



# THE NATURALIST

*The monthly newsletter of the Historic Rivers Chapter  
Virginia Master Naturalist Program*  
<http://historicrivers.org>

APRIL 2015

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## Chapter Board 2015-2016

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## President's Message

Spring is here! You probably feel much as I do – I've been released from the jail of long dark days inside. Time to get outside, enjoy, and learn more about our local natural world.

The opportunities are practically boundless – bluebird trails, butterfly scouting, wildlife mapping, kayaking on Dragon Run, field trip to the Fish Hatchery, wildlife camera study, OspreyWatch, native plant walks, bird walks,

[http://www.historicrivers.org/?page\\_id=399](http://www.historicrivers.org/?page_id=399)

Grab your camera, binoculars and loupes and join in. Exploring with fellow master naturalists is always a learning adventure – plus a fun time is guaranteed.

We'll be glad to see you!

Shirley Devan

### Notes from the Board

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

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## HISTORIC RIVERS CHAPTER

### April 1<sup>st</sup> Wildlife Mapping Gang at Jamestown Island



"It was no April Fool's Day joke....this gang of 15 did meet for Wildlife Mapping on Jamestown Island. Great company, great birds, and great weather!" Contributed by Judy Jones.

Trivia Challenge  
(answer on Page 9)

What two birds were named for explorers Merriwether Lewis and William Clark during their historic westward expedition in the early 1800's?

## HISTORIC RIVERS CHAPTER

### Wildflower Spot– April 2015

John Clayton Chapter, Virginia Native Plant Society



**Photo:** Golden Ragwort (*Packera aurea*) taken by Helen Hamilton

Golden Ragwort (*Packera aurea*) is a welcome sign of spring, covering swampy areas with bright yellow, from mid-March through early summer. The buds are purple, and open to display yellow disc and ray flowers, unusual for a member of the Aster Family -- the rays are often white. This native perennial grows 1-3 feet tall, with only a few deeply cut leaves on the stems. The leaves at the base of the plant are heart-shaped, in a large rosette. After the flowers fade, these leaves spread to form a nice groundcover which will persist over most of the winter.

Growing naturally in bogs, wet woods, floodplains and meadows in eastern North America, Golden Ragwort thrives in acid, rich soil, zones 3 to 9. The plant can be aggressive, and will grow under trees where nothing else thrives.

Propagation is by seed and division.

Golden Ragwort is one of the herbs (ground and dissolved in alcohol) that are sold as Lydia Pinkham's Vegetable Compound, widely marketed as a cure for any "female complaint." A tea made from the root and leaves was used by American Indians,

settlers and herbalists to treat delayed and irregular menses, leucorrhea and childbirth complications, leading to its alternate common name "squaw-weed."

"Ragwort" means a plant with ragged leaves, and "wort" is an Old English word for "plant".

Blooming in the spring, the flowers are an important source of nectar for early insects and butterflies.

For more information about native plants visit [www.claytonvnps.org](http://www.claytonvnps.org).

By Helen Hamilton, past-president of the John Clayton Chapter, VNPS



## Notes From The wild side March 2015

Ramblin Clyde

### A Lenten Surprise



Mr. Jacob and Mrs Terry Terrapin proudly announce the birth of their hatchling Miss Caroline. I found the youngster on Saturday March 28 by literally stumbling on her. Fortunately I did not harm her. I introduced her to Miss Ellie and the neighbors' children. She is too young to try and raise so I put her back in the leaf mold and into Gaea's care.

I am happy to report the Easter Bunny is alive and nibbling on the spring flowers in my butterfly garden. The squirrels are up to their usual high jinks making meals of the Camilla flower buds and trimming my Loblollies. I don't know what they find so tasty about these pines but the backyard is littered with small pine branches. Last week I had an Old Man of the Forest (an Opossum) amble past the water garden. He is competing with the neighborhood Raccoon for meat scraps on the compost pile. I think Dean's camera would get some dandy photos out there at night.



The most interesting thing that has happened is that of the five Bluebirds that have been visiting my feeding stations, two have stayed and are building a nest in one of my bird houses. The suet/peanut butter log feeder has attracted a small flock (8) of Yellow-rumped warblers (Butter Butts). They are competing with the usual crowd of chickadees, Red-bellied and Downy Woodpeckers, Titmice, Carolina Wrens, Cardinals, and the occasional Pine Warbler. My group of juncos have an Eastern Towhee joining them for breakfast before they all disappear into the Azaleas.

Our backyard and front yard robins have established their territories but furiously fight each other when both show up at the bird bath. The ladies have appeared but haven't chosen a mate.

The Green Frogs are out basking in the water garden and I spotted a small blue butterfly dancing above the pansies.

Miss Ellie and I went to the VLM Frog exhibit yesterday and enjoyed Patty Riddick's company as our Docent. We learned quite a bit and the exhibits are breath taking. As a preteen in the 40 and 50s I was privileged to stay with my Aunt and Uncle who ran a country store in the Blue Mountains. I spent all my holidays and vacations with them. Needless to say I knew every critter that lived within a five mile radius, and where every trout lurked in local streams along with every bird nest I could climb to. Their dog SNAFU ( Situation All Fouled Up – Army lingo) was my constant companion and sniffed out, found, and chased every frog and turtle around. The local farmers couldn't remember my name so they gave me the appellation SNAFU also. I wore it proudly until I found out the true Army meaning. On my spring breaks we could sit out at night and hear the Spring Peepers, Wood Frogs, Bull Frogs, Leopard frogs and toads call. The sound was so loud that it literally rolled off the mountains like a physical force. Habitat loss, climate change and acid rain has since silenced them.

Finally the male Carpenter Bees are in aerial combat. The males are sting less but the ladies do sting. The gals come out at the end of April. You can catch the males with your bare hands and impress the grand children with your bravery and hope a female hasn't shown up early. I must admit am not that brave.

## HISTORIC RIVERS CHAPTER

### Friday Frolics

New Quarter Park,

April 10



The Williamsburg Bird Club leads two bird walks a month at New Quarter Park on the second and fourth Saturday mornings. On April 10, Bruce Glendening, Joyce Lowry, and Cheryl Jacobson can be seen here looking and listening for a Louisiana Waterthrush.

Jeff Honig and Graham Rose were also at Friday Frolics and are seen here discussing a re-engineering strategy. A hard rain on Friday night tested the watercourse and the edges held firm.



Adrienne Frank and Gary Driscoll frolic in the rain garden during Friday Frolics on April 10. The rain garden needed repairs after a hard winter and heavy rains had eroded the stream from the upper to the lower retaining ponds.

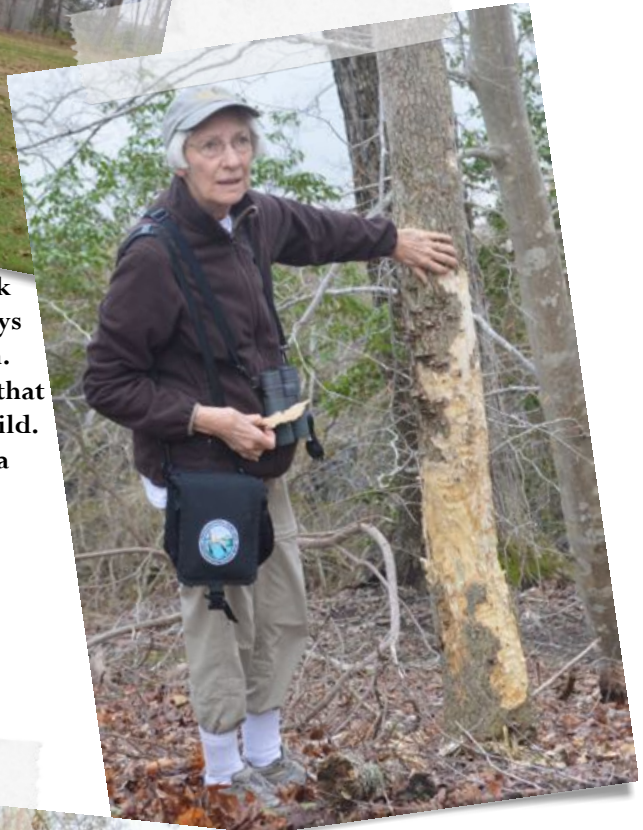




## HISTORIC RIVERS CHAPTER



Jan Lockwood leads visitors to New Quarter Park on a Wildlife Mapping hike on April 6. Jan surveys the park to map wildlife 3 or 4 times each month. On another occasion, mappers noticed this tree that appeared to be newly scratched by something wild. Mappers debated the possibilities while Jan got a closer look.



*It's time to monitor the Bluebird Trail again. Lois Ullman and Jan Lockwood talk about protocol with new monitor, Lisa Nickel, center.*

### Butterfly Circle News



Great Purple Hairstreak Butterfly identified by Judy Jones and Jan Lockwood in New Quarter Park on April 11. This species was not on the local checklist and a "Great find!!!!!!!" according to Adrienne Frank.

Female Falcate Orangetip butterfly spotted by Shirley Devan at Warhill High School April 10.



Trivia Challenge  
(answer on Page 9)

What is the only two-towed bird  
in the world?



### You know you're a Master Naturalist When...

by Kathi Mestayer

a critter decomposes in your back yard and the most urgent question is...what are those beetles crawling on it?

Last year, a critter of unknown identity decomposed in our back yard. We were not consulted, but we were notified by the scent, which wafted toward the patio and sent us searching. By the time we found it, well, it was well on its way to another trophic level. It had these interesting bugs on it....

So, I asked Hugh Beard what they were, and the reply was, "Those would be carrion beetles. They are so cool." Right. MN-speak.



Last week, I poked around in that area, and found the bare bones. I again asked Hugh for help (Mac thought it must be a possum, I thought raccoon, so we had to settle a bet). Hugh guessed raccoon, and sent me this website, in case I'm ever in need of a skull i.d. again: <http://www.skullsite.co.uk/raccoon/raccoon.htm>

Absolutely a raccoon!

So, what's left? I gathered the bones I could find, and put them out on a table in the back yard, not realizing I was setting out a buffet for the squirrels. The next morning, one hopped on to the table, grabbed a vertebra, took a little bite, and happily scurried away with it. Now, how do I know she/he was happy? The bone passed the taste test!

I'm keeping track of the number of vertebrae out there so I know how many they're taking.....one more this week, two left. Plus the scapula.



### Mark your calendar! Upcoming General Membership Meetings

- May 13 - Film Showing: "Symphony of the Soil" in the Human Resources Building Auditorium at 6pm  
May 20 - Pearl Beamer, Wildlife Rehabilitator - a combined meeting with the Williamsburg Bird Club in Andrews Hall (Room 101) at W&M 7:30pm  
June 10 - Matthias Leu, Biology Professor, to talk about deer densities at 6pm  
July - no General Meeting  
August - no General Meeting

Upcoming Fall speakers - Professor Fashing (spiders); John Maddy (invasive plants); Nick Newberry (W&M student); Will Daniel (photographer and author)

### Trivia Challenge Answers

Page 2- Lewis's Woodpecker & Clark's Nutcracker

Page 7-The Ostrich. All other birds have three or four toes

### Upcoming Continuing Education Opportunities

Please check the Chapter website for more information (<http://www.historicrivers.org>). Workshop registration may be required ahead of time.

- [CE] NPS Spring Walk with Donna Ware - April 14, 2015** from 5:00 pm to 7:00 pm at James City County Recreation Center, 5301 Longhill Road, Williamsburg, VA 23188
- [CE] New Frontier of Climate Change - April 15, 2015** from 8:30 am to 11:00 am at Richmond
- [CE] WBC Monthly Meeting W&M Student Research - April 15, 2015** from 7:30 pm to 9:30 pm at College of William & Mary, Andrews Hall, Room 101
- [CE]: BLUEBIRDS IN OUR GARDENS - April 18, 2015** from 10:00 am to 12:00 pm at Freedom Park Interpretive Center
- [CE] Butterfly Gardening with Joni Carlson - April 18, 2015** from 1:00 pm to 3:00 pm at Chippokes Plantation State Park, 695 Chippokes Park Road, Surry, VA 23883, United States
- [CE] HRBC Bird Walk - April 19, 2015** from 7:00 -10:00 am at Newport News City Park
- [CE] NPS Spring Walk - April 19, 2015** from 1:30 pm to 2:30 pm at Lafayette High School, 4460 Longhill Road, Williamsburg, VA 23188, United States
- [CE] VIMS April Discovery Lab-Climate Change - April 21, 2015** from 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm at VIMS - Catlett-Burruss Research and Education Lab
- [CE] WBC Bird Walk - April 25, 2015** from 7:00 am to 9:00 am at New Quarter Park, 1000 Lakeshead Dr., Williamsburg
- [CE]: VIMS - The Gulf Oil Spill: Five years on - April 30, 2015** from 7:00 pm to 9:00 pm at VIMS Watermen's Hall, McHugh Auditorium, 1375 Greate Road, Gloucester Point, VA
- [CE] New Quarter Park Birthday Celebration - May 2, 2015** from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm at New Quarter Park, 1000 Lakeshead Drive, Williamsburg, VA 23185, United States
- [CE] HRBC Bird Walk - May 3, 2015** from 7:00 -10:00 am at Newport News City Park
- [CE] Mt Rogers Naturalist Rally - May 8, 2015** from 5:00 pm to 9:00 pm at Konnarock Community Center, Mt Rogers
- [CE] Mount Rogers Naturalist Rally - May 9, 2015** from 7:00 am to 5:00 pm at Konnarock Community Center, 6535 Whitetop Road, Troutdale, VA 24378, United States
- [CE] WBC Bird Walk at New Quarter Park - May 9, 2015** from 8:00 am to 10:00 am at New Quarter Park, 1000 Lakeshead Dr., Williamsburg
- [CE] NPS Walk at William & Mary Campus - May 9, 2015** from 9:30 am to 11:30 am at College of William and Mary:Phi Beta Kappa Memorial Hall, 601 Jamestown Road, Williamsburg, VA 23185, United States
- [CE] Monthly meeting - May 13, 2015** from 6:00 pm to 9:00 pm at JCC Human Services Bldg., 5249 Olde Towne Rd., Williamsburg
- [CE] HRBC Bird Walk - May 17, 2015** from 7:00 -10:00 am at Newport News City Park
- [CE] WBC Monthly Meeting - Wildlife Rehab - May 20, 2015** from 7:30 pm to 9:30 pm at College of William & Mary, Andrews Hall, Room 101
- [CE] WBC Bird Walk - May 23, 2015** from 7:00 am to 9:00 am at New Quarter Park, 1000 Lakeshead Dr., Williamsburg
- [CE] VSO Field Trip to Piney Grove - May 30, 2015** 5:00 -12:00 pm at Sussex County



