



THE NATURALIST

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

<http://historicrivers.org>

A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

Volume 5 No. 5 May 2011

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Photo caption:

From left: Doug Domenech (Secretary of Natural Resources for the Commonwealth of Virginia), Carol Heiser (Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries and Virginia Master Naturalist program Steering Committee), David Whitehurst (Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries and Virginia Master Naturalist program Executive Committee), Susan Powell (Virginia Master Naturalist volunteer, Historic Rivers Chapter), David Paylor (Director, Virginia Department of Environmental Quality), David Johnson (Director, Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation)

Congratulations Virginia Master Naturalists!

Posted: 11 Apr 2011 08:16 AM PDT

Governor Bob McDonnell announced the winners of the 2011 Governor's Environmental Excellence Awards, which were presented at the [Environment Virginia Symposium](#) in Lexington on April 6.

The [Virginia Master Naturalist Program](#) is one of the winners of this prestigious award, earning a gold award in the category of governmental environmental programs.

Of course, it is the wonderful work of our volunteers and the support from our sponsoring agencies and partners that earned the award for the program. It was fitting that Susan Powell (Virginia Master Naturalist volunteer, Historic Rivers Chapter), our first VMN volunteer to complete 2500 hours of service, accepted the award on behalf of the program. Thanks, Susan, and thanks to all of our volunteers, sponsoring agencies, and partners!

The awards recognize the significant contributions of environmental and conservation leaders in three categories: environmental projects, environmental programs and land conservation. They are given to businesses and industrial facilities, not-for-profit organizations, government agencies and individuals.

Speaking about the awards, Governor McDonnell remarked, *"We are very proud of the Virginians in these private, non-profit and government entities who have demonstrated the innovation and dedication to improve our environment and make the lives of their fellow Virginians better."*

Award winners were chosen based on criteria including environmental benefit, stakeholder involvement, public outreach, transferability and innovativeness.

This year's awards were sponsored by the [Virginia Department of Environmental Quality](#), the [Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation](#), Dominion and Smithfield Foods Inc.

Additional information on the Governor's Environmental Excellence Awards is available on the DEQ website at www.deq.virginia.gov/info/geea/2011.

Message forwarded by Michelle Prysby

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Janette Navia, Webmistress

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President's Message

What a sad day it is. Mother eagle from the Botanical Gardens eagle family died this morning while fishing for her family. On her way back to the nest and her three hungry eaglets, she was hit by an airplane preparing for landing at Norfolk International Airport. Upon reading the comments logged onto the WVEC TV website where the link to the live eagle cam was located, I know that I am not the only one grieving as if I had lost a member of my family. For several years I have watched this beautiful pair of eagles upgrade their nest and then set about raising two or three (usually three) young ones. I wait, often with great trepidation, for the babies to fledge and cry many tears of happiness when they leave home successfully. I have never worried about mom or dad – once eagles get to be their ages, they pretty much have no predators. Unfortunately, the dangers of nesting near a busy airport have become sadly clear. Mom was no match for a jet plane.

It is comforting to know that many of us are feeling the same sense of loss and anguish – fear for the eaglets, sadness for the mate, and the sorrow for not seeing this year's beautiful family fledge under mom and dad's protection. As Master Naturalists, we are only too aware of the dangers and pitfalls our Virginia wildlife faces on a daily basis: degradation of habitat, poisons, excess fertilizers from farms and lawns, disappearing prey and vegetation. Of course, this sad event could not be prevented – planes have got to fly, eagles have got to fly. But I think the deep sense of loss I feel is very much why we strive to do what we can for the wildlife we CAN impact. I am grateful to belong to a group that shares my love, admiration, and hope for all the birds, and other critters, out there in the great big dangerous world.

Barbara Boyer, President
Historic Rivers Chapter

Notes from the Board

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

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Shirley Devan accepts York County's 2010 Outstanding Volunteer Award

Pictured left to right: Sara Lewis, Steve Devan, Shirley Devan and Molly Nealer

Photos Courtesy of Les Lawrence





Congratulating Shirley are Virginia Master Naturalists and Supporters!

Left to Right: Les Lawrence, Felice Bond, Susie Engle-Hill, Sara Lewis, Jeanette Navia, Shirley Devan, Katherine Short, Steve Devan, Geoff Giles, Susan Powell, and Molly Nealer.

Photo courtesy of Les Lawrence.

From Membership Chair, Shirley Devan

Latest (and Final!) Word on “Travel Time”



From our Chapter’s beginnings in 2007, many of us have kept track of our “travel time” to and from Volunteer Service Projects because we were told to! THANK YOU to so many of you who have been so diligent in recording your time!

But times change (so to speak)...and so will we!

The “VMN Volunteer Policy Handbook” dated 10/8/2010 (page 10) describes the revised VMN state policy on “travel time” for Volunteer Service Projects:

“Travel Time: Travel time typically does not count towards the certification requirements or towards milestone achievements. A chapter may have a few projects for which travel time does count. Specifically, travel time can be counted for projects in which the main activity is travel (e.g. Virginia Frog and Toad Calling Survey, locating and measuring Virginia's big trees, other car-based surveys.) In addition, Master Naturalists may want to track their mileage on all projects for tax purposes, and the online reporting system provides fields for tracking this information.”

Per Michelle Prysby, our HRC chapter is one of only a couple that reports travel time in our annual report. And since the new online system has a field for mileage (not hours), she has decided to make recording “travel time” optional. Per Michelle, “if people are recording their mileage, we can always use that to get a guesstimate of the time, and then it would be one less thing for the volunteers to have to record.”

The bottom line: you no longer need to record your “travel time” to and from Volunteer Service Projects. Use the “mileage” capability in the online system only if it helps you personally to keep track of volunteer miles for personal income tax purposes.

NOTE: For calculation of milestone hours for Volunteer Service, I have been filtering out “travel time.” Same for hours for VMN Certification.

NOTE that no one’s certification or milestone achievements will be changed from previous years! You are grandfathered in if hours were used in previous years to calculate certification, recertification, or milestone achievements.

As always, please contact me by phone or email if you have questions or concerns: 757-813-1322 or sedevan52@cox.net

As Michelle says, it's one less thing to keep up with! I think most of us will agree!

HISTORIC RIVERS CHAPTER

Emma Came.....And then, Alas,.....Emma Went

By Patty Riddick



Emma
in
2010

Emma, the bullfrog, mysteriously appeared at our pond in March of 2010. Emma was happy and she began to grow. Emma was named by our 8-year-old granddaughter and Emma remained her name. At times we wondered if she might more appropriately have been called “Emmett” but we chose not to question the wisdom of an 8-year-old. Fall came and then winter and we saw no more of Emma. We hoped she was faring well at the bottom of the pond during those cold days. Lo and behold, glorious day, in the spring of this year, there she was again. She enjoyed sitting at the side of the pond watching for those insects. She grew even more. She enjoyed perching on her cork float—a gift from our Master Naturalist friend, Evelyn. Sadly, after a very heavy rain last month, Emma mysteriously disappeared. We wish her well in her new home, but, we miss her!

Emma
in
2011





Ever wonder how to stabilize a steep slope with tools you already have lying around the house? Here's one at the side of our neighborhood pool that has been giving us fits for decades. It's just too steep, and too bare, to get its act together. So the experiment for this year is very low-tech; logs along the slope, held in place by existing small shrubs/saplings and (mostly) cedar stakes.

After the big rainstorm of April 16, I went down to see how it was holding up, and so far so good. We'll keep monitoring it through the summer, and patch it up as needed. Now, if we can just keep those guys with the leaf blowers away....

Submitted by Kathi Mestayer

HISTORIC RIVERS CHAPTER

Litter by Clyde Marsteller

How many times have you driven along one of our roads and noticed all the litter on the shoulders? I ran into the same thing in God's Three Acres. As I was picking the junk up I decided to keep representative kinds of litter I had collected and do some research on how long the stuff stays in the environment before it decomposes.

Here is a listing:

Piece of paper	2 to 4 weeks
Candy Wrapper	1 to 3 months
Aluminum Can	350 years
Soda/Beer six pack plastic holder	450 years
*Plastic Bottle	1000 years
Glass Jar/Bottle	1 Million Years
Plastic Water/Soda Bottle	NEVER
Any Styrofoam Product	NEVER

Taken from Food Democracy July 16, 2008.

Plastic bags are made from oil: it takes about 430,000 gallons of oil to produce 100 million plastic bags, and the U.S. goes through 380 BILLION of them a year.

A statistics class at Indiana U did the math: more than 1.6 BILLION gallons of oil are used each year for plastic bags alone. Compounding the problem is the fact that, not only do we make tons of plastic bags (and use lots of oil in the process) we only recycle 1 percent. One lousy percent. It's pitiful. G3As is across the street from a 7-11 and a Food Lion. More than half the trash I picked up was plastic bags.

But the plastic problem gets worse. Under perfect conditions a bag takes a thousand years to biodegrade, and in a landfill, plastic bags decompose even slower. If buried, they block the natural flow of oxygen and water in the soil. If burned, they release dangerous toxins and carcinogens into the air. The damage is even more severe when the bags end up in the ocean, where thousands of sea turtles and other marine life die each year after mistaking plastic bags for food. (Peninsula to the James & York Rivers to the Bay to the Ocean).

(Continued on next page)

HISTORIC RIVERS CHAPTER

Ireland, Taiwan, South Africa, Australia, and China have heavily taxed plastic bags or banned their use entirely. In 2001, Ireland consumed 1.3 billion plastic bags. A plastic bag consumption tax of 37 cents per bag was introduced. In one year it reduced consumption by 90%. Approximately 18,000,000 liters of oil have been saved by the Irish. (I'll drink to that)!

How many recycled newspapers does it take to save a tree?

Extracted from an article by Bruce G. Marcot, Ph.D. Research Ecologist, USDA Forest Service, PNW Research Station, Portland OR.

If one family recycles 365 newspapers, they will save about 0.48 trees , or about half a tree. My elementary school classes average 22 students so I tell them if they have their families recycle all their newspapers for a year they will save 11 trees which is enough habitat for one family of woodpeckers or 3 –4 nests of songbirds !

QED(Math talk for the Latin Quod Erat Demonstrandum, Thus It Has Been Proven.)

Finally I came across this Native American proverb that I am going to take as my own personal Credo: “ We do not inherit the earth from our ancestors, we borrow it from our children.”

Live long and prosper,

Clyde

**Clyde presents his
“Zoo in My Luggage”
At the April 13th
Historic Rivers Chapter
Meeting.**



Advanced Training by Adrienne Frank and Gary Driscole

For more information please see: historicrivers.org

[AT] HRBC Bird Walk—Starts: May 1, 2011

[AT] VLM SUNDAY LECTURE SERIES - Virginia Bats at Risk—Starts: May 1, 2011

[AT] Native Plant Walk with Donna Ware—Starts: May 1, 2011

[AT] VLM EVENING SEMINAR SERIES - Coyotes are Here—Starts: May 3, 2011

[AT] VIMS Tidal Wetlands workshop—Starts: May 5, 2011

[AT] New Quarter Park - Walk N Talk—Starts: May 7, 2011

[AT] WBC Bird Walk at New Quarter Park—Starts: May 14, 2011

[AT] HRBC Bird Walk—Starts: May 15, 2011

[AT] WBC Field Trip—Starts: May 21, 2011

[AT] VMN Rally at Sweet Briar College - Weekend—Starts: June 3, 2011

[AT] VMN Rally at Sweet Briar College - Weekend—Starts: June 4, 2011

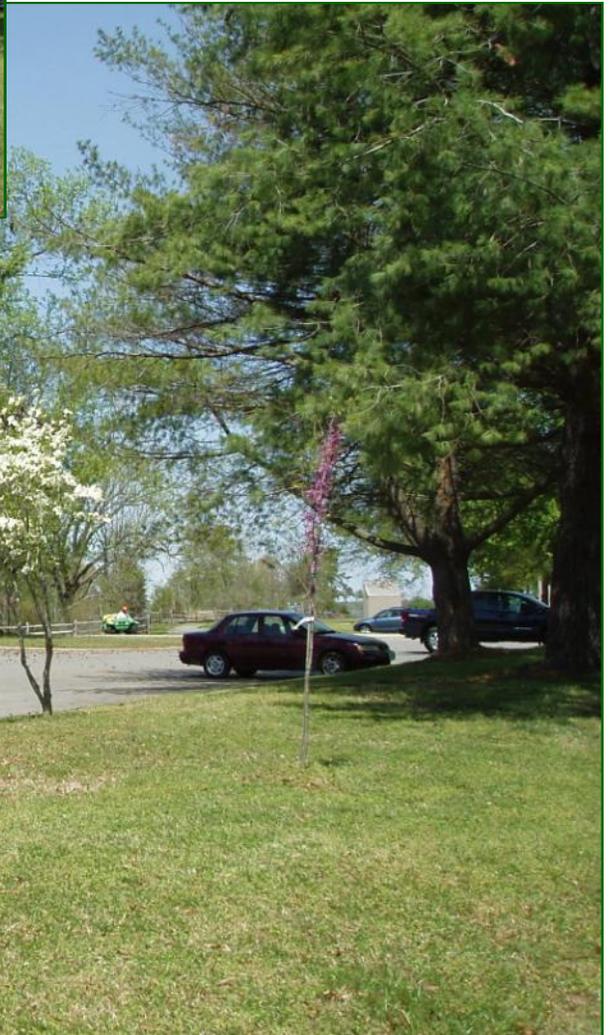
[AT] HRBC Bird Walk—Starts: June 5, 2011

HISTORIC RIVERS CHAPTER

“For everyone who helped to plant the trees near the parking lots at York River Last year; Well done!”

Mary

Photos by Mary Apperson





“Is the Nature
Lady
home?”

You know you're a Master Naturalist when ...

The elementary school girls across the street call you the "Nature Lady."

Monday, April 18, the two little girls who live across the street rang the doorbell. My husband, Steve, answered the door because I was "indisposed" (in the shower). The conversation at the front door was something like this (as told by my husband):

Little girls: Is the Nature Lady home?

Steve: She can't come to the door right now. I'm the Urban Guy. What's up?

Little girls: We wanted the Nature Lady to take a picture of us with our little snakes.

Steve: She can't come to the door but I can take a picture with my iPhone.

Little girls: OK!

Here is the photo my husband took of the little girls with their worm snakes. He printed the photo out from his iPhone and gave it to them. (Last summer I had taken a photo of them with the local worm snakes and they wanted a repeat performance. Future Master Naturalists!!)

By Shirley Devan



Nestlings

These hatched in the box at the side of my driveway early this week. Not sure of the date (approximately April 18). I peeked in the box each day and the female sat tight. I thought she was on eggs, but she may have been on new nestlings. These are about 2-3 days old -- the pin feathers are starting to appear. Only 4 are visible in this photo, but there are actually 5 Carolina Chickadee nestlings in this tiny, deep nest cup.

Submitted by Shirley Devan

A Note from Kathi Mestayer

On Monday, April 25, we showed the "Bringing Nature Home" video of Doug Tallamy's talk on the necessity of using native plants to create habitat. We had the Williamsburg United Universalists Sanctuary reserved, a big screen, and the generous help of a few UU members to help us get the electronics all set up. About 25 people showed up, and saw the video. We had a handout on sources of native plants, habitat, gardening for birds, the MN program, and low-impact lawns (the usual suspects). Afterward, a few people came up and talked about how much they enjoyed it. One person said, "I never knew there was such a big difference between native plants and non-natives. I always figured that, whatever you planted, the critters would just, well, adapt." Another person who is the chair of the Landscaping Committee of a Homeowner's Association asked if we would show the video to his committee members.

Thanks again to the Williamsburg Unitarian Universalists for letting us use their space, and to the VNPS, MGs, MNs, and WUUs for publicizing the event!