



THE NATURALIST

The monthly newsletter of the Historic Rivers Chapter

Virginia Master Naturalist Program

<http://historicrivers.org>

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Chapter Board 2015-2016

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President's Message

Fragile and Resilient

By Shirley Devan

Last week at the Northwest River in Chesapeake, I recaptured a female Prothonotary Warbler that had been banded as an adult in 2009. She is at least seven years old. She has five eggs in her nest. Last year she raised two clutches in this same box. She has made at least seven round trips from the Coastal Plain of Virginia to Central or South America. She is the definition of resilient. Yet at 15 grams – just barely over ½ ounce – she is also the definition of fragile – easily snatched by a predator or crushed by a clumsy handler.

For the past 10 days I've been reflecting – some might describe it as grieving – over the death of a dear friend, Ruth Beck. Ruth was a friend to our Master Naturalist Chapter and several of us helped with her projects over the past few years – “Monitoring and Surveying of Beach and Marsh Nesting Birds” at Craney Island and Hampton Roads Bridge Tunnel. No one was tougher or more resilient than Ruth Beck. She overcame serious medical issues to return to her work in the field studying colonial waterbirds. But hearts are fragile organs and her warm and generous heart gave out May 7. (contd. on Page 2)

Notes from the Board

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

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HISTORIC RIVERS CHAPTER

President's Message (Contd. from Page 1)

Our natural world is fragile...and resilient. Nature's wonders can withstand abuse and neglect, poisoning and fracturing – but only to a point. Recovery is possible because of natural resilience. But, as we know, many of our birds, amphibians, butterflies, insects, trees, fishes, and the natural areas that support them are on the edge of resilient and moving toward fragile and broken. This is not a newsflash. Master Naturalists hear these scenarios regularly. And it is easy to slip into the “grieving” mode when reflecting on the perilous state of our beloved natural world.



Highlight Comments from Dragon Run Paddlers

- The terrific narrated tour by Teta, the bald eagle, the helpful kayak guides, and the 5 snakes. :) Plus, the camaraderie of the Master Naturalist group. I want to go again!
- It was the perfect day! It was so beautiful and peaceful. Teta was a wonderful guide.
- The highlight for me was Teta's enthusiasm and leadership. They don't call her a paddlemaster for nothing!
- What a lovely trip on such a perfect day. The serene and unspoiled stream that we paddled was really special. We had a running commentary from Teta coming through our assigned Walkie talkies. She is such a treasure! It was a really perfect day with great companions. The only thing missing was my good buddy Portia!
- Not often one gets to kayak a narrow trail, make S turns, and scotch over logs.
- There were so many! But the top of the list was the wonderful views of a bald eagle sitting regally next to its lofty nest that has been its home for 14 years. The next was the smallest snake I've ever seen curled on top of a cypress knee. Of course Teta Kain was a phenomenal guide and you can never beat the company of our naturalists. What a wonderful day!

Wildflower Spot– May 2015

John Clayton Chapter, Virginia Native Plant Society

Dogbane

Apocynum cannabinum

This shrub-like herbaceous perennial grows 3-5 feet tall with attractive purplish stems that branch near the top. The long, drooping leaves are opposite on the stem, attached with short stalks. Like milkweeds, which they superficially resemble, both stems and leaves produce a milky sap when broken. White, bell-like flowers appear in clusters at the ends of branches from May through July.

This plant is found in all counties of Virginia, and throughout the U.S. and Canada. Easy to grow, with erect stems, Dogbane would fit at the back of a perennial border or at the edge of woodlands. It prefers full sun and somewhat moist soils but tolerates both flooding and drought. The Monarch butterfly uses Dogbane for nectar and as host plant for its caterpillars.

The common name, Dogbane, refers to the plant's toxic nature, which has been described as "poisonous to dogs." *Apocynum* means "away dog!" and *cannabinum* means "like hemp."

The roots were commonly harvested in the 19th and early 20th centuries for a variety of folk and other medical purposes. Native Americans and colonists used the berries and root in weak teas for heart ailments and as a diuretic, with appropriate preparation, since all parts of the plant are poisonous, containing glycosides affecting heart activity.

Also known as "Indian Hemp," Native American women made miles and miles of twine from the long fibers in the stems of this plant. Their homes were constructed of vertical and horizontal poles covered with bent saplings, all lashed together with Dogbane twine, which also furnished fishnets, baskets, mats and ropes. Such uses are thousands of years old – Dogbane remnants have been found in ancient archeological sites.



Notes From The wild side May 2015 Ramblin Clyde

A Squirrel's Tale



Yesterday Little Bunny met one our seven Samurai juvenile squirrels in the backyard . S. Squirrel asked,“ What are you, how do you get here and where do you go?” Bunny replied,“I am who I am, where I came from and where I go are secrets I keep.” S. Squirrel said,“then linger awhile and whisper your secrets to me”.

I have found where the Flying Squirrel in Box #18 on the Newport News Park B.B. Trail has gotten to. He is alive and well and living in my bird house by the brush pile. I was going to move said bird house to another location when he poked his head out and chattered to me. Evidently the Samurai Seven haven't made him a part of their playground.

Jacob was out this morning munching on Maple tree seeds. This reminded me of our first trip to England. We were touring Warwick Castle near Stratford-Upon-Avon when we met a group of children busily throwing maple seeds in the air and watching them spin to the ground. I asked them what they called the seeds and one answered in a beautiful English accent, “ Helio- copters”.

A pair of Catbirds have joined the avian crowd in the back yard. I still have four Yellow Rump Warblers feeding at my suet /peanut butter log and I spotted a Black and White Warbler in the shrubbery around the fish pond. The House Finches have four fuzzy headed nestlings in the old Robin nest (much to Miss Ellie's delight).

The butterflies are still few and far between. We had a Morning Cloak, Purple and a Silver Spotted Skipper visit. I finally was able to find Mountain Mint for sale and now have a couple of plants in the garden.



For the first time since June of last year I was allowed to ramble by myself around God's 3 Acres (G3A). I was limited to turning over no more than five small logs. Spring in G3A is almost mystical and the woodland didn't disappoint me. I found three Rough Earth Snakes (*Virginia striatula*) two large females and a little male. The last log I handled was so rotten it fell apart when I attempted to roll it over and the male was inside.



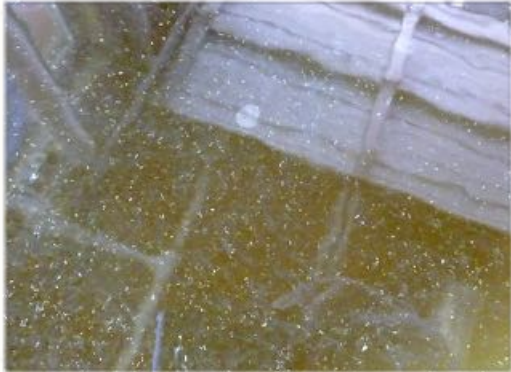
I ended up at the upper end of the wood lot and found three Pink Lady Slipper Orchids (*Cypripedium*) and running cedar. My Father and I would go to the Pocono Mts in Pennsylvania in the late fall and harvest armfuls of the running cedar (pictured left) to make Christmas wreaths and table decorations. At the edge of the wood lot I came across a stand of Downy Yellow False Foxglove (*Aureolaria virginica*, pictured lower left). It is hemiparasitic on White Oaks (*Quercus alba*). It is common on upland dry oak stands but rare on the Coastal Plain.

Ramblin Clyde LLAP

Earth Day Field Trip to Harrison Lake National Fish Hatchery Bruce Glendening & Shirley Devan

About twenty Historic Rivers members spent Earth Day, April 22, touring the fish hatchery located close to the James River about ten miles downstream of Richmond.

Purchased in the 1930s, the property is owned by the US Fish and Wildlife Service, and its ponds were originally constructed to raise fish for stocking nearby lakes and ponds. Its current projects are (1) to restore the declining American shad, historically the most important fish of the



Chesapeake Bay and (2) to restore declining freshwater mussel populations in the surrounding creeks.

Michael Odom, the hatchery's Project Leader, explained that the most efficient way to increase

shad population was to hatch millions of shad, knowing that only a fraction (about 1 in 350) will mature to adulthood (see picture left). Actually raising the fish would take too much time and resources. The website reports the facility has hatched over 60 million shad -- this year's goal is 4 million.

The second major project is freshwater mussel restoration. Since mussels are one of the best filters of freshwater, scientists are concerned about a significant drop in populations. Using a test site on the Nottaway River, the hatchery is working with Virginia's Department of Game and Inland Fisheries to study and bolster local mussel sites. Michael showed us buckets of mussels growing in the facility's surrounding ponds (see picture right) and how they are now working with about 9 of the 27 freshwater mussel species found in the Chesapeake area.

Of course, the group was distracted by seeing a bald eagle pick over an easy lunch since the ponds also harbor stray fish entering the facility's intake from the James River.

The weather was beautiful, but as the afternoon progressed winds began picking up. Our group ran out of time and didn't enjoy the surrounding nature trails that, unbeknownst to many, are open year-round to the public. The group retreated to have lunch in nearby Hopewell completing another successful Historic Rivers field trip.



HRC Members Lead New Quarter Park Field Trip Sara Lewis



Historic Rivers Master Naturalists led a field trip for 120 first graders from Yorktown Elementary School again this year on Thursday, May 14. The day was picture-perfect with temperature low enough to keep the May flies away. Les Lawrence and Pam Camblin conducted a presentation about mammals and Sherry Brubaker talked about reusing and recycling at her station, assisted by Erin Chapman. Lucy Manning and Judy Jones presented “The Mystery of the Lying Log” and Geoff Giles was assisted by Deane and Ruth Gordon in his presentation about birds. Jeff Honig, Cheryl Jacobsen, and Nancy Gore got everybody to the right place and on time as logistics leaders. Thank you to one and all for volunteering and bringing a great experience in nature to these kids.



Butterfly Circle News

Spring Butterfly Exploration Successes

Despite a few days of none or very few butterflies, our exploration revealed 22 species and 294 individual butterflies during an eight-day period (Sunday to Sunday 4/12-4/19). Approximately, 30 people participated including 6-8 who came back several times. Of the 11 locations, the award for the most individual butterflies (97) goes to New Quarter Park. The most species winner was York River State Park and surrounds where the team had 10 species. York River State Park and Warhill both had a fair number of individual butterflies, approximately 60.

Three species were found that I have never observed in our region and one species will be added to our checklist: Harvester, Juniper Hairstreak, and Great Purple Hairstreak (pictures below). Hurray!

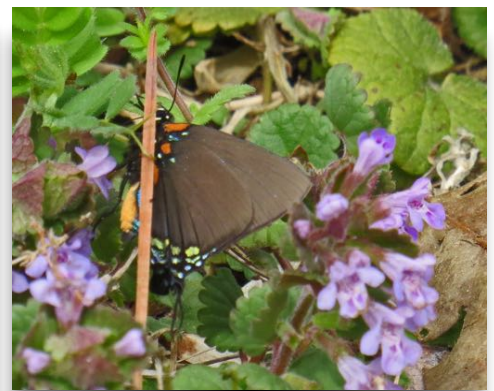
Several butterflies were observed early and it was apparent that they wintered over (e.g., Mourning Cloak and Sleepy Orange). We also saw butterflies that had just emerged and were pristine. At the beginning of the week, we saw a lot of spring only butterflies (e.g., Falcate Orangetip and Henry's Elfin). Later in the week, we identified a greater array of species (e.g., Variegated Fritillary, Black Swallowtail). The Duskwings were the species that gave us the most trouble with identification, and we obtained help us distinguish between Horace's and Juvenal's. We didn't even try to sort out the Summer versus Spring Azures, for that you really need a researcher with a microscope. (contd. on Page 7)



Harvester, with the only carnivorous butterfly caterpillar, preys on woolly aphids. Photo by Brian Taber in his backyard.



Juniper Hairstreak, host plant is guess what? Juniper. Photo by Ken Lorenzen at Croaker Landing



Great Purple Hairstreak, host plant is mistletoe. Photo by Judy Jones at New Quarter Park

(contd. from Page 6)

The North America Butterfly Association's Butterfly Counts 2014 Report was released this week. Our Williamsburg Circle was highlighted for a species high count – Gemmed Satyrs (9); we had the most of any count in North America. In our region, the Dismal Swamp count was noted as having two high species – Great Purple Hairstreaks (26) and Yehl Skippers (4). Two other Virginia counts were noted and one was just for 1 species/1 individual.

How did we compare to the average? Of 439 counts in North America, the average was in existence for 15 years, had 10 observers, 34 species, and 869 individual butterflies. Our 1st year Williamsburg count had 31 observers, 52 species, and 1017 individual butterflies. The highest could was Patagonia, AZ with 76 species and 3124 individual butterflies.

We accomplished our goals of finding out what and where spring butterflies were occurring. Thank you everyone for all of your enthusiasm and experimentation.

Adrienne

Spring Photos from Inge Curtis



Eastern Bluebird



Female Common Yellowthroat



Summer Tanager



Eastern Phoebe

A Day on the River Judy Jones

Once a week, Shirley Devan and two of her many loyal team members travel down Interstate 64 to Chesapeake to monitor and band the prothonotary warblers of the Northwest River. The day is long, leaving Williamsburg at 7:30 am and arriving back home around 5:30 in the evening. In between,

the team travels up and down the river in a slender but motorized canoe, checking boxes and netting the warblers, banding the females (and a few males on lucky days), and banding those chicks who are at least four days old. This is a day of sunshine, stiff muscles, hard work, and just plain fun.



This past May 12 was a very unusual day. The winds were strong and the river was rough. It was a tough time for our canoe 'driver', Cheryl Jacobson. She had to carefully and gently nest the canoe prow beside the warbler box so that Shirley could lean WWWWAAAAYYY out and try to net the egg-incubating female before she fled from the box. Because the wind was so strong, the water had risen well above normal and several of the boxes were either totally submerged or partially underwater.



Leaning over and tugging mightily, Shirley would pull these boxes up out of the river bed, relocate them, and just hope that the eggs had stayed warm and dry. Several times, we were lucky enough to find just hatched chicks that, being too young to band, were left alone till next week when the next team would return to band them.

Cautiously avoiding snakes both in the river and in the trees, the team worked efficiently in order to return the birds to their nests as quickly as possible.

And so, I believe this is truly what being a Master Naturalist is all about....being outside, surrounded by sunshine and fresh air, doing our 'citizen science' thing, and spending time in the company of great folks. Who could ask for anything more than this day on the river!



HISTORIC RIVERS CHAPTER

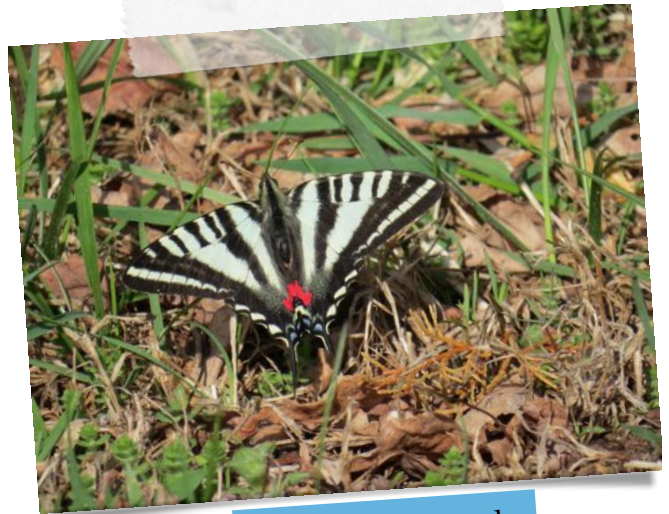
Cruise to Chippokes Plantation Sherry Brubaker and Judy Jones

On April 18th a number of HRC members did the "Cruise to Chippokes" and had a glorious, sunny day and managed to travel in great company on the ferry to Scotland. A Volkswagen cruisers club was headed to the Virginia Diner (we're in good company) and this amazing reduce/reuse/recycle/repair VW accompanied us. It had been buried in sand in Southern California and the gal who rescued it dug it out, removed the trees growing from it, refurbished it and has now put 535,000 miles on it! It was great and its name is Dauntless.

Our friend, Joni Carlson, did a great job teaching us more about butterflies and good plants for them and gave us Milkweed!! and other butterfly sustaining plants. We toured the plantation, saw a zillion zebra swallowtails in the



Dauntless



Zebra Swallowtail



The team at Chippokes



Osprey

Mark your calendar!
Upcoming General Membership Meetings

June 10 - Dr. Matthias Leu, (Biology Professor, College of William and Mary), "Deer space use correlates with songbird community change: Evidence from point count surveys at study sites with contrasting land use" 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)

The May 13 HRC General Meeting featured a showing of the film "Symphony of the Soil. After seeing the film Larry Roddick was inspired to offer this poem, which he composed some time ago.

The Four-letter Word

The word's been expunged from my lexicon
It's no longer used; it's forever gone
When speaking or writing I'm always alert
To avoid that soiled word that rhymes with shirt
I do not relate you-know-what kind of jokes
That evoke soiled looks from decent folks
When into my garden I roam to toil
And place my hands in the rich soil
I always pause after my travails
To clean beneath my soiled fingernails
I'll never again, not even for fun
Sit down and watch a Soiled-Harry rerun
The four-letter word from which I'm now free?
It begins with a D and ends with a T.

Upcoming Continuing Education Opportunities

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

If you find training that is not on this list and open to all members, please let us know and we can approve it for the chapter. Adrienne-gary@cox.net

- [\[CE\] HRBC Bird Walk](#) - May 17, 2015 from 7:00-10:00 am at Newport News City Park
- [\[CE\] Science Under Sail](#) - May 20, 2015 from 2:00 pm to 4:00 pm at Yorktown, VA, USA
- [\[CE\] 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
- [\[CE\] NPS Meeting - Native Uses of Native Plants](#) - May 21, 2015 from 6:30 pm to 8:30 pm at Yorktown Public Library, Battle Road and Route 17
- [\[CE\] WBC Bird Walk](#) - May 23, 2015 from 7:00 am to 9:00 am at New Quarter Park, 1000 Lakeshead Dr., Williamsburg
- [\[CE\] VMN Webinar - From Impairment to Restoration](#) - May 26, 2015 from 12:00 pm to 1:00 pm at Web
- [\[CE\] Science Under Sail](#) - May 27, 2015 from 2:00 pm to 4:00 pm at Yorktown, VA, USA
- [\[CE\] Spring Training — Sponsored by Peninsula Master Naturalists](#) - May 30, 2015 from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm at Tabb Library and Victory YMCA, 100 & 101 Long Green Boulevard, Yorktown VA
- [\[CE\] NPS Two-for-One Plant Walk](#) - May 30, 2015 from 10:00 am to 12:00 pm meet in the driveway at Edie's house, 9954 Figg Shop Road, in Gloucester
- [\[CE\] WBC Field Trip to Piney Grove](#) - June 6, 2015 from 4:00 am to 12:00 pm at Meet at Colony Square Parking Lot - EARLY
- [\[CE\] NPS Chickahominy Riverfront Park - Covered Trees](#) - June 6, 2015 from 10:00 am to 12:00 pm at Chickahominy Riverfront Park.
- [\[CE\] HRBC Bird Walk](#) - June 7, 2015 from 7:00-10:00 am at Newport News City Park
- [\[CE\] Monthly meeting](#) - June 10, 2015 from 6:00 pm to 9:00 pm at JCC Human Services Bldg., 5249 Olde Towne Rd., Williamsburg
- [\[CE\] WBC Bird Walk at New Quarter Park](#) - June 13, 2015 from 8:00 am to 10:00 am at New Quarter Park, 1000 Lakeshead Dr., Williamsburg
- [\[CE\] NPS Grafton Ponds Plant Walk](#) - June 13, 2015 from 10:00 am to 12:00 pm at Natural Area Preserve, n Newport News Park
- [\[CE\]: VIMS Discovery Lab - Shipwrecks](#) - June 16, 2015 from 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm at VIMS - Catlett-Burruss Research and Education Lab 7577 Spencer Road Gloucester Point, VA
- [\[CE\] NPS Plant Walk around Stonehouse Habitat](#) - June 20, 2015 from 10:00 am to 12:00 pm at Stonehouse Elementary School, 3651 Rochambeau Drive, Williamsburg, VA 23188, United States
- [\[CE\] HRBC Bird Walk](#) - June 21, 2015 from 7:00-10:00 am at Newport News City Park
- [\[CE\]: VIMS: Filming the Giant Squid](#) - June 25, 2015 from 7:00 pm to 8:00 pm at VVIMS - Watermen's Hall, McHugh Auditorium 1375 Greate Road Gloucester Point, VA 23062
- [\[CE\] WBC Bird Walk](#) - June 27, 2015 from 7:00 am to 9:00 am at New Quarter Park, 1000 Lakeshead Dr., Williamsburg

