



THE NATURALIST

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

<http://historicrivers.org>

A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

Volume 4 No. 8 August 2010

Advanced
Training
Page 3, 9, 10
& 11

Cohort V be-
gins August 31
Page 5

Timekeeping
Update
Page 5

Congratula-
tions!
Page 6

Field Trip
Opportuni-
ties
Pages 10-11

Biography-
John Muir
Pages 16-19

Wildlife
Mapping
Greensprings
Pages 22-24

Message from the president

Synergy in Historic Rivers Chapter Members

As I reflect on the grand day of events at our summer picnic at Ted Sargent's home on the Chickahominy, July 17, 2010, I gained additional insight into the strengths and capabilities of our members. As I enjoyed the day under the sycamore tree, I concluded the Chapter has an excellent synergy of nature-related activities and environmental stewardship capabilities. As a group, we experience great pleasure sharing with each other whether it was the early morning bird walk, frog bog, swamp romp, or owl prowling.

Ted and Judy's hospitality was outstanding. The crabs and burgers, roasted corn on the cob, and all of the pot luck dishes made for great eating. It's becoming "fact" the Chapter has some pretty good cooks among its members. The home-made pickles from Adrian and Gary's garden were spectacular. On behalf of the Chapter, kudos to our hosts for a grand party. The collection of photos from the day has provided good memories of the 2010 summer picnic.

It was great to have Bill Williams join us to lead the morning's bird walk. Dean and his purple fiddle provided a cultural dimension to the afternoon. We

especially enjoyed riding up river on Les's pontoon boat. The osprey shared flight as we returned down river to Ted's house. They were grand to watch as they soared along the shoreline. We soon forgot the summer heat and humidity and moved on to the next event.

The day's scheduled events and activities all contributed to the theme of science education relating to natural resources on the peninsula. Such a dedicated educational focus across many areas pertinent to environmental education demonstrates the depth of talent among our members. These events could be offered as the program if we were to organize a day-long field trip. The eagerness across members for doing the activities together and the philosophy of sharing the information provide an excellent comrade at a level some organizations never achieve.

It's impressive to have such a breadth of environmental-related talent in our Chapter members. The depth and breadth of talent has been built in the first 4 years of the Chapter, an accomplishment in itself. As individuals we enjoy being together with each doing his/her part to make the event meaningful for the group. It's amazing to

CHAPTER OFFICERS 2010

Bruce Hill, President

*Ted Sargent, Vice President
& Programs Chair*

Patty Maloney and Lois Ullman, Secretary

Jim Booth, Treasurer

*Barbara Boyer, Newsletter
Editor*

Felice Bond, Historian

*Alice Kopinitz & Jeanette
Navia, Host*

Shirley Devan, Membership

*Susan Powell, Volunteer Ser-
vice Projects*

*Bruce Hill & Shirley Devan,
Training Chair*

*Dave Youker, Advanced
Training*

*Adrienne Frank & Gary
Driscole, Outreach Commit-
tee*

Seig Kopinitz, Webmaster

*Dean Shostak, Field Trip Co-
ordinator*

*Patty Riddick, Member-at-
Large*

*Evelyn Parker, Member-at-
large*

COMMITTEES

Volunteer Service Projects

Susan Powell, Chair

Advanced Training

Dave Youker, Chair

Training Committee

Bruce Hill & Shirley Devan, Chair

Outreach/Publicity

Adrienne Frank, and Gary Driscole

watch the members interact with each other as they contribute their expertise. The demonstrated compatibility of the diverse personalities and their capabilities to come together for a day of sharing is that of a much more mature organization.

The end point is greater than the sum of the results from each individual event. Other organizations should be envious of the dynamics and breadth of environmental education skills across Chapter members. What a distinguishing characteristic to have in an organization of volunteers. I'm still out there, at times, with the green tree frogs as they welcomed the evening's dusk.

Bruce F. Hill, President
Historic Rivers Chapter
Virginia Master Natural-
ists



Top: Crab Chef Ted Sargent

Left: Guests enjoying
fruits of Ted's labor

Summer 2010 Picnic

Photos courtesy of
Lester Lawrence

Notes from the Board

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

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ADVANCED TRAINING OPPORTUNITES

Date	Title	Location	Time	Remarks/Contact
August				
1 Aug	HRBC Walk State Arboretum of Virginia	Newport News Park	0700-1000	Jane Frigo contact Sally: rccsca@comcast.net
8 Aug	Plant Walk	near Boyce, VA	1300	
14 Aug	WBC Walk	New Qtr Park	0800-1000	Shirley Devan
15 Aug	HRBC Walk	Newport News Park	0700-1000	Jane Frigo
21 Aug	WBC Field Trip	Craney Island	0700-1200	Shirley Devan
28 Aug	WBC Walk	New Qtr Park	0700-1000	Shirley Devan
September				
4 Sep	Reptile & Amphibian Conserva- tion in Virginia	Rice Center; Charles City, VA	0900-1500	Tim Christensen: mtnc066@msn.com and Mi- chelle Prysby: masternatural-
5 Sep	HRBC Walk	Newport News Park	0700-1000	Jane Frigo
11 Sep	WBC Walk	New Qtr Park	0800-1000	Shirley Devan
11 Sep	HRBC Field Trip	TBD	0800-1200	Dave Youker http://
16-17 Sep	Good Green, Bad Green: Inva- sive Plant Control for Habitat Restoration	Front Royal, Virginia	All-day confer- ence	www.forestryforthebay.org/ ggbg/
18 Sep	WBC Field Trip	TBD	0700-1200	Shirley Devan
19 Sep	HRBC Walk	Newport News Park	0700-1000	Jane Frigo
25 Sep	WBC Walk	New Qtr Park	0700-1000	Shirley Devan



Hardy souls turned out to move mulch early Saturday morning. Jeanne Millen, Mike Millen and Lois Ullman. Not pictured here are Sara Lewis and Nancy Norton. Picture courtesy of Shirley Devan

Basic Training for Cohort V starts August 31

By Shirley Devan, Training Committee

We have 21 volunteers enrolled in our Cohort V Basic Training class. Classes start Tuesday, August 31 and will complete March 9, 2011 with Graduation and our Chapter's Annual Meeting.

Members can earn volunteer hours by helping with training sessions and performing pre-class and post-class tasks. Contact Shirley Devan if you can help out.

Except for field trips, almost all classes will be in the Multi-purpose Room at the Human Services Building, 5249 Olde Towne Road, Williamsburg, VA. [Exceptions are noted below.]

The total number of hours in Basic Training this year is 71 – 49 hours in 17 classes (including preparation of the Naturalist Biography) and 22 hours in 6 field trips. To graduate from Basic Training, volunteers in Cohort V must complete at least 15 of 17 classes and 4 of 6 field trips.

All sessions (except Saturday field trips) start at 6 pm sharp and end by 9 pm sharp. MOST (not all) classroom sessions are on Tuesday nights.

In addition, as part of the 71 hours, volunteers in Cohort V should:

1. Attend at least two hours on one or more bird walks/field trips with either the Williamsburg Bird Club or the Hampton Roads Bird Club.
2. Attend at least two hours on one or more native plant field trips/walks with a chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society. The local John Clayton Chapter leads 1 – 2 walks per month (sometimes more).
3. Attend at least one program in the series “VIMS After Hours” presented once a month at VIMS in Gloucester Point, VA.

Here is the training schedule:

August 31: Introduction to VA Master Naturalist Program and the Historic Rivers Chapter; the Nature of Naming

September 7: Biology Basics and Risk Management

September 18: Field trip – Scientific Methods and Field Methods [Saturday afternoon]

September 21: Habitats

October 5: Plant Biology [location is Jamestown High School]

October 19: Dendrology

October 30: Field Trip – Wetlands Ecology [Saturday – all day]

November 2: Geology of VA

November 13: Field Trip – Geology [Saturday all day]

November 16: VA Indigenous Cultures

December 1: Weather and Climate [**Wednesday -- new date**]

December 7: Entomology

December 8: Chapter's Holiday Party [Wednesday -- location TBA]

Continued on next page

January 4: Herpetology

January 15: Field Trip – New Kent Forestry Center [Saturday 9 am – 1 pm]

January 18: Ornithology

January 25: Naturalist Biography due [outside class assignment]

February 1: Fishes of VA

February 12: Class/Field Trip: Freshwater Ecology and Winter Botany [Saturday all day; location is Jamestown High]

February 15: Mammalogy

March 1: Ecology Concepts

UPDATE – Membership and Timekeeping Information
By Shirley Devan, Membership Chair, Historic Rivers Chapter

When last I communicated with you about timekeeping and managing your hours (June newsletter), I indicated that our Historic Rivers Chapter would be a pilot chapter to test the new “VMS – Volunteer Management System” that the state VMN people (Michelle Prysby and other techies) are implementing.

UPDATE: As of July 27, all of our HRC member data has been entered into the VMS. Michelle Prysby deserves a big round of applause for importing our member data into the system to get our Chapter ready to go. Hours that you have sent through June 2010 are already in the system. She has also prepared and distributed to us a “How to Get Started” document for both Administrators and Members.

The chapter administrators for our database have been identified and will be getting up to speed in the next week. The administrators for our system are:

- Projects: Susan Powell
- Calendar – 2 people: Susan Powell and David Youker
- Newsletters: Barbara Boyer
- Volunteer Hours and Membership Roster: Shirley Devan
- Photo Albums – 2 people: Seig Kopinitz and Felice Bond
- Global Administrators: Bruce Hill, Mary Apperson, Susan Powell, Shirley Devan

If other members want to join in and help manage the system, please let Bruce or Shirley know. We would love to have more your help.

Before members can record their hours in the new system, our Administrators need to complete a few tasks. An important task is entering our approved projects into the system so you’ll have something to record your time against. Susan Powell, Chair of our Volunteer Service Projects, will be doing that soon. I’ll be entering data about our new Cohort V volunteers. Others will be adding newsletters, photos, advanced training, etc.

So it’s not quite ready for prime time, but we know how to get there.

For July, please continue to send me your hours on the Microsoft Word document you’ve used in the past.

We’ll have multiple training sessions for anyone who wants hands-on introduction to the system. Plus we’ll distribute a “How to Get Started” document fairly soon. Michelle asked our chapter to be a pilot because she feels that most of our chapter members will be willing to enter their hours online. I think we’ll live up to her expectations! As always, thanks for your support. Our team will be glad to answer questions. Stay tuned to your email for updates.



Congratulations to Master Naturalists and Master Gardener **Barb Dunbar** for the role she played in helping York County develop low-cost science field trips. She and others were recognized with Achievement Awards granted by the National Association of Counties.

Barb will be leading a Walk and Talk at New Quarter Park about butterflies on August 7 from 10 a.m. to noon. Hope to see you there! NQP Walk and Talks count towards Advanced Training hours.

As part the ongoing effort to provide low cost, high quality services to its citizens, York County routinely encourages employees to think creatively and develop programs that will enable the county to work more efficiently and effectively.

This year, the county is pleased to have been recognized for those efforts with an outstanding eight Achievement Awards granted by the National Association of Counties for various county programs and initiatives.

□ It is quite an honor to be recognized on the national level for programs that county staff has created and implemented, said County Administrator James O. McReynolds. □ County employees work very hard to serve the citizens of York, and these awards are recognition of a job well done. □

The following are programs that won Achievement Awards this year, and the names of county staff accepting those awards and congratulations from Board of Supervisors Chairman Don Wiggins. For more information on these award winning programs, please contact the Public Information Office at 890-3300.

Science Field Trip Productions

During these tough economic times, budget cuts in schools have virtually eliminated science-based field trips, a once-beloved tradition in our elementary schools. By partnering with other departments and experts from the local community, reusing supplies and relying on grants and volunteer hours, the Virginia Cooperative Extension □ York County created a science field trip program to fill that void at a surprisingly low cost. Additionally, the field trips serve to get students outdoors and involved in hands-on activities while also fulfilling science requirements. Over 200 5th grade students have participated in these field trips so far.

Board Chairman Don Wiggins recognized York Master Gardeners **Barb Dunbar** and Teresa Bennett, York Extension Agent Dan Nortman.



Super Congratulations to Nancy!
Nancy Norton receiving certification as a Virginia Master Naturalist, accompanied by Granddaughter Sarah McCarn

Photo: Shirley Devan

World Water Monitoring Day By Kathi Mestayer

I did this last year at sites on Powhatan and Mill Creeks, and it was interesting simply in terms of learning how to do the sampling. They send you a kit with instructions to sample dissolved oxygen, temp, clarity, and ph, and then you do the sample and enter the data online. The kits cost about \$21.50, based on my quick visit to the site.

Oh, and you can do the sampling any time from now until Dec 31, even though World Water Monitoring Day is officially Sept 18.

September 18—World Water Monitoring Day—is right around the corner! Register now and take advantage of all the resources available both for free and through the WWMD Store. For some additional ideas, check out the new Protect Our Waterways brochure and online Observation Guide, and test your knowledge with the accompanying crossword puzzle.

Kit Donations for Low- and Middle-Income Countries

WWMD encourages participation from Low- and Middle-Income countries through the donation of monitoring kits. If you are interested in either making a donation or receiving a donation of test kits, please click here for more information.

Detective Tuesday Returns August '10

Reserve a FREE copy of The Water Down Under today

Detective Michelle Tuesday from the popular WWMD title A Waterproof Case will return in the August release of The Water Down Under. This 32-page illustrated story teaches elementary schoolchildren (ages 8 to 11) about the importance of observation, in addition to scientific testing, when trying to determine the health of a waterway. Complete the online form to reserve your free copy today.

Combine WWMD with Other Great Programs

World Rivers Day

Observed every last Sunday in September, World Rivers Day is a global celebration of the world's waterways that encourages the improved stewardship of rivers around the world. Celebrate WWMD together with World Rivers Day by taking water quality samples of your local river.

National Public Lands Day

National Public Lands Day (NPLD), to be observed September 25, is the U.S.'s largest hands-on volunteer effort to improve and enhance America's public lands. Sign up for NPLD and then monitor the water resources found at your work site. Just don't forget to report your data!

(See form on following page)



What is World Water Monitoring Day? [Click here](#) to learn more.
To **unsubscribe from this list**, please send a blank e-mail to wcmd@wef.org.

Sign up Today!

September 18—World Water Monitoring Day—is right around the corner! [Register now](#) and take advantage of all the [resources](#) available both for free and through the [WWMD Store](#). For some additional ideas, check out the new [Protect Our Waterways](#) brochure and online [Observation Guide](#), and test your knowledge with the accompanying [crossword puzzle](#).

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Find WWMD on Facebook

WWMD is now on Facebook. [Click here](#) to find us, learn how others are getting involved, read the latest program updates, and join in the fun.



Training Opportunities from the Virginia Living Museum

August 3, 2010

Underground Treasures - Virginia's Rocks and Minerals

Below the surface throughout Virginia lies an amazing variety of rock and mineral resources. In this hands-on workshop, we'll use simple field and lab techniques to learn to identify native VA rocks and minerals ores, encounter some minerals with unusual properties, and show examples of some surprising commercial uses for these resources.

Presented by: Jim Drummond, VLM Education Associate

Ages 18+

Time: 6 - 7:30 p.m.

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

Training Opportunities from Virginia Institute for Marine Science

Sharks!

Starts: August 26, 2010 at 7:00 PM

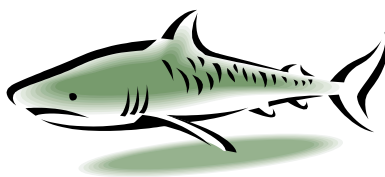
Location: McHugh Auditorium, Waterman's Hall

Event URL: <http://www.vims.edu/public/register/index.php>

Contact: 804-684-7846, programs@vims.edu

Join VIMS professor Tracey Sutton as he explores the natural history of sharks and the management status of selected shark populations around the world.

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



Larry Riddick leading "Swamp Stomp" at the Summer picnic

Virginia Museum of Natural History Field Trips

By Dean Shostak

Join VMNH staff on scientific expeditions. Fees are used to support VMNH research. Space is limited. To learn about upcoming expeditions or to make a reservation, please e-mail fieldtrips@vmnh.virginia.gov or call 276-634-4171.

(Scientifically significant specimens may be retained by curators for the VMNH collections.)

2010 VMNH Field Trips

Learn about the fascinating geological history of the Middle Atlantic States covering a wide variety of ages and environments representative of the last 450 million years with VMNH Staff and Volunteers. Field trip fees are used to support VMNH research. To make a reservation, please e-mail fieldtrips@vmnh.virginia.gov or call (276) 634-4171. Information is also available at www.vmnh.net. Please note that space is limited. (Scientifically significant specimens may be retained by curators for the VMNH collection.)

July 24: Lower James Boat Trip (Limit 16)

VMNH Member, \$90; Non-Member, \$100

Meet at the Jamestown Yacht Club at 8:30 a.m. June 19 and boat the James River on the Surry County side for about 15 miles. We will collect from massive outcrops of marine formations containing millions of shells, barnacles, corals, bone, teeth, etc. of Miocene and Pliocene Age. We stay at the Hampton Inn-Chester.

July 25: Meherrin (Limit 16)

VMNH Member, \$45; Non-Member, \$50

We will collect by boat from the Eastover and Yorktown Formations long the Meherrin River at Murfreesboro, NC. Boats put in at the Route 258 bridge.

August 23-27: Paleo Camp for Adults!

\$650/double, \$900/single occupancy/week

\$165/day/double; \$230/day/single/overnight

\$85/day (lunch provided by Stratford Hall)

\$75/day (lunch on your own)

We will stay at Stratford Hall, home of the Lees of Virginia. We will collect from Aquia Creek (upriver); Popes Creek (MD) area, and Westmoreland Cliffs. Formations include the Aquia (60 my), Nanjemoy (50 my), Calvert (14 my), Choptank (12 my), Eastover (9 my).

August 28: Calvert County Cliffs and Chesapeake Bay Boat Trip (Limit 16)

(Depending upon weather conditions)

VMNH Member, \$90; Non-Member, \$100

Staying at the Holiday Inn Express in Prince Frederick, we will launch boats at the Chesapeake Beach at 9:00 a.m. and collect shells, bone, teeth of the Calvert (17 my) and Choptank (12 my) Formations along the beaches and cliffs of the famous Calvert Cliffs for about 15 miles. We return to Chesapeake Beach at 4:30 p.m. (In case of windy weather we will move to the Patuxent River.)

August 29: Pope's Creek/Potomac Boat Trip (Limit 16) VMNH Member, \$45.50; Non-Member, \$50

The group will put in at the 301 bridge near Pope's Creek and boat the river on the Maryland side for about 8 miles. We collect shells, bone, and teeth from lower Eocene (50 mya), lower Miocene (18 mya).

Sept. 11: Stratford Hall/Westmoreland Boat Trip (Limit 16)

8:00-4:00 p.m.

VMNH Member, \$76.50, Non-Member, \$85

Stratford Hall \$5/ea grounds fee which can be applied to dining at the Stratford Hall Dining Room or Gift Shop

Take a trip along the spectacular cliffs of the Potomac River, in an area rich in paleontology, ecology, and history. The 140-foot high cliffs expose sediment ranging for 3.5 million to 14 million years old, and have produced fossils of whales, seals, crocodiles, sharks, and numerous seashells. Explore the scenic beauty at Westmoreland State Park and the historic structures and museum at Stratford Hall. Accommodations and park fees are not included. A campground is available at Westmoreland State Park and hotels in Montross and Colonial Beach. Bring your own lunch, a trowel, plastic bags, and a bucket. Dress to wade and get dirty. Access is moderate, with some walking required, and getting wet is likely. No restrooms.

Sept. 12: Stratford Hall/Westmoreland

9 a.m.-2 p.m.

VMNH Member, \$31.50; Non-Member, \$35

Children under 12, \$22.50; Non-Member, \$25

Stratford Hall \$5/ea grounds fee which can be applied to dining at the Stratford Hall Dining Room or Gift Shop

Meet at Westmoreland State Park at 9:00 a.m., convoy to Stratford Hall, and boat the Stratford Hall Cliffs to collect shells, bone, teeth, etc. from the Calvert, Choptank, St. Marys, and Eastover Formations.

Note: These have been approved for advanced training



YOU ARE CORDIALLY INVITED TO ATTEND

**A NIGHT
of
BLACK LIGHTS and OWLS**

VCU Rice Center, Charles City County

August 21 – August 22 2010

7:00 pm Saturday to 9:00 am Sunday

Join entomologist Dr. Art Evans and E&O Coordinator Anne Wright from dusk to dawn documenting the nocturnal riches of the VCU Rice Center.

We will catalogue insects attracted to ultraviolet and mercury vapor lights and make regular forays into the night in search of owls.

A side trip to experience the mighty frog chorus at the Harrison Lake Fish Hatchery is also planned.

Dr. Evans is the author of the "National Wildlife Federation Field Guide to Insects and Spiders."

Dinner is pot luck, so bring a dish! A grill will be going.

Camp out or sleep (bring your own gear) in the LEEDS Platinum Education Building, and enjoy the science and camaraderie of creatures of the night!

-->RSVP: abwright@vcu.edu <--

Field Trip Information

By Dean Shostak

I have been in contact with the following organizations planning dates for upcoming field trips:

National Weather Service Wakefield, VA

Keck Environmental Field Lab, William and Mary, Williamsburg, VA

Virginia Museum of Natural History, Martinsville, VA

TFC Recycling, Chesapeake, VA

In the mean time we have the VCU Rice Center on August 21/22 (See invitation in this newsletter.)



I have participated in a couple of VMNH Field Trips this Summer that have been very exciting.

I propose we attend the Stratford Hall Cliffs Field trip on Sunday, September 12, 2010. Here are the details for the trip. I will arrange car pooling for all who wish to attend (about 1.5 hrs from Williamsburg.) Please register with VMNH and let me know if you are going so I can figure out the travel logistics. I can take 8 in my vehicle.

Sep 12, 2010

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(Scientifically significant specimens may be retained by curators for the VMNH collections.)

Dean Shostak Field Trip Coordinator

deanarmonica@aol.com

Backyard Wildlife Mapping: Scene 3

The Black Rat Snake

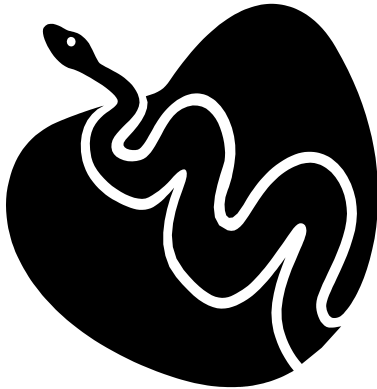
By Larry Riddick

While toting compost in a pail,
I saw a rat snake in a rush.
It slipped away off the trail
And disappeared in the brush.

If I could speak snake,
And it had ears,
A plea I would make
For it to stay here.

I'd invite it to lunch,
And show it a hole
Where I just have a hunch
There might be a vole.

If it chooses to go
And forgo my protection,
It could meet neighbor's hoe.
And suffer bisection.



Present and future Master Naturalists
enjoying the Summer 2010 picnic



Butterflies at Chippokes

words by Alice Kopinitz, pictures by Felice Bond and Seig Kopinitz

The day began with a ferry ride across the James to join forces with others to participate in the butterfly count at Chippokes State Park sponsored by the North American Butterfly Association.

Ferry riders: Felice Bond Gary Driscole, Adrienne Frank, Teta Kain, Alice and Seig Kopinitz met up with Ruth and Glenn Burch and Alan Belden. This was the group that loaded into Ruth’s truck to travel the park. We stopped at the flower garden – lots of butterflies including a puddle of tiger swallowtails. We drove along fields stopping to check out a number of areas. Teta even caught one skipper in order to check out the wing coloration. We were hoping it was an unusual find, but alas, it was not. We hiked along the river finding buckeye caterpillars. All in all, we had a good beginning and decided to stop for lunch.

We rode back to the park visitor center and settled at a picnic table with lots of shade. A tawny emperor butterfly decided that this table looked like a good place to find lunch as well and joined us. This critter seemed especially interested in Seig’s peanut butter sandwich. Lots of opportunity for close-up pictures. As we continued our lunch, we began to see butterflies all around us on several of the trees. More photo ops! As we stretched our legs, more butterflies were discovered eat-

ing on the branch of a nearby tree. It appeared that an animal had enjoyed a meal on the angled branch and left behind some “butterfly treats”.

It was time to head to Bacon’s Castle and a walk in the garden. This is one of my favorite places just because I like to look at gardens. We were greeted in the grass by a sooty wing and blue azure. The flowers were bright and keeping many butterflies happy.

One more stop in our travels – Hog Island Wildlife Area. As we drove into the facility, the message board had posted the date, time and temperature. We decided that we had to get a picture of that sign. We did on our exit from the facility. Not too many butterflies, but some interesting mushrooms growing in the grass. We did make our stop at the entrance for a picture.

While we were recording butterflies, we noted the vast number of dragonflies we saw at every location. We were thankful for flies or mosquitoes did not bother us at all.

At the end of the day, we had recorded 27 species of butterflies – not a bad day’s work.

Oh, we did make one final stop before the ferry – visited College Run Farm for a dish of homemade ice cream.

How hot was it???????????

Alan Belden, Alice Kopinitz, Glenn Burch, Teta Kain, Ruth Burch, Seig Kopinitz and Felice Bond. Gary and Adrienne were not there for the photo.





© Felice

Above: Sleepy Orange courtesy of Felice Bond



Above: Grey Hairstreak

Below: Common Wood Nymph

Bottom: Silver Spotted Skipper

Photo from Mike Millan



Black Swallowtail

Photo: Felice Bond



© Felice



Continued

John Muir: Worldwide Master Naturalist

“What creature of all that the Lord has taken the pains to make is not essential to the completeness of that unit – the Cosmos? They are Earthborn companions and our fellow mortals.” (1)

John Muir: (4/21/1838 – 12/24/1914)

From the readings and research that I have undertaken to learn about and understand this naturalist, this quote seems most appropriate to his character and basic values.

His belief was similar to Native American ethos, which considered that everyone and every thing has a spirit. It is evident that his overarching passion in life was to be in the wilderness and respond to the, “natural inherited wildness in our blood.” (2)

It is also apparent that he considered his life’s mission was to share this passion, his views and observations with anyone who would attend his written or spoken thoughts. He was a prolific writer, having published sixteen books, (six of which were published posthumously), and hundreds of articles, reports essays, and position papers for various newspapers and periodicals. Most of his writings were chronicles of his explorations and summations of his opinions of his experiences. He wrote not as an educator, but more as a relater and convincer. He appeared to be a capable man, educated to some extent, and in fact was later in life awarded an Honorary Doctorate from Yale University. Most of his education seems to have come from firsthand experience and his intuitive intelligence.

Humans have gifts in varying forms and degree. Some are natural athletes, some natural artists, natural caregivers, and some, as in John Muir’s case, are natural naturalists. All creatures have an instinctive link to their environment. The strength of this connection varies by individual, but remains in fact as a process of survival. His connection to his environment was exceptional, and a review of his life will bear that out.

John Muir was born in Dunbar, East Lothian, Scotland, son of Daniel and Ann Gilrye Muir, and one of eight children. His father was devoutly religious, and apparently intolerant of those whom he felt did not share his strength of beliefs. Part of John’s early education (beginning at age three) was a very heavy handed demand from his father that he memorize the Old and New Testament. It is speculated by some of his published biographers that that this task instilled a deep respect within him for peace and quiet as the process required absolute concentration without distractions, and mandated his entire focus; in a sense he was training himself how to learn. His mother was viewed as a kind woman with a sense of humor who tempered the hard ways of his father, and was not shy about reining in his attitudes when they affected their children too negatively. His early schooling was pictured as rather bleak, with strict disciplinarian teachers who relied on memorization rather than learning or understanding as their teaching method. His school time readings of Audubon’s accounts and illustrations of birds were his first introduction to the work of a naturalist, “and the only part of his Dunbar schooling he enjoyed”.(3)

In 1849, the Muir family emigrated to the United States, and homesteaded 80 acres of land in Kingston, Wisconsin which his father named Fountain Lake Farm. In order to build and run the farm, his father suspended John’s formal education in favor of the hard labor necessary to operate and eventually acquire additional property, including 340 acres nearby which his father named Hickory Hill Farm. Muir used what little free time granted to him by his father to continue his reading of poetry and adventure stories that he either borrowed or purchased with the few funds he was able to make by trapping and selling muskrat hides. As evident, a pretty mean life, which he balanced by taking sanctuary in the forests near his home and focusing on the natural world around him for spiritual renewal.

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He also began building machinery, mostly from scrap wood and with hand tools, to include sawmills, clocks, and various measuring devices. When he was nineteen, his father allowed him to return to school for a period of only two months. At age twenty-two, he was convinced by an acquaintance to enter some of his by now locally well known inventions in the Wisconsin State Agricultural Fair where he was awarded prizes and given recognition for his machines. The new notoriety brought him to the attention of the Chancellor of the University of Wisconsin at Madison, who recruited him as a student. He attended classes off and on as funds would permit, and studied earth and physical sciences, primarily in the areas of botany and geology.

While there, he studied with Dr. Ezra Carr and became personal friends with Dr. Carr and his wife Jeanne. It was she that gave him lifelong encouragement to follow his apparent calling to become a highly visible advocate for preservation of our wilderness. She introduced him to many well-known and respected people who also encouraged and helped him realize his potential for positive influence in this area. Included among them was Ralph Waldo Emerson whose poetry and prose on the subject of nature mirrored Muir's own thoughts and feelings.

In 1864, there was strong indication that President Lincoln was about to institute a military draft of up to 500,000 additional men to fight for the Union Army in the Civil War. Having no decided interest in the civil rights issues, John Muir and his brother Daniel opted to visit Canada where they operated a sawmill together. This job lasted for two years during which time period Muir spent his free time exploring the area and collecting plant specimens.

Coincident to the end of the Civil War, he returned to the United States and settled in Indiana where he was employed as an industrial engineer. He sustained an eye injury at work, which caused him to spend six weeks resting in a darkened room while healing. This time period is considered to be a turning point in his life. He was house-bound, and unable to see, or be with and be nourished by his beloved wilderness. Upon his recovery, he made the decision to recognize his true course. He quit his job, and set out on a 1,000 mile walk from Indiana to Florida for the sole purpose of discovering what he would encounter. He had intended to travel on eventually to South America, but contracted a malarial type of illness while exploring the Florida swamps, and illness delayed his plans. He sailed instead to New York which didn't take him long to dislike. He then decided to travel west to California, to hopefully restore his health in the fresh mountain air.

Upon his arrival in San Francisco in 1868, Muir immediately set out on foot to explore the Coastal Range, and further to the Sierras and the Yosemite Valley. Along the way, he stopped at a point in the San Joaquin Valley, "marked off a square yard and, mixing science with wonder, sat down to inventory its vegetation." (4)

Muir spent enough time at this one spot to inventory sixteen different species of wildflower, and count over seven thousand flower heads, as well as identifying assorted grasses and mosses in the one square yard area. He is said to have recorded this information in copious notes that he made of this nature visit. There is no record of how long this took him to accomplish, but it is evidentiary of his immediate love of the area. California became his home and was where he returned to after his many adventures and explorations. During the first few years of his life in California, he ran a sawmill for another individual, and again spent his free time exploring the various sequoia forest areas, Yosemite, and the entirety of the northern part of the state. At this point in his life, he had no responsibilities other than his job. While uncertain of his future, he felt no need to join the mainstream of society. His spiritual and physical needs were satisfied by his freedom to often explore his habitat for the pure sake of discovery. "He had found more mutual benefit occurring among species and varieties growing together in pure wilderness than to believe that competition was the primary, overriding law." (5)

In 1870 he found proof that the contours and features of the area were formed by the movement of glaciers. This was in direct contradiction to existing scientific theory that these features had been formed by earthquakes. He in fact found a living glacier in the area of Mt. Merced, in California, and was able to personally show his proof to a renowned scientist, Professor Joseph LeConte. The Professor, an acquaintance made through the aforementioned

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Jeanne Carr, not only agreed with him, but also encouraged him to publish his discovery and conclusions. Muir did so in a series of five articles published in the New York Tribune.

By this time in his life, approximately in his mid-thirties, John Muir was beginning to establish his credibility and credentials in the field of naturalism. He was a much sought after guide for visitors to the Yosemite Valley area, which included a sizable roster of scientists, educators, and publishers, all of whom seemed to highly value his knowledge and his manner of expressing himself. They liked him and trusted him, and he was able to leave his sawmill job and make his living by writing and lecturing about his discoveries as well as “botanizing”, collecting and selling various species of flora for educators.

He remained thus occupied for the next several years, living a fairly solitary life in the Yosemite area, and later exploring Alaska in 1879. It was that year, also through Jeanne Carr, that he met Miss Louisa (Louie) Wanda Strentzel. In 1880, he and Louie married and settled in Martinez, California, in a section of an estate owned by his wife’s family. His exploration and nature forays were considerably cut back for the next eight years as he diligently worked to grow and maintain their property, which he made into a successful fruit orchard and vineyard. During that time they also had two daughters: Wanda, (1881 – 1942), and Helen, (1886 – 1964).

Among his most notable accomplishments, John Muir was instrumental in initiating efforts which resulted in the U.S. Congress creating legislation in 1890 which accorded Yellowstone Park the status as America’s first named National Park. He fought persistently against what he perceived was negative human encroachment and activity harmful to his beloved wilderness. He was anti-sheep grazing, (called the sheep Hoofed Locusts), against excessive harvesting in the forests, and was anti-mining. His efforts in this regard were primarily in the Sierras and Yosemite Valley.

He was a co-founder of the Sierra Club, dedicated to preservation, as opposed to conservation, efforts to protect the wilderness area in California. He was the first and only president of that organization from its formation in 1893 until his death in 1914. His counsel on preservation of natural resources was sought by both Presidents Roosevelt and Taft, each of whom met personally with him during their Presidency and toured the Sierra Mountains. During his lifetime he explored both North America, and to a lesser extent South America.

There have been numerous books and articles published not only about his life, but also his teachings, opinions and discoveries. There are several schools named after his as well as National Monuments and Parks to include Mt. Muir and Muir Beach in California, and Muir Glacier in Alaska. Both his first home in America, Fountain Lake Farm and Hickory Hill Farm, (later acquired by his father), and his residence in Martinez, California have been designated as National Landmarks. The recent U.S. Mint series of States Quarters features his likeness on the reverse of the State of California Quarter minted in 2005.

John Muir was a widower for the last nine years of his life. While he kept up with his writings, his travels through the wilderness decreased due to advancing age and health issues. He died in 1914 at the age of 76.

He left a legacy of work to protect the beauty of nature from rapid westward population growth, and from man’s expanding appetites and consuming use of our natural resources. Thanks largely to his efforts, Congress was well aware of the value of preserving our wilderness areas. Additionally, due to significant lobbying efforts by the nation’s railroad industry, Congress also recognized the national economic benefits of growing tourism of these areas. In 1916, two years after Muir’s death, Congress passed The National Parks Act, centralizing park management and preserving sites so designated. The Act also stopped the diminution of parklands by removing previously state held authority for development of these wilderness areas if they had determined it necessary for economic benefit. This at least partially fulfilled one of Muir’s visions of protecting and preserving our wilderness.

HISTORIC RIVERS CHAPTER

Continued from previous page

His dedication to his life's calling seems to have taken first priority over his lifespan. Although he is portrayed as a good husband and loving father, he seemed able to walk away from responsibility whenever the urge moved him. He led a somewhat unstructured early adult life, traveling when and where he wanted, working menial jobs when necessary, and avoiding the threat of military conscription during the Civil War.

He gained notoriety through his writings and lectures and used his fame to influence what he envisioned to be the proper use of our wilderness and natural resources.

Prepared by J.T. Miller
Historic Rivers Chapter, Cohort IV
Virginia Master Naturalist

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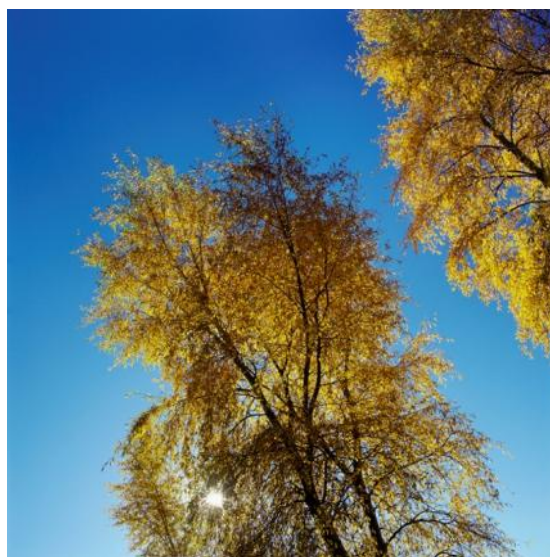
Autobiography, John Muir

(3) & (5) THE LIFE AND ADVENTURES OF JOHN MUIR

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ALSO: <http://en.wikipedia-org/wiki/John-Muir>

<http://xroads.virginia.edu/~CAP/NPS/nps4.html> (The National Parks Act Of 1916)



The Centipede

The centipede is not quite nice;
 He lives in idleness and vice;
 He has a hundred legs.
 He also has a hundred wives,
 And each of these if she survives
 Has just a hundred eggs;
 So that's the reason if you pick
 Up any boulder, stone or brick
 You nearly always find
 A swarm of centipedes concealed;
 They scatter far across the field,
 But one remains behind.
 And you may reckon then, my son,
 That not alone that luckless one
 Lies pitiful and torn,
 But millions more of either sex-
 100 multiplied by X-
 Will never now be born;
 I dare say it will make you sick,
 But so does all Arithmetic.

The gardener says, I ought to add,
 The centipede is not so bad;
 He rather likes the brutes.

The millipede is what he loathes;
 He uses wild bucolic oaths
 Because it eats his roots;
 And every gardener is agreed
 That if you see a centipede
 Conversing with a milli-
 On one of them you drop a stone,
 The other you leave alone-
 I think that's rather silly;
 They may be right, but what I say

Is "Can one stand about all day
 And count the creature's legs?"
 It has too many, any way,
 And any moment it may lay a hundred eggs!
 So if I see a thing like this



I murmur "Without prejudice"
 And knock it on the head;
 And if I see a thing like that



I take a brick and squash it flat;
 In either case it's dead.

A.P Herbert

Naturalist's note: A.P. got the number of legs per segment correct - was not only a good poet but an astute observer.

Ramblin Clyde

By Clyde Marsteller





Mr. and Mrs. Bob White Caught in the Act of Enjoying a Stroll at New Quarter Park

Williamsburg, July 26, 2010 - The extreme heat didn't stop Mr. and Mrs. Bob White from taking a stroll at New Quarter Park this past Saturday. Staffer Jack Cole snapped a photo of Mrs. White just before Mr. White called the interloper to her attention. The pair took cover from the paparazzi just off the beaten path and were last seen progressing into the wooded ravine on the Cub Creek or east side of the park.

Mr. Cole happened upon Mr. and Mrs. White as they were about to begin picnicking along hiking loop 7. They were seen sampling the food arrayed near Bluebird Box 11, about 50 yards from the Restoration Habitat being developed by a group of local nature nuts, who hope the pair will chose New Quarter as their permanent residence.

For more about Bobwhite and the Restoration Habitat, see http://wildlifepreservation.suite101.com/article.cfm/northern_bobwhite.



More happy Master Naturalists enjoying the Summer of 2010 picnic!

Alice & Seig Kopinitz

Photo: Lester Lawrence

Wildlife Mapping Greensprings Wildlife and Birding Trail By Linda and Jeff Miller

Jeff and I moved into our home nine years ago. Yet it was only four years ago that we discovered the wonderful nature trail just out our back door, so to speak. (We walk out the front door, down the street and we are on the trail in less than three minutes).

The Greensprings Trail is very special for it has three distinct habitats to rediscover every day – wetlands, woodlands, and open fields. While we have walked the trail for the past four years, it wasn't until we began our Virginia Master Naturalist training last year and became certified in wildlife mapping that we began to truly see and experience the variety of wildlife and flora that call this amazing trail home.

Last month when we approached the small creek just off the path with the beaver dam, the water was full of bubbles, just like a pot of boiling water. We watched for several minutes and then the mystery was solved. Up popped the beaver!



June 22, 2010

Beavers can stay underwater for an extraordinarily long time!

Photo by Linda C. Miller

This past month I read a book by Warner Shedd titled “[Owls aren't Wise and Bats aren't Blind, A Naturalist Debunks Our Favorite Fallacies About Wildlife](#)”, a wonderful book that debunks many common myths about our native wildlife. Also the wildlife illustrations by Trudy Nicholson are outstanding. I discovered this wonderful book at the Williamsburg Library!

Here are a few fun facts that I learned about beavers from Mr. Shedd:

Beavers are vegetarians and this beaver was eating the aquatic plants in the creek, creating quite a scare for the invertebrates!

HISTORIC RIVERS CHAPTER

Beavers can stay underwater for an extraordinarily long time. At least 15 minutes at a time! How do they do it---their heart rate drops to half its usual rate, a third eyelid call a nictitating membrane covers the eyes; similar membranes close off the ears, nostrils and throat automatically; and they are able to use 75 percent of the oxygen in their lungs whereas human lungs process only 15 percent.



July 27, 2010

“Next to humans, the beaver is undoubtedly the most proficient of North American inhabitants at manipulating the environment for their own benefit”, Warner Shedd from “Owls Aren’t Wise and Bats Aren’t Blind.” Photo by Linda C. Miller

The beaver is a rodent with incisors that act as big sharp chisels. They use their teeth to fell trees, just like those pictured above. We will need to check back to see if this is a new or abandoned project. This is very close to the lodge.

While we were wildlife mapping last Tuesday, we had reached the large bridge over looking the marsh, when I startled two young fawns that were feeding just under the bridge. They ran back about 15 to 20 feet and as if I had asked, they held this pose long enough for me to get several fantastic photos. On our way back, we saw them again further back in the woods with their mother, so our white tail deer count for the day increased from two to three!



July 27, 2010

White Tail Deer Fawns, Photo by Linda C. Miller

“White tail deer are natives to this continent and it is estimated that there are little more than 25 to 27 million in North America” Warner Shedd, “Owls aren’t Wise and Bats aren’t Blind, A Naturalist Debunks Our Favorite Fallacies About Wildlife”

HISTORIC RIVERS CHAPTER

Continued from previous page

As you know we have been experiencing very high temperatures with very little rain in the last month. In fact, so little rain that the wetland just off the observation bridge is slowly turning into grassland.



June 22, 2010

Six Great White Egrets and more than 40 Turtles



July 27, 2010

Three Mallards and only Four Turtles



August 2010

- 7 - EVMA Group Ride & Meeting, 9 a.m.
- 7 - Walk & Talk: Butterflies, Barb Dunbar, Va Master Gardener & Naturalist, 10 a.m.-noon.
- 14 - WBC Bird Walk, 8-10 a.m.
- 21 - BYOK! 9 a.m.-noon
- 28 - Bird Walk, 7-9 a.m.
- 22 - Disc Golf Tournament
- 23 - Moonlight & Music Jam, 6:30-8:30 p.m.
- 28 - WBC Bird Walk, 8-10 a.m.
- 28 - BikeBeat Mountain Bike Demo, 9 a.m.-2 p.m. For info, call 229-0096
- 28 - Master Naturalists Teaching Garden Workday, 9:30-11:30 a.m.



September 2010

- 4 - EVMA Group Ride & Meeting, 9 a.m.
- 4 - Walk & Talk: Foraging for Pawpaws, Vickie Shuffer, Edible Wild Foods Expert
- 11 - WBC Bird Walk, 8-10 a.m.
- 11 - Hare & Tortoise Run/Walk. www.colonialroadrunners.org.
- 22 - Moonlight and Music Jam, 6:30-8:30 p.m.
- 18 - BYOK! 9 a.m.-noon
- 18 - Stargazing Night, 8-10 p.m.
- 22 - Bruton High School Cross Country Race, 3-6 p.m.
- 25 - WBC Bird Walk, 7-9 a.m.
- 25 - Disc Golf Tournament



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 Upcoming Events

- 25 - Master Naturalists Teaching Garden Workday, 9:30-11:30 a.m.
- 25 - Chesapeake Experience Evening/Sunset Paddle, \$50/person. To register www.chesapeakeexperience.org or call 890-0502.



October 2010

- 2 - EVMA Group Ride & Meeting, 9 a.m.
- 2 - Bruton High School Panther Invitational Cross Country Race, 8 a.m. *Disc Golf Course will be closed until 1 p.m.*
- 2 - Walk & Talk: Burwell's New Quarter & Sign Dedication



Goodbye ... Hello

In late July, Sara and Jordan returned more than 900 of the 1000 baby oysters they raised at NQP for the Chesapeake Bay Foundation's Oyster Restoration Program and picked up 1000 new spat to raise for the oyster reef that is being restored in Felgate's Creek. If you'd like to help with this project or schedule a program about oyster restoration, call York Co. Parks & Recreation at 890-8500.



Enjoy a peaceful August morning on Queen's Creek.



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

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)