



## THE NATURALIST

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

<http://historicrivers.org>

A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

Volume 5 No. 2 February 2011

**2011 Board  
Nomina-  
tions**  
Page 2

**Party!**  
Page 3

**Advanced  
Training**  
Page 6

**Photo  
Caption  
Contest**  
Page 9

**Biography**  
Edward  
Abbey  
Pages 14-16

**VLM &  
VIMS**  
Pages 15 &  
19

**Vernal Pools  
and the Hu-  
man Foot-  
print**  
Pages 18-22

Over the past year, the Historic Rivers Chapter has made outstanding progress recruiting new members to the chapter, developing new projects, and working diligently towards our mission of helping conserve and manage the natural resources in our community. This is due in large part to the strong leadership provided by our Board of Directors, and the guidance of our President, Bruce Hill.

We would like to take the opportunity to thank Bruce for his hard work and devotion to the chapter. For the past several cohorts, Bruce has been one of the first friendly faces we all meet and depend on while we are training to become master naturalists. We have all benefited from his mentorship and his great knowledge of natural history.

In February, Bruce made the decision to resign from his position on the Board. We are saddened by his resignation and will miss his camaraderie and sound advice. We wish Bruce well, and hope to continue to see him on the trails and in the classroom.



Bruce Hill, PhD.

Photo Courtesy of Shirley Devan

## Nominations for 2011 HRC Virginia Master Naturalists

### CHAPTER OFFICERS 2011

*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 Service Projects*  
*Bruce Hill & Shirley Devan, Training Chair*  
*Dave Youker, Advanced Training*  
*Adrienne Frank & Gary Driscole, Outreach Committee*  
*Seig Kopinitz, Webmaster*  
*Dean Shostak, Field Trip Coordinator*  
*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*

Position	Nominees
<b>President</b>	Barbara Boyer
<b>Vice President – Programs</b>	Ted Sargent
<b>Secretary</b>	Lois Ullman Patty Maloney
<b>Treasurer</b>	Thad Hecht
<b>Historian/Outreach</b>	Geoff Giles
<b>Basic Training – Chair</b>	Jennifer Trevino
<b>Committee Members</b>	Shirley Devan Dean Shostak Susan Powell
<b>Advanced Training</b>	Adrienne Frank Gary Driscole
<b>Volunteer Service Projects</b>	Susan Powell Cherie Aukland
<b>Membership</b>	Shirley Devan
<b>Host</b>	Janet Curtis
<b>Newsletter</b>	Patty Riddick
<b>Field Trips</b>	Dean Shostak Les Lawrence
<b>Members at Large</b>	Nancy Norton Kathi Mestayer Felice Bond
<b>Webmaster</b>	Jeanette Navia

#### Notes from the Board

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

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## Basic Training for Cohort V By Shirley Devan, Training Committee

Members who attend Basic Training classes get Advanced Training hours.

Upcoming Basic Training Events: Multipurpose Room, Human Services Building, 5249 Olde Towne Road Time: 6 - 9 pm (except Saturday field trips and Annual Meeting).

All HRC members are invited and encouraged to attend and participate. Folks who are not members of Cohort V can record Advanced Training for attending these sessions. See you there!

**February 12, 2011:** Freshwater Ecology and Winter Botany. This is a Saturday event 9 am - 4 pm at Jamestown High School. Presenters will be Hugh Beard and Charlie Dubay. More details will come in January.

**February 15, 2011:** Mammalogy, by Bo Baker, VA Living Museum.

**M**

**arch 1, 2011:** Ecology Concepts, by Steve Living, Wildlife Biologist, VA Dept of Game and Inland Fisheries.

**March 9, 2011:** Graduation for Cohort V and Annual Meeting, 6 - 9 pm. Speaker will be Bruce Wielicki, Climate and Atmospheric Scientist, NASA Langley Research Center. Tentative topic is "Climate and Climate Change." Location is TBD.

Shirley Devan, Training Committee  
Historic Rivers Chapter  
Virginia Master Naturalist

Visit from a Western Tanager in Kathi Mestayer back yard. Seen only once, on January 15th.

Photo—Kathi Mestayer



### Calling all Members:



There's going to be a party! Come and celebrate the graduation of COHORT V.

Our speaker for the evening is Dr. Bruce Wielicki is a NASA Langley Senior Scientist for Earth Science, and a renowned expert on Climate Change.

Look for an eVite coming soon!

## Bluebird Monitoring Project report

By Sara Lewis



Master Naturalists from the Historic Rivers Chapter met with staff from York River State Park to discuss refurbishing and monitoring the 60-box bluebird trail there. Seen here, front row left to right, are Ted Sargent, Lois Ullman, Sara Lewis, and Shirley Devan, and back row, left to right, Les Lawrence, Patty Maloney, Maurice Suggs (YRSP), Bill O'Connell, Russell Johnson (YRSP), and Brad Thomas (YRSP). The Naturalists will be monitoring the boxes weekly to encourage nesting that increases the population of bluebirds. The group is also monitoring trails at New Quarter Park and Ford's Colony and contributing data to the Virginia Bluebird Society database. Bluebirds are a necessary to a healthy ecosystem since they are great insect eaters and keep their numbers balanced. If you monitor a bluebird box trail (5 or more boxes) and would like to contribute data to the Virginia Bluebird Society, contact VBS County Coordinators Lois Ullman (258-0123) or Sara Lewis (220-2042

## Embryogenesis

By Jeff Miller

On January 25<sup>th</sup>, three of our VMN-HRC members responded to a request for assistance from Mary Apperson to help with a research project at the New Kent Forestry Preserve.

Thad Hecht, Geoff Giles, and Jeff Miller met Billy Apperson, State of Virginia Forester (as well as Mary's Husband), at the greenhouse on the Preserve property to assist in what Billy termed embryogenesis research.

This is a commercially oriented research project, privately funded by an individual Virginia resident with the intention of increasing yield of Loblolly Pine timber on woodlots at reduced expense and reduced land use.

As explained by Billy, seedlings were grown in measured patterns, and those within the "top ten percent of the top ten percent", of ideal characteristics such as growth rate, yield, health, etc., were culled and sent to a lab in Georgia to be cloned. Three families of Loblolly Pine were cultivated, and for this experiment the base trees were grown in British Columbia.

The resultant seedlings all from the same embryo per family, were then shipped to New Kent to be planted in March in a land facility in Charles City County where they will be watched over and continually measured to determine which family has the most likelihood of future commercial success. Full growth from these seedlings will take approximately 20 years, but daily information will be noted during the project.

The seedlings were sent in boxes, with very small root ball/stems and Billy deemed it urgent to pot them in flats of his special nutrient mixture so they would survive to be planted.

That was our job, and we did it for several enjoyable hours alongside Billy Apperson and a local frequent volunteer there named Judy Thompson.



Photo courtesy of Jeff Miller

## Wildlife Mapping on the Greensprings Trail

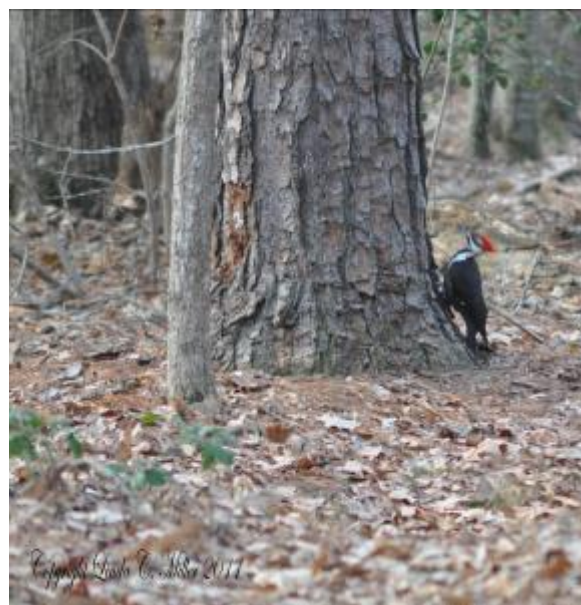
by Linda and Jeff Miller

This month was so very cold and the marsh waters have been frozen. The Green-winged Teals have left and "Harley" the Great Blue Heron awaits patiently. On our last walk of the month, six mallards were skating on the ice patches seeking open water. It was like a cartoon!

During the month, a family of sixteen bluebirds have been gathered off the farmer's field. We even spotted eight Eastern Meadow larks.

And just before you reach the field, we came upon a industrious Pileated Woodpecker and the usually shy Hermit Thrush paused for a few moments for his photo shoot.

Happy Wildlife Mapping!



# HISTORIC RIVERS CHAPTER

PAGE 6

## Advanced Training Opportunities—2011

By Dave Youker

Date	Title	Location	Time	Remarks/Contact
<b>February</b>				
6 Feb	HRBC Walk	Newport News Park	0700-1000	Jane Frigo
10 Feb	Winter Plant Identification Workshop	VIMS	0900-1500	Tara Fisher, 757-382-6206 <a href="http://www.virginiabirds.net/f_trips.html">http://www.virginiabirds.net/f_trips.html</a>
11-13 Feb	VSO Field Trip	Outer Banks	various times	
12 Feb	WBC Walk	New Qtr Park	0800-1000	Shirley Devan
19 Feb	Annual Woods & Wildlife Conference	Charlottesville, VA	0845-1645	<a href="http://www.cnre.vt.edu/forestupdate">http://www.cnre.vt.edu/forestupdate</a>
19 Feb	WBC Field Trip	TBD	0800-1300	Shirley Devan
19 Feb	HRBC Field Trip	Mathews County	0800-1200	Dave Youker
20 Feb	HRBC Walk	Newport News Park	0700-1000	Jane Frigo
24 Feb	Lust In The Dust-The Reproductive Life Of Insects And Spiders	Lancaster Community Library Kilmarnock, VA	1300	Pam Narney at 804-224-0014
26 Feb		New Qtr Park	0700-0900	Shirley Devan
<b>March</b>				
6 Mar	HRBC Walk	Newport News Park	0700-1000	Jane Frigo
12 Mar	WBC Walk	New Qtr Park	0800-1000	Shirley Devan
12 Mar	HRBC Field Trip	Dismal Swamp	0800-1200	Dave Youker
19 Mar	WBC Field Trip	TBD	0800-1300	Shirley Devan
20 Mar	HRBC Walk	Newport News Park	0700-1000	Jane Frigo
26 Mar	WBC Walk	New Qtr Park	0700-0900	Shirley Devan
<b>April</b>				
12 Apr	<a href="#">Wetland Plants: Know 'em &amp; Grow 'em</a>	Ernie Morgan Center, Norfolk	0900-1600	Contact Katelin at teachwetlands@wetland.org, 410-745-9620

## Reminders from the Membership Chair

By Shirley Devan

Most Chapters in the state are just beginning to implement the new online Volunteer Management System database as 2011 begins. Guess what? We've been there and done that! Yea!

Almost all HRC members are using the online database to record their Advanced Training hours and Volunteer Service hours. Please keep in mind that I am available to answer questions about login process, hours, project codes, etc. I hope you feel comfortable contacting me. I am able to "trigger the system" to send you a reminder login web address if you've lost your bookmark.

Meanwhile, did you know that:

- • The web site is: <https://virginiamn.volunteersystem.org>
- • The Upper Left corner is really important real estate on the main page.
- • You can "Edit Your Profile," "Add Hours," and "View Your Hours."
- • You can change your password if you click on "Edit Your Profile" and even add a photo of yourself (or your favorite fauna). Remember to "Save" your changes at the bottom of the screen.
- • You can correct or delete an entry you made earlier. Click on "View Your Hours" and then click on the "problem" entry. When the screen comes up, make the changes and then "Save Hours" or "Delete Hours" (which deletes the record).
- • You can record Volunteer Service Hours if you attend the business portion of our monthly Chapter Membership meetings (usually from 6 – 7 pm) on second Wednesdays. Record your time on Project "A1a – Participation in Board or Committee meetings."
- • You can record Volunteer Service Hours if you attend any HRC Board meeting (usually the first Wednesday), even if you're not a Board member. Record your time on Project "A1a – Participation in Board or Committee meetings."
- • You can record Advanced Training hours if you attend the "program" portion of our monthly Chapter Membership meetings (usually 7 – 9 pm). Record your time on Project "A Advanced Training" and list your hours in the box next to "Continuing Education."
- • You can record Advanced Training hours if you attend a Basic Training class, as a "refresher" that you attended earlier during your Basic Training.
- • You can record Volunteer Service Hours if you write an article for the monthly HRC newsletter. Record your time on Project "A1c – Chapter Newsletter"

Thanks for making the system work and for being guinea pigs for the rest of the chapters in the state. Let me know if you have questions.

## [SAVE THE DATE!](#)

### *Virginia Master Naturalists Historic River's Chapter presents "Through the Eye of a Naturalist"*

*Exhibition Dates: March 1 to 31, 2011*

The Williamsburg Regional Library

515 Scotland Street

Williamsburg, Virginia

757 259-4070

<http://www.wrl.org>

Please plan to attend our Exhibition Reception Sunday, March 6 from 2 to 4 pm.

Driving Directions:

Williamsburg Library 515 Scotland St., Williamsburg, VA, 23185

From Richmond or the Peninsula via I-64

Take Exit 238 off of I-64. Coming from the west, bear right off the exit ramp, from the east turn left off the exit ramp onto Route 143. Proceed south about .5 mile to the intersection with Route 132. Turn right onto Route 132 and proceed for about 2 miles, following the signs for the Williamsburg Business District. Just beyond the railroad tracks, turn right onto Lafayette St. and proceed one block. Turn left onto North Boundary St. The library is one block up on the right.

**Sara Lewis, Member's Choice Award**





## Photo caption contest



### We had a tie for first place!

Larry Riddick's *"In the future, you might want to consider closing the blinds before you shower."*

Clyde "Crashcup" Marsteller: *"Whoops, someone doesn't wear pajamas!"*

\*\*\*\*\*

Close seconds included:

William O'Connell: *Hey, who closed this window?! or...Hey, I want to brush my teeth, too!*

Nancy Norton: *WOW !!! Bright eyed, but where's the BUSHY tail ?????*

Alice Kopinitz: *Okay, who took my dental floss?*

Geoff Giles: *Yo, pal!! Could you share that toothbrush?! The stuff you've been feeding to the birds out here gets stuck between my teeth!! While you're at it, I could use some dental floss, too!!!*

Larry Riddick: *Please pass the toothbrush. I prefer to brush after every meal.*

Patty Riddick: *Ah, wish I had a red toothbrush.*

(Larry: hint...there's a birthday gift idea in there somewhere)

Thanks to Richmond photographer Grace LeRose, whose pecan bars the squirrel clawed through the window screens to eat the day before. He was back for more!

## Our Walk With The Raptors

By Jeff Miller

On Thursday, the 27<sup>th</sup>, Linda and I bundled up and went to our favorite local nature hangout at Greensprings Trail. As is our usual practice, we stopped every once in a while on the trail and just looked around for our bird and animal friends. It was rather cold and cloudy, and there wasn't much moving around in the marsh area, but we did see some Deer and some Turkey Vultures.

As we continued up the trail toward the adjacent farmland, I had expected to see our usual assortment of Bluebirds, Squirrels, Meadowlarks, Robins, Red Bellied and Pileated Woodpeckers, and Flickers. Surprisingly, we didn't see anything at all moving around. As our walk continued, I noticed that there weren't even any Geese at the southern end of the field, where just the week before there had been flocks numbering in the hundreds.

Suddenly I heard a crackling noise in the trees about 20 feet ahead of me and the mystery of the hiding wildlife was solved.

This beautiful Bald Eagle flew out of the woods and over our heads within a distance of around twenty yards away. Linda took as many pictures as she could before the Eagle reached the tree line east of us. We stood and just watched as he (she?) began to circle and actually hover over the field. While looking up, and following its flight, we saw four more hovering, circling, wide wing spanned birds. I saw them in my binoculars, and confirmed there were one other mature, and three additional immature, Eagles up there.

I think our presence may have interrupted a hunting lesson for the brood. What a fantastic sight.

On our way back down the trail and at the observation bridge we also saw a Red Tailed Hawk, a Cooper's Hawk, and a Red Shouldered Hawk. No wonder all the other critters were laying low today.



## Upcoming Events from New Quarter Park—February & March, 2011



**Winter hours!**  
**Fri. 10 a.m.-Dusk**  
**Sat. & Sun. 8 a.m.-Dusk**

### February 2011

- 5 – Walk & Talk, **Oysters & the Chesapeake Bay**, 10 a.m.-noon
- 12 - WBC Bird Walk, 8-10 a.m., led by Susan Powell
- 14 – Happy Valentine’s Day
- 26 - WBC Bird Walk, 7-9 a.m., led by Bill Williams

### March 2011

- 5 – Walk & Talk, **Wildlife Watching**. 10 a.m.-noon, Steve Living, Watchable Wildlife Biologist, VDG&IF
- 12 - WBC Bird Walk, 8-10 a.m.
- 12 - Stargazing Night, 7-9 p.m. Early bird arrival! Come at 6:30 while there is still light to talk to astronomers as they set up their scopes.
- 26 - WBC Bird Walk, 7-9 a.m.
- 26 - Endometriosis Walk
- 27 - Cabin Fever Sunday, 1-3 p.m.

**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.



**Save the date!**

Sunday, March 27, 2011

### 4th Annual New Quarter Park Cabin Fever Sunday

New Hours for Exhibits: 1-3 p.m.

Got Cabin Fever? We’ve got the solution! Come to NQP on the last Sunday in March and learn all about active, outdoor groups you can join in the Hampton Roads to Richmond area. Booths open from 1-3 p.m. You’re invited to come early or stay late to hike, bike, play disc golf, kayak, picnic, and play.



**Want to participate as an exhibitor?**

Reserve a space ASAP

Booth area: near Park Office/parking lot/restrooms  
 Call Molly (890-35130), Sara (784-0344) or Vic (Appomattox River Co. 757-890-0500)

Exhibitor pot luck picnic with BBQ by Appomattox River Co. and setups by YRP&R to be held in Shelter 1 from 12:30-1:30. Bring a dish to share.

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

Come any time before 1 p.m. to set up and play  
 More Information at [www.yorkcounty.gov](http://www.yorkcounty.gov), go to Parks and Recreation  
 Plan ahead! New Quarter Park, 1000 Lakeshead Dr., 757-890-5840 (Friday-Sunday), York Co Parks & Rec, 757-890-3500 (Monday-Friday)

## Book note from Kathi Mestayer

*The Secret Lives of Common Birds: Enjoying Bird Behaviors Through the Seasons*

I just got my Daedalus Books catalog, and the cover featured one of my favorite books: *The Secret Lives of Common Birds: Enjoying Bird Behaviors Through the Seasons*, by Marie Read, a wildlife photographer, and her husband, Peter Wrege, director of the Elephant Listening Project at the Cornell Lab of O.

Instead of focusing on bird i.d., it focuses on common birds, season by season, and *what the heck they are doing!* A great book for anyone (okay, some of you already know all of this), and the photos are outstanding (bluejay with no head feathers during molt, chickadee sipping from the tip

end of a tree-sap icicle during winter in Ithaca, NY).

Daedalus sells "remainder" books, or the ones that are overstocked/overprinted, at a fraction of the retail cost.

I'm ordering a few.

Go go go!

<http://www.daedalusbooks.com/Products/Search/QuickSearchResult.asp?Search=MARIE+READ&Media=Book&image1.x=14&image1.y=9>

## SAVE THE DATE—VIRGINIA MASTER NATURALISTS ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Hello VMN Chapters--

Please save the date for our 2011 Virginia Master Naturalist Statewide Volunteer Conference and Training, and ask your chapter members to do the same! Thank you to everyone who responded on our survey; the results were very helpful.

**Conference dates: Friday, September 23–Sunday, September 25, 2011**

Location: Camp Friendship, Palmyra, VA (in Fluvanna County, about 15 minutes south of Zion Crossroads at I-64)

Host Chapter: Rivanna

Registration details will be available in the spring.

Thanks!

Michelle Prysby



Duck in Sunset

Photo Courtesy of Michael Fuchs—2011



**March 1, 2011**

### **TUESDAY EVENING SEMINAR SERIES - Molding and Casting Animal Tracks**

Attention nature enthusiasts, teachers and Master Naturalists. Learn how to make lasting three-dimensional records of animal tracks during this demonstration of basic molding and casting techniques. This seminar will also include an introduction to the process of making latex rubber molds.

Ages 18+

Time: 6 - 7:30 p.m.

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

**March 5, 2011**



### **Birds of the Smithsonian Museum of Natural History**

**Activity Level 2**

**Register call 757-595-9135**

A small group of people will be guided through a behind-the-scenes tour in one of the world's largest research bird collections. It will include dried study skins, skeletons, mounted birds, and alcohol preserved samples dating back to the late 1800s. Some examples include extinct specimens of Passenger Pigeons and birds collected by John James Audubon and Teddy Roosevelt. Dr. Carla Dove will explain how this collection is used for current bird studies and the specialized work of the Feather Identification Lab to solve bird strike cases. This trip is for all budding scientists and those who wish to delve into the world of birds and forensic feathery.

Age: Minimum age 10; 18 years without an adult

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

Cost: \$40 Members; \$60 Non-Members.

## Naturalist Biography – Edward Abbey

In the summer of 1982 I attended a one-week workshop in Colorado to become a better whitewater raft guide. I was the only Easterner in attendance, and my most vivid memory of the week was all the Western raft guides who were reading *Desert Solitaire* by Edward Abbey, an author I never knew. Twenty-eight years later, I own over twenty books by him, as well as a few about him, and this author had been one of the guiding lights in my interest in the natural world, reflected these days in my course of study to become a Virginia Master Naturalist. And I have some very respectable company in my love of this author. His praise includes a *Who's Who* of nature writers and environmentalists of the twentieth century: Edward Hoagland, William Eastlake, Edwin Way Teale, John McFee, Wendell Berry, Annie Dillard, and Larry McMurtry, who called Abbey, “the Thoreau of the West.”

He has also been called racy, sardonic, provocative, a “gadfly on the rump of society,” a crackpot, and a dangerous radical. *Desert Solitaire*, a collection of essays written while Abbey was a solitary National Park Ranger in Arches National Monument, and *The Monkey Wrench Gang*, a humorous novel about a half-crazed bunch of radicals out to destroy the Glen Canyon Dam (which ultimately spawned the real eco-saboteurs of Earth First) each has sold over a million copies and continue to sell well today, twenty years after Abbey's death.

“Resist much. Obey little.” The words are Walt Whitman's, but the sentiment defines the life of Edward Abbey. He is generally defined as an environmental writer or nature writer, but he personally rejected that description and an examination of his works shows him to be so much more. Bookstores wrestle with where to put him: nature, fiction, non-fiction, philosophy, or autobiography. He was all of these, but the single noun that stands above all else is ‘writer.’ Abbey was quite prolific, creating over his lifetime nine books of fiction, twelve books of non-fiction, hundreds of essays, and a posthumously edited collection of poems. Most of this writing adopts the theme of a defense of the West's wild places against those who would destroy them: industrial-corporations, urban developers, and Big Government.

Also like Whitman (“Do I contradict myself? Very well, then, I contradict myself. I am large; I contain multitudes.”) Abbey was an incredible mixture of contradictions, which also fought against any attempt to pigeonhole him. Liberals loved him but couldn't understand his NRA membership. Conservatives liked his views on guns, immigration and racism, but were devastated by his tree-hugging, environmental activism and his attacks on every chamber of commerce. Both camps rejected his radicalism.

In a short biography like this, a few concrete illustrations will do better at revealing who Abbey was than grand, glorious praises. In a speech to 500 ranchers in Bozeman, MT (later published as an essay: *Free Speech: the Cowboy and His Cow*) Abbey took on the overgrazing of cattle on public land.

Overgrazing is much too weak a term. Most of the public lands in the West, and especially in the Southwest, are what you might call “cowburnt.” Almost anywhere and everywhere you go in the American West you find hordes of these ugly, clumsy, stupid, bawling, stinking, fly-covered, shit-smearing, disease-spreading brutes. They are a pest and a plague. They pollute our springs and streams

Continued from previous page

and rivers. They infest our canyons, valleys, meadows, and forests. They graze off the native bluestem and grama and bunch grasses, leaving behind jungles of prickly pear. They trample down the native forbs and shrubs and cacti. They spread the exotic cheatgrass, the Russian thistle, and the crested wheatgrass. *Weeds.*

He goes on to point out that in the East it takes half an acre to support one cow. In the West it takes from twenty-five acres to a square mile. And Abbey is just as irreverent when it comes to sacred cows (consecrated bovines). He takes on everything from the “cowboy myth,” to the “Instant Rednecks: our nouveau Westerners with their toy ranches, their pickup trucks with the gun racks, their pointy-toed boots with the undershot heels, their gigantic hats. And, of course, their pet horses.”

One of Abbey’s most famous polemics is his attack on the National Parks and what he calls Industrial Tourism. Abbey despises the motorized tourist, who, “so long as they are unwilling to crawl out of their cars... will not discover the treasures of the national parks.” His three-pronged solution consists of (1) no more cars in National Parks, (2) no more new roads in National Parks, and (3) put the park rangers to work.

Once we outlaw the motors and stop the road-building and force the multitudes back on their feet, the people will need leaders...let them take risks, for God’s sake, let them get lost, sunburnt, stranded, drowned, eaten by bears, buried alive under avalanches—that is the right and privilege of any free American. But the rest, the majority, most of them new to the out-of-doors, will need and welcome assistance, instruction and guidance. Many will not know how to saddle a horse, read a topographical map, follow a trail over slickrock, memorize landmarks, build a fire in rain, treat snakebite, rappel down a cliff, glissade down a glacier, read a compass, find water under sand, load a burrow, splint a broken bone, bury a body, patch a rubber boat, portage a waterfall, survive a blizzard, avoid lightning, cook a porcupine, comfort a girl during a thunderstorm, predict the weather, dodge falling rock, climb out of a box canyon, or pour piss out of a boot. Park rangers know these things, or should know them, or used to know them and can relearn; they will be needed. In addition to this sort of practical guide service the ranger will be a bit of a naturalist, able to edify the party in his charge with the natural and human history of the area, in detail and in broad outline.

With this essay in mind, one can rightfully expect that Abbey would castigate the RV crowd. Not so! This is part of the contradiction of the man. In the essay *The Winnebago Tribe*, after referring to the tin and Formica cake boxes on wheels, multiplying all over the landscape like maggots, he does a complete turnabout and discusses a woman he met in a campground.

She was a widow, sixty-five years old, sweet, plump, white-haired, healthy and happy looking, sitting in the shade of her motor home and knitting something for a distant grandchild. We talked and I learned. ...For her the Winnebago is not a vacation vehicle but a home. Period. Nor does she any longer *take* vacations; she is always on vacation....”It’s a nice way to live,” she said, “but don’t tell the world about it.” She smiled at me. “We can’t have everybody doing this, you know.”

Abbey's biography, continued from previous page

This is not the place to discuss every book that Edward Abbey has written, but a few of them should be mentioned. *The Brave Cowboy* was written in 1956. It was later made into a movie starring Kirk Douglas with the name changed to *Lonely Are the Brave*. It is the tale of a young cowboy driven from the open range by barbed wire (which he frequently cuts) and government meddling. He gets himself arrested and thrown into jail so he can help a friend escape. The friend, a draft dodger, doesn't want to escape, so the cowboy breaks out by himself and rides off not into the setting sun, but onto a darkened freeway where he and his horse are killed by an eighteen wheeler loaded with modern plumbing products.

In his next novel, *Fire on the Mountain* written in 1962, Abbey's protagonist is an old man who tries unsuccessfully to defend his ranch from a government takeover. The themes Abbey explores in this work are the relationships between freedom and constraint, the individual and society, past and present, and permanence and change. In this novel, as in *The Brave Cowboy*, the protagonist ends up dead, out of place in the modern world.

Abbey's most important novel, takes matters in an entirely different direction. In *The Monkey Wrench Gang*, 1975, a group of self-styled anarchists strike back at the powers that be—the meek rising up against the machine. They move up from burning billboards and sabotaging road-building machinery to planning the destruction of the Glen Canyon Dam. Their activism is one of Abbey's strongest themes in his later literature. As a militant defender of the West's last wild places, Abbey never came out in favor of anarchy, but certainly his characters did. Once, when asked if he seriously wanted to blow up Glen Canyon Dam, he denied it, but he answered that if someone else did, he would hold the flashlight.

What Edward Abbey did demand was ecological responsibility, and in the 1950's and 1960's he was the only voice being heard denouncing the rape of his beloved canyon country. Ultimately, he became the point man for several generations of citizens whom he inspired to fight against the national passion for growth for growth's sake. He raised people's consciousness of their responsibility for the earth. Some, like Earth First, took him literally and began "ecotage," disabling bulldozers, cutting down billboards, pulling up surveyor stakes, slashing barbed wire, and spiking trees. Most decided to use Abbey's own weapons of choice: words.

***Benedictio:*** May your trails be crooked, winding, lonesome, dangerous, leading to the most amazing views. May your mountains rise into and above the clouds. May your rivers flow without end, meandering through pastoral valleys tinkling with bells, past temples and castles and poets' towers into a dark primeval forest where tigers belch and monkeys howl, through miasmal and mysterious swamps and down into a desert of red rock, blue mesas, domes and pinnacles and grottoes of endless stone, and down again into a deep vast unknown chasm where bars of sunlight blaze on profiled cliffs, where deer walk across the white sand beaches, where storms come and go as lightning clangs upon the high crags, where something strange and more beautiful and more full of wonder than your deepest dreams waits for you--- beyond that next turning of the canyon walls.

So long.

*Prepared by Ted Sargent, Historic Rivers Chapter, Virginia Master Naturalists, Cohort IV*

*January 2010*



# HISTORIC RIVERS CHAPTER

## Advanced Training from The Virginia Institute of Marine Science

### The Census of Marine Life: A Decade of Discovery

**Starts:** February 24, 2011 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](mailto:programs@vims.edu)

The Census of Marine Life was a 10-year international effort to assess the diversity, distribution, and abundance of marine life around the globe. Its 2,700 scientists mounted 540 expeditions and have identified more than 6,000 potentially new species. Join VIMS professor Tracey Sutton, an expert on deep-sea fishes, as he describes Census highlights and reveals his own discoveries from several Census programs. Sutton was one of the scientists selected to announce the official results of the Census at a press conference in London in October 2010.

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

### Maury Science Lectures

The lectures in the Maury Science Series at VIMS are aimed at a scientific audience but are open to the public.

Lectures typically take place on a Friday during the academic year (September—May), and begin with a reception at 3:00 pm in the Watermen's Hall lobby (unless otherwise noted). The presentation follows at 3:30 pm in McHugh Auditorium ([campus map](#), building 56) at VIMS.



**"Hmmm, yes, very nice. Lovely presentation. I think we can recommend this place to the boys."**

Photos and captions courtesy of Kathi Mestayer



**"Hey, wait a minute! Who ate all the millet?"**

## PROJECT UPDATE: VERNAL POOLS AND THE HUMAN FOOTPRINT

As many of you know, some of our chapter members have begun to work on the Vernal Pools Survey project with the VCU Rice Center. This is a coordinated project with three Master Naturalist Chapters - Historic Rivers, Pocahontas, and Riverine. There are 69 volunteers trying to find vernal pools that were mapped back in 1988-90 by Dr. Charles Blem and his wife.

During Phase I of this project, our chapter has had 21 brave volunteers in the field trying to find these sites using 20 year-old field notes, maps from 1975, handheld GPS units, Google Earth, and mostly common sense. The seven teams have been very successful in finding many of our assigned sites. On February 5 we go back to Rice Center to practice field training in measuring total dissolved oxygen, pH, and much more.

Below are some team reports and several photos we wanted to share with everybody. We are very proud of our chapter's enthusiasm in this project. Now we are hoping for a wet spring, so we will have the opportunity to count spotted and marbled salamander egg masses! Thank you to all the "vernal poolers" who are working on this project.

Felice Bond and Dean Shostak , Co-Coordinator, Vernal Pools and The Human Footprint

### Team 1 Gary Driscoll, Geoff Giles and Jeanette Navia

We checked out five James City County sites on Monday, January 17. Geoff took coordinates for what we believe are the sites, though it is difficult to tell without water. Geoff went back to a few of the sites on Tuesday after it rained and saw that rain water was now in site JC\_3. We believe one site is no longer a vernal pool but a pond created by a beaver dam (photo). We need to check one of the sites using Google Earth, as the aerial map indicated the site was very far off the road and inaccessible from the road.

### Team 2 Dean Shostak, Catherine Short, Christina Woodson

We went out Tuesday, Jan 18th and found all the sites in New Kent County. Three had pools with water, one was possible with more rain, and one was logged and really altered. So 3 maybe 4, not bad, at all. We had a great day in the field and can't wait to go back.

### Team 3 Susan Powell, Cherie Aukland, Jim Booth

We had a great day riding around in the New Kent county countryside searching for vernal pools! Of our 5 sites, we positively located two. Of the other three, one was probably under a parking lot, one was most likely filled in with an enormous junkyard, and the third was (possibly) in someone's front yard bisected by a raised driveway (and dry). We will go back to investigate that one when we have a bit more rain. En route to locating our last site, we chose to take a scenic route and found three new vernal pools along the way. We recorded their locations and estimated the sizes/depth of these three "new" pools.

Vernal Pool Project, continued from previous page

**Team 4 Patty Maloney, Nancy Norton., Gary Hammer**

Hey, gang: Nancy Norton, Gary Hammer and Patty Maloney went out yesterday during the Spring "thaw." We found water in two of our five locations plus a few ducks. Two of the dry locations were in areas with newer developments: a McDonald's and new homes/retention ponds. The attached pictures include one of the vernal pools with ducks; one of the developed areas with a fenced retention pond; and Nancy taking a long/lat reading.

**Team 5 Felice Bond, Les Lawrence, Lois Ullman**

Jan. 17, 2011 - Just want to pass along that Lois, Felice, and Les made our initial survey today of Surry County sites 4-8. We had a lot of fun (we always do!) but kind of a mixed bag of results. We had one great positive, with lots of water (Larry, please note), for the most part frozen over but lots of it. One site was evidently mis-sited, but we managed to locate what we believe was the actual location - but with new construction adjacent and no evidence of a vernal pool. One site was on Dominion Power property next to the Surry Nuclear Power Plant. We were definitely looking in the right place but no evidence of a depression, much less any water. If anybody has any contacts with Dominion, this might be worth pursuing. Another site had been plowed over and leveled, and the fifth site was not visible from the road.

So, we were 1 for 5. Based on the one positive, though, we believe there should be sufficient water present; plus, we should get lots of good rain overnight. Hope everybody has as much fun as we did. It's like a big scavenger hunt!

Jan.20 - Our team was a little bummed that we only had one viable site. We may want a new set of sites to check out.

On Jan 24<sup>th</sup> our team checked out the extra Prince George County packets. The sites were right near our only site in Surry Co. We were thrilled to find 3 of the 4 pools and one additional one. Yea! That gives us five possible chances to get to do some VP research.

**Team 9 Shirley Devan, Seig Kopintz, Alice Kopintz**

The location of our five pools is Prince George. We were eager to begin. We checked our iPhone calendars and found that we ALL had some unscheduled time on Thursday, January 13. What are the odds for that happening? Want to guess what we did....yep, a road trip to Prince George to look for vernal pools.

PG\_8 - THERE WAS THE POOL AND LOTS OF WATER IN THE POOL- Yea!

PG\_9 - noted a depression in the ground, but too far from road to view if water was there.

PG\_7 - Found house and address, but if pond is there, we need to have permission to investigate.

PG\_4 - Pool may be there, but close to swamp. Could not observe from road and again will need to walk on property.

PG\_3 - THERE WAS THE POOL AND LOTS OF WATER IN THE POOL - Yea!

We were really happy with our trek. We think finding two definite pools, one very good possibility, one possible, and one unknown is a great beginning. We hope that all the teams have positive results.

Photo Montage on pages 20 & 21 created by Dean Shostak from photos submitted by participants

Additional reports, page 22

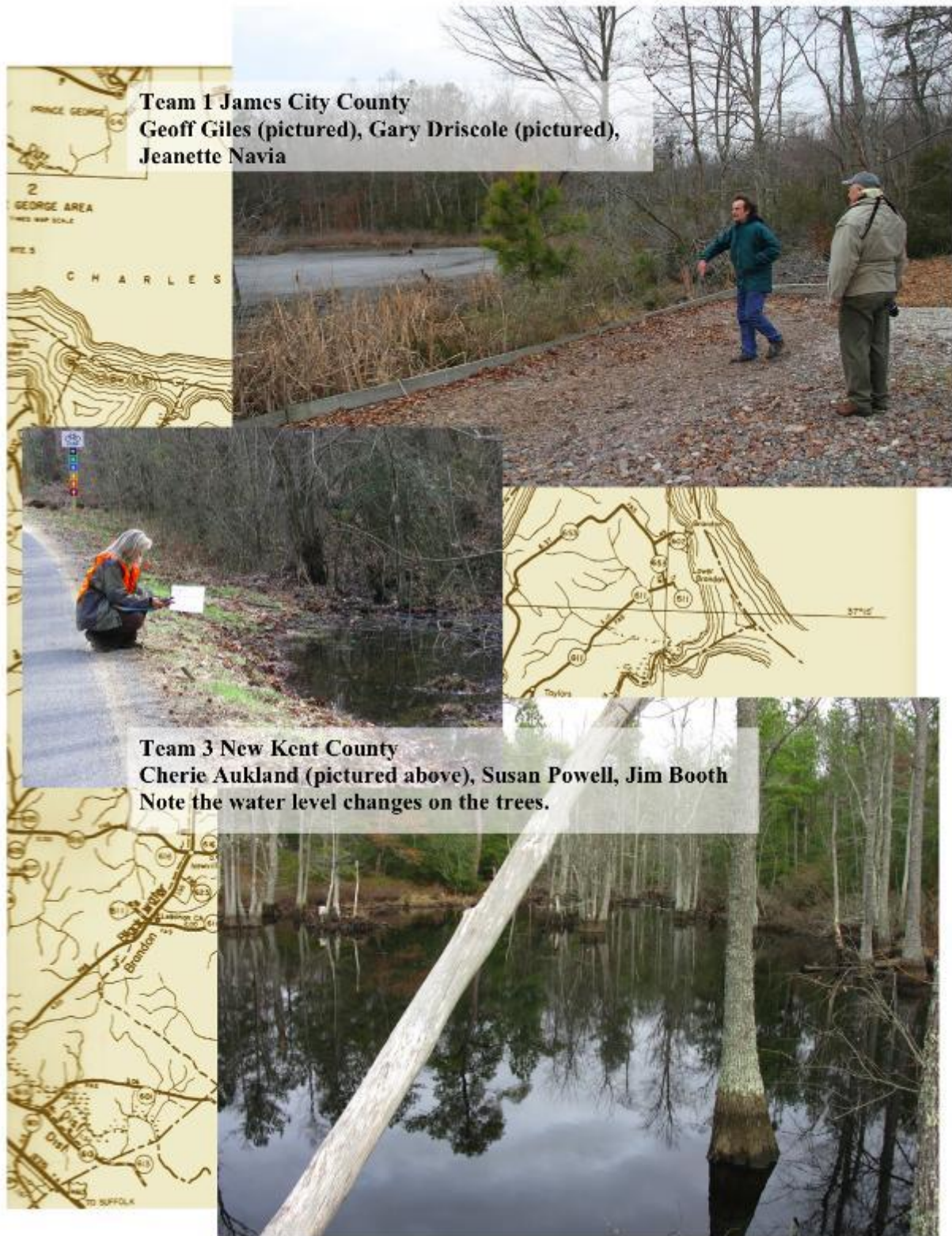


Photo montage created by Dean Shostak

# HISTORIC RIVERS CHAPTER

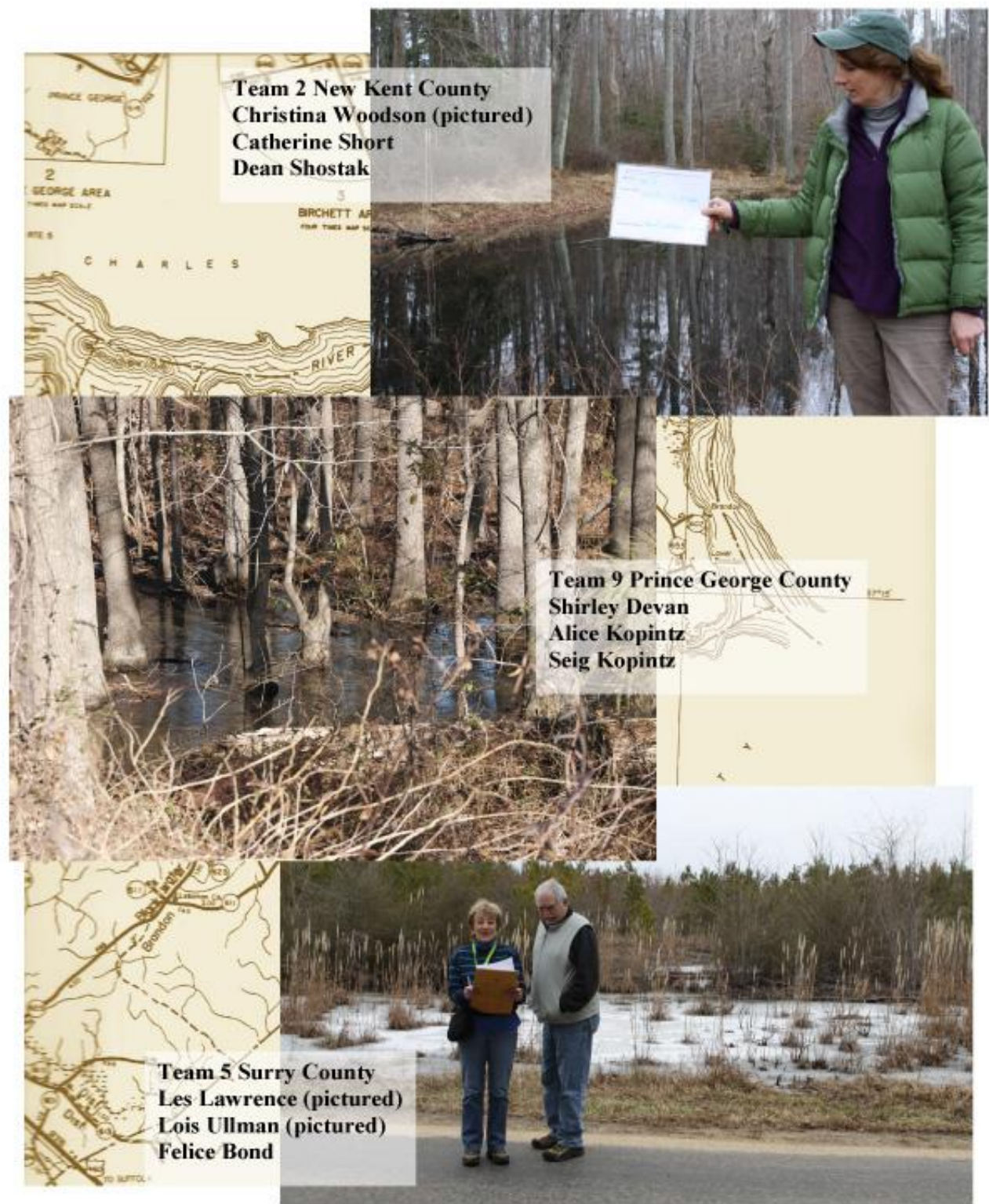


Photo montage created by Dean Shostak

## Vernal Pool Sleuths, continued

Breaking News for Vernal Pool Sleuths: The team of Parker, Riddick & Riddick went out today to do their first reconnaissance and located all five pools! The territory covered four sites in Surry County (SUR\_9, SUR\_1, 2 & 3), and one site in Sussex County (SUS\_1). Unfortunately SUS\_1 was quite polluted with tires, cans, bottles, plastic bags, etc. This pool, located adjacent to a pull off on Rte. 460, did not appear to be healthy enough to host amphibians. SUR\_2 was well off the road but was eventually spotted about 300 feet away from the road and behind SUR\_1. The last stop was at SUR\_3 which had no standing water; however, it was marshy, had cypress knees and had water lines showing on trees.

It was a great day and thoroughly enjoyed by the team.

Left: Larry Riddick and Evelyn Parker

Below: Sussex County site—pollution!

Pictures courtesy of Patty Riddick

