



# THE NATURALIST

*The monthly newsletter of the Historic Rivers Chapter*

*Virginia Master Naturalist Program*

<http://historicrivers.org>

March 2016

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## Chapter Board 2016-2017

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*Shirley Devan, Past President*  
*Jan Lockwood, Vice President*  
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*Sonny Bowers and Barbara Neis, Publicity & Outreach*  
*Sharon Plocher & Jennifer Trevino, Basic Training*  
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*Cheryl Jacobson, Historian*  
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*Doug Dwoyer, Newsletter*  
*Sherry Brubaker, Field Trip Coordinator*  
*Joe Beene, Barb Bucklin, Maud Ann Wilson, Host*

## President's Message

by Judy Jones

Last Wednesday, March 9<sup>th</sup>, was such a great evening — seeing Cohort X hug their way into graduation was just ideal. As we listened to Jerre Johnson, munched on cake, ordered new VMN clothing, and proudly saw our huggable friends get new name tags and certificates, the evening captured seamlessly the essence of what it is to be a Master Naturalist. As Jennifer stated that night, it takes commitment, enthusiasm, perseverance, fun, curiosity, and camaraderie to complete our training course. In the same way, as members of HRC VMN, we know firsthand the joy that lurks in so many of our activities....for example, bluebirding with buddies, crunching oysters with buddies, wildlife mapping with buddies, and of course, graduating with buddies. And now, for me, as the new president, it's leading with buddies. I know that I'll have the guidance, direction,

### Notes from the Board

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

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and support of our 139 other Master Naturalists as we begin the next two years together. But this message would be meaningless without thanks for the guidance, support, and encouragement that Shirley Devan has not only given to all of us these last two years, but will continue to send our way as she, I hope, fosters the transition from the old executive board to the new.

And so, we begin a new cycle together, as buddies, as fellow volunteers, as educators and leaders, as folks who are constantly teaching and constantly learning, working together to make a difference. So let's do it — find a buddy and let's get started!

## Chapter News

### New Historic Rivers Chapter Board of Directors Elected

Those of you who are particularly alert noticed our new HRC Board of Directors listed on Page 1. At the chapter meeting of March 9<sup>th</sup> the board slate presented in February's newsletter was offered in nomination and unanimously elected by the chapter members present. That slate is reflected on Page 1.

## HISTORIC RIVERS CHAPTER

### Congratulations HRC VMN Cohort X Graduates!

By Jennifer Trevino, HRC Basic Training Co-Chair

At the HRC Annual Membership meeting the evening of March 9, 2016, all nineteen members of Cohort X were recognized for having completed the HRC VMN Basic Training program. Each graduate was introduced, awarded a "Certificate of Completion," received a new volunteer badge, and was given a gift bag containing several mementos of his/her journey through basic training. Eight of the nineteen graduates were also recognized for having met the requirements for VMN certification, and received a HRC VMN "Certified Virginia Master Naturalist" certificate and new name plate badge. In addition to completing the key instructional and participatory requirements for basic training, Cohort X members received high praise for such heartfelt qualities as; their commitment to and intense enthusiasm for the HRC VMN Basic Training program, continuing education experiences, involvement in a variety of volunteer service projects; perseverance and tenacity in all of their efforts; their ongoing curiosity and eagerness to learn; their joyous play and lively fun in learning about and experiencing nature; and the wonderful camaraderie shared by all, which was described as "mutual trust and friendship among people who spend a lot of time together; the loyalty and warm, friendly feelings that friends have for each other." The HRC congratulates and applauds Cohort X!



First row, left to right: Patsy Carlson, Judy Kinshaw-Ellis, Kristie Couser, Randi Heise, Renee Dalman, Joni Carlson, Karen Wilson

Second row, left to right: Ken Paladino, Mike Blum, Bob Thomas, George Reiske, Janet Harper, Bill Harper, Barbara Neis

Back row, left to right: Bill Vanzetta, David Graft, Alister Perkinson, Sonny Bowers

Not pictured: Anita Angelone

Members Recognized for Milestone Awards

March 9, 2016



Left to right: Fred Matthies - 250 hours, Al Booth - 500 hours, Ruth Gordon - 500 hours, Sibyl Rose - 250 hours, Mike Woodward - 250 hours, Adrienne Frank - 1,000 hours, Portia Belden - 250 hours, Ginny Broome - 250 hours, Linda Morse - 250 hours

## Virginia Cooperative Extension Conferred on Clyde Marsteller the Title of Master Gardener Emeritus Volunteer

Recently I had a unique and humbling experience. My Newport News Master Gardener Association honored me by conferring the title of VCE Master Gardener Emeritus Volunteer upon me. This title can be bestowed upon Master Gardeners who have given at least 1000 hours of dedicated service as a Master Gardener serving his/her community but because of health or other circumstances cannot continue to fulfill his or her role as an active volunteer. Additionally VCE confers continued affiliation on the volunteer. I have had the privilege of serving as a Master Gardener for the past 15 years having graduated with the Class of 2001 (Our second day of class was interrupted by that day of infamy September 9-11) and have earned 1000+ hours of volunteer service.

After accepting the Award I told the group that after completing my training my mentor, Ken Castle, who was in his late 70s, took me on my first service trip. We were to plant several donated shrubs at a Menchville house – a home for abused women. After we arrived, Ken took a shovel out of his van and told me, “ Marsteller, there are two kinds of Master Gardeners, the first are those who can dig, bend down, plant and then stand up and the second kind are those who can't. The first kind does all the work and the second kind supervise.” He then handed me the shovel. I am turning in my shovel and will start supervising (though Miss Ellie says that won't work at home).

I am taking my Cardiologists advice :

Get a good Lawn Service

Hire a healthy Yard Man with a good clotting time

Additionally my backyard is now entirely moss covered- no grass

The Butterfly Garden has been planted with native plants, pollinator attractors and milkweed.

Now I'm waiting to see if all that hype works.



## HISTORIC RIVERS CHAPTER

Stephanie Schmuck, HRC member, had her Leppard Frog design chosen for the annual certification pin by VMN. Be sure to wear your new Leopard Pin with pride....you worked hard to earn it and Stephanie Schmuck worked hard designing it. Here's a photo of our Stephanie with her new pin!



## Wildflower Spot– March 2016

John Clayton Chapter, Virginia Native Plant Society

### Red Maple

*Acer rubrum*

One of the first signs of spring is the red haze over the bare limbs of our local maple trees. This would be the male and female flowers of Red Maple. Typical of many species, the male flowers appear first as a yellowish pink, closely followed by the darker pink blossoms of the female trees. When fertilized, the familiar maple “keys” form and drop from the twigs like miniature helicopters.



Red Maple is a medium-sized tree with smooth gray young trunk bark and broken darker older bark. The highly variable leaves have 3 to 5 lobes and are whitened underneath. It is well named, as its flowers, petioles, twigs and seeds are all red to varying degrees. However, this tree is most well known for its brilliant deep scarlet foliage in autumn. Many cultivars are available with varying shades of red and leaf shapes.

One of the most common and widespread deciduous trees of eastern North America, Red Maple ranges from Minnesota, east to Newfoundland, south to Florida, and southwest to Texas. Usually occurring in low, wet sites, this tree is adaptable to a very wide range of site conditions. It can be found growing in swamps, on poor dry soils, and most anywhere in between.

Red Maple will tolerate some air pollution and is easy to transplant. With striking fall foliage and pleasing form, it is often used as a shade tree for landscapes. Maple syrup and lumber production occur on a small scale from red maple.

This is the State Tree of Rhode Island.

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

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

**Photo:** Deerberry (*Vaccinium stamineum*) taken by Phillip Merritt

**HRC Supports James City County Recreation Expo  
by Shirley Devan**

Chapter Volunteers who participated in the outreach effort on February 27, 2016

- Jeanne Millin
- Mike Millin
- Catherine Short
- Renee Dallman
- Judy Kinshaw-Ellis
- Nancy Barnhart
- Barbara Neis,
- Judy Jones
- Shirley Devan



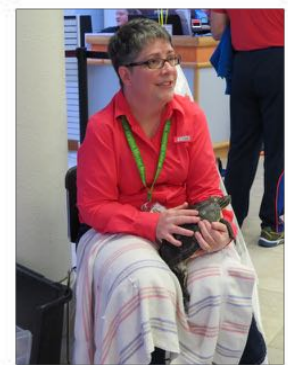
Barbara Neis & Nancy Barnhart help kids



Judy Jones shows off a box turtle



Judy Jones shows off scat



Renee Dallman with a Florida Cooter



HRC Volunteers at New Kent Forestry Center  
by Shirley Devan



Barbara Neis, Judy Jones, Janet Harper & Patty Maloney



Cybil Rose with Project Learning Tree  
Coordinator Page Hutchinson



Patty Maloney and Dave Lauthers of VMN  
Peninsula Chapter



Les Lawrence (right) and friend

## Notes from the Wild Side by Clyde Marsteller

Spring has hit the Lower Forty (Newport News) like a ton of bricks.

- My Snow Drops are nodding their pretty little heads, the Hellebore are blooming along with a couple of Daffodils, some Hyacinths and my Camilla .
- The Snow Birds are still at the feeders: Juncos, Yellow Rumped Warblers and White Throat Sparrows.
- A pair of Blue Birds are visiting each morning but are ignoring my nesting boxes.

As we were leaving the house Wednesday morning Miss Ellie spotted an adult Bald Eagle soaring in circles overhead. My city bred wife even identified it — something must be rubbing off.

The surest sign that spring is here are the male Carpenter Bees [*Xylocopa violacea* ] starting to duel one another for territorial rights. They usually come out of hibernation in the middle of March and the females appear in April. The neat thing about these Bees is that the **male carpenter bees cannot sting** and you can catch them in your hands to awe your grandchildren with your bravery. The females do however sting but as they will not appear for a few weeks you can catch the boys with impunity but with this caveat, there are always a couple of the ladies who didn't read Dr Evans Insect book.



## Gloucester County Schools Pollinator Partners Program by Joanie Haury & Doug Dwoyer

Gloucester County Schools are establishing Pollinator Gardens at most of its' schools. Susan Walton, from the Peninsula Chapter of Master Naturalists, is our director. We each have our own schools with the help of some teachers. Most of the other volunteers are from the Northern Neck Master Naturalist chapter and Gloucester Master Gardeners. We sort of feel like a fish out of water, but are learning and it is a little overwhelming.

This program will be represented at the Gloucester Daffodil Festival April 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> in Gloucester Courthouse. We will be sharing a tent with the Gloucester Master Gardeners. Stop on by and see us. If you feel so inclined and would love to support our effort, please let us know. We'd love to have you help us out and earn volunteer hours to boot!!

[jhaury1@cox.net](mailto:jhaury1@cox.net) or [ddwoyer@cox.net](mailto:ddwoyer@cox.net)

## Butterfly Project Update

Butterfly reports are starting to stream in... hurray! In the last week, multiple people have reported seeing Falcate Orangetips, Azures, Eastern Tail Blues, Sleepy Oranges, Cabbage Whites, Eastern Tiger Swallowtails (2), and a Comma.

**Spring butterflies** are beginning to emerge on warm sunny days. Early butterflies may be a little smaller than those later in the summer, and some can only be seen in Spring. These 3 can be seen in the Williamsburg area in March and April.



Falcate Orangetip (Mid South East) – Male & female  
– Host plants are cress and mustards



Henry's Elfin (Range is mostly SE)  
– Host plants are Redbud and Holly



Pine Elfin (East and into western Canada)  
– Host plants are pine trees  
This one is rare in our area so keep a keen eye out!

**Please record** what you see. We are compiling the species and their frequency throughout the season. Next fall and winter, we would like to compile how many of which species were seen in each month of the year.

There are at least 2 ways that you can submit your data to the project:

- Go to eButterfly and enter sightings online. Once you have signed up, eButterfly will help you record sighting(s), numbers, and locations. If you submit a photo, they can help to identify it.
- or
- Write down your observations using spreadsheets, either on paper or in Excel. I can send you a PDF or an Excel version. An blank format sheet is shown on the next page.

If you would like more information about collecting sightings, please let me know. Adrienne at [Adrienne-gary@cox.net](mailto:Adrienne-gary@cox.net)

**Spring Butterfly Walks** – In April, we will be organizing walks or wildlife mapping opportunities to find spring butterflies. Keep an eye out for Emails.



## Mastodon Project Update by Kathy Cross

Several members of the HRC Virginia Master Naturalists continued their assistance to Dr. Jerre Johnson on piecing together the Mastodon bones and fragments. Pictured below working on an exciting, new discovery in the Mastodon puzzle are Bill, Alice and Portia!



Dr. Jerre thinks these pieces are part of the Mastodon's cranium. The inner portion of the skull showed pockets where the membranes of the brain were held. Using Super Glue (you heard me correctly) and a lot of patience, our volunteers kept piecing these delicate parts together.

More work continues. Larger bone pieces have to be preserved in order to keep them from deteriorating. Smaller fragments have to be carefully put together and identified. Dr. Johnson is currently looking for funding through grant money and donations. The next expenses will be the chemicals needed to preserve the specimens, and tests to determine age and sex of the Mastodon. Dr. Johnson, again, thanks every one of the volunteers who are helping on this project.

You can be part of this by calling Kathy Cross for specific times when we meet. It is usually on Wednesday mornings at Dr. Johnson's house in Williamsburg.

## Visit to Joseph Pines Preserve by Kathy Cross

Joseph Pines Preserve is a 232 acre Biodiversity Center in Sussex County for the study and restoration of Virginia native longleaf pine, native pitcher plants and the wildlife that inhabits this property. It is owned by the Meadowview Biological Research Station in Woodford, Virginia and operated in cooperation with the US Forestry Service, The Nature Conservancy and other fine organizations. The Meadowview Station also owns and operates the Central Virginia Preserve in in Caroline County focused on pitcher plant preservation. Dr. Phil Sheridan directs the Meadowview Station and both preserves and oversees many events and activities at the preserves including volunteer activity, ecology classes and field trips.

Randi Heise and I were fortunate enough to get a personal tour with Dr. Phil Sheridan and Mike Hammond, who is on the Board of Directors for the Research Center. We spent 4 hours walking the property. Phil and Mike (they like being informal) were great tour guides showing us the value and history of longleaf pine-pitcher plant ecosystem that thrives so well here. They expressed an interest in partnering with The Virginia Master Naturalists for volunteer help and field trips to learn more about their facilities.

The value of the longleaf pine is incredible. In Colonial Virginia, the longleaf pine provided lumber, turpentine and pitch and can grow to a height of 130 feet and live for close to 300 years. It is known for its straight grain lumber, its resistance to numerous insects and the long pine needles used for landscaping. They provide habitat for a great variety of wild life species such as bobwhite quail, red cockaded woodpecker, Bachman's sparrow and Mabee's salamander. They support a diversity of flora including native pitcher plants, orchids, lilies, wildflowers, grasses and sedges.

In 1893 the Long Leaf Pine was almost extinct. Now through the efforts of several organizations, public and private land owners, the longleaf pine is increasing in numbers. The native pitcher plants are offered to organizations, too, in an effort to increase their numbers.

For more information and to help at these facilities, contact [Meadowview@pitcherplant.org](mailto:Meadowview@pitcherplant.org) or 804-633-4336. I will present some ideas to our VMN group for future field trips and how we can help.

### Trivia Challenge

Why does an owl bob its head up and down and side to side when sighting an object of interest in its visual field?

Answer on Page 16

## Presquile National Wildlife Refuge Volunteer Day by Kathy Cross

The day was partly cloudy and warm as we boarded the boat with Cyrus Brame, Wildlife Refuge Specialist for US Fish and Wildlife Service. It took us only about 10 minutes to get to Turkey Island (in the James River near Hopewell, VA) on which the refuge is located. There are no roads connecting the mainland to the island due to a channel that was dredged in the 1930s to allow passage of large ships.

Cyrus gave us a brief overview of what we would be doing. The most important task was to put up a new sign at the entrance to the refuge. Thanks to some muscle power from the guys in our group, the poles were placed in the ground and the sign was placed! After that, we cleared out some invasive plants, filled raised beds and cleaned up around the refuge. We ate our lunch in the Education Center, where schools send students to take a two day ecology course. There is a bunk house for the students to stay overnight as well.



We finished up around 1pm. Cyrus took the volunteers back to the mainland. I stayed on the island, waiting for Cyrus to return so we could drive around the island and look for places to plant native gardens. We came up with two great game plans — to be continued.

Come out to Presquile National Wildlife Refuge. It is one of the wildlife refuges of the US Fish and Wildlife Eastern Virginia Rivers Complex. Make arrangements to visit during one of their open houses.

Wes Hudson of VIMS has been conducting an experiment at New Ken Forestry Center over the last several years. The experimental goal is to establish the viability of tree plantings in restored wetlands under various soil moisture conditions. A number of members of HRC as well as the Peninsula Chapter of VMN have supported Wes by volunteering for his tree-growth measurement efforts several times each year. Wes is now requesting photos any of the volunteers may have taken during the measurement sessions. He will be the Chapter Meeting guest speaker on April 13 at which time you can pass along any photos, or e-mail them to him at [hwhudson@vims.edu](mailto:hwhudson@vims.edu).

### Trivia Challenge

All these varied head movements help the owl judge the position and distance of things around it—essentially, to triangulate on objects, including potential prey, and to build a composite picture of its surroundings. This head-bobbing helps make up for an anatomical limitation: An owl's eyes are fixed in position, so they simply can't move the way our eyes do. To look up, down, or to the side, an owl has to move its head. They have very flexible necks and can do 270 degrees of a full head turn, looking over one shoulder, around the back, and almost over the opposite shoulder. And after a few of these head-bobs to triangulate on their prey, they rarely miss. It's not only owls that measure the world this way. Most other birds of prey, like falcons and hawks, have the same intent, fixed, predator's eyes, and so they, too, perform their share of head bobs, figuring out what's what and what's where.

See: <http://birdnote.org/>

### You Know You're a Master Naturalist when...

Back in 2011 Kathi Mastayer posed the title phrase for members of the chapter to complete and everyone thought it was a lot of fun. She suggested that it has been long enough that we do it again. So, fill in the remainder of the sentence and submit your entries to Kathi at [mestaverkschachinger@gmail.com](mailto:mestaverkschachinger@gmail.com) or Doug Dwoyer at [ddwoyer@cox.net](mailto:ddwoyer@cox.net) by April 15th and the best responses will appear in the May newsletter. Have fun with this!



## Spring Plant Walks

Sponsored by the John Clayton Chapter, Virginia Native Plant Society

Weeds and Orchids. **Saturday, April 16, from 9:30 to noon.** Join Donna Ware at Freedom Park to see native and non-native weeds [such as bluets (*Houstonia* spp.) and *Veronica* spp.] of early spring in the big fields near the Interpretive Center and to visit a calcareous ravine to see showy orchis (*Galearis spectabilis*) and other species that prefer high nutrient soils. For information and to register contact Donna at 757 565 0657 or dmeware@verizon.net

Wildflowers and Orchids! **Saturday, April 23, at 10:am,** at Grafton Ponds area. Join environmental consultant Meegan Wallace to look for showy orchis (*Galearis spectabilis*) which should be in bloom as well as many spring wildflowers. From I-64 Travel east on Fort Eustis Blvd (Va-105), pass Richneck Road on the right, look for a small parking area on the left, marked with VNPS signs. Contact Meegan at 757 291 1099 to register and for more information.

Spring Flowers. **Sunday, May 1, 2:00 pm.** Meet at Newport News Park's Discovery Center, Constitution Way. Use the NNPark entrance at Constitution Way. From Jefferson Ave, turn onto Constitution Way; drive 0.9 mile; the Discovery Center will be on the right (GPS coordinates 37.181682, -76.537173); additional parking nearby along Constitution Way if needed. Peninsula Master Naturalist Susie Yager will lead a walk through this lakeside woodland area to see Pink Lady's-Slipper Orchid, Partridgeberry, Yellow Star-Grass, Putty-Root Orchid, Pickerelweed, and numerous other spring flowers as well as several ferns. The round-trip walk will be about 2 miles. The Discovery Center has restrooms. Contact Susie Yager to register at soozigus@cox.net.

Moss Walk in Eden Woods. **Saturday, May 21 10:00 am.** Moss Gardener Norie Burnet will lead our group through her lovely garden of trees, shrubs and perennials carpeted with 30 species of moss. Norie is well known for the artistic layout of her gardens and for her extensive collection and knowledge about mosses. Meet at the Lightfoot Post Office to carpool to Norie's home in North Chesterfield, 1915 Montaigne Drive, Richmond, Va.

## Continuing Education Opportunities

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

**[CE] Holly Society - Meeting & Presentation on VA Hollies - March 19, 2016** from 9:30 am to 3:30 pm at Joe & Mimma's Italian Restaurant, 5742 George Washington Hwy (Rt 17), Grafton VA

**[CE] WBC/MG -DESIGNING THE SMALL GARDEN - March 19, 2016** from 10:00 am to 11:00 am at Freedom Park Interpretive Center, Williamsburg Botanical Garden

**[CE] HRBC Bird Walk - March 20, 2016** from 7:00 am to 10:00 am at Newport News City Park

**[CE] WBC Bird Walk - March 26, 2016** from 7:00 am to 9:00 am at New Quarter Park

**[CE] VIMS York River Research Symposium - March 30, 2016** from 8:30-4:00 pm at VIMS

**[CE] VIMS - March After Hours Lecture: Whimbrels - March 31, 2016** from 7:00 pm to 8:30 pm at VIMS - Watermen's Hall, McHugh Auditorium 1375 Greate Road Gloucester Point, VA

**[CE] VLM - Jack Hanna - April 1, 2016** from 4:00 pm to 5:00 pm at Virginia Living Museum

**[CE] HRBC Bird Walk - April 3, 2016** from 7:00 am to 10:00 am at Newport News City Park

**[CE] Monthly meeting - April 13, 2016** from 6:00 pm to 9:00 pm at JCC Library, 7770 Croaker Rd., Wes Hudson of VIMS speaking on tree growth in wetlands compensation sites.

**[CE] WBC Field Trip to Great Dismal Swamp - April 16, 2016** from 7:30 am to 1:00 pm at Dismal Swamp Canal, Chesapeake, VA 23323

**[CE] NPS - Freedom Park Walk - April 16, 2016** from 9:30 am to 12:00 pm at Freedom Park

**[CE] WBG - BLUEBIRDS IN OUR GARDENS - April 16, 2016** from 10:00 am to 11:00 am at Freedom Park Interpretive Center, Williamsburg Botanical Garden.

**[CE] HRBC Bird Walk - April 17, 2016** from 7:00 am to 10:00 am at Newport News City Park

**[CE] WBC Bird Walk - April 23, 2016** from 7:00 am to 9:00 am at New Quarter Park, 1000Lakeshead Dr., Williamsburg

**[CE] NPS - Grafton Ponds Walk - April 23, 2016 -10:00 - 12:00 pm** at near Richneck Rd, York Co.