



THE NATURALIST

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

<http://historicrivers.org>

A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

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"Turkey??? Who are you calling a turkey?"

This turkey was spotted hitchhiking out of town just before the Thanksgiving holiday. She apparently had dinner reservations elsewhere!

Photo was taken by Patty Maloney along Monticello Avenue. The turkey was also spotted separately at the same location by Bruce Hill and Nancy Norton.

Photo and text by Patty Maloney

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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Wow, 2012 is almost here! I love welcoming a new year and anticipating all the wonderful adventures that await us. If 2011 is any indication, 2012 will definitely be an interesting year in many ways. The Historic Rivers Chapter of the Virginia Master Naturalists is poised and ready for many new adventures. We look forward to graduating Cohort VI, many of whom have already achieved the hours of service and education needed to become certified. We look forward to welcoming a new cohort later in the year, and starting the process of learning all over again. We hope that at last Susan Powell and Felice Bond (and the many VMNs who assisted in the Kiosk Project) will be able to rest awhile before starting another major project! Kudos to them for their patience, perseverance, and outstanding job completing such a monumental task. We look forward to finding new ways to let our neighbors know who we are and what we do. We anticipate introducing more children to the wonders of the natural world. We learn from each other, and share so much, and that knowledge and caring spirals outward from us. Let's keep up the good work.

If you make one resolution this new year, may I suggest you resolve to become more involved in the Chapter's events. Come to the general membership meetings, come to the Board meetings (they are not THAT boring), refresh your knowledge by sitting in on the new cohorts' training. Volunteer to help the chapter by your service. If you do this, I guarantee 2012 will be a fun, enriching and beneficial year. AND regardless of the economy, the politics, the depressing news... spending time in the natural world, with like-minded folks, is the best way to keep young and playful!

See you soon,

Barbara

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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The Kiosk Project – It’s Finally Live!

Dear Naturalists,

Wednesday, November 16, marked the official ribbon cutting ceremony for the brand new Interpretive Center at Freedom Park in James City County. Our chapter was invited to attend the ceremony, and I am pleased to report that many members were in attendance.

The new Interpretive Center is the location for the touch-screen kiosk that volunteers from our chapter helped to develop. After working on it for almost a year, I was thrilled to see it finally go live!

Although work on the kiosk project officially began in January of 2011, the idea for this project was hatched in spring of 2007. I remember sitting in the multipurpose room, waiting for one of our training sessions to begin, when Felice Bond showed me some of her photos of butterflies. I had just met Felice, and her photos were, of course, stunning! It was at that moment that we both came up with the idea of creating some sort of public educational “thing” that would provide information and photos about plants and animals in our area.

I also got to know Seig and Alice Kopinitz. This dynamic duo found a true home in the master naturalist program and have since made it their goal to learn about all the plants and animals they come in contact with. Seig enjoys nature photography and has a remarkable organizational work flow for cataloging his digital photographs. He has made it his routine to include both the scientific and common names of his subjects as part of each photograph’s file name. He then organizes his files into folders that are grouped according to current taxonomic order or some similar logical arrangement. What a great way to learn natural history!

I was privileged that Seig gave me early access to his photographic catalog of species. Whenever I needed a photograph of a species, I knew where I could find it. Seig had mentioned to me on several occasions that he wanted to be able to share his work with the public – and wouldn’t it be nice to create some sort of public educational “thing.” Hmmm...

Continued on next page.....

The idea lingered in the background for a few years, and in the meanwhile the chapter swelled with more and more people who were genuinely interested in natural history. A few of those people had the same idea that Felice, Seig, Alice, and I had – wouldn't it be nice to create some sort of public educational "thing?"

Then, to my utter amazement, Nancy Ellis, Superintendent of James City County Parks, contacted me in the fall of 2010 and asked if our

chapter would be interested in working with the county on their new kiosk program at Freedom Park. Specifically, she wanted us to provide information on plants and animals that might be present at the park.

Finally we had a format for our public educational "thing," and I knew we could do it! I knew we could provide the information, and I knew we could provide the photos. So, I said yes!

To date we have provided information on 353 species of animals and plants, including 835 photos and 15 audio recordings. Marvelous!

This was accomplished by the work of forty-nine volunteers who created a team of researchers, photographers, editors, proof-readers, and content managers. Together we have worked nearly 2000 hours. I have included a list of contributors below.

To those of you who worked on this project, I hope you bonded with the plants and animals you researched or photographed and that you know what a gift you have given to visitors of the park.

We are indeed fortunate that we were offered this opportunity to share with others our passion for the natural world!

Susan Powell

HISTORIC RIVERS CHAPTER



Above: The Ribbon Cutting.

Photo by Shirley Devan

Below: Susan Powell, Historic Rivers Chapter, who directed the Kiosk Project's progress.

Photo by Felice Bond



HISTORIC RIVERS CHAPTER

Contributors to the Kiosk Project

Thanks to everyone who worked so long and hard on this project!

Historic Rivers Chapter			
Adrienne Frank Alice Kopinitz Angier Brock Barbara Boyer Chérie Aukland Dean Shostak Felice Bond Gary Driscole	Geoff Giles Inge Curtis Jeanette Navia Jeanne Millin Jim Booth Kathi Mestayer Lauralyn Copan Les Lawrence	Linda Cole Linda Miller Lois Ullman Mary Apperson Mike Millin Mike Powell Nancy Ward Pam Camblin	Patty Maloney Sara Lewis Seig Kopinitz Shirley Devan Stephanie Schmuck Susan Powell Susie Engle-Hill
Friends of the Historic Rivers Chapter			
Alex Powell Ben Bond	David Knepper Judy Jones	Lindsey White Michelle DeLaunay	Tom Bond
Colonial Nature Photography Club			
Barbara Houston	Lynda Blair	Harry Danforth	
John Clayton Chapter Native Plant Society			
Jan Newton	Phillip Merritt		

Virginia Herpetological Society			
Brian Munford	John White		
Northern Neck Chapter Virginia Master Naturalists			
Ellis Squires			
Peninsula Chapter Virginia Master Naturalists			
Larry Lewis			
Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries			
Stephen Living			
Coastal Virginia Wildlife Observatory			
Brian Taber			

A Few Kiosk Outreach Moments.....

Dean Shostak wrote ...

“This past Tuesday I went out to FP on my own to check it out. I had been inside for only a couple minutes when I was greeted by David Hilton, who, I found out later, was the park supervisor. Without knowing me as a VMN, or anything else, he led me, literally by the arm, over to the kiosk and showed me all its features, especially the wildlife section. I finally told him I was VMN and lucky enough to have had a chance to work on a small part of it and then he gushed even more praise for it.

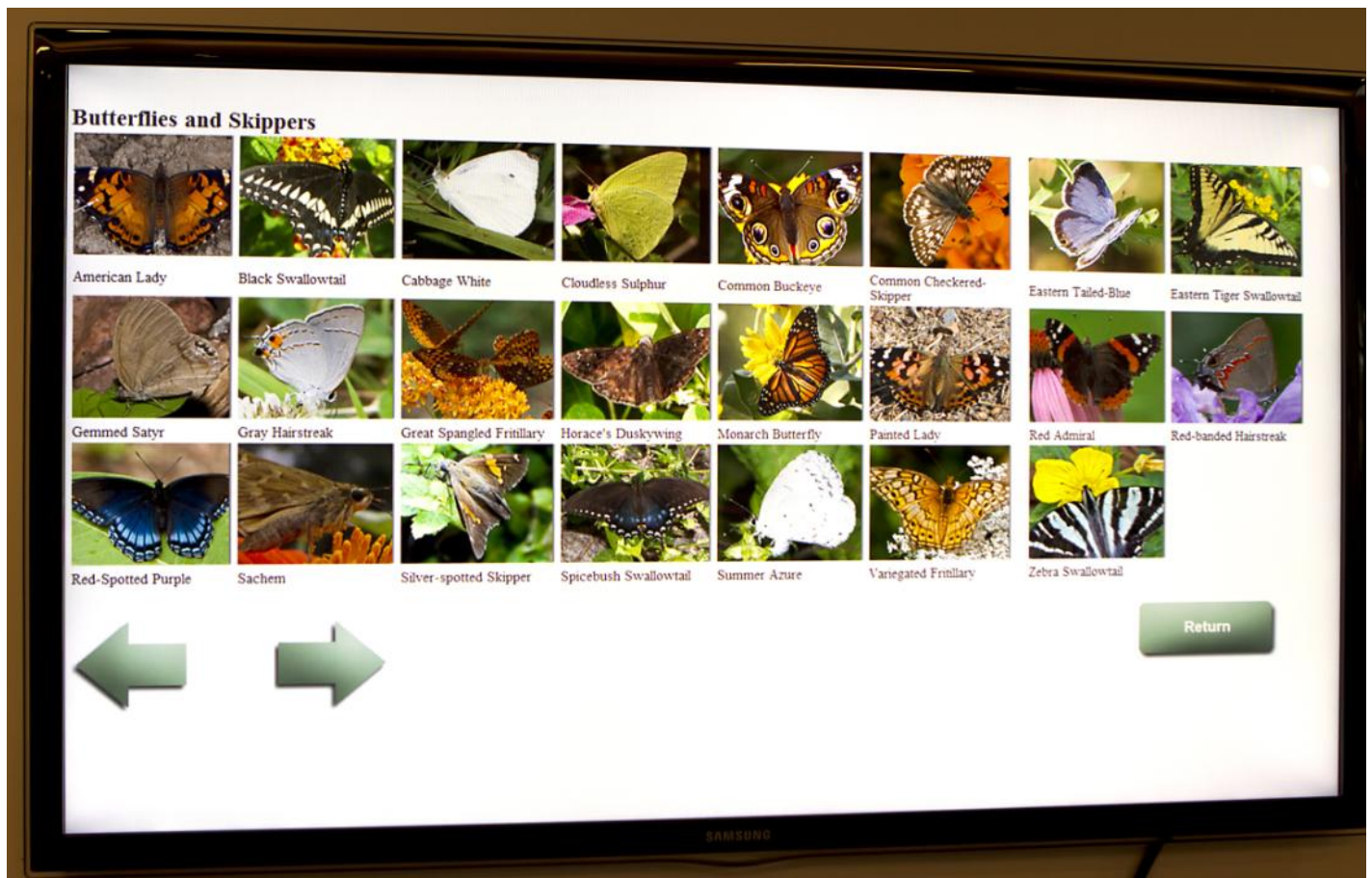
He told me how someone from DGIF was in this week and was utterly amazed by it.

I then got a tour of facilities and he told me how much he admires our group and looks forward to working with us.”

HISTORIC RIVERS CHAPTER

Les Lawrence's experience...

"I actually had the opportunity to use the kiosk in a demonstration. A man and his two children had just walked the trails and had seen a snake which they thought was a copperhead. It was only about a foot long, so it had to be a juvenile if it were truly a copperhead. I explained about a juvenile's tail and had the young boy (only about 10 but obviously very interested in "nature") find the pics of a copperhead on the kiosk. They agreed it had to be something else but couldn't identify it. Then the boy wanted to identify the caterpillar in one of "our" pictures - he found it was a luna moth. At least one young boy and his dad were impressed with the kiosk! (As was I.)"



"Touch any butterfly or skipper and detailed information on that species 'flies out.' "

Photo by Felice Bond



Shirley Devan explains how to use the touch screen.

Photo by Felice Bond

HISTORIC RIVERS CHAPTER



Some of the Members of Historic Rivers Chapter and Friends attending the Ribbon Cutting Ceremony.



Left: Adrienne Frank's photo is one of several HRCVMN 2010 photo contest winners that adorns the walls of the new Interpretive Center.

Right: One of three historical windows with artifacts found in Freedom Park.

Photos by Felice Bond



English Ivy: Story of a plant Far From Home.

Copyright 2010 Kathi Mestayer

It was *so cute* when we brought it home from the nursery!



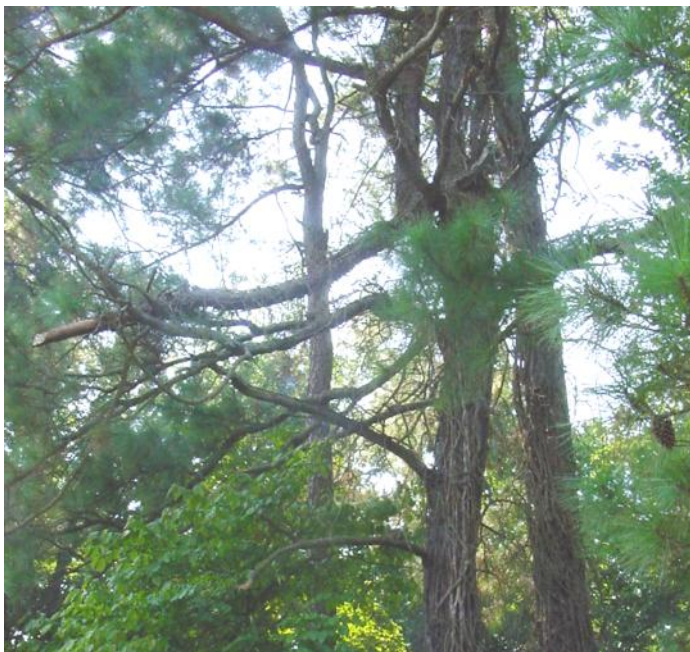
We planted and watered it. It flourished under our care, and began to branch out...



Before we knew it, that little plant had spread across the lawn and up into the trees, providing a lovely deep green shade, and food for European starlings and English sparrows, who "planted" it in our neighbors' yards.

We began to notice that, other than the trees that were there before we planted the ivy, not much grew along with it....except poison ivy, which flourished along the tree trunks.





When we cut the vines at the base of the trees, the dead vines remained and dragged some of the tree branches and bark down with their weight. The severed vines started regrowing almost immediately.

By the time we sold the house, the ivy had moved into the wooded areas around our and our neighbors' back yards, creating an "Ivy Desert." We tried getting rid of it, but the roots went deep underground, and Round-Up had virtually no effect on it. If only we had known more when we planted that first little plant!



The Moral: Plant in haste, repent at leisure.

HRC Members Attend Workshop

Living Shorelines: Addressing Erosion

November 1, 2011



Pictures by Tom Dougherty

Continued on next page.....

Living Shorelines: Addressing Erosion



Larry's Favorite Tree

Photos and Text by Patty Riddick

On a Sunday afternoon recently, Larry Riddick led a "Walk n Talk" in New Quarter Park for members of Cohort VI. The group spent over two hours walking and identifying various trees in the park after which Larry instructed the group on the correct procedure to measure a tree.

An initial focus of the walk was to locate the seven most common trees in our area as identified by Dr. Stewart Ware in his dendrology lecture to Cohort I of which Larry is a member. This proved to be an easy task but led to more challenging identifications as the walk progressed. The seven trees, in descending order of abundance are: the Loblolly Pine, *Pinus taeda*; Tulip Poplar, *Liriodendron tulipifera*; American Holly, *Ilex opaca*; Dogwood, *Cornus florida*; White Oak, *Quercus alba*; American Beech, *Fagus grandiflora*; and the Sweet Gum, *Liquidambar styraciflua*.



Larry then pointed out his favorite tree, a Tulip Poplar, which sits in a wooded ravine at the park, and which was later measured by Larry and Sara Lewis, HRC member and park employee. This tree data was subsequently submitted to Virginia Tech's Remarkable Tree and Big Tree databases.

The day ended with those in attendance measuring a Red Maple, *Acer rubrum*.

HISTORIC RIVERS CHAPTER



HISTORIC RIVERS CHAPTER



HISTORIC RIVERS CHAPTER

Western Shore Marshes IBA.....By Dave Youker

On November 5th, several master naturalists from our Historic Rivers Chapter along with members from the Peninsula Chapter visited the Mathews County portion of the Western Shore Marshes Important Bird Area (IBA). They were joined by members from the Hampton Roads Bird Club (HRBC), Williamsburg Bird Club (WBC), and Richmond Audubon. The shoreline of Mathews County has been designated as the upper part of the Western Shore Marshes IBA which stretches down the western portion of the Chesapeake Bay to Grandview Beach. An IBA is a site that provides essential habitat for one or more species of bird, and Virginia currently has 20 IBAs located throughout the Commonwealth.

This group had a dual purpose for this particular visit. The first objective was to survey the marshes and surrounding waters to identify all the bird species encountered throughout the day. Their primary assessment locations were the New Point Comfort and Bethel Beach areas, and their total count was 63 different species. Many of these species such as rails, seaside sparrows and marsh wrens are unique to Virginia's marsh lands.

Data from these surveys are compared with historical data to determine impacts on specific bird populations. Every year more of this unique marsh habitat is lost to development and as a result of natural destruction. Groups monitoring these IBAs provide valuable data concerning the effects this diminishing habitat have on both resident and migrating species of birds.

The second objective, which was done in conjunction with Audubon's TogetherGreen event, was to remove any trash from the surrounding habitat. Litter and storm debris can be detrimental to the survival of avian species, and it has a negative impact on people visiting this area to enjoy its natural resources. The group certainly achieved this second objective as their truck was heaping with all sorts of extraneous items. As this material was collected, it was separated into recyclables and trash and was delivered to the Mathews County Waste Management Center.

If you missed the opportunity to participate in this event, there will be other chances to get involved. The HRBC and WBC have adopted this IBA, and visits will be scheduled throughout the year. This activity is an approved HRC volunteer project.



HISTORIC RIVERS CHAPTER

The Zoo went to S. Morrison Community Center in Newport News on Saturday, November 5th, and was visited by 92 young folks and 94 adults! Clyde was accompanied by Patty and Larry Riddick.

Photo at top: Clyde lets Newport News Mayor, Dr. McKinley L. Price, listen to the Betsy Beetles talk.

Photo at bottom: Clyde and Larry greet the visitors.



Text and photos by
Patty Riddick

HISTORIC RIVERS CHAPTER

Freedom Park Interpretive Center

Saturday 19, 2011

The Zoo and I were honored to be the first presenters at the new Interpretive Center at Freedom Park. We were invited by the Williamsburg Botanical Garden and our hostess was Angela Cingale.

I was excited and apprehensive when I received the invitation. The tremendous amount of work and talent our Chapter put into the Kiosk made me acutely aware that the Zoo and I had a huge standard of excellence to live up to.

If anyone in the Chapter has not yet visited the Center you have an exciting experience waiting for you. The building, exhibits, and especially "our" Kiosk are awesome. The Park staff and the Center's curator David are extremely knowledgeable and courteous.

The critters and I arrived at 9 a.m. David met us and helped set up the displays in the meeting area. Angela introduced herself and I had an opportunity to introduce the animals to her and Helen Hamilton.

We didn't know how many guests would show up although a Girl Scout Troop had made reservations. We anticipated about sixty folks.

I had hoped some of our Chapter would come and help as our Zoo Cru. Much to my delight Shirley Devan, Linda Miller, Nancy Ward, Barbara Dunbar, and Patty Maloney came to my aid. At the end of the morning Angela also became a Zoo Cru member.

By 10 a.m. the seats were filled by numerous families and the Girl Scout Troop. I started the presentation with the story of the Perfect Animal-our own Living Fossil (not me, the cockroach) and Pangea when a group of thirty children from an underserved community escorted by students from the College of William and Mary arrived. Suddenly it was Standing Room Only! The Zoo Cru did an outstanding job handling the animals, allowing all an opportunity to see, hear, and in some instances touch the critters.

The Madagascar Hissing Cockroaches and their American cousins started off the show followed by the Roly Polies, Giant Millipedes (1,200 legs and counting), Giant Striped Wood Slugs and their cousins Giant Wood Snails, large Night Crawlers, and the Fabulous Talking Betsy Beetles.

They were followed by the Fearsome Predators. The Arachnid Clan were represented by our Black Widow Spiders and Lobo the Wolf Spider. They were followed by the Delightful Amphibians: Salamanders, Rana the Leopard Frog, Galadriel the Green Tree Frog, and Mushroom the Toad. Next came the Reprehensible Reptiles (I love alliteration) Dink the Skink, Gizzard the Fence Lizard along with a Ring Neck Snake, snake eggs and a juvenile Black Racer all preserved in alcohol. However, Gollum the Worm Snake was alive and frisky (slithery ?). A complete Box Turtle shell elicited the question "Where is the Turtle"?

I told a Tall Tale about the turtle taking off his shell and swimming in my Water Garden and I stole it. I told my young audience that somewhere in Denbigh is a turtle crawling around without any clothes. Of course I told them it was just a story and the truth was the turtle had met with a mishap.

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The presentation started and ended with Billy the Big Mouth Bass entertaining the audience with his renditions of : “Take Me to the River” and “Don’t Worry, Be Happy.”

Billy Big Mouth , the Dreaded RoboWasp and the Fabulous Talking Betsy Beetles were show stoppers. The total attendance was 97 folks to include 65 children.

It appeared the Zoo was well received and provided a learning experience about the animals sharing our natural world. The idea of Stewardship of our world and its Creatures is the keystone of “A Zoo In My shopping Bags.”

Years ago Felice Bond shared with me a quote from Rachael Carson that I treasure. “ If a child is to keep his inborn sense of wonder...he needs the companionship of a least one adult who can share it, rediscovering with him the joy, excitement and mystery of the world we live in.”

The Zoo is dedicated to the memory of my father, Floyd Marsteller, my best friend and a born Naturalist.

The Zoo Keeper



Photo courtesy of Angela Cingale, our Williamsburg Botanical Garden hostess.

HISTORIC RIVERS CHAPTER

Project FeederWatch by Kathi Mestayer

When I first decided to try participating in Project FeederWatch, I was a little intimidated by the structure of the whole thing. Watch the same area (my yard) for two consecutive days a week, with five non-watch days in between? Note the basic weather info for the 2-day period? Keep track of the highest number of each species I saw at any given time? Get online, remember my registration number, and report my findings?

It just seemed overwhelming. I knew I'd get something wrong. I just knew I'd forget something important.

Well, I was right about the last two. I still get some things wrong from time to time (like entering the high temp range as being lower than the low temp range). Fortunately, the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's (Lab of O) software caught that one. And I do forget (once I forgot to make a note of the precipitation during my watch period). I'm gifted that way.

But the Lab of O's system and software is *practically* idiot-proof, and there's a person monitoring it who will either answer the phone or get back to you via email very quickly. In fact, I tested the system by forgetting my Registration Number today. Worked like a charm!

I just keep a pad and pen by the front bay window, next to my binoculars and prehistoric bird book (still has Myrtle warblers listed), and hunker down every now and then and make a note of the birds I see. And I do it on weekends, so it's not that hard to remember when to make notes. And it's quite interesting to note "my" birds' comings and goings, not just their numbers. Who's bathing first thing in the morning at 50 degrees F? It was a blue jay. Wait; was that a western tanager? Yes!



Continued on next page.....

HISTORIC RIVERS CHAPTER

Project FeederWatch continued...

I just keep a pad and pen by the front bay window, next to my binoculars and prehistoric bird book (still has Myrtle warblers listed), and hunker down every now and then and make a note of the birds I see. And I do it on weekends, so it's not that hard to remember when to make notes. And it's quite interesting to note "my" birds' comings and goings, not just their numbers. Who's bathing first thing in the morning at 50 degrees F? It was a blue jay. Wait; was that a western tanager? Yes!

Now, I get all pouty when the end of the season arrives, and I see my email notification to that effect. I suppose I could still do it, but...it just wouldn't be the same.

It's only \$15 to register (\$12 if you join the Lab), and a lot of fun. You also get a nice poster showing all the birds you are likely to see at your feeder. Oh, and did I mention that it's an approved Volunteer Service Hours Project for the Master Naturalists?

Here's where to find out more: http://www.birds.cornell.edu/pfw/Overview/over_index.html

VOLUNTEER SERVICE PROJECTS

Hampton Roads Audubon Christmas Bird Count -- December 17, 2011. Contact Geoff Giles to help out in the Tabb sector of York County/Newport News. 757-645-8716

Williamsburg Bird Club Audubon Christmas Bird Count - December 18, 2011. Contact Bill Williams at 757-229-1124 to help out in the Williamsburg/James City County area.

Advanced Training for December 2011

Adrienne Frank and Gary Driscoll, AT Co-Chairs

Please go to the website for more information www.historicrivers.org

Hampton Roads Bird Club Walk - December 4, 2011 from 7:00-10:00 am at Newport News City Park

CLASS: Weather and Climate - December 6, 2011 from 6:00-9:00 pm at Human Services Building, 5249 Olde Towne Rd., Williamsburg, VA

WBC Bird Walk at New Quarter Park - December 10, 2011 from 8:00-0:00 am at New Quarter Park, 1000 Lakeshead Dr., Williamsburg

HRBC Bird Walk - December 18, 2011 from 7:00-10:00 am at Newport News City Park

MEMBERSHIP PAGE

Awards! Kudos! Congratulations!

At the general membership meeting in November, Shirley Devan, Historic Rivers Chapter Membership Chair, presented awards to two members:

Jean Balutanski received her Master Naturalist Certification and new name badge!

Jennifer Trevino reached the 250 Service Hour Milestone for service to the chapter!

Good job Jean and Jennifer!

ATTENTION ALL MEMBERS!

Deadline is December 19
for Posting Hours to Volunteer Service Database!

Reminder -- submit your Volunteer Service hours to the online database no later than December 19. That allows all the folks participating in Christmas Bird Counts Dec 17 and Dec 18 to include their hours!

After December 19, we'll be slicing and dicing the numbers to assemble the 2011 HRC Annual Report to send to Michelle Prysby early in January.

If you need a jump start to get into the database, let me know! I'll be glad to provide technical support on the phone or on a house call!

Thank so much!

Shirley Devan
Membership Chair