



THE NATURALIST

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

<http://historicrivers.org>

A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

Volume 5 No. 9 September 2011

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Training**

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“ welcome to Cohort VI. Our first class was great.

Personally, I feel like I have 25 new friends!”

Shirley Devan

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Message from the President

Let it Be!

The Daily Press runs a cute family-oriented comic strip by Pat Brady called "Rose is Rose." In this strip, the protagonist is a young mother of a very active child, and a busy homemaker for their small family. Rose has a "let it be" tree that she seeks out when times are rough and she needs a break from the stresses of her life. A few minutes alone leaning on her "let it be" tree and she is calm, and ready to face the world again.

I would be willing to bet that most of us, as Master Naturalists, have a "let it be" place (whether it be a tree, a beach, a pond, stream, lake, whatever), and I would be willing to bet that it is a place in nature. I actually found my place during my training to become a Master Naturalist. Now, I am not going to share my place with anyone because it is MY place, but I am sure most of you have your own.

I wish to welcome Cohort VI to our group, and I encourage you to be on the lookout for your own "let it be" place while you are in training. For those of you who have lived in the area for a long time, you may already have your place or places, and maybe you will find new ones to explore. For those of you new to the area, you are in for a real treat!!! There will be places that will fill the requirements for a place to simply give yourself over to the natural world, and to just "let it be."

Barbara W. Boyer

President, Historic Rivers Chapter

Virginia Master Naturalist

Notes from the Board

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

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HISTORIC RIVERS CHAPTER

Advanced Training Opportunities in late summer are numerous. All of the Basic Training classes are available for AT credits, if you have not participated in a class topic or field trip. There are regular events such as bird walks at New Quarter Park or field trips with the Native Plant Society. Don't forget you can sign up for the Virginia Master Naturalist Conference. Please go to the website for more information www.historicrivers.org

[AT] Walk & Talk at New Quarter, September 3 - Coastal Plain Geology at New Quarter - Geology -

September 3, 2011 from 10:00-12:00 pm at New Quarter Park, near Queen's Lake, York Co.

[AT] HRBC Bird Walk - September 4, 2011 from 7:00-10:00 am at Newport News City Park

CLASS: Risk Management; Biology Basics - September 6, 2011 from 6:00-9:00 pm at Human Services Building, 5249 Olde Towne Rd., Williamsburg, VA

[AT] WBC Bird Walk at New Quarter Park - September 10, 2011 from 8:00-10:00 am at New Quarter Park, 1000 Lakeshead Dr., Williamsburg

[AT] Monthly meeting - September 14, 2011 from 6:00-9:00 pm at JCC Human Services Bldg., 5249 Olde Towne Rd., Williamsburg

VNPS Annual Chapter Meeting - Speaker Teta Kain - September 15, 2011 from 6:30-8:30 pm at WJCC Community Center, Longhill Road

[AT] VNPS - Annual Meeting 9/16-18/2011 - September 16, 2011 from 3:00-9:00 pm in Manassas, VA

[AT] VSO Field Trip to Chincoteague, VA - September 16, 2011 from 4:00-10:00 pm at VSO Field Trip to Chincoteague, VA

CLASS: Citizen Science & Research; Scientific Methods; Field Methods - September 17, 2011 all day at York River State Park, 5526 Riverview Rd, Williamsburg, VA

[AT] WBC Field Trip - September 17, 2011 from 7:00-1:30 pm at WBC Field Trip

[AT] VSO Field Trip to Chincoteague, VA - September 17, 2011 from 8:00-10:00 pm at Chincoteague,

[AT] VNPS - Annual Meeting - September 17, 2011 from 9:00-10:00 pm at Manassas, VA

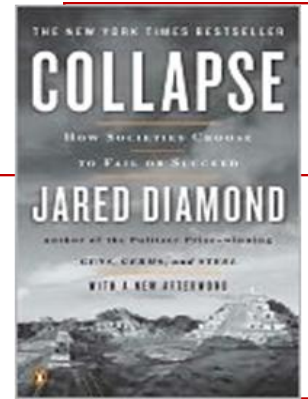
[AT] HRBC Bird Walk - September 18, 2011 from 7:00-10:00 am at Newport News City Park

CLASS: Habitats - September 20, 2011 from 6:00-9:00 pm at Human Services Building, 5249 Olde Towne Rd., Williamsburg, VA

[AT] Bird Walk at New Quarter Park - September 24, 2011 from 7:00-9:00 am at Bird Walk at New Quarter Park

[AT] VIMS After Hours - Algal Blooms - September 29, 2011 from 7:00-9:00 pm at VIMS After Hours - Algal Blooms

Adrienne Frank and Gary Driscoll, AT Co-Chairs



Here's a blurb about a book that might be of interest to VMN.

Collapse by Jared Diamond

“Who hasn't gazed upon the abandoned temples of Angkor Wat or the jungle-choked cities of the Maya and wondered, could the same fate happen to us? In this riveting book, Diamond explores how humankind's use and abuse of the environment reveal the truth behind the world's great collapses, from the Anasazi of N. America to the Vikings of Greenland to modern societies. In his million-copy bestseller *Guns, Germs, and Steel*, Jared Diamond examined how and why Western civilizations developed the technologies and immunities that allowed them to dominate much of the world. Now in this brilliant companion volume, Diamond probes the other side of the equation: What caused some of the great civilizations of the past to collapse into ruin, and what can we learn from their fates?”

Recommended by Susie Engle

BLUEBIRD MONITORING WINDS DOWN

By Les Lawrence

After monitoring Bluebird activities on the Meh-Te-Kos trail at York River State Park for over five months, this year's season has almost reached closure. The last of the boxes have been vacated, and they have been cleaned for the season. It was a fun time watching the building of nests, laying of the eggs, seeing the eggs hatch (literally in one instance!) and then the young birds fledging – all in such a short period of time. Amazing.

This trail is comprised of 25 boxes, nine of which were made and installed as an Eagle Scout project at the onset of this Bluebird season. Most of the new boxes were not inhabited this year except by wasps and, more lately, gypsy moths. Nonetheless, the trail was successful; the results:

- * Bluebirds made 16 nest attempts (at least 1 egg)

- * 74 Bluebird eggs

- * 64 hatchlings

- * 54 fledglings

- * Carolina Chickadees made 4 nest attempts

- * 21 CC eggs

- * 10 hatchlings

- * 10 fledglings

- * A Carolina Wren made 1 nest attempt

- * 5 CW eggs

- * 4 hatchlings

- * 4 fledglings

Six HRC members contributed a total of 139 hours to ensure that monitoring was completed every week: Alice and Seig Kopinitz, Christina Woodson, Patty Maloney, Shirley Devan, and Les Lawrence. Also, a non-HRC member, Dorothy Whitfield, contributed quite a few hours walking the 2 and one-half mile trail. In addition to monitoring the boxes, we installed a total of 20 snake guards (thanks for Bill O'Connell's help), made/added 13 Noel guards, and relocated four boxes.

Continued on next page....

HISTORIC RIVERS CHAPTER

Activity in one of our boxes was also featured in the magazine “Nature Friend.” The article, by Shirley, and a photo, by Patty, reported the competition over a nesting box by Bluebirds and Carolina Chickadees. Five BB and four CC eggs were laid in the “shared” box, but, alas, the competition was too great and both sets of parents ended up deserting their eggs.



We also took advantage of our time on the trail to do some wildlife mapping. During the five + month period, we documented 35 bird, 4 mammal, 11 butterfly, 5 reptile, and one toad species! Not bad.

We had a busy but fun experience!

HISTORIC RIVERS CHAPTER

YORK COUNTY 4-H CAMPERS

with Linda Miller



This year I was joined by Laura Copan, Pam Camblin and Christina Woodson for three days of fun at this year’s 4-H Camp. Campers were given a list of courses to select from and this year we had two classes each day with fifteen students. In addition to Natural History books, the children had images of this year’s camp theme, “Rainforest Jungle” animals. Over the three days, campers worked in graphite, pen & ink and watercolor! What was so nice this year is that several of last year’s campers signed up again!

Zoo Update August 2011

For two weeks in August A Zoo In My Luggage (Shopping Bags) participated in the Newport News Parks & Recreation Summer Program. The critters, the Zoo Cru and myself went to eight Elementary Schools and the Mid Town Community Center. We visited with 171 children and 48 aides. The age of the children ranged from 6 to 12 years with one notable exception.

I would like to thank Shirley Devan, Patty Riddick, Jeanne Millin, Nancy Ward and Geoff Giles for volunteering as Zoo Cru members and driving down here to the Lower Forty.

Geoff and I had the privilege of working with a group of 20 Special Needs children ranging in age from five to 18 years. At first I was at a loss how to interact with them but it was immediately apparent the children had never seen anything like the Zoo and their wonderment and excitement at seeing the animals was a delight to both of us. I told little stories about each animal giving them names and allowing them to touch and experience each one. They met our Living Fossil the American Cockroach and it's African cousins the Hissing Cockroaches. They squealed and laughed over the Robotic Wasp. The concept that six legged beasties are insects came across nicely. Roly Poly the Isopod, Millie the Millipede, Mug the Slug, Dale the Snail, and Herm the Worm fascinated them while Betsy the Patent Leather Beetle to their amazement "talked" to them. The stars of the show Mushroom the Toad, Rana the Leopard Frog, Dink the Skink and Gizzard the Fence Lizard topped off the performance.

To work with these special children and to realize you were introducing them to a world they never knew existed is probably the most satisfying and humbling experience I have ever had.

A final thought. So far the Zoo has visited with 4,400 children and adults and we are looking forward to the 2011-2012 school year.

Ramblin Clyde

Zoo Keeper

HISTORIC RIVERS CHAPTER

Meet the Zoo Babies!



Betsy Beetles



Milipedes



Skink



Snails and Slug



Fowler's Toad



Leopard Frog

Mystery Solved

By Nancy Norton

Seven weeks ago, while a patient in Sentara Hospital, I overheard the nurses talking about a BIG moth on the window. Being a curious Master Naturalist, I asked where the window was and painstakingly made my way to take a look. Well, it was a BIG moth, and not a Luna moth, as I had thought. I snapped a picture of its underside with my cell phone, planning on checking it out later.



Upon getting home, I called Patty Maloney to see if she had a book on butterflies and moths so I could try to identify the moth. She just happened to have Art Evans book on all matter of bugs and I began going through the moth section. Much to my chagrin, all of the pictures are taken looking down on the moth so nothing matched my picture taken looking at the underside of the moth.

This moth had green wings as well as yellow and orange markings on its head that made the cutest monkey-like face. At the next board meeting I asked several folks if they had any idea what I had, but photo was not the best and no one had an answer. Guess I needed to work a little harder to find out!!!!

Fast forward 4 weeks and we are at the Peaks of Otter for a little R&R after chemo. Taking a walk to the nature center, we were greeted by the ranger, who was sporting a corn snake boa, and as I was ready to bolt back out the door, something caught my eye.



There was the most beautifully colored and largest moth we had ever seen sitting on a branch in a box. It had bright red and gray wings with white spots and an orange and yellow monkey-like face. OMG!!! Here was the very moth that had eluded me for so long. I was so excited I didn't even think about the snake. I just needed to know what moth it was. The ranger told me she was a Regal Moth and the picture I had was the male.

Hurray, finally the Mystery was solved!!!!!!



A Regal Moth!

Nancy Norton



4th Biennial: NoVa Urban Forestry Conference

Make Room for Trees: *The Urban Forest Continuum*

November 18, 2011

Algonkian Regional Park Conference Center 47001 Fairway Drive, Sterling
VA 20165

A vibrant forest canopy in urban, suburban and urbanizing areas faces many challenges. Some of these we are well acquainted with but continue to struggle with. New challenges await us on the horizon. Join us for a full day of exploration, discussion and motivation as we frame the issues and discover solutions for the next 100 years of Urban Forest Canopy in Virginia

Key Note Address by Bill Elemendorf, Penn State University

Details are forthcoming. Agenda and registration information will be available at: www.treesvirginia.org

Doug Tallamy on JCCTV!

**"Bringing Nature Home" - the importance of native plants for our
wildlife.**

7 pm every night through Sept!

Be sure to tune in!

HISTORIC RIVERS CHAPTER

YOU KNOW YOU'RE A MASTER NATURALIST WHEN....

(Collected by Kathi Mestayer and Contributed by Many of Us)

...you are looking for a good home for two black-widow spiders.

...you see a pile of poop in the middle of the trail and say, "Cool! Scat! I wonder what kind it is?" and take a photograph so you can email to your fellow MNs later. You do not move the scat because it is part of the food web, right where it is.

...you're driving along I-64 at 70 mph, and you see a bald eagle soaring overhead. Without thinking about it (never think about it), you lower the window and point straight up at it so other drivers can see it, too! Then, someone passes you and gives you a really weird look, like "do you need help, or what?"

...you see a cute little box turtle in the front yard, and pick a few ripe blackberries to give it. The next day, you go over to the garden to check on that very first ripe tomato that was hanging kind of low...and see what the turtle has been eating. You mention the chewed-up tomato to your husband, and he says, "Was it the turtle? Great!"

...you open a window, carefully push up the screen, and gently direct a wasp to the outdoors with a wispy piece of paper towel. Who knew I would ever do that?!

...you come home with more photos of plants than birds after attending a birding conference in the Shenandoah Mountains.

...you lie down in the dirt in a heartbeat to get the right shot of a pink ladies' slipper.

...you are sorely tempted to empty the dozens of bags of leaves your neighbors have laboriously filled and lined up next to the road for pickup.

... you get a traffic summons (while birding) for going too SLOW!!! ;-)

...you try to rescue a large red-bellied turtle across the road and he or she pees all over you.

...somebody shows up with a Tupperware container with deep-fried cicadas in it, and a MN just pops one in his mouth, and says, "hmmm, needs salt."

...you'd rather be scrambling down the slippery Yorktown Bluffs after Jerre Johnson than anywhere else on a Saturday morning in November.

HISTORIC RIVERS CHAPTER

Final Results of Prothonotary Warbler Nest Boxes in Chesapeake, VA

By Shirley Devan



The Prothonotary Warblers (PROW) at Northwest River Park in Chesapeake produced a record 136 nestlings out of 101 boxes in 2011 season. This body of freshwater is surrounded by Bald Cypress trees and mixed hardwoods with thick understory, perfect habitat for the Prothonotary Warblers.

Stephen Living, Wildlife Biologist, or I, plus volunteers from Historic Rivers Chapter, Williamsburg Bird Club, and Coastal Virginia Wildlife Observatory visited Northwest River Park 22 times between April 13 and July 5 – sometimes twice a week – to ensure that as many nestlings and adults as possible were counted and banded. Here are a few data on the 101 boxes:

136 PROW nestlings banded

17 new PROW females captured and banded

3 new PROW males captured and banded

55 boxes showed evidence of PROW nest activity (from “sprig of moss” to 2 broods)

6 boxes had 2 broods that were banded

9 female PROW females banded at Northwest River in 2009 and 2010 were “recaptured” in 2011. Five were banded as adults in 2009; one was banded as a nestling in 2009; three were banded as adults in 2010.

In the 39 boxes at Northwest River Park since 2008, 38 boxes showed evidence of PROW nesting activity – ranging from “sprig of moss” to two broods.

HISTORIC RIVERS CHAPTER

The new boxes installed in 2011 showed moderate to no activity, depending on location. Ten of the 23 boxes close to the original 39 hosted PROW nest activity. The farther the boxes were from the original 39, the less activity. Some of the boxes will be candidates for repositioning in 2012, but many will probably remain in position for a second year to give the warblers a chance to find and nest in them.

The Prothonotary Warbler (PROW) is a “watch list species” of conservation concern for Partners in Flight, and is listed as a Tier 4 species (moderate conservation need) in the Commonwealth of Virginia’s Wildlife Action Plan. The Prothonotary Warbler is the only cavity-nesting warbler east of the Mississippi River. They readily take up residence in nest boxes stationed on poles about 10 feet from the shore in swamps and creeks.

The Prothonotary Warbler citizen science project is supervised by Dr. Bob Reilly, Master Bander and Vice President of Coastal Virginia Wildlife Observatory (CVWO) and Professor at the Center for Environmental Studies at VCU.

This Chesapeake municipal park is one of five sites Dr. Reilly supervises. The Prothonotary Warbler nest box project began 24 years ago with a network of approximately 80 nest boxes at Presquile National Wildlife Refuge near Richmond. In the 1990’s the project expanded to sites at Deep Bottom Park in Henrico County, to the Dutch Gap Conservation Area in Chesterfield County and to White Bank Park in Colonial Heights. These five sites are the focus of research and conservation efforts by faculty, staff, and graduate students at Virginia Commonwealth University as well as by volunteers from the Richmond Audubon Society, Williamsburg Bird Club, and the Historic Rivers Chapter of the VA Master Naturalist program.

Start-up supplies, labor, and financial support for this 2011 effort have been provided by:

VA Department of Game and Inland Fisheries
Virginia Society of Ornithology
Coastal Virginia Wildlife Observatory
Richmond Audubon Society
Williamsburg Bird Club and individual Bird Club members
Members of Historic Rivers Chapter, VA Master Naturalist



Prothonotary Nestlings