



THE NATURALIST

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

<http://historicrivers.org>

A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

Volume 4 No. 4 April 2010

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Message from the president

Let's Finish the Strategic Plan

As your newly elected president, I am humbled and honored to be selected as leader of the Historic Rivers Chapter of the Virginia Master Naturalists. The uniqueness of our organization and its program integrate and synergize my interests, professional training, and hobbies. I thank you for your vote of confidence; I will strive to continue moving our chapter forward.

As a Chapter, we have a solid and broad programmatic foundation developed under the leadership of Susan Powell. She gave us 110 percent through her dedication and direction of our program and its associated projects. I commend you Susan for a job well done. I also acknowledge the equally hard work of other outgoing Board members. Their time and dedication to the Historic Rivers Chapter have given us a record of success and position of ecological leadership within the Commonwealth of Virginia.

A major task is to finish documenting a long-range plan for the Historic Rivers Chapter. We have a good start on this document but need to finish writing and adopting a strategic plan. We have developed our program sufficiently that we should clearly state and enumerate its major goals to ensure our focus stays on track toward meeting our objectives for the next 5 years.

With the graduation of Cohort IV we have sufficient human resources to complete this long-range plan and to move out and work on addressing our major goals. As a Chapter, we need to discuss and decide what these goals should be. Once we have identified and agreed on them, we can recognize individual initiatives and/or projects to move our program forward toward meeting these programmatic goals.

The first strategic plan for the Chapter will be the most difficult to write and complete. However, subsequent strategic plans will advance and refine the initial goals as our program matures and becomes more focused. We will need to decide how frequently we should update the strategic plan to ensure its relevance for guiding our program.

My challenge to each member of the Historic Rivers Chapter is to think broadly as you look up and outward as preparation for participation in the discussions as we move forward on this important document.

Bruce F. Hill, President
Historic Rivers Chapter
Virginia Master Naturalists

HISTORIC RIVERS CHAPTER

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CHAPTER

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Upcoming HRC Monthly Programs

April 14, 2010 (Wednesday): "Sketching Nature" by our own Linda Miller, Volunteer in Cohort IV.

May 12, 2010 (Wednesday): "More about the Chesapeake Bay" by Jill Bieri, Owner, Chesapeake Experience.

Master Naturalists at Farmers Market: May 8

"That's right, you heard right, the secret word for tonight is mudshark. And with the mudshark secret word.....the mudshark arpeggio."

Oops -- channeling Frank Zappa again. Where was I?

Oh, yes! We have a date for Habitat Day at the Farmers Market in Williamsburg! Saturday, May 8, perfect for nice weather and talking about nature in our own yards, back and front. For those of you who have done this before, you know how much fun it is. Why, just seeing Sheila doing her Dora the Explorer impression was worth the price of admission last year!

Let me know via email if you want to be part of the fun, either for planning, preparation, execution, or all three.

No idea too strange!

Kathi Mestayer

kwren@widomaker.com

Notice!

After last Sunday's work day at NQP bobwhite habitat, Cynthia Long told me the scheduled May 1 date will be cancelled. Cynthia expects to have some (!) leftover plants from the plant sale April 24 and a work day may be scheduled to put those in the ground. Again, it may be a short notice thing from Cynthia.

Notes from the Board

All meetings of the Board of Directors are open to members.

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Mr. and Mrs. Hooded Merganser at the pond off John Tyler bypass and Rte. 199. They have been wintering here for the last month

Courtesy of Jeff Miller

Invasive Species In A Nutshell by The Lorax

Lots of talk these days about invasive species and seems as if there are a lot of people trying to make sense of all the bad press some plants and animals are getting lately who are interested in learning more about them. The below is something I use when working with younger groups. Most of them have read 'The Lorax' but many aren't familiar with 'On Beyond Zebra' so I read it to them in its entirety before we move forward.

We all know and love Dr. Seuss. In addition to 'The Lorax', Dr. Seuss wrote another book I'd like to mention. Have you ever read 'On Beyond Zebra'? It's about "the rest of the alphabet". A very young child, Conrad Cornelius O'Donnell O'Dell, is very proud that he has learned the entire alphabet from A to Z. His friend, though, draws another letter and says-

Quote:

In the places I go there are things that I see That I never could spell if I stopped with the Z. I'm telling you this 'cause you're one of my friends. My alphabet starts where your alphabet ends!" He then proceeds to describe the alphabet on beyond Zebra. One of his special letters is NUH. "And NUH is the letter I use to spell Nutches Who live in small caves, known as Nitches, for hutches. These Nutches have troubles, the biggest of which is The fact there are many more Nutches than Nitches. Each Nutch in a Nitch knows that some other Nutch Would like to move into his Nitch very much. So each Nutch in a Nitch has to watch that small Nitch Or Nutches who haven't got Nitches will snitch. The invasive species problem we are all facing in a nutshell. Every native species is a Nutch. Non native and highly invasive species such as Albizia julibrissin (Tree of Heaven); Pueraria montana var. lobata (Kudzu), Passer domesticus (English House Sparrow), or Rattus norvegicus (Norway Rat); don't have a Nitch (niche) of their own here on North America. The only way they can get one is to snitch it.

Kathi Mestayer

April Monthly Meeting.....

Linda Miller

The act of observing and recording nature offers so much. It requires close attention. It improves drawing skills. It encourages the act of reflection. Keeping a nature or field journal is a powerful and wonderful tool to help us observe carefully and remember what we see. Many of us are uncomfortable drawing because we do not consider ourselves to be "artists". We all know how to write to handwrite, so the ability is there. In this workshop, Linda C. Miller of Cohort IV will provide directed and fun activities to help us focus our observations.

Please bring a pad of paper with about 10 sheets, a ballpoint pen, and a 2B pencil. Lined paper is just fine, if you don't have a sketch pad. Everyone will receive a kneaded eraser. Those wanting to buy materials, please consider *Walls Alive* in Williamsburg.

Frogging/Wildlife Mapping at Greensprings

By Anger Brock

There was still daylight at 7:30 p.m. on Wednesday, March 24, when a group of Historic Rivers Master Naturalists—fourteen of us, with all four cohorts represented—met at the Greensprings parking lot to listen for frogs and toads and do some wildlife mapping. Dean Shostak and his daughter AJ were among the early arrivers. The sighting of a barred owl was their reward—and ours, through the photo AJ took.

Some who had been on the trail before were dismayed to find a pool—formerly a frog haven—now looking polluted, with oily substances floating on the top and trash strewn around. But other pools and ponds along the walk seemed healthy, with lots of frogs inhabiting them. Spring peepers were the most prevalent voices—we heard several full choruses. We also heard a full chorus of southern leopard frogs, several pickerel frogs, and a toad. Was it an American toad, its melodic trill characterized by some as “dreamlike”? Or was it a southern toad, its trill higher and harsher than the American’s? After listening to recordings of their respective calls on Cherie’s iPhone and consulting Susie’s book on frogs and toads, we decided that the best way to confirm an identification was to time the trills: southern toads typically sing for 2-8 seconds, while the Americans can go on for twenty seconds or longer, though they average 12-15 seconds. Just then, of course, the toad went silent.

Early on the walk, we both saw and heard Canada geese and squirrels. We also saw several bats and an unidentified spider. Late in the walk, we heard barred owls.

Except to see the eye shine of frogs after the sun went down, we really didn’t need our flashlights, for a waxing gibbous moon (confirmed by Shirley’s iPhone weather channel app) poured so much light onto the trails that we each cast our own moon shadow. Good thing Shirley had sold that HRVMN hat with the flap to Linda Cole in the parking lot before we set out: Linda didn’t get any moonburn on her neck!

The final decision of the expedition was whether to cut across a Jamestown High School baseball field or to continue through the woods as we made our way back to the parking lot. It was such a beautiful night, we stayed in the woods.

Participants, as shown in Shirley’s photo:

Front row, left to right, are Adrienne Frank, Linda Miller, Felice Bond, AJ Shostak, and Dean Shostak.

Back row, left to right, are Angier Brock, Gary Driscole, Nancy Norton, Patty Maloney, Linda Cole, Shirley Devan, and Les Lawrence. Not pictured are Susie-Engle Hill and Cherie Aukland.



Photo courtesy of Shirley Devan

"Nature Illustrated" Botanical and Flower Painting Exhibition

March 6 through April 30, 2010

The Williamsburg Regional Library

515 Scotland Street

Williamsburg, Virginia 23185

www.wrl.org

757.259.4070

This group exhibit features more than fifty original paintings by nineteen regional artists who have studied with Juliet Kirby. Linda has four original watercolor paintings on exhibit including the Stinking Parasol Mushroom.

Artwork description:



Macrolepiota procera

Stinking Parasol Mushrooms, dried

Linda C. Miller, 2009

"A Place very Pleasant to Inhabit" Hampton 400th Anniversary Exhibition

April 3 through May 16, 2010

The Charles H. Taylor Art Center

4205 Victoria Boulevard

Hampton, Virginia 23669

757.727.1490

The exhibition title is part of a quote by Captain John Smith referring to Hampton in his writings about the early exploration of Tidewater. This exhibition features 400 years of Hampton's art and history, from the Native American culture, and the earliest English colonization through five centuries up until today. Artworks in all media and from all periods by many artists who have lived, worked in and been inspired by Hampton will be on view. The exhibition will include historic works lent by The Hampton History Museum, Hampton University Museum, public and private collectors as well as recent works created especially for this once in a lifetime event. Also on view will be archaeological artifacts, historical objects, photographs and a video created especially for this exhibition. Hampton historians, historical re-enactors, and many of the exhibiting artists will be present to meet visitors and answer questions about the objects and artwork on view.

Artwork Description:



Cornus florida

Dogwood Tree

Linda C. Miller, 2009

Advanced Training Opportunities with the Virginia Living Museum

Workshops

April 6, 2010

Virginia's Amphibians and Reptiles

Explore the part of the natural world that slithers, crawls, and hops. Take a close-up look at amphibian and reptile anatomy and survival strategies. Meet some of the Museum's live animals.

Presented by: Betsy Wolin, VLM Education Associate

Ages 18+

Time: 6 - 7:30 p.m.

Cost: \$5 Members; \$7 Non-Members. Active volunteers are free.

Safaris

April 10, 2010

NEW! National Zoo Kiwis

Activity Level 2

Come behind the scenes on a special guided tour of one of the National Zoo's most unusual animals, the Kiwi. There will be Kiwi feathers, eggs, x-rays, skeletons and more to look at and ask questions about. There will also be time to visit with some of the 400 species that live at the National Zoo.

Age: 18+ (8-17 with an adult)

Time: 7 a.m. - 9:30 p.m.

Cost: \$40 VLM members; \$60 non-member

April 24, 2010

Blackwater Canoe/Zuni Pine Barrens

Activity Level 4

Explore one of the best deep river swamps in our area as you canoe your way down the gorgeous Blackwater River. High bluffs border sections of the river and huge bald cypress and water tupelo dominate the canopy of the swamp, making it one of the best riparian forests to be seen. This area is home to turtles, herons, red-shouldered hawks, beavers and an occasional river otter. Our journey will also take us to the famous Zuni Pine Barrens, a totally unique habitat that is one of the last of its kind in Virginia. This habitat is filled with such unusual plants that the Nature Conservancy purchased this rare land to protect its fragile environment.

Age: 18+ (10-17 with an adult)

Time: 7 a.m. - 6:30 p.m.

Cost: \$40 VLM members; \$60 non-members

May 15, 2010

Wildflowers of the Blue Ridge Mountains

Activity Level 2

Explore the majestic mountains of Virginia and step into the world of delicate wildflowers. We'll venture to a meadow, dry, upland forests, wet, bottomland forests, and a waterfall to search for May apple, trillium, wild geranium, Yellow Lady's slippers, false lily of the valley and much, much more.

Age: 18+ (10-17 with an adult)

Time: 7 a.m. - 8 p.m.

Cost: \$40 VLM members; \$60 non-members

John Clayton Chapter of the Peninsula Native Plant Society

- Saturday, April 3 at 10:00 am: **Spring Wildflower Walk - YRSP**

A fieldtrip to **York River State Park** where we'll be looking for trailing arbutus and other early spring bloomers like paw paw, dogwood and golden ragwort. There is a small entrance fee into the park, so carpooling is suggested. Trip leader is **Phillip Merritt**.

Please register by calling Phillip Merritt at **(757)604-1026** or emailing him at vnpfieldtrips@gmail.com.

- Saturday, April 10 at 10:00 am: **Spring Wildflower Walk - Gloucester**

A fieldtrip to **Summerfield's Wild Area** to search for trailing arbutus, a dainty, fragrant, ground-clinging shrub. Jack-in-the-pulpit and other delights of the spring acid woods are often sited in this area. Trip leader is **Mary Hyde Berg**. (Rain date: April 17 at 10am)

Please register and get directions by calling Mary at **(804)693-3568** between 7 am and 8:30 pm. (If messages are not returned, please call again.)

- Saturday, April 10 - all day: **CNU Gardening Symposium**

Our chapter will have a display at this day long event with educational classes exhibits, horticultural clubs, plant sales, experts.

Location: Ferguson Center, Newport News, VA

Call 757-594-7568 to Register.

Volunteers Needed: Call **Helen Hamilton** at **757-564-4494** to sign up to help man chapter's display booth and tell others about native plants!

- Sunday, April 11 at 1:00 pm: **Sandy Bottom Creek Park Walk - NN**

A fieldtrip to **Sandy Bottom Creek Park** in Newport News to look for blooms of sweet-leaf as well as Jack-in-the-pulpit and *houstonia*. Trip leader is **Phillip Merritt**.

Please register by calling Phillip Merritt at **(757)604-1026** or emailing him at vnpfieldtrips@gmail.com.

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Grafton Ponds Was the Place to Be By Patty Riddick

On a cool Sunday afternoon in late February, a merry band of 13 naturalists set out to discover and record the fauna at Grafton Ponds in York County. They were fortunate to meet up with Steve Living who was quick to leave his rake in the leaves of his front yard and come along to lend his expertise. What a day they had discovering many salamanders, including the rare Mabee's salamanders, frogs, deer, slug eggs and numerous birds. Some animals were identified by their scat, some by their tracks, some by their bones, and some by their calls. There was evidence of a raccoon, squirrel, Chorus frogs, and an Eastern Mole although they were never seen.

Although the Mabee's salamanders are known to breed from late winter through early spring, no evidence of any salamander eggs was found. The timing just wasn't right, too early or too late. As well as wildlife mapping, the group checked the vernal pools and compared their conditions with memories of the last visit in the fall. All agreed the pool areas were greatly expanded from the winter snows and rains.

One of the merry group became so enthused she left her binoculars in the woods which prompted a full group search. One for all, and all for one! All ended well with the sighting of two deer in close proximity to the found binoculars. Were the deer checking out the humans?

The afternoon ended with an announcement from Larry Riddick about another proposed trip in mid-April. The next excursion date and time will follow. Come join the fun next time!

Mabee's
Salamander



Above:

Hard at work....

Adrienne Frank, Gary Driscole, Dave Youker, Sheila Kerr-Jones, Patty Maloney, Les Lawrence, Clyde Marsteller, Susie Engle-Hill, Felice Bond, Larry Riddick and Sara Lewis



Field Trip News

Saturday, April 17, 2009, 5:30-10:00 PM

Master Naturalist Night York River State Park

Join your fellow Master Naturalists for a special evening out at York River State Park (YRSP). We will be mixing with Virginia Peninsula Astronomy Stargazers (VPAS) for an evening of food, astronomy, and wildlife mapping. Daryl Douglas of VPAS has agreed to speak with our group and teach us about stargazing using their amazing telescopes on their April Dark Night Meeting at YRSP.

Felice Bond has agreed to take us out frogging that evening and Bill Williams will lead us on a walk for evening wildlife (owls, bats, insects, etc.)

Here is the schedule for the evening:

Meet at Visitor Center of YRSP

Informal Potluck Dinner Shelter #2

5:30-6:30 PM Please bring your own plates/silverware I will provide drinks and cups.

Last Names A-H Bring Starter/Salad

I-P Bring Main Course

Q-Z Bring Dessert

Astronomy Talk to VMN 6:30-7:00 PM

Wildlife Mapping, Guided Walks Bill Williams/Felice Bond 7:00-9:00 PM

Stargazing With VPAS Telescopes in Dark Night Sky 9:00-10:00 PM

I told Daryl we would bring enough extra to feed VPAS (roughly another 10 folks) He requested the 5:30 PM dinner time so they would have time to eat and then have an hour to set up before it got dark. You will get Volunteer Service time for Wildlife Mapping and I will work on getting Adv. Training Credit for the astronomy time. Please bring slightly more food that will cover our new friends with VPAS. Wear clothes you can get muddy in, and if you have a flashlight/headlamp with a red light VPAS would really appreciate it. I'm hoping for a good turnout for my first field trip.

Please E-mail me to let me know if you are coming so I can plan accordingly. All family and friends invited on this outing.

Dean Shostak, Field Trip Coordinator

deanarmonica@aol.com, cell:757-880-4697

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Update on the “Friends of Chickahominy Wildlife Management Area” By Shirley Devan

Ted Sargent, Nancy Norton, Patty Maloney, and I attended the “formational” meeting March 16 at the DGIF Region I headquarters in Charles City County. The room was packed with local landowners, farmers, hunters, volunteers, and wildlife managers plus 4 VA Master Naturalists and one Williamsburg Bird Club member (me ... I wore two hats at this meeting).

The sense of the folks in the room was that a “Friends” group would be a good thing and that formation of a 501(c) (3) organization is in their future. Their wish list included over 25 large and small projects in the categories of habitat, recreation, and infrastructure. Building and maintaining bluebird box trails and duck boxes, planting a native plant garden, and clearing access points were just a few of the suggestions for the “Friends.”

The next meeting is April 8 at 5:00 pm at the Chickahominy Wildlife Management Area. Attendees will get a “boots on the ground tour” of the area and learn more about what the WMA needs. If you want more info, contact the area manager, Donald Earl, on his cell phone: 804-357-1715. Hope to see you there.



Gary Driscole discussed the Master Naturalist Program with an interested visitor at the Virginia Horticultural Extravaganza.

Photo courtesy Les Lawrence

Historic Rivers Chapter represented itself well at the recent York County Master Gardeners Horticultural Extravaganza held at York High School. Present to meet and greet the attendees were Felice Bond, Gary Driscole, Les Lawrence, and Patty Riddick. Bruce Hill came by to check on us, and Larry Riddick helped out between classes. We set up two tables which looked absolutely fantastic with habitat posters, one of our tri-fold boards, deer antlers, birds’ nests, turtle shell, plus a meal worm farm. Additionally, Les enjoyed and shared with others some very special BBQ meal worms. There were not many takers, but we generated much interest. Our estimation is that our display tables were visited by over 75 people during the day. We had about ten interested folks sign up for more information on becoming a master naturalist. It was a good day!

By Patty Riddick

HISTORIC RIVERS CHAPTER

New Quarter Welcomes Bluebird Box Adopters by Sarah Lewis

Virginia Master Naturalists from the Historic Rivers chapter have adopted the 12 bluebird boxes at New Quarter Park for the 2010 season. The volunteers will monitor the boxes as bluebirds begin to build their nests in late March and early April. Bluebirds are expected to lay four to five eggs in a clutch that they will attend for two weeks until they hatch. The nestlings will fledge in three weeks. Master Naturalists will monitor this process and clean the boxes for subsequent nesting. Bluebirds will nest two or three times a year.

The bluebird box monitors pictured here are, from left to right, Shirley Devan, Lois Ullman, Nancy Norton, Jeanette Navia, Gary Hammer, and Evelyn Parker. Program participants not pictured are Dean Shostak, Renee Hirsch, Susie Engle, Ted Sargent, and Sara Lewis.

The bluebird boxes were originally erected in New Quarter Park by Gregory Millslagle of Wild Birds Unlimited in Kiln Creek, who maintained the trail for over a decade.

Students of William and Mary Biology professor Dan Cristol have collected data on the New Quarter Park bluebird population for several research studies during that time.

Bluebirds were common on farms and in rural areas, where they were appreciated for keeping insect populations in check. But in the 1950s and 1960s, bluebird numbers dropped dramatically as suburban development increased. There was less and less farm land and more and more competition for the nesting places from house sparrows and starlings. In addition, the use of pesticides like DDT affected the bird's food supply of insects and caused egg shells to be thin, therefore unable to support development. The plight of the bluebird was recognized throughout the eastern United States in the 1970s. Wildlife groups and bird clubs began to build bluebird boxes and DDT was banned. This has lead to an increase in the numbers of bluebirds and the continuing support of bluebird nest box programs ensures the success of the birds as well as their contribution to a healthy ecosystem.



Dr. Art Evans, rolling up his sleeves to talk about....

LUST IN THE DUST

Photo from Jody Ullman

Mark Catesby

1682-1749 b. England

Mark Catesby is truly a remarkable individual whose life path always encircled him with the learning, means, and support to fulfill his dream of creating a natural history study of the plants and animals of colonial America. This amazing effort resulted in a two volume publication comprised of more than 200 hand color plates, drawn by Catesby himself over an eight year period, then personally hand engraving all but a handful of plates and selling self-published subscriptions.

There is not much known or written about Catesby's upbringing and personal life and there is no autobiographical journal. However, experts contribute his love of naturalism or 'early Inclination....to search after Plants, and other Productions in Nature' (1) to have begun while spending time with his Uncle Nicholas Jekyll, who had a personal garden of gentry means. It was here that Mark was introduced to John Ray, Samuel Dale, and Thomas Fairchild, the gentlemen who intellectually supported Catesby's journey to receive specimens and seeds from America for their gardens and personal study.

In 1712, Catesby traveled with his sister Elizabeth when set out to join her husband, Dr. William Cocke, who resided in capital city of Virginia, Williamsburg. Catesby brought his box filled with paper and paints to record the local fauna of the area 'which were Strangers to England' (2). Catesby was introduced to others in the colonial town who also had interest in horticulture and natural history and it was through their help that Catesby's stay was extended into a seven year visit "where he explored the Tidewater plantations of Virginia and made expeditions up the James river towards the Appalachian mountains"(3). During this time he created original watercolor paintings, "using reflected color and form as a rhetorical device to unify animals and plants that interact in the wild, and supporting his visual arguments with textual description, Catesby developed a new format for the illustration of flora and fauna."(4)

Returning to London in 1719, Catesby had the opportunity to show his work to his friend Samuel Drake, who

then arranged a meeting with the noted botanist of the day, William Sherard, writing "Mr. Catesby is come from Virginia...he intends againe to return, and will take an oportuniity to waite upon you with some paintings of Birds &c. which he hath drawn. Its [a] pitty some incouragement can't be found for him, he may be very usefull for the perfecting of Natural History' (5). His work was also reviewed by the Royal Society. But it was Colonel Francis Nicholson, who would be serving as the first Royal Governor of South Carolina and befriended Catesby that pledged to sponsor his next series of studies if it were to be of South Carolina. With the aid of the Colonel, Catesby secured an annual salary of L20 from wealthy subscribers, including Sir Hans Sloane, the founder of the British Museum.

In 1722, Catesby sailed across the ocean again to spend an additional four years recording the fauna and flora of the Carolinas, Florida and the Bahama Islands. During this visit, Catesby sought to be more systematic in his travels noting in a letter to Sherard, " My method is never to be twice at [the same] place in the same season for if in the sp [ring] I am in the low Country [in the sum]mer I am [at] the hea[ds] of rivers the next Summer in the low countrys, so alternating that in 2 Years [I visit} the two different parts of the Country."(6)

The 263 original watercolors by Catesby were purchased by King George III in 1768 from a London bookseller and are now held in the Royal Collection. In the preface to the Natural History, Catesby states "As I was not bred a Painter I hope some faults in Perspective and other Niceties may be more readily executed, for I humbly conceive Plants, and other Things done in a Flat, tho' exact manner may serve the Purpose of Natural History, better in some Measure than in a more bold and Painter like Way."(7)

Mr. Catesby's works still stand today and are a remarkable example of botanical illustration. Carl Linnaeus was dependent upon Catesby's Natural History for many of his descriptions of American species. One can view these wonderful plates in the two volume Natural History by visiting the reference library at the Maritime Museum in Newport News, Virginia.

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Bibliography and Footnotes:

- (1) page 178 Amazing Rare Things The Art of Natural History in the Age of Discover, by David Attenborough, Susan Owens, Martin Clayton and Rea Alexandratos
- (2) Ibid, page 179
- (3) Ibid, page 179
- (4) page 20, Mark Catesby's Natural History of America The Watercolors from The Royal Library Windsor Castle by Henrietta McBurney
- (5) page 180 Amazing Rare Things The Art of Natural History in the Age of Discover, by David Attenborough, Susan Owens, Martin Clayton and Rea Alexandratos
- (6) Ibid, page 190
- (7) Ibid, page 191

Prepared by Linda Miller

Historic Rivers Chapter, Virginia Master Naturalist

Cohort IV

February 2010

The full schedule for the **Great Dismal Swamp Birding Festival** is available at <http://www.fws.gov/northeast/greatdismalswamp/pdf/SOE102.pdf>

The festival will kick off on May 6th and runs through May 8th - a great way to celebrate International Migratory Bird Day at the Great Dismal Swamp National Wildlife Refuge! There are a variety of guided walks, owl prowls, bus tours and workshops. Saturday's festivities will include an exhibition area with variety of exhibitors and activities for the whole family. There will be live music and food as well.

Call 757/986-3705 for reservations and more information. Be sure to join us and get that Swainson's Warbler for your year list!

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

This spring, the Chesapeake Bay Foundation is sponsoring a "Grasses for the Masses" program, in which volunteers, like our neighbor Danny Whitten, volunteered to grow celerygrass in their homes, using an aquaculture setup provided (on loan) from CBF.

Here's Danny's crop. Later this spring, he and his kids will go and plant the grass at a site on the James. Notice how lovely the setup is from an interior-decorating standpoint; it's just the focal point needed for their sunroom!

Kathi Mestayer





Winter Hours

Friday, 10 a.m. to Dusk

Saturday & Sunday, 8 a.m. to Dusk

April 2010

3 - EVMA Group Ride & Meeting, 9 a.m.

3 - Walk & Talk: Rusty Blackbird Research & Spring Migration, Dan Cristol, W&M Biology Dept, 10 a.m.-Noon

4 - Easter Sunrise Service at the Fire Circle led by Rev. Steve Wiley of Grace Baptist Church. 6:45 a.m.

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

17 - BYOK! Arrive at 9 a.m., put-in by 9:30, take-out by noon

17 - Disc Golf Tournament (course closed to public)

24 - WBC Bird Walk, 7-9 a.m., meet in overflow parking lot

24 - Master Naturalists Teaching Garden Workday, 9:30-11:30 a.m., park in overflow lot

24 - Bark in the Park, Heritage Humane Society. www.heritagehumanesociety.org, park in overflow lot

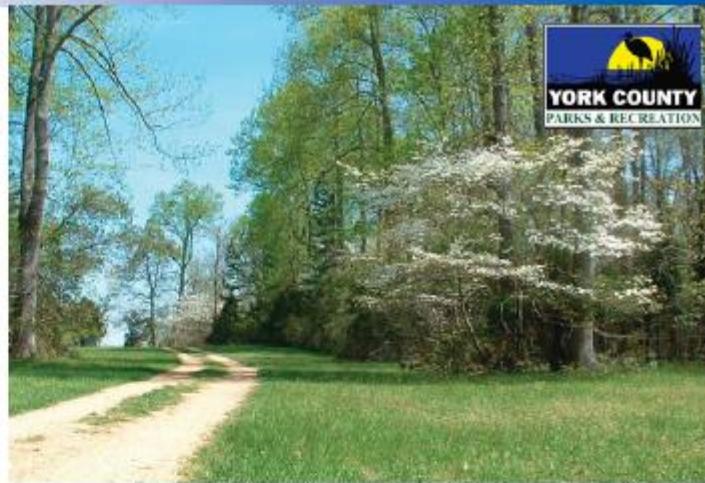
Summer hours begin May 1. New Quarter will be open daily from 8 a.m. until dusk.

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 Penniman Rd., left on Hubbard Ln. Right on Lakeshead Rd., follow to Park.



More Information at www.yorkcounty.gov, go to Parks and Recreation
New Quarter Park, 1000 Lakeshead Dr., 757-890-5840 (Friday-Sunday) . York Co Parks & Rec, 757-890-3500 (Monday-Friday)



Upcoming Events

May 2010

1 - EVMA Group Ride & Meeting, 9 a.m.

1 - British Long Bow Tournament, North American Chapter of the British Long Bow Society

2 - Cyclists Against Cancer, 8 a.m., ride 15, 25, or 50 miles. Registration forms in park office or contact elainecardwell@cox.net or 871-7544.

8 - York Co. Geology Ride, Walk & Talk field trip, Jerri Johnson, W&M Professor Emeritus. Space limited, reservations required: 890-5840 or 890-3513. (Participants may follow in own car.)

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

8 - No Quarter at New Quarter Disc Golf Tournament. Call John Roy at rottown@cox.net and 757-220-0959.



15 - BYOK! 9 a.m.-noon

22 - WBC Bird Walk, 7-9 a.m.

22 - Queens Lake 5K Run + 1K Fun Run/Walk, 8 a.m.

22 - Master Naturalists Teaching Garden Workday, 9:30-11:30 a.m.

22 - Stargazing Nite with NASA, 7:30-10:00 p.m.

23 - EVMA Spring Fling: Ride, Eat, Play, 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.



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

HISTORIC RIVERS CHAPTER

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2010 Virginia Society of Ornithology Outer Banks Field Trip—attended by Cohort IV members Linda and Jeff Miller



Photos taken at Oregon Inlet, Pea Island Wildlife Refuge South Pond, Bodie Island and the Alligator River State Park

Courtesy of Linda Miller



Cultivars and the Food Web

In response to a series of VNPS emails on the subject of a Tech/Virginia Nursery and Landscape Association (VNLA) initiative on developing native plant cultivars, I wrote to Doug Tallamy, author of *Bringing Nature Home* and professor at University of Delaware. The proposed criteria for consideration of cultivars was/is:

1. They should be plants that are not restricted to growing in narrow environmental conditions or geographic areas
2. They should be plants that "present" well--so they catch the eye of the consumer
3. They should not be too "tricky" to grow
4. They should grow well in containers
5. They will be grown for gardening, not for restoration projects in the wild.

I posed the following question to Dr. Tallamy in an email:

"I have suggested that the plant's function in an ecosystem/food web should be added as a criterion. In addition, is there any way to make an educated guess about what cultivars would be most beneficial? I note in your book that you mention avoiding making berries bigger (so that birds can still eat them), but wonder if anything else is worth considering. - Kathi"

Here's his reply, verbatim:

"Good questions. Most often we play with flower color or shape when developing a cultivar. That typically messes up our pollinators, but may not impact leaf feeders at all. Changing leaf color (green to purple, or variegated, for example) will certainly change the leaf chemistry, which is a no no from the food web perspective. Breeders should remember that the primary benefit native plants have over non-natives is their contribution to food webs. So don't mess with that. I can tell you that every place I go people are asking how to get more straight species into the market. They don't want cultivars!"

So, there it is. Some guidance and principles (flower shape, leaf, color/chemistry) that will impact cultivars' ability to function in the food web. In summary, I have to ask why the criteria proposed for the project include "5. They will be grown for gardening, not for restoration projects in the wild." Are these mutually exclusive? Not in my yard.

> Kathi Mestayer

Smithsonian's Division of Birds

By Shirley Devan

As the Virginia Living Museum Safari mini-bus headed north on I-95, the 14 passengers observed the usual avian species along a high speed thoroughfare: Turkey Vultures, American Crows, Red-tail Hawks, Rock Pigeons.

When we reached our destination – the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History – the quality of our birds improved considerably: Ivory-billed Woodpecker, Carolina Parakeet, Passenger Pigeon, King Penguin, Trogon.

WHAT?

We were deep in the basement of the museum for a behind-the-scenes visit in the Division of Birds. Our host for the morning was Dr. Carla Dove from the Division's Feather Identification Lab. The March 6 trip was sponsored by the Virginia Living Museum, and Lisa Wright and Rock Moeslin accompanied the twelve of us and took turns driving the bus. The Williamsburg contingent included Bird Club members Alice and Seig Kopinitz, Susan, Mike, and Alex Powell, and me. Master Naturalists Felice and Tom Bond and Les and Laura Lawrence also joined us. A mother-daughter duo from Tabb rounded out our group.

When we arrived at our appointed spot in basement, Carla proceeded to describe the study skins she had assembled for us. Yes, she let us hold the study skins for the Ivory-billed Woodpecker, the Carolina Parakeet, and the Passenger Pigeon, with frequent reminders to WASH YOUR HANDS REALLY WELL WHEN YOU LEAVE HERE!

She had also brought out a box of four birds collected by John James Audubon in the early 19th century. The Smithsonian also holds historically significant specimens from Theodore Roosevelt even though we did not see those.

Dr. Dove had set out interesting feathers from various American birds. Some birds were pickled in jars. An American Bittern stretched halfway across the table. Several skeletons as well as a few unusual nests were on display. Two boxes contained Song Sparrow study skins illustrating the variation in size of one species as collected across the United States. Another box contained tanagers from South America; still another contained eggs of Rufous Hummingbirds. Dr. Dove showed us the tiniest hummingbird as well as the largest.

The museum houses the third largest bird collection in the world with over 640,000 specimens. Only the British Mu-

seum and the American Museum of Natural History in New York City have larger collections.

The Smithsonian collection contains almost 4,000 "type" specimens. Original taxonomic descriptions are based on these "type" specimens! Hundreds of scientists from around the world visit the Division of Birds every year to conduct research.

Dr. Dove (with a name like that, she has to be an ornithologist!) directs the Feather Identification Lab, which processes over 3,500 aircraft bird strike cases per year from around the world. She showed us examples of "snarg" – the term used to describe the blood and bits of unidentifiable body parts left behind after a bird strikes a jet engine (or gets processed in a Cuisinart!).

The Feather Identification Lab's avian DNA database, completed in 2006 for 96% of all bird species in US and Canada, helps solve bird strike cases. The experts in Dr. Dove's lab also use other techniques such as microscopic features on the down portion of feathers.

Luckily, most of us had cameras, which Dr. Dove encouraged us to use. Needless to say we snapped photos of each person holding their favorite extinct bird! When she had completed her prepared presentation on the items on the display table, she asked if anyone had a particular bird they wanted to see. At our requests she took us into the aisles and stacks and rows and rows of cases holding over 640,000 specimens. She opened up cases to display King Penguin, kingfishers, trogons, macaws, and other colorful birds.

An awe-inspiring visit particularly for the bird nerds in the group! We thanked Dr. Dove for coming to work on Saturday morning specifically to give us a tour. We collected our coats and cameras and made a beeline for the restrooms to WASH OUR HANDS REALLY WELL. The memories will stick for a long time.

Photos from the visit are on my Flickr site: http://www.flickr.com/photos/shirley_devan/



HISTORIC RIVERS CHAPTER



Native Plant Walk at York River State park

Leader was Phil Merritt. Participants, left to right:

Dorothy Whitfield, Jeanette Navia, Lois Ullman, Christina Woodson, Phil Merritt, Louise Menges, Courtney Langley.

Photo by Shirley Devan

Phil took us on a short walk around the park and down to the beach to show us Golden Ragwort, Bluets, Paw Paw (blooming), Sassafras, May Apples, Redbud, Dogwoods, Red Maple, flowering Sweet Gum tree, Spicebush, Serviceberry, Saxifrage, and Bald Cypress.

Left and below: Ivory-billed Woodpecker

Right: Group at the Smithsonian

Courtesy of Shirley Devan



HISTORIC RIVERS CHAPTER



On Saturday, March 20, three William and Mary students helped kill ivy at the National Parks Service site at the Yorktown Battlefield. And what a battle it was! You can see the gnarly vines that it took us the better part of an hour to saw through. And we kept going, working our way through several more monster vines and tree rescues. Michael Byrd was there to cheer us on, provide the tools and water, and take this photo.....

Courtesy of Kathi Mestayer

Williamsburg Parks & Recreation Department Waller Mill Park **Art in the Park**

Instruction By: Linda C. Miller, Naturalist
<http://lindacmiller.blogspot.com>



Three Day Workshop: April 17, May 1 and 8

The act of observing and recording nature offers so much. It requires close attention, involves drawing and writing, it encourages the act of sketching, capturing a natural scene is a great way to record a memory, to help us observe carefully and remember what we see. You will learn sketching and drawing techniques in a class room setting, then actually be "in the field" and explore Waller Mill Park. Students will work at their own pace while Linda "visits" for individual instruction. All levels: Beginner to Advanced.

Adult Workshop:

Workshop Limit: Minimum of 5 students / Maximum of 15 students
Intended for ages 18 & older
Children 12 years old and older may participate with enrolled adult

Fee: \$75 per student / 3-day workshop
Register By: April 14, 2010 **NO REFUNDS**

Register in person at Waller Mill Park or by phone (757) 259-3778

Workshop Date #1: Classroom Instruction

Date: Saturday, April 17
Location: Waller Mill Park Education Center
Time: 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.
Lunch: 12:30p.m. to 1:15 p.m. *Room available for bag lunch

Workshop Date #2: Field Sketching

Date: Saturday, May 1
Location: Waller Mill Park - Shelter #4
Time: 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.
Lunch: 12:30 p.m. to 1:15 p.m. *Pavilion available for bag lunch

Workshop Date #3: Field Sketching

Date: Saturday, May 8
Location: Waller Mill Park - Shelter #3
Time: 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.
Lunch: 12:30 p.m. to 1:15 p.m. *Pavilion available for bag lunch

Material List:

All workshops:
• Sketching paper or spiral journal with blank pages appropriate for pencil or watercolor.
• Pencils with lead type 2B, H minimum and kneaded eraser.
• Materials may be purchased locally at Walls Alive.

Optional:

• Watercolor pencils, watercolor paints, colored pencils. No oils or pastels.

Field Sketching:

• Comfortable chair or stool
• Sun protection
• Insect repellent
• Camera, binoculars or magnifying glass
• Your favorite field guides

Comforts:

• Bring water, snack and lunch

From Kathi Mestayer

Well, here she is. The big sourwood in Matoaka Woods. Not a champ, for sure, but impressive all the same.

She measures 62" around one trunk, and 92" around both. The trunk divides just about at chest height, so we figure it's a coin toss about which one is official. In any case, Mac looked up the champ and it's 4' in diameter, so we're short of that either way. It's right next to an oak.



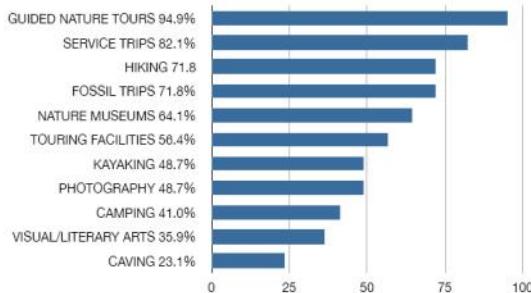
Field Trip Survey Results

Thank you so much for everyone taking time to answer the survey. Thirty-nine members took it. This gives me an excellent starting point for planning field trips for our chapter over the next year. I have tabulated the results and included the written responses. There are many suggestions I will actively pursue. Please feel free to contact me at any time with any ideas or suggestions.

Thank you!

Dean Shostak, Field Trip Coordinator, Cohort IV
deanarmonica@aol.com

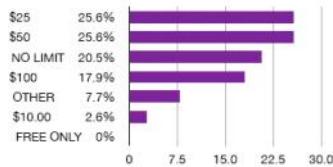
1. What types of field trips would you like to participate in next year?



Other responses to Question 1:

1. Up for almost anything you can think of.
2. Out of town weekend trips to natural history "hot spots."
3. Trips that show nature-friendly landscaping.
4. Emphasis on SERVICE TRIPS. Boating opportunities.
5. Botanical gardens, lectures
6. I can't hike too far - 4-5 miles at most. I won't camp in winter.

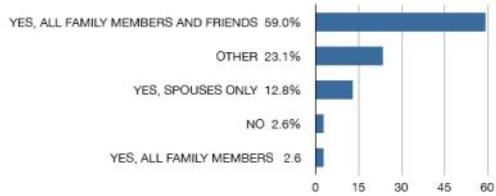
4. How much are you willing to spend on a field trip?



Other responses to Question #4:

1. Depends on the value of the trip. A unique experience can be worth a higher price, but of course, a bargain is always welcome since we are not made of money either.
2. As many free or low-cost options as possible, though would still be interested in learning about more expensive trips if really cool!
3. Would depend on the trip.

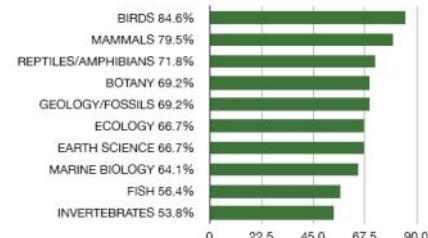
5. Should family members and friends be welcome on field trips?



Other responses to Question #5:

1. A reasonable amount of visitors, limit children.
2. Spouses and friends. No children under 18.
3. Yes - spouses, "significant others," family members, and friends (perhaps first making sure that all VMN members can be accommodated?)
4. This would very much depend on the type of trip open, and the interests of the FMs, and the agility level expected.
5. Depends on the trip.
6. Yes, but only if the group is not too large.
7. Sometimes - when space and kind of activity allow.
8. No one under the age of 18 or 21 (must be an adult)
9. Depends on the type of field trip.

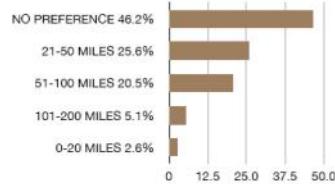
2. What areas of interest would you like to pursue with your fellow Master Naturalists?



Other responses to Question #2:

1. All, what happened to insects?
2. Especially insects
3. Astronomy
4. Again, habitat-friendly landscaping. Non-native invasives.
5. Chesapeake Bay issues.

3. How far are you willing to travel for a field trip?



6. Annual big trip destinations



1. Yellowstone & Yosemite
2. State Arboretum
3. Overnight group reservations at state
4. Eastern Shore or Dismal Swamp
5. Day Trips to state parks and/or National Wildlife Refuges in Northern Neck of VA (still in coastal plain). Example: Rappahannock River NWR. Thanks, Dean, for sending out this survey! In reality, I'll go anywhere with this group and do just about anything!
6. Aurora Fossil Museum, Aurora, NC
7. "Blandy Experimental Farm, (The State Arboretum of VA) Contact Person: Candace Felling, Dir. of Educ., www.virginia.edu/blandy_c116b@virginia.edu, 540-837-1758 Ext.230 (9 mi. east of Winchester, VA)
8. Master Naturalists can spend the night in the dorm for a very reasonable fee
9. Lots of local trips - particularly around VA, but also NC & MD. (Easier weekend travel for people who have to work)
10. I love to travel, and as long as health and wealth admit, I'll go almost anywhere to see the beauty of our world, and the wonders of nature, for that matter I'll go see man's destruction too.
11. Frankly, I don't think our chapter should start officially offering expensive, exotic trips. People can do that on their own in small groups, which they already do. If they want to invite the MNs, fine. But I don't want us to become a group that officially goes on that kind of expensive trip. I think our unique contribution to the community and people's lives is an appreciation of nature (relatively) close by, and that you don't have to get on a plane or drive 12 hours to be transported by nature. We have enough of that in our culture already.
12. I enjoy repeats, too - Grafton Pond, walks with Donna Ware, walks at New Quarter Park, etc.
13. Partner with Chesapeake Bay Foundation on study trips at their residential facilities: http://www.cbf.org/Page.aspx?casa_id=111

CONGRATULATIONS TO COHORT IV GRADUATION—MARCH 2010



Graduates with their diplomas:

L to R: Ted Sargent, Nancy Norton, Christina Woodson, Jeff Miller, Lois Ullman, Dean Shostak, Patty Mahoney, Les Lawrence, Donald Shepler, Rhonda DeChirico, Linda Miller, Steven David

Photo: Seig Kopinitz

Cohort IV presenting Shirley Devan and Bruce Hill with tokens of their appreciation for the outstanding work done for the Historic Rivers Chapter of the Virginia Master Naturalists

Seig Kopinitz



See what fun it is to be a Master Naturalist?