinated with the Virginia eBird Hotspot coordinator to integrate these sites and update Virginia eBird (and per extension eBird) with the remaining 527 VBWT sites. Prior to the inclusion of the VBWT Virginia had 552 hotspots. The inclusion of the VBWT brings the total number of Virginia Hotspots to over 1,000!

VBWT sites are identified within eBird by both their official VBWT name and the site number (e.g. Hungry Mother State Park - MCM01). Each VBWT site on the VDGIF webpage will have a link directly to the eBird observation bar charts for that site, thus allowing users to see what's being seen! A link to the Virginia eBird portal will also allow new users to register to enter their own observations for the site. With the linkage between eBird and the VBWT, birders in the Commonwealth will be easily able to identify VBWT trail sites within eBird and enter their sightings.

Many thanks to Gerco Hoogeweg, eBird Volunteer Hotspot Manager for Virginia, for his work in helping to coordinate this effort.

Stephen Living
 Watchable Wildlife Biologist
 Virginia Dept. of Game & Inland Fisheries





Honoring 1000 hours of volunteer service, Shirley Devan was recognized by the Historic Rivers Chapter of the Virginia Master Naturalists for her dedication and service since 2007. Jeanette Navia, Membership Chair, and Susan Powell, President, presented the 1000-hour pin at the annual picnic in July.

Photo courtesy of Adrienne Frank

Events farther afield

The Virginia Natural History Society <http://fwie.fw.vt.edu/vnhs/> is planning a symposium entitled **"Historical Explorations into Virginia's Natural History"** on Saturday, Sept. 26, 2009 at the new Virginia Museum of Natural History in Martinsville, Va. www.vnmh.net

This symposium will present the contributions of the leading naturalists over the past 400 year history of Virginia in the fields of: Fossils, Marine and Estuarine Invertebrates, Mussels, Spiders, Insects, Marine and Freshwater Fishes, Amphibians, Reptiles, Birds, Plants, Mammals, Caves. Plus a presentation on the contributions of Thomas Jefferson to Natural History.

Costs: \$10 for the symposium only and \$25 for the Symposium plus Banquet on Sept. 26. Lunch will be available at the Museum's cafeteria. A reception will be held Friday, Sept. 25, 5:00 – 8:00 pm at the museum.

Hotel accommodations will be available at the Quality Inn/Dutch Inn 276-647-3721 <http://www.qualityinn.com/hotel-collinsville-virginia-VA381> for approximately \$45 per night when reserving for the symposium

Registration information is available at the Natural History Society website: <http://fwie.fw.vt.edu/vnhs/>

If you have any questions please call Tom McAvoy (540-231-6320) or tmcavoy@vt.edu

This will be a unique and an important addition to the history of Virginia and natural history.

~~~~~  
Tom McAvoy Dept. of Entomology Virginia Tech 216A Price Hall Blacksburg, VA 24061

<http://web.ento.vt.edu/ento/>

Phone: 540-231-6320

FAX: 540-231-9131



## MORE TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

### EVENTS

#### Oyster Gardening Workshop

**August 5th, Noon-1pm, Dominion VA Power Outdoor Pavilion**

Please contact Chris Moore at Chesapeake Bay Foundation (757) 622-1964 ahead of time so he can bring the spat oysters (\$30 per 1,000 oysters). If planning to attend, check out the link to the Chesapeake Bay Foundation website that gives some information on the oyster gardening and will show you where to purchase the growing system/floats needed <http://www.cbf.org/Page.aspx?pid=1104>. Also, if participating, please let Paul Dickson of Dominion VA power know [Paul\\_E\\_Dickson@Dom.com](mailto:Paul_E_Dickson@Dom.com) or 485-6754. and bring a bag lunch!

### Service hours reminder!

From HRC member Jeanne Millin:

I would like to make the 4<sup>th</sup> Saturday of the month, Invasive Clearing Day at New Quarter Park. We would like to start at about 9:15 or immediately after the Williamsburg Bird Club 7 to 9 am walk.

Jeanne Millin



#### Rain Barrel Workshop

**August 8th, 10am-Noon, Cape Henry Collegiate, Virginia Beach.**

The cost of this workshop is \$60 (includes materials for one rain barrel) and the class is limited to 15 people. Advanced registration is required. For more information or to register for the course, contact Helen Kuhns at LynnhavenRiverNOW, [hkuhns@lynnhaven2007.com](mailto:hkuhns@lynnhaven2007.com) or 757-962-5398.

#### Introduction to the Biology and Identification of Virginia Insects

**September 3, 2009, 8am-4:30pm, VIMS, Gloucester Point**

Lunch included. There is no charge for registration, but pre-registration is required. Deadline for registration: August 20, 2009

For more information or to register, contact: [syerdle@vims.edu](mailto:syerdle@vims.edu)

### Pet Project

By Kathi Mestayer

I've been working on cutting the english ivy vines away from this lovely tree. I started in May, and am now about 3/4 of the way around (having done 3 work sessions). Today, I cut a chunk out of a vine that was 3 inches in diameter. It's slow going, using bypass pruners, a little hand saw, a screwdriver to pry the vines away from the tree, and a lot of patience. And as you can see, the ivy shows very little evidence of distress. Tough stuff.

Photo courtesy of Kathi Mestayer

**INTERESTING FINDINGS ABOUT MARSH BIRDS IN A STUDY BY  
W&M'S CENTER FOR CONSERVATION BIOLOGY. SEE THE SUMMARY BELOW.**

From: "Mike Wilson" <mdwils@wm.edu>  
 Date: July 21, 2009 6:13:13 PM EDT  
 To: "Va-bird@listserv.com" <va-bird@listserv.com>  
 Subject: [Va-bird] CCB survey of tidal fresh marshes

The Center for Conservation Biology has just completed a comprehensive survey of the marsh bird communities in the upper tidal reaches of Virginia's tributaries. Our objective was to gain a better understanding of the relevant factors that influence the distribution and abundance of marsh birds in tidal-fresh and oligohaline reaches (i.e., salinity 0 to 5.0ppt) of the Chesapeake Bay.

Over the past 17 years, Center staff have had the opportunity to conduct several lines of investigation into the ecology of marsh birds in the mesohaline and polyhaline salt marshes of the Bay. These efforts have resulted in the survey of over 600 marsh patches and production of comprehensive guidelines for the conservation of marsh birds. This year was the first time we have been able to launch a broad-scale investigation into the lower saline portion of the Bay with the cooperation and funding from the Department of Defense.

The tidal portion of Virginia is extremely significant to populations of freshwater marsh birds such as King Rails, Least Bitterns, Marsh Wrens, and the Coastal Plain Swamp Sparrow. Virginia supports 59% of all the tidal freshwater/oligohaline marshes in the Mid-Atlantic region and nearly 11% of these marsh types along the entire Atlantic coast. Freshwater/oligohaline marshes of Virginia are threatened by sea-level rise, invasive exotic plants such as Phragmites, barriers to lateral migration from upland development.

Our specific objectives were to investigate how salinity, vegetation cover, habitat area, and the underlying topography and geography influence freshwater marsh birds. We conducted 696 surveys of 232 points across the mainstems and associated tributaries of the James, York, Pamunkey, Mattaponi, Rappahannock, and North Landing rivers, as well as Back Bay.

The most surprising result is how far the marsh birds that have traditionally relied on more saline environments now reach into freshwater communities. The best example is the Clapper Rail, which historically was

relegated to brackish and salt marshes in the Bay, but now is found in many habitats where King Rails are expected to occur. In certain freshwater marshes, Clapper Rails have replaced King Rails in order of abundance. Moreover, King Rails were not found to be as widespread as once assumed. King Rails are declining throughout their range, including the Chesapeake Bay for reasons unknown.

We are beginning to work through the data gathered this summer and will share results with the VA-bird community in the future.

Mike Wilson  
 Center for Conservation Biology  
 College of William & Mary / Virginia Commonwealth University  
 PO Box 8795 Williamsburg, VA 23187-8795  
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Submitted by Shirley Devan

## Blue Ridge Parkway Peaks of Otter News Release

Visit the Blue Ridge Parkway to enjoy and experience the wonder of nature at NatureFest 2009 at the Peaks of Otter (milepost 86).

On Saturday, August 15, National Park Service staff and volunteers, along with professional naturalists and presenters, will conduct a series of nature-centered activities throughout the Peaks of Otter area. Activities for NatureFest 2009 begin at 9 AM as children enjoy "Fishing With a Ranger". Rangers will supply fishing poles and bait so kids, fourteen and under, can try their luck near the dam at Abbott Lake. Visitors can then experience nature hikes and hands-on activities as well as presentations and demonstrations throughout the day.

Programs and presentations will discuss and demonstrate natural history topics as varied as bears, salamanders, frogs, toads, fish, geology and astronomy. Marilyn Maisano, a practicing field geologist and curator of the geology collection at Virginia Military Institute, will discuss "The Blue Ridge Mountains through Time" and take visitors on a guided walk. Mike Pelton, internationally known bear expert will explain black bear behavior and show visitors how to look for signs of bears on a guided walk. Mike Hayslett, Sweetbriar College Naturalist and wetlands expert will talk about the amphibians found in the Peaks of Otter area and follow up with a salamander walk.

The 8 PM Saturday evening program, "Night Sounds & Night Creatures," will be conducted by Laura Rogers of the Nature Zone, a Lynchburg City nature center, and will include a flying squirrel, an opossum and a snake. The program will be followed by "Starry, Starry Night" with National Park Service volunteer and Master Naturalist, Martin Dileggi. This will be a great opportunity to view stars and planets in the Nature Center parking area and learn about how and why they were formed. Participants may bring lawn chairs, binoculars and flashlights.

NatureFest 2009 will feature several activities specifically designed for children's enjoyment although all activities will be appropriate for visitors of all ages. New this year, Nature Olympics will be an opportunity for families to compete in fun, nature-themed games. Programs and presentations will take place in the Flat Top Room of the Peaks of Otter Lodge, lakeside near the Lodge and at the Nature Center.

Stop by the Peaks of Otter Visitor Center at milepost 86 on the Blue Ridge Parkway on the day of the event for a schedule of activities and presentations. For questions about specific times and locations of activities and for information about food and lodging, contact:



### VIRGINIA LIVING MUSEUM

#### ADULT SCIENCE SEMINARS FOR 2009

#### September 8      **More than Just Teeth**

Shark! - Is a jaw full of sharp teeth the first thing that comes to mind when you hear the word? We'll take a look at the amazing adaptations that have kept sharks at the top of the food chain for millions of years, debunk some shark myths, and explore the important roles that sharks play in the ocean ecosystem. Presented by: Dana Zebrowski, VLM Science Educator. Ages: 16 and above.

Time: 6-8 p.m.

Cost: VLM members \$5, non-members \$7, active VLM volunteers free. Call 757-595-9135 to register.



Forwarded by Kathi Mestayer

The following topics may help justify your attendance at the annual conference of the **Mid-Atlantic Exotic Pest Plant Council**, August 11-12, at the University of Pittsburg in Johnstown, PA. See [www.ma-eppc.org](http://www.ma-eppc.org) for complete information including speakers. Register online at [www.morrisarboretum.org](http://www.morrisarboretum.org)

Click on Education and Seminars

White-tailed Deer interactions

Effects of Natural Disturbance

Anthropological and Ecological Aspects of Plant Distributions

Invasive Medicinal and Culinary Herbs

Stream Restoration

Japanese Knotweed

Invasive Species Mapping

Spatial Approaches to Modeling Dispersion: An Epidemiology Example

Predicting Vulnerability of Areas to Invasiveness

Invasive Risk Potential of Biofuel Crops

Rooftop native pant garden tour

The Three R's of Why Invasive Species Control is Restoration

Prioritizing Treatment Sites with Limited Resources

Hiring a Firm to Control Invasive Species: How to Write an Effective Business Contract

Establishing and Enforcing a "Do-Not-Plant List" Within a Homeowners Association-governed Community

Central Jersey Invasive Species Strike Team WIMS Mapping Software to Record and Track Treatments

Wavy Leaf Basket grass

Lyme disease

Japanese Barberry

Invasive Species under the Current Administration

Planting native cultivars versus native ecovars

Field Experience: Looking at the Campus' Invasive Plants and Natural Diversity

Synergy between White-tailed Deer Herbivory and Invasive Plant Species in Mature Deciduous Forests  
 Fire Management as a Tool in Invasive Plant Management  
 Effect of Climate Change on Invasive Plants Complicating Factors in Invasive Plant Management

Who Should Attend:

Nursery and landscape professionals  
 Natural resource specialists  
 Managers of parks, preserves and conservation districts  
 Invasive plant management and restoration specialists  
 Extension agents, environmental educators and garden and outdoor writers  
 Public and botanical garden managers and supervisors  
 Researchers, students and gardeners  
 Golf course and Recreational Land Managers  
 Volunteers who want to know more  
 Managing non-native invasive species to mitigate the threat to the world's biological diversity is getting more challenging. Our quality of life depends on the health of our natural resources, but limited funding, human development, introduction of new species and complicated species interactions combine to make the job tough. In this seventh Mid-Atlantic conference attendees will not only obtain useful background on the issues surrounding this biological problem but will also learn:  
 Thresholds for action

Tools for effective and efficient removal

What the new administration has done and plans to do to control invasive plants. How deer make our job three times as hard

Get the most from your volunteer program  
 Techniques for preventing non-native plant colonization

August 11 and 12, 2009  
 to be held at the  
 University of Pittsburgh  
 at Johnstown, PA  
 100 East Northwestern Avenue  
 Philadelphia, PA 19118  
 August 11 & 12, 2009  
 Register online at [www.morrisarboretum.org](http://www.morrisarboretum.org)  
 Click on Education and Seminars

## More Training Opportunities....



### Conference Registration

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Title (if applicable): \_\_\_\_\_  
 Organization/Company (if applicable): \_\_\_\_\_  
 Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Conference Fees

**Individual EARLY Registration (before July 31):** \$20.00

**Individual LATE Registration (August 1 or later):** \$40.00

All individual registrations include continental breakfast and buffet lunch.

#### Display Table Reservations

|                                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                       |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Display Table<br>(non-profit organizations)<br>No charge for display table<br>Must pay registration fee for individuals | <input type="checkbox"/> Display Table<br>(for profit organizations)<br>\$50 registration fee<br>Includes one individual registration |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

Do you give the URRR permission to include your contact information in our List of Attendees?  Yes  No

Do you have special dietary requirements?  Yes  No

Payments are accepted through PayPal at [www.upperroanokeriver.org](http://www.upperroanokeriver.org) through the conference link or make checks payable to: Upper Roanoke River Roundtable

Mail Completed Form to:  
 Upper Roanoke River Roundtable  
 Attention Maureen Castern  
 1918 Cambridge Avenue  
 Roanoke, Virginia 24015

Questions?: Contact Maureen Castern at [mcastern@verizon.net](mailto:mcastern@verizon.net) or (540) 344-5286.

### 2009 Watershed Conference



Friday, August 14, 2009

Ferrum College

8:30 am - 5:00 pm

Presented by the



In partnership with  
 Ferrum College and DCR



### NIGHT of the BLACK LIGHTS and OWLS

**Place?** VCU Rice Center, Charles City County

**Date?** August 22<sup>nd</sup> – August 23<sup>rd</sup> 2009

**Time?** 7:00 pm Saturday to 9:00 am Sunday

Join entomologist Dr. Art Evans, E&O Coordinator Anne Wright, and expert owlers from dusk to dawn to document the nocturnal riches of the VCU Rice Center. We will catalogue insects attracted to ultraviolet and mercury vapor lights and make regular forays into the night in search of owls. Dr. Evans is the author of the "National Wildlife Federation Field Guide to Insects and Spiders."

Dinner is pot luck, so bring a dish! A grill will be going. Camp out or sleep (bring your own gear) in the LEEDS Platinum Education Building, and enjoy the science and camaraderie of creatures of the night!

~> RSVP: [abwright@vcu.edu](mailto:abwright@vcu.edu) <~

The newest tenant in Larry & Peggy Riddick's bluebird house...

Photo courtesy of Larry Riddick



**The end of Kudzu.....???**

**Forwarded By Kathy Mestayer**

## **Fungus Tapped to Take on Kudzu**

**By Jan Suszkiw**

**July 16, 2009**

Kudzu, "The Vine that Ate the South," could meet its match in a naturally occurring fungus that Agricultural Research Service (ARS) scientists have formulated as a biologically based herbicide.

By one estimate, kudzu spreads at the rate of 150,000 acres annually, easily outpacing the use of herbicide spraying and mowing, as well increasing the costs of these controls by \$6 million annually.

But in Stoneville, Miss., ARS plant pathologist Doug Boyette and colleagues are testing a fungus named *Myrothecium verrucaria*, which infects kudzu with an astonishing speed of its own. In fact, the fungus works so quickly that kudzu plants sprayed with it in the morning start showing signs of damage by mid-afternoon, according to Boyette, with the ARS Southern Weed Science Research Unit in Stoneville.

He first began working with *M. verrucaria* in 1998, when a Louisiana Tech University scientist furnished him with isolates from diseased sicklepod specimens. In greenhouse experiments, spray formulations killed 100 percent of kudzu seedlings and 90 to 100 percent of older plants in outdoor trials. *Myrothecium* also worked its anti-kudzu magic under a wide range of conditions, including the absence of dew.

Additionally, host-range tests in 2005 showed that *Myrothecium* caused little or no injury to many of the woody plants known to occur in kudzu-infested habitats, includ-

ing oak, cedar, pine, hickory, pecan, sassafras and blackberry.

A few companies expressed interest, but only if the fungus' production of toxins called trichothecenes could be reduced or stopped. Boyette's group examined several approaches, settling on a method of growing *Myrothecium* in a fermenter on a liquid diet instead of a solid one. Not only did this stop trichothecene production or reduce it to acceptable levels, the method also extended the fungus' shelf life and potency under field conditions. Besides kudzu, *Myrothecium* also showed potential as a pre-emergence bioherbicide, controlling purslane and spurge in transplanted tomatoes.

Read more about the research in the July 2009 issue of *Agricultural Research* magazine. ARS is the principal intramural scientific research agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture

<http://www.ars.usda.gov/is/pr/2009/090716.htm>

JIL M SWEARINGEN Invasive Species Specialist  
NPS National Capital Region Center for Urban Ecology  
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202-342-1443, ex 218  
<http://www.nps.gov/cue>  
<http://www.invasive.org/weedus>  
<http://www.ars.usda.gov/is/pr/2009/090716.htm>

## Sassafras Farms Owner Talks about How to Grow Things from Scratch With Stuff You Already Have Lying Around the House

Denise Green, owner of Sassafras Farms native plant nursery and landscaping, gave a talk to a standing-room-only crowd at the York County Library, for the VNPS Clayton Chapter's July meeting. Her topic was propagating native plants, which she made look a lot easier than has been my experience. And we learned a few of the reasons why.

A few pointers:

1. After pollinators have stopped visiting and the plant is dry, put it in a brown paper bag and shake like mad! to get the seeds loose!

For late (fall) blooming plants, it's good to wait until after a frost.

2. Store in a DRY ziplock bag in the fridge.

3. Some seeds, like milkweed, need light to germinate.

4. For very-hard seeds, put them in a cup, pour boiling water over them, and let sit overnight. This will help soften the seed coating.

5. A rule of thumb for how deep to plant seeds: plant them as deep as the diameter of the seed! That explains the poor germination of my lettuce seeds, which were buried way too deep!

6. Rattlesnake Master is a good nectar plant.

There was some other stuff about fermenting seeds that are in a fleshy pod or fruit, but that was way over my head.

Sassafras Farms is a great little outing; it's just across the bridge in Gloucester. Call ahead to make sure Denise will be there when you go. (804) 642-0923. She also does landscape consultations; after H. Isabel, she helped me figure out how to minimize the disturbance and help foster recovery (and, in our case, succession!) in our back yard.

Kathi Mestayer

## SUMMER FUN

As one of my favorite entertainer's song exclaims the Zoo was "On The Road Again".

The critters and I were invited to visit with the children at the Jamestown 4H Camp. We met with 97 campers ages 9 to 13 yrs old over three days during the 3<sup>rd</sup> week of July. As usual "Toadstool" the American Toad, "Susie Blutz" our Prima Donna Box Turtle, the snakes and the Amazing Talking Betsy Beetles were the Zoo Stars.

I enjoyed the excitement the kids showed as they and handled our Decomposers and Predators especially the Inner City children most of whom never encountered the majority of the Zoo denizens.

My "Zoo Crew" helpers were Newport News Master Gardeners who didn't know what to expect but quickly became accomplished handlers.

The snakes are back in their home environs and the permanent residents are having their quarters cleaned and upgraded. I recently attended a reptile rehab class at Sandy Bottom Park and I have tweaked Susie Blutz's enclosure and diet.

I am looking for new animals ( Ellie said Larry's

"Feathered Serpent" had better stay in the bird house) and I am still looking for an *Apheloria virginiensis* millipede.

I will be teaching entomology to the upcoming Master Gardeners class in September and I need access to a large field near a woods in order to catch some more representatives of the various Orders ( especially a Zebra Swallowtail). I have several neighbors who allow me to collect around their flower beds but the rest peer suspiciously out of their windows as this Senior Citizen cruises around the sub division with a butterfly net.

Have a safe summer,

Ramblin' Clyde

The Zoomaster, Clyde Marsteller with scary prop (right)





## August

Open Every Day 8 a.m. to Dusk

1 - Walk & Talk, John Lewis, Environmental Education

1 - Moon Gazing, 9-11 p.m.

5 - Moonlight & Music, Wednesday, 6:30-8:30 p.m.

8 - Bird Walk with Bill Williams, 8-10 a.m.

15 -BYOK, 9 a.m.-Noon

22 -Bird Walk with Bill Williams, 7-9 a.m.

22 - Invasive Species Removal, 9:30-11:30 a.m.



Why care about invasive species? *Over millions of years, plants have evolved a complex relationship with other living things.*

*For about 500 years, humans have been moving plants between continents and far from areas where they evolved. When moved, they may not be able to grow. If they do, however, they may not be able to host insects or be tasty to animals. Some non-native plants grow a lot and out-compete native plants that interact with other life.*

*With native plant loss, we also lose insects and the food web unravels.*

*To learn more, read Bringing Nature Home: How Native Plants Sustain Wildlife in Our Gardens by Douglas W. Tallamy. We need insects that are attracted by native plants. They "pollinate plants, return the nutrients tied up in dead plants and animals to the soil, keep populations of insect herbivores in check, aerate and enrich the soil, and ... provide food either directly or indirectly for most other animals." He concludes, "If insects were to disappear ... our own extinction would not be far behind."*

Shelter & Fire Circle Reservations: \$50 & \$25; Call 890-3513  
Disc Golf: Daily \$3, Annual \$25; Sales & Rentals



### Directions

- Exit Col Pkwy at Queen's Lake, turn right. Turn on Lakeshead Dr. (Look for sign.)
- From Peninsula: Exit I-64 at Rt. 199 toward Jamestown. Exit Rt. 143W. Right on Peniman Rd., left on Hubbard Ln. Right on Lakeshead Rd., follow to Park.

### Upcoming events:

#### September

4 - Moonlight & Music, Friday, 6:30-8:30 p.m.

5 - Walk & Talk. Native Plants/Bobwhite Habitat, Helen Hamilton, 10 a.m.-Noon

12 - Colonial Road Runners 8K Run/Walk, For Ovarian Cancer, 9 a.m.; 1 mile Fun Run, 8:30 a.m.

12 - Bird Walk with Bill Williams, 8-10 a.m.

12 - Bird Sleuth, 8-10 a.m., for kids 9-12. Call 890-3500.

19 -BYOK, 9 a.m.-Noon

26 -Bird Walk with Tom McCary, 7-9 a.m.

26 - Invasive Species Removal, 9:30-11:30 a.m.

#### October

3 - Walk & Talk, Jerre Johnson, Geology, 10 a.m.-Noon

10 - Bird Walk, 8-10 a.m.

10 - Bird Sleuth, 8-10 a.m.

17 - BYOK!, 9 a.m.-Noon

24 - Bird Walk, 7-9 a.m.

24 - Invasive Species Removal, 9:30-11:30 a.m.

#### November

7 - Walk & Talk, Clyde Marsteller, Insects, 10 a.m.-Noon

14 - Bird Walk, 8-10 a.m.

14 - Bird Sleuth, 8-10 a.m.

28 - Bird Walk, 7-9 a.m.

#### December

5 - Walk & Talk, Holiday Flora, Libbey Oliver, 10 a.m.-Noon

10 - Bird Walk, 8-10 a.m.

24 - Bird Walk, 7-9 a.m.

**Needed:** Volunteers to lead Walk & Talks in 2010. Suggestions and ideas are also welcome. Contact Sara Lewis at 757-220-2042 or saraelewis@cox.net.

More Information at: [www.meetup.com/NewQuarterPark](http://www.meetup.com/NewQuarterPark) & [www.yorkcounty.gov/parksandrec](http://www.yorkcounty.gov/parksandrec)  
New Quarter Park, 1000 Lakeshead Dr., 757-220-3653 . York Co Parks & Rec, 757-890-3500

## Eastern Shore Butterfly Count

By Shirley Devan

More than 10 VA Master Naturalists turned out to assist in the 11<sup>th</sup> Eastern Shore Butterfly Count Sunday, July 19, sponsored by the Coastal Virginia Wildlife Observatory and the North American Butterfly Association.

More than 25 volunteers gathered in the parking lot of the Eastern Shore of VA National Wildlife refuge to divide into teams to cover sectors corresponding to those covered in the Audubon Christmas Bird Count.

Sector Leaders included Brian Taber, President of CVWO, Teta Kain, Ruth Burch, Bob Ake, and Larry Brindza. Master Naturalists joining in were: Sheila Kerr-Jones, Susie Engle-Hill, Adrienne Frank, Gary Driscole, Alice and Seig Kopinitz, Susan, Mike, and Alex Powell, and Margaret Ware. Charlotte Boudreau from the Peninsula Chapter also joined us.

Susie, Charlotte, and I were fortunate to join Larry Brindza to survey the Butterfly Trails at the Wildlife Refuge as well as the path to Wise Point and Fisherman Island. Wildlife Refuge Volunteer George Budd also joined us. George is one of the tour guides for Fisherman Island and possessed the all-important combination to unlock the gate. He also provided a voucher that allowed us to drive through the toll booth without charge to get to Fisherman Island.



Larry Brindza is in charge of the CVWO's Monarch Butterfly Migration Program, established in 1998. Larry and his team conduct fall surveys of Monarch populations and tag several hundred Monarchs each season, a few of which have been found later at their roost sites near Mexico City.

The four of us set off with Larry, one of the area's butterfly experts, eagerly anticipating our ventures to usually off-limits wonderlands. As we meandered around the Butterfly Garden and Trails at the Wildlife Refuge, we encountered expected species: Black Swallowtail, Cabbage White, Cloudless Sulphur, Silver-spotted Skipper, and American Lady and other beauties. We also enjoyed a few ripe blackberries tempting us from the trail side! Yum.

Then we walked down the road to Wise Point, the very tip of the Delmarva Peninsula. Larry shared with us that the great stand of dead pines had resulted from Hurricane Isabel when she came ashore with a fierce salt spray. The trees are now home to woodpeckers, osprey and other cavity nesting species. As we walked we spotted two Glossy Ibis fly over and numerous Ospreys – adults and young – flying and screaming overhead.

As we neared the tip of the peninsula, Larry pointed out a single bush that had held hundreds of Monarch butterflies one year. We returned to the parking lot for lunch and water replenishment and then set off for Fisherman Island in our cars. We walked around the south side of the island to the bay, spotting butterflies all along the way. American Snouts and Common Wood-nymphs were the most common. As we headed inland George pointed out an Osprey nest that sported three young birds almost ready to fledge. We stopped for a brief rest in the shade of a LARGE Hercules Club tree. I later learned that this is the same species as the Devil's Walking Stick, *Aralia spinosa*. The trunk of this large specimen was about 8 inches in diameter and featured large spikes on the trunk.

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Signs along the trail warned us to watch out for turtle nests. We passed several nests marked with flags and netting. Oh yes, we found butterflies too and Larry ticked them off his list. George gave us a bit of his usual Fisherman Island tour. A memorable afternoon in usually inaccessible areas with two guides who stomp around this area year round. Too good to be true!

By my tally we found 18 species with the rarest being the Juniper Hairstreak, the only one I missed. The rest of the group found one in the garden next to the parking lot while I was inside refilling my water bottle.

The final results are not available yet, but typically the final count includes about 30 butterfly species. I encourage all Master Naturalists to include this on their July schedule next year. A great learning experience in a special Virginia location.

Opposite Page: Shirley Devan at the very tip of the DelMarVA peninsula.

Photo courtesy of Susie Engle-Hill and Shirley Devan



Above: Eastern Tiger Swallowtail at Fisherman Island.



The person holding the Black Swallowtail is Larry Brindza, the leader of our sector. We were on Fisherman Island when we found this butterfly on the ground floundering around.

The other photo: people are: Susie Engle-Hill, Charlotte Boudreau, George Budd, and Larry Brindza. We are on the path to Wise Point.

Photos courtesy of Shirley Devane.



## Jamestown 4-H Camp Wetlands Walk and Talk

On July 30 **Larry Riddick** and I were visitor instructors at Jamestown 4-H Camp, sponsored by the Virginia Cooperative Extension. Larry planned the wetlands walk and talk for two small groups of campers, ages 9-13.

He explained what a wetlands is and what purpose it serves. Some of the activities included comparing soil samples of the wetlands area versus the nearby deciduous forest, examining live fiddler crabs, and learning to identify several birds by their calls.

The campers received a scavenger hunt sheet so they could focus on specific plants and animals that live in a wetlands area. Some kid favorites were cypress knees, 5-lined skinks, and a yellow-bellied sapsucker drilling out holes in a tree trunk.

After our program, we were invited to the picnic area adjacent to the James River to enjoy red and blue snow cones – a much enjoyed treat on that 90+ degree afternoon!

Felice Bond

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Teaching Kids what a snag is



Larry taking soil samples







Discussing what a wetland is.



Pointing out the difference between Poison Ivy and Virginia Creeper