



THE NATURALIST

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

<http://historicrivers.org>

A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

Volume 3 No. 9 September 2009

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Message from the president

Welcome New Master Naturalists!

On Tuesday, August 25th, our chapter had the privilege of welcoming the newest cohort of trainees to our master naturalist chapter. As always, it's enjoyable to meet and learn about all our new members. Our chapter continues to grow. Our membership now stands at about sixty members.

I was thrilled to see all the members of past cohorts who attended the first night to welcome our new group. Your presence is always heartening, and I could tell that you were inspirational to the new group.

We thank Alice Kopinitz and Barbara Boyer for bringing refreshments. We also thank our training team who have worked hard and will continue to work hard to help all the new members get the most from their training.

Banshees in the Reeks!

"The word "banshee" is a Gaelic term for a female spirit and the word "reeks" is a Gaelic term for hills and dales. Legend has it that around the 1840s, the owner of the farm was of Irish or Scottish decent. After a night

in town he came back to the farm and heard strange cries and sounds in the woods, what he thought might have been banshees. Since the farm was very hilly, he is supposed to have said that he heard, "banshees in the reeks." In the years since, the name has become Banshee Reeks."

~ from the Loudon County, Virginia, government website - www.loudoun.gov

What a great name for a master naturalist chapter! "Banshee Reeks!" I first heard about this chapter from Leesburg, VA, last year when I attended the first Virginia Master Naturalist State Conference. It turns out that Banshee Reeks and Beagle Ridge - another great name for a chapter - were among the first master naturalist chapters to be established in Virginia. Both chapters were very impressive at last year's conference, and it was clear that they had worked very hard to establish themselves as chapters. The Beagle Ridge chapter hosted the first state conference, and those of us who attended were amazed and impressed by how well the conference was organized and how much we learned.

This year's Virginia Master Naturalist conference will be sponsored by Banshee Reeks, and will be

CHAPTER

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Bruce Hill, Chair

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Adrienne Frank, and Gary Driscole

Message from the president, continued from page 1

held in Leesburg, VA, during the last weekend in October. The conference is a three-day event, filled with classroom sessions as well as field sessions. In fact, one of the classroom sessions will be taught by our very own Clyde Marsteller, who will present "A Zoo in My Luggage."

On Friday evening, there will be a "Share Fair." The Share Fair provides the opportunity for each chapter to bring along a tabletop display to share curriculum materials, service project ideas and successes, creative marketing ideas, and whatever else the chapter would like to show off.

I would like to encourage everyone to attend, if possible. It's a great way to network and share ideas with members of other chapters. I was amazed by how much I learned at last year's conference. Not only did I attend sessions about natural history, I also attended sessions about how to give better presentations, and how to organize a chapter.

Here's a link to the conference website .Virginia Master Naturalist Conference 2009. Registration is \$125, and information about the conference and instructions on how to register are provided on the website.

A block of rooms has been reserved at the Best Western Hotel and Conference Center in Leesburg, VA. The group rate for the rooms is \$99 per night and includes a full hot breakfast buffet each morning in the hotel's breakfast room. Reservations must be made by September 30 in order to get the group rate.

If you are interested in helping with the "Share Fair" display, or if you would like to arrange a carpool, please let me know.

How appropriate for the conference to be held during Halloween weekend ... I wonder if we will hear any Banshees in the Reeks!

Regards,

Susan Powell, President

Historic Rivers Chapter

VA Master Naturalist Program

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.

Basic Training for Cohort IV Began

August 25

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



September General Membership Meeting September 9, 2009

Program:

HRC Master Naturalist **Mike Millin** will describe his recent trip to Costa Rica with slides and photos of the flora and fauna in this tropical ecosystem.

Green-Crowned Brilliant Hummingbird

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.

Early Fall Plant Walk on Big Island September 12, 2009, 9:00 am to 1:00 pm

Join botanists, Donna Ware and Mark Chittenden, on September 12, for a walk around Big Island on the Dragon Run to identify native plants and learn about the unique ecosystem. Big Island is in the middle of the Cypress-Tupelo swamp and is accessible only by a short boat trip. This time of year, there should be a number of ferns and ground covers; swamp oaks, walnut, and hickories; native shrubs should be bearing fruit; and if it continues to rain, we will see a variety of mushrooms. Bring water, lunch, and bug spray. Wear long sleeves, long pants and sturdy shoes for walking. We will meet at the Food Lion in Saluda at 9 am to car pool to the site. Registration is limited to 15 participants.



You know you're a Master Naturalist when you lie in the dirt to get a shot of an interesting plant to bring home and identify
- Kathi Mestayer



ADVANCED TRAINING OPPORTUNITY

A Field of Dreams: Restoration of native coastal prairie for native grassland plants, birds, and butterflies in Maryland

This presentation is sponsored by John Clayton Chapter, VA Native Plant Society

Don't miss this special presentation in celebration of the 25th Anniversary of JCC/VNPS: Douglas E. Gill, our speaker for the September 17 Annual Meeting, learned natural history in Audubon chapters in New Jersey, and joined the faculty of the Department of Biology at the University of Maryland in 1971, where he has been a Full Professor since 1983. His research and teaching center on ecology from an evolutionary biological perspective. A dynamic speaker, Dr. Gill was invited to present the results of his 40 year study of the life history of pink ladyslipper orchids at a recent VNPS Spring Workshop. In his presentation for us on September 17th, he will describe his studies of 228 acres of native grass-

lands undergoing restoration in Queen Anne's County, Maryland. This study began in March of 1999 and focuses on four areas:

1. growth performance of planted native grasses versus invasive alien species;
2. responses of wildlife, especially native bird species such as Grasshopper Sparrow, Dickcissel and Bob-white Quail to these restored grasslands;
3. whether these grasslands become home to insects, and if so, their effects (if any) on neighboring row crops, as well as on the native grasses themselves;
4. development of techniques to optimize the prairie's attractiveness to wildlife. Dr. Gill will be available after his talk to discuss habitat restoration with anyone with special interest in this topic.

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.



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.vmnh.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 Fresh-water 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

### Native Plant Walk - Sunday, September 20 at 1:30pm.

**Phillip Merritt** will lead a tour of a brackish tidal marsh on the Warwick River at Denbigh Park in Newport News. A boardwalk offers viewing of cordgrass, black needlerush, seashore mallow, butterfly pea and other species. This will be an easy walk on flat surfaces, about 1/3 of mile total. From I-64, take the Jefferson Ave. West exit (towards the airport), go about 1.75 miles and turn left on to Denbigh Boulevard, proceed 3 miles to the end of road. Please register [atclaytonsnatives@yahoo.com](mailto:atclaytonsnatives@yahoo.com) or 604-1026. For upcoming walks keep checking the John Clayton Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society's website [www.claytonvnps.org](http://www.claytonvnps.org)

### 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



Do not hug this tree—courtesy of Kathi Mestayer

### ADVANCED TRAINING OPPORTUNITY



### Butterfly Festival 2009, Sept 26

Mark your calendar for Sept 26, 2009. Butterfly Festival 2009 is a one-day extravaganza brought to life by hundreds of butterfly enthusiasts who give of their time and talent to share their butterfly passion with the public. This is a "No Admission" family affair that features themed events targeted to meet the interest of a diverse audience. Activities include speakers, exhibits, garden tours, crafts, games and a walk through the butterfly pavilion. Butterfly host and nectar plants, books, t-shirts and butterfly novelties will be for sale. The Butterfly Festival will be held Saturday, Sept 26, 2009 from 10 am - 4 pm (Rain or Shine) at the Hampton Roads Agricultural Research & Extension Center on Diamond Springs Road. Hope to see you there!

Mary B. Wright Horticulture Programs Coordinator  
Virginia Cooperative Extension Newport News Office  
739 Thimble Shoals Blvd., Suite 1009 Newport News,  
VA 23606-3562 757-591-4838 Fax 757-596-2057

## VISIT TO VCU'S RICE CENTER BY SHIRLEY DEVAN

This was my first visit to VCU's Rice Center perched on the side of the James River in Charles City County. Our host and hostess were Dr. Art Evans and Anne Wright, Coordinator for Life Sciences Outreach Education in VCU's Department of Biology. Traipsing around in the woods with Dr. Evans was an unforgettable experience. He's an entomologist, author of the National Wildlife Federation's "Field Guide to Insects and Spiders of North America" lecturer, and photographer. Several of his "groupies" were there along with several members of the Riverine Master Naturalist Chapter.



Saturday morning Anne Wright conducted a tour of the platinum-level LEEDS building and described the history of the property and how Mrs. Rice saved the property from being turned into an upscale housing development by her son!! Wow!

Making contact with Anne and the Rice Center was wonderful. They love working with VA Master Naturalists and she is open to having VMN programs at the Rice Center in the future. Not every event is a sleep over but it was interesting to prow! around there at midnight (and later for some!) looking at insects, spiders, frogs, toads, listening for owls, and grazing the food bar. A fun night in the woods!

(See other reporters' stories on pages 13-15)



Left: Spider and cicada  
 Right: Alice after midnight  
 Top: Group of HRC Master Naturalists—Les Lawrence, Felice Bond, Alice Kopinitz, Shirley Devan, Jeanette Navia, Patty Riddick, Larry Riddick, and Sid Kopinitz  
 Above, right: Polyphemus Moth

Pictures courtesy of Felice Bond and Shirley Devan



## A Bee Story by Jim Booth

Sometime this spring my wife noticed insects (bees) apparently entering the middle dormer on our house. Upon checking inside the house I found a few dead bees by the window of the dormer. Our exterminator was called and identified the bees as wild honey bees, which he could not exterminate as they are protected as an endangered species. He gave me the phone number for Andy Westrich of the Hampton Apiary. Andy came to look at the bees in late June, told us he could remove them and set a date for the seventh of August.

On the designated day Andy arrived, donned his beekeeper clothing, tented the dormer with plastic and cut a large hole in the ceiling of the dormer. The insulation was then removed revealing six combs attached to the ridge of the dormer. Andy then proceeded to vacuum the bees into a 10 gallon bucket without harming them. He said the bees are not overly aggressive! He removed the combs and placed them into a carrying box then continued to collect the bees as they came into the dormer through a very small opening just above the top of the window. Once he had the honeycombs and bees out of the dormer overhead, he sealed the bee entrance from the inside. He continued to collect the bees by leaning out of the window to the area where they were congregating. After about an hour Andy patched the dormer ceiling, packed all of his equipment and took his new bees, honey and six combs to a location in Hampton. The photos tell the whole story.

My thanks and a well earned check went to Andy for four hours of exacting and humane labor. And thanks to all other apiary hobbyists who continue to maintain and protect our wild bees.



Access to  
bees....



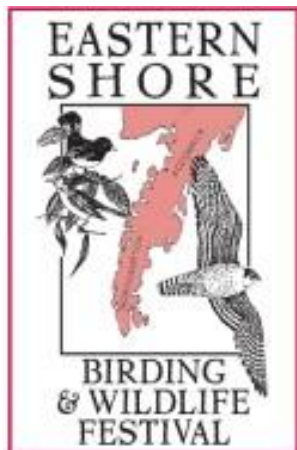


Clockwise from top left  
A few bees flying around outside?  
A few thousand bees inside!  
Fashion statement?  
Calling all bears...  
Andy Westrich of Hampton Apiary to the rescue  
A bucket full of bees  
Bee vacuuming by a professional (don't try this at home!)



All pictures from Jim Booth





Coming soon, see page 17 for details!

The 39<sup>th</sup> Annual Virginia Geological Field Conference

## Geology of Shenandoah National Park region, Virginia

October 2-3, 2009

**Big Meadows Byrd Visitor Center, Shenandoah National Park**  
 Scott Southworth, Bill Burton U.S. Geological Survey  
 Chuck Bailey, Greg Hancock College of William & Mary  
 L. Scott Eaton James Madison University

Shenandoah National Park lies astride the Blue Ridge Mountains in north-central Virginia. Rocks in the region include Grenvillian basement rocks, Neoproterozoic sedimentary and volcanic rocks, and early Cambrian siliciclastics. The structural geometry of the Blue Ridge is the product of late Neoproterozoic rifting, Paleozoic contractional deformation, and Mesozoic extension. The modern landscape developed during the Cenozoic as differential erosion at a regional scale generated the highlands. Both Quaternary and active surficial processes have constructed distinct landforms.

In the past decade there has been plethora of geological research in the Park and new geologic maps of the region have been recently completed. The 2009 Virginia Geological Field Conference will highlight new research, visiting exposures along and near the Skyline Drive. The focus of the trip will be broad, encompassing bedrock and structural geology as well as surficial geology and rates of erosion at local and regional scales.

The VGFC will be based at Big Meadows (Mile Post 51). A pre-trip reception with introductory talks will be held at the Byrd Visitors Center on Friday evening, October 2<sup>nd</sup>, at 7:00 p.m. The field trip will leave from the parking lot at the Byrd Visitors Center at 8:00 a.m. on Saturday and return at about 5:00 p.m. Transportation, lunch, and guidebook will be provided. There will be a few short (approximately one mile roundtrip) hikes on trails during the trip; participants should be prepared to walk over rugged terrain.

Due to logistics in the park, two 54-passenger buses will convey the field trip participants. **No other vehicles** will be permitted on the field trip. Given the space constraint, attendance will be limited to 100 participants. Register early to ensure your place at the Conference.

Questions: contact C. M. Bailey, 757-221-2445, cmbail@wm.edu

|                        |                                                        |
|------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|
| Names(s) _____         | <u>Registration (by Sept. 16<sup>th</sup> 2009)</u>    |
| Address _____          | Student (\$20) _____                                   |
| City, State, Zip _____ | Regular (\$45) _____                                   |
| Telephone _____        | <u>Late Registration (after Sept. 16<sup>th</sup>)</u> |
| e-mail _____           | Student (\$30) _____                                   |
|                        | Regular (\$55) _____                                   |
|                        | Total submitted _____                                  |

**Registration deadline is September 16, 2009**

Make checks payable to **Virginia Geological Field Conference** and send to:

Virginia Geological Field Conference  
 Virginia Division of Geology and Mineral Resources  
 900 Natural Resources Drive, Suite 500  
 Charlottesville, Virginia 22903

## Public Lands Day Opportunity

Public Lands Day is Saturday, September 26, 2009 (check out the website: <http://www.publiclandsday.org/> ) The intention is to have communities and parks partner in hands-on projects to help preserve and protect the parks.

At Colonial National Historical Park, how better to do that than by pulling invasive weeds? Dorothy Geyer, Natural Resource Specialist, is organizing a 3-hour invasive removal project that day in which anyone age 8 and up can volunteer (time TBA, but probably in the morning). Participants will primarily be pulling honeysuckle out of the wooded areas at the Glasshouse site at the Jamestown end of the Parkway in order to help protect a number of very nice native wildflowers that grow in this area (mostly spring ephemerals). Bring gloves, insect spray, a pair of clippers if you have them, and a good back! Dorothy will have water – and cookies!

This whole area has changed quite dramatically in the past year. There is a new handicapped-accessible trail to the Glasshouse demonstration building, a re-aligned loop trail, and the final multipurpose trail link between the Park and the Green Spring spur of the Capitol-to-Capitol Trail. Dorothy will be happy to give tours of the new facilities and talk about future opportunities for managing and maintaining our wonderful native plants over the coming years.

For Historic Rivers Master Naturalists, this project comes under the umbrella of a project that's already approved for volunteer service hours.

It would be great to have lots of people turn out. Anyone interested should contact Dorothy by Sept. 12 to sign up and to get the details. You can reach her at (757)898-2433

or [Dorothy\\_Geyer@nps.org](mailto:Dorothy_Geyer@nps.org).



# HISTORIC RIVERS CHAPTER

## Estuaries Day at York River State Park

September 26, 2009

The Historic Rivers Chapter Master Naturalists will set up an exhibit. We are in need of a few good volunteers with some good ideas about educational topics and willingness to talk about our mission. We have exhibited for the last two years and York River State Park is counting on us this year.

Please let Adrienne and Gary know when you would like to take a shift on that Saturday. We would also like to coordinate with whoever has the canopy and toolkit. Adrienne-gary@cox.net

Estuaries Day at York River State Park in Williamsburg, VA

During Estuaries Day Williamsburg offers visitors a number of activities to help raise understanding and awareness about estuaries in Virginia and around the world.

The celebration is set to be held at **York River State Park**, and offers a hands-on look at estuaries and what we can do to keep them healthy. A number of activities, including canoe trips, hiking and more, will help you to explore and understand the estuarine ecology of not only **York River State Park**, but the entire world. Some of the activities may require pre-registration due to group size limitations, but all of the events are scheduled to be free of charge.

Estuaries, semi-enclosed coastal bodies of water, are an important part of our ecosystem, and through Estuaries Day you'll be able to better understand these beautiful pieces of geography through exciting and informative activities.

## Estuaries Day At York River State Park

|                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|-------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Date:             | Saturday, September 26, 2009                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Time:             | 10:00 AM - 4:00 PM                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Location:         | Adjacent to Visitor Center                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Description:      | Learn about estuaries, that rich, fertile ecosystem where fresh and salt water meet. The events of Estuaries Day recognize the value of our estuaries as natural resources and focus attention on the threats that humans impose on them. Activities are free and include paddling trips, hiking, and hayrides. |
| Extra Event Fee:  | No                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Children Allowed: | Yes                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Telephone:        | (757) 566-3036                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| E-mail:           | YorkRiver@dcr.virginia.gov                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Web Site:         | <a href="http://www.dcr.virginia.gov/state_parks/yor.shtml">http://www.dcr.virginia.gov/state_parks/yor.shtml</a>                                                                                                                                                                                               |

## ADVANCED TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

sponsored by John Clayton Chapter, VA Native Plant Society.

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his study began in March of 1999 and focuses on four areas:

1. growth performance of planted native grasses versus invasive alien species;
  2. responses of wildlife, especially native bird species such as Grasshopper Sparrow, Dickcissel and Bob-white Quail to these restored grasslands;
  3. whether these grasslands become home to insects, and if so, their effects (if any) on neighboring row crops, as well as on the native grasses themselves;
  4. development of techniques to optimize the prairie's attractiveness to wildlife.
- Dr. Gill will be available after his talk to discuss habitat restoration with anyone with special interest in this topic.

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### NATIVE PLANT WALK

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### You Know You Are a Master Naturalist When....

By Jeanette Navia

You decide to drive a car you haven't driven in a month to work, notice less than a mile on the road that there's a spider web with egg, many little bundles of food and a live spider on the side of your car (from window to top of door to side mirror), you consider going back home and taking the other car so as not to disturb the spider, but decide to continue on your way because you're late. You are hot but you refuse to open the window because you know what will happen to the web. You are amazed as the mother spider hangs on for dear life, bouncing around, making her way from the middle of the web to the side of the car and hanging on there where it's safer, making herself into a little ball. You get to work, surprised that she's hung on the whole way but worried because she's not moving. You park on the other side of the parking lot where no one ever parks so your coworkers won't accidentally (or on purpose) swipe the web off your car. A half hour later, you go back out to the car to

see if she's moved, and are surprised to see that she's gone -- nowhere to be found. You go back out at lunch time to see if she's there -- don't see her. After work, you check again, no mama spider. You start to drive back home and are very happy to see her making her way back down to the middle of the nest (apparently she was on the car roof). You drive slowly, but have to go to Farm Fresh so again you park carefully so no one messes with the web. She's still there when you come out and you're very happy. You drive home slowly, glad to see that she's still hanging on. But then you look again, and ... she's gone. The 'wind' from driving too fast must have pulled her too much. You quickly realize that, no, it would not be feasible to go back and try find her somewhere on Route 60. You feel guilty the rest of the trip home and hope somehow she made it. (but no, she hadn't). Sorry this doesn't have a better ending. But I'm not messing with the egg -- hope it'll hatch?

**This article brought to you by the following:  
Tom & Felice Bond, Adrienne Frank & Gary  
Driscole, Shirley Devan, Alice & Seig Kopinitz,  
Les Lawrence, Jeanette Navia, Patty & Larry  
Riddick**

The notice arrived via email – **Night of the  
Black Lights and Owls.** -

Did that sound like fun or what? Who can resist owls,  
night critters and (at

our house) bug photography has become a pas-  
sion. What an opportunity!!

The event began with hot dogs and hamburgers and  
plenty of shared dishes.

*The Leaders*

Our host and hostess were Dr. Art Evans and Anne  
Wright, Coordinator for Life Sciences Outreach Edu-  
cation in VCU's Department of Biology. Traipsing  
around in the woods with Dr. Evans was an unforgetta-  
ble experience. He's an entomologist, author of the  
National Wildlife Federation's "Field Guide to Insects  
and Spiders of North America", lecturer, and photogra-  
pher. Several of his "groupies" were there along with  
several members of the Riverine Master Naturalist  
Chapter.



We were very impressed by Art's knowledge of insects but almost more impressed  
by his manner. He did a wonderful job of telling sto-  
ries, making it interesting to listen, and by communi-  
cating information in a way that was easily understood  
and engaging. We all followed him around with eager  
ears.

Everyone considered it a special treat to meet and in-  
teract with Dr. Arthur Evans and Anne Wright.

**The Facility:** - The Rice Center sits on a bluff on the  
James River over looking islands; a fantastic view!

This was my first visit to VCU's Rice Center perched  
on the side of the James River in Charles City County.  
I was just as fascinated by the Rice  
Center facility as I was by the in-

Continued on Page 14

sects and spiders. Anne Wright gave us a tour Sunday  
morning. The property was donated to VCU by Inger  
Rice in the year 2000. VCU was to raise money for a  
building, but by 2007, not enough money had been  
raised, so Ms. Rice donated \$2 million with the stipu-  
lation that the facility be ecologically friendly and be  
built within one year. The 4,900-square-foot Walter L.  
Rice Education Building (named after Inger's late hus-  
band) opened in October 2008. It became the first  
building in Virginia to be awarded the U.S. Green  
Building Council's LEED (Leadership in Energy and  
Environmental Design) platinum certification, given to  
very green, energy-efficient, high-sustainable build-  
ings.

Geothermal heat-  
ing and cooling is  
used throughout  
the Rice building.  
There is a green  
roof; we could see  
plants growing on  
top. This type of  
roof helps cool the  
building and re-  
duces storm water  
runoff. Rainwater is collected from the roof and used  
for toilets. The toilets have two flushes -- one for liq-  
uid and one for solids -- to reduce the amount of water  
needed for most flushes. Wastewater is treated onsite.



Left: Rice Center  
facility

Above: Larry  
Riddick with  
blacklight

Photo courtesy of  
Patty Riddick



Left: White Hair-  
streak Moth

Above left: Black  
Widow spider

Photo courtesy of Felice  
Bond

Continued from Page 13

Most of the materials used in construction were brought in from the local area (mostly from within Virginia), cutting down on energy needed for transportation. Lighting is high-efficiency. One room had prismatic skylights that Anne says sometimes makes the room too bright at times. There were lots of windows, and huge levers on the side of the building that, when closed, shaded one of the rooms and cut down the heat. The carpets and chairs – very beautiful in design – were all made from recycled plastics. Nearly every detail of the building was designed with energy efficiency and sustainability in mind.



We were impressed with Anne's description of the history of the property and how Mrs. Rice saved the property from being turned into an upscale housing development by her son!! Wow!

The VCU Rice Center was fascinating as a three million dollar 'green' structure. Carpets, both attractive and functional, had been produced from plastic water bottles; many in-ground wells piped water under and into the building at a median temperature of 50 degrees F; and the roof was covered with many sedum plants. These were only a few of the wonderful 'green' features we were shown by Anne Wright from VCU. Additionally, this building was erected on the footprint of a previous structure without destroying or uprooting any trees! We were all very impressed.

Unlike some who hardly slept all night, Patty and Larry slept on air mattresses on the floor of the VCU Rice Center conference room along with five or six others and were cooled by industrial-looking ceiling fans which they were told came from the 'Big Ass Fan Company'.

A short video about the building can be seen at [http://www.news.vcu.edu/for\\_media/ricecenter/ricecentervid.html](http://www.news.vcu.edu/for_media/ricecenter/ricecentervid.html)

## *The Program*

### **Black Lights:**

Although not everyone professed to be a big fan of bugs, everyone did really enjoy this unique experience. Patty was especially taken with the many frogs and toads and enjoyed hearing them call to each other. Les thought the toads gorging on all the bugs attracted to the lights was a show to see.

One of Felice's favorite experiences was checking for aquatic insects in the big black tub of water located in the middle of the forest. It was sometime around midnight, and we had given up on spotting the *very vocal* barred owl somewhere in the canopy overhead. Instead, we concentrated on shining our flashlights on the tiny critters swimming around right in front of us and also on the black widow spider in her messy cobweb under the lip of the tub. The owl ended up moving lower in the treetops until it was directly above us, hooting and hollering as loud as ever. We never could spot it but enjoyed its company in the dark of the night.

Another favorite occurred about 3 AM. Just as Seig, Alice, and I were ready to call it a night, we decided to check on one more thing, another big tub of water. We were thrilled to discover a dragonfly that had just split out of its final molt. The adult's body and eyes were still soft and gelatinous-looking and the tail hadn't finished "growing". By morning, all that was left was the empty shell attached to a stick.

The frogs and toads were so abundant because of all of the water features around the Rice center. The grey tree frogs started singing during our picnic dinner and continued all night. The toads sat patiently around the bug lights sheets and outside of the building. They must have eaten a thousand bugs that night.

### **And Owls:**

In addition to studying the insects, Adrienne and Gary did a little owling. Early in the evening, the large group walked down the dirt road and our leader, Anne, played a tape of barred and screech owls. Later in the evening, one of our participants used a flute like instrument to call for barred owls. That brought it a family of 3 owls that flew back and forth over our heads for several hours. We had some very good looks at them, when shining our

lights up into the trees. We could see the owl(s) watching us, hooting, and flapping their wings as the took off over our heads.

### *In Conclusion*

Making contact with Anne and the Rice Center was wonderful. They love working with VA Master Naturalists and she is open to having VMN programs at the Rice Center in the future. Not every event is a sleep over but it was interesting to prowl around there at midnight (and later for some!) looking at insects, spiders, frogs, toads, listening for owls, and grazing the food bar. A fun night in the woods!



Above: Fish Fly

Right top: Tattered Male Luna Moth; Right : Black Widow

Previous page: Pre-dawn emerging dragonfly

Photo courtesy of Felice Bond



Group with Ann Wright by the River

Photo courtesy of Felice Bond

## Rice Center Visit by Felice Bond

One of my favorite experiences was checking for aquatic insects in the big black tub of water located in the middle of the forest. It was sometime around midnight, and we had given up on spotting the *very vocal* barred owl somewhere in the canopy overhead. Instead, we concentrated on shining our flashlights on the tiny critters swimming around right in front of us and also on the black widow spider in her messy cobweb under the lip of the tub. The owl ended up moving lower in the treetops until it was directly above us, hooting and hollering as loud as ever. We never could spot it but enjoyed its company in the dark of the night.

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## Felice Bond



Ann Wright  
Photo courtesy of Shirley Devan



Left: AM Toad eyeing late night snack  
Above: Dr. Evans with Insect Collection  
Photo courtesy of Felice Bond



## EASTERN SHORE BIRDING FESTIVAL

September 17, 2009

By Shirley Devan

Greetings all, The Eastern Shore Birding Festival is just over a month away! Here's some information about the festival and links to the Eastern Shore Chamber of Commerce. This weekend of birding is always fun -- lots of great field trips and good birds. We're only about an hour away so it's very convenient to pop over to the Shore for a weekend that people from all over the mid-Atlantic come to enjoy.

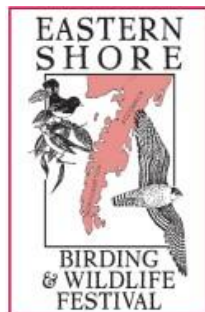
Help us celebrate our 17th Festival!

Virginia's Eastern Shore will wow birders and nature lovers, artists, and photographers. The barrier islands seaside and the creeks and "necks" bayside are an essential part of the Fall migration for millions of neotropical songbirds, raptors such as eagles, hawks, and falcons – and for some species of butterflies and dragonflies, oh my! These travelers may forage on the islands or necks en route, but then must converge on and pause near Kiptopeke at the southern tip of the peninsula to continue fueling up for crossing the Bay. And that's where the Festival activity is concentrated. Tucked between the broad waters of the Chesapeake Bay and the Atlantic Ocean, this patchwork of farms, forests, ponds, marshes, and creeks provides an incredible opportunity to experience these winged wonders in the most tranquil and lovely of settings. Come to the Festival and boat out to Cobb Bay and its marshes to see the shorebirds – oystercatchers, godwits, whimbrels – see the roosting royal terns on the inlet beaches of barrier islands -- or take a boat tour on the Machipongo River, or a kayak tour on Onancock Creek. Celebrate one of nature's most amazing spectacles, and one that is increasingly threatened – 11 of the 96 neotropical songbird species are in trouble, most others are in decline. A boat with an experienced guide is the only way to discover the Eastern Shore's chain of remote, uninhabited (by man) seaside islands. Climb aboard and observe eagles and peregrine falcons soaring above this United Nations-designated International Biosphere Reserve. Or watch songbird banding at Kiptopeke. So many choices!

Please visit [www.esvachamber.org/festivals/birding](http://www.esvachamber.org/festivals/birding), soon for the program details and the registration and activities form, as capacities for some trips are quite limited!

Laid-back luxury at The Inn at Onancock. Private spa bathrooms, 1000 count sheets, full gourmet breakfast & WineDown Hour. An easy stroll to many fine restaurants. For information: (757) 789-7711, or visit [www.innatonancock.com](http://www.innatonancock.com)

Pearce's Waterfront Lodge --Where wild ponies run free. On Upshur Bay in fishing village of Quinby. View Eastern Shore Barrier Islands flyway from 900' dock. Visit us at [www.pearceswaterfrontlodge.com](http://www.pearceswaterfrontlodge.com), or phone (757) 442-7318 Visit the Barrier Islands Center in Machipongo. Preserving history and culture of hardy fishing folk of the barrier islands....and the pirates, smugglers, and rumrunners! (757) 678-5550. [www.barrierislandscenter.com](http://www.barrierislandscenter.com)





**NEW QUARTER PARK**  
york county, virginia

## September

Open Every Day 8 a.m. to Dusk

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

5 - Walk & Talk, Oyster Aquaculture, Dave Graft, 10 a.m.-Noon

12 - Colonial Road Runners Tortoise & Hare 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. Register 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.

26 - Apollo 40th Anniversary Celebration with NASA Skywatchers: Moon Activities & Video Clips in Shelter #1, 7-8 p.m.; Moon Gazing/Star Gazing, Overflow Parking Area, 8-10 p.m

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:

#### October

3 - Walk & Talk, Jerre Johnson, Geology, 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

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

20 - Christmas Bird Count



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

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

**Needed:** Volunteers to lead Walk & Talks in 2010. Topic ideas also welcome. Contact Sara Lewis at 757-220-2042 or saralewis@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

Sweet Briar College  
and the  
*Virginia Vernal Pools Program*  
are pleased to announce an  
“Isolated Wetlands Conference &  
Vernal Pond Building Workshop”

with Tom Biebighauser,

Author of *A Guide to Creating Vernal Ponds*

(<http://herpcenter.ipfw.edu/outreach/VernalPonds/index.htm>) and

*Wetland Drainage, Restoration, and Repair*

([http://www.kentuckypress.com/viewbook.cfm?Category\\_ID=1&Group=197&ID=1396](http://www.kentuckypress.com/viewbook.cfm?Category_ID=1&Group=197&ID=1396))

September 11-13, 2009

(6:00 p.m. Friday to 2:00 p.m. Sunday)

Conference presentations, full-day construction workshop, on and off-campus field exploratories and lots of take-home resources!

\$95.00 Registration Fee (includes two meals only; lodging is separate)

è Registration deadline: September 7, 2009 ç

FMIC: Mike Hayslett @ [mhayslett@sbc.edu](mailto:mhayslett@sbc.edu) or (434) 381-6439

## WELCOME TO COHORT IV

Steven David

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