

THE NATURALIST

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

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Chapter Board 2016-2017

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President's Message

MEET THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

by Judy Jones

Just the other day, when I was wondering who to harass with my five question approach to newsletter writing, Susan Powell sent me an email. Poor timing on her part because, like a bolt from above, I realized she was the perfect person for our next "Meet the Executive Board" message. Susan is a member of Cohort I – yep, she helped our organization come into being. She's worked with training classes since the beginning, so most of you have met her. But I'm thinking that we may not know her as a person, so here's our chance.
Susan is a Member-at-Large on the board, has held a

variety of offices, is our representative to the state organization and serves on their board, is our Risk Management co-leader (with the equally wonderful Jennifer Trevino), and has redefined wildlife management for both us and for the state. So, she does soooo much behind the scenes that most folks don't even realize...and is a parent, spouse, and farmer too.

Notes from the Board

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

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Susan's gifts to HRC VMN have been huge, with time, talent, knowledge, insights, and leadership. But her biggest gift to all of us is her friendship.

So, without further ado, please meet once again our friend and fellow Master Naturalist,

Susan Powell!

Susan, I want folks to get to know you. Can you fill in a little background info please.....



Background Information...okay, here goes....

I love Virginia! I have lived here most of my life. In fact, I was born in the old Williamsburg Community Hospital, which has since been torn down and the site repurposed as the College of William & Mary's School of Education. I've managed to live or work in almost every city on the Peninsula and pretty much every city on the Southside. I met my husband, Mike, while in grad school at ODU. We were both getting our masters' degrees in biology. While in grad school, he worked three jobs, and I worked two, but we still managed to graduate and get married. He joined the Air Force and went to Eastern Virginia Medical School, and I went to work for the VA Department of Transportation and then for a small environmental consulting company. After Mike finished med school, we received our orders from the Air Force and moved to Biloxi, Mississippi, then San Antonio, Texas, and then Dayton, Ohio. After finishing our stint in the military, we moved back to Virginia where we settled in James City County.

Fill in a little about yourself now....

We live in Toano with our three dogs, a cat, and a lizard. My son, Alex, is attending college and is still hanging out with us—at least for now. We are trying to create an organic micro farm of sorts to grow veggies as well as native plants (i.e., food for us; food for the insects). This particular project has gone from a two-year to a five-year to a never-ending work in progress!

Tell us one thing about yourself that is funny, quirky, unique, or really rather bizarre....

It turns out that I'm a lousy farmer. I love tobacco hornworms, and I have a hard time cutting my cut flowers or harvesting my basil if I see bees or butterflies using them. I allow my radishes to grow big and go to flower because I think the flowers are pretty, and I love how they attract the bees. I never manage to eat much out of my garden, but I enjoy it all the same!

Why did you choose to become a Master Naturalist?

The Master Naturalist program is a natural fit for me. I have always loved nature—I studied it in college, worked in the field of environmental consulting, and continue to spend most of my leisure time birding, butterflying, or botanizing.

Final Question....which activity or activities in VMN have brought you joy?

That's easy! I love to help train each new cohort of Master Naturalists. It is such a great feeling to watch people who already love nature become even more fascinated and enthralled with nature! But what brings me the most joy is that I have discovered a community of friends who share my passion for the natural world.





President Judy Jones introduced Carter Thrash, a sixth grader, as a Nancy NortonNature Camp Scholarship winner at the June $8^{\rm th}$ HRC General Meeting



Two Eastern Ratsnakes "making more rat snakes" on Judy Kinshaw-Ellis' front porch

Renee Dallman Leads HRC Team in First Portion of Virginia Birding and Wildlife Trail Project at Chickahominy Riverfront Park



Left to Right: Renee Dallman, Shirley Devan, Alister Perkinson, George Reiske, Barbara Neis, Nancy Barnhart, JudyJones. Photo by Tony Dallman.

The team saw/heard 33 species of birds, 3 species of butterflies, 3 species of mammals, and 2 species of frogs.



HRC Magnet now available for \$5.00 with proceeds to benefit HRC. Can be purchased at chapter functions

Cohort XI Basic Training by Jennifer Trevino

We are excited about our upcoming Cohort XI Basic Training program which begins Tuesday, September 6, 2016. If you know of folks who may be interested in joining the training session, please refer them to our HRC website, historicrivers.org. The website contains information about becoming a master naturalist and includes the HRC Cohort XI Basic Training Application Package (additional detailed information about the training is in the application package).

If you have any questions, please let one of us know.

Thanks!

HRC Basic Training Committee

Jennifer Trevino, Co-Chair Sharon Plocher, Co-Chair Shirley Devan Cheryl Jacobson Maud Ann Wilson David Lunt Susan Powell Janet Harper Renee Dallman

Nancy Barnhart Recognized by National Park Service by Shirley Devan

Several HRC members (and NPS volunteers) were on hand the night of June14th to see our own Nancy Barnhart receive the prestigious National Park Service "George and Helen Hartzog Outstanding Volunteer Service Award, Individual" for 2015.



Dorothy Geyer (pictured left), Colonial National Historical Park Natural Resource Specialist, who nominated Nancy presents Nancy the award.

Wildflower Spot - July 2016

John Clayton Chapter, Virginia Native Plant Society

Leafcup

Smallanthus uvedalia (Polymnia uvedalia)

This is a large, coarse plant growing 3-10 feet tall on stems that are often hairy. Huge leaves, to over a foot long, are cut into several lobes and somewhat resemble the foot of a bear, suggesting the other common name "Bearsfoot." The plant is usually known as "Leafcup" because the leaves are arranged in pairs on the stems, and the petiole of each leaf is winged, forming a small cup around the stem.

Each plant is covered with yellow flowers, 1-3 inches across, visited by many butterflies,



bees, wasps, and other insects. Leafcup is a member of the Aster Family, with tiny flowers crowded into the central disk, surrounded by yellow rays. Aster flowers are complex – the anthers (male reproductive part) are packed into a cylinder and as they mature, the pistil (female reproductive part) is pushed up through the cylinder, presenting pollen grains to insects seeking nectar. After a few days, when the pollen grains are no longer viable, the stigma opens and becomes receptive to the pollen deposited by other visiting insects. The large seeds resulting from fertilization are food for many species of birds.

Leafcup is native to nearly every county in Virginia, and ranges from New York to Illinois and Missouri, south to Florida and Texas. This large perennial grows best in part shade, in soil that remains moist in the summer. It can be seen in native woodlands at the edge of forest, in shade filtered by the leaves of the forest trees. Because of its size, this plant is suitable for the back of a perennial border, or edges of woods.

Native Americans used extracts of the root of Bearsfoot as a stimulant and laxative. Physicians in the late 1800's recommended its use in ointments for ailments such as rheumatism, swellings, fevers, burns, cuts and local inflammations.

For more information about native plants visit www.vnps.org.

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

Photo: Leafcup (*Smallanthus uvedalia*) taken by Helen Hamilton

Osprey/Osprey Watchers Doing Well by Co Leads Osprey Woman-Cheryl Jacobson, and Judy Jones

We are glad to report that the Osprey are having a very good breeding year at this point. Interest in watching osprey has grown with 33 HRC Master Naturalists currently monitoring nests. Judy Jones and I are again co-leading the Osprey Watch Project. Many of the newer cohort members became involved in this project. We held a "kick-off" meeting at the Freedom Park meeting room and invited all previous watchers and anyone interested in becoming a watcher to join us.

Osprey Watch is a project of The Center for Conservation Biology. Their staff person, Libby Mojica, has been very helpful to us for the past three years. This year, Libby obtained a new job in Colorado and has moved. In talking with the Center's Director, Bryan Watts, regarding the future of this position, he indicated that Libby coordinated the work with their raptor projects and although he hoped her position would be filled in the future they very well would not be able to limit her work to raptors. Basically, what this has meant to us is that we are needing to

help each other even more than we have done in the past. I am so thankful that we have many skilled osprey watchers who are assisting new watchers in this fun and exciting project. Many experienced watchers have stepped up and become a mentor/team with a new watcher.

Many nests have two chicks who are growing rapidly. Already the chicks can be observed flapping their wings in an effort to learn to fly. Some nests that have failed in the past due to storms, predation and human disturbance are succeeding this year. At right is a



picture of a nest with two large chicks on the James River that I have been monitoring and that has failed for two years. As you can see, this should be a successful year.

Hearing Nature by Kathi Mastayer

Earlier this year, I was asked to help with a nature outing for K-12 kids who are blind or visually impaired. It was called *Sounds of the James*, and consisted of a boat trip up the James River, run by Cap'n Mike Ostrander, of Discover the James ,and some dry-land activities, which we would help with. The activities were at Deep Bottom Park, just south of Richmond.

The program was supported by the 2015 Virginia Wildlife eStore Grant Program through a partnership between the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries and the Wildlife Foundation of Virginia and was planned by the VA Association for Parents of Children with Visual Impairments (VAAPVI) and Outreach Services of the VA School for the Deaf and the Blind (VSDB). Support was also provided by the Virginia Dept for the Blind and Vision Impaired and the Virginia Project for Children and Young Adults with Deaf-Blindness.

Felice Bond and I got together and talked about possible activities that might include items from our Tool Box, and how to engage the blind and visually-impaired using touch, smell, and sound. Debbie Pfeiffer, director of Outreach Services, VSDB, helped us understand a little about what it's like to work with blind and visually-impaired people. It was challenging to think about if you (like me) haven't had much exposure to that world.

The group included of a few adult organizers, like Debbie Pfeiffer, Dawn Peifer, President of VAAPVI, Caren Phipps and Tracy Deluca, DBVI; Julie Durando and Ira Padhye, Virginia Project for Children and Young Adults with Deaf-Blindness; O&M's Greg Chittum, Becky Peek and Bob Burton; as well as the caregivers (parents, and, in one case, a bonus sibling) of the blind/visually-impaired participants. Lynda Richardson, of DGIF, was there to photograph the event for DGIF.

Eagles and Red-tails

As we walked the group down to the boat, Kimmy (age 14) was holding a big hawk feather I had brought to provide a sense of the range of sizes of birds (also had a couple of mourning-dove feathers). She said, "Ms. Mestayer?" (to make sure I was close enough to hear her) After I replied, she went on, "is this feather from a red-tailed hawk or a red-shouldered hawk?" "I think it's red-shouldered," I said. "Oh, did you know that they often play the red-tailed hawk's call instead of the eagle's in movies?" Whoa! Who had been coaching this kid? Was I in over my head? I found out later that Cap'n Mike had mentioned that during an earlier trip, and she remembered.

Common bird calls

The dry-land activities included listening to bird calls, and feeling a few things, like sturgeon scales and the bird feathers. We were outdoors, in a shelter with four picnic tables under it, so we had plenty of room and no need to worry about rain.

I had prepared a collection of the calls of birds that the participants would be likely to hear when they got home, along with some background about the functions of the calls (so they would know that they are not just random sounds, but give territorial, alarm, "feed me," and other messages.)

As we went through the list (played on laptop/ipad with cordless BT speaker), we also talked about mnemonics, like "Who cooks for you?" and "Drink your tee-hee" and "Teakettle, teakettle," etc., which they got a big kick out of.

Responses to bird calls

One girl, Caroline, who is a junior in high school, started imitating the calls by whistling them the second the recording stopped. She nailed even the most-complex ones, like mockingbird and thrasher (and others) by whistling inward (inhaling). Wow.

She later told me, "When I walk to the bus, I'm going to start noticing and learning bird calls." I'll bet. (I got a recent email to the effect that she was at a bass fishing tournament the next weekend, still happily honing her skills.)

And to prove how realistic the sounds were, a mockingbird flew over and started a brief duet with the recording.

Birding as a hobby

We also talked briefly about how the most experienced birdwatchers can identify birds by their calls as much as 80% of the time. And that there is a birding tournament (the <u>Great Texas Birding Classic</u>) that has a category for birders who are blind and visually-impaired. The rules include: "One sighted person per team is allowed but not required. Sighted person must be blindfolded restricting bird identification to sound-based ID only. Driver/record keeper may not assist with bird location or identification." They're taking this seriously.

So, there you have it. A potential new hobby for many people who are blind or visually-impaired, and perhaps an opportunity to re-discover nature by ear.



Left to Right: Caroline Carbaugh, Kathi Mastayer, Laura Grace Snow, and Debbie Pfeiffer (VSDB). Photo by Lynda Richardson, DGIF.

A Mid-Summer's Update on the VA Breeding Bird Atlas by Ashley Peele, VABBA2 Coordinator

The summer is winging past and the summer solstice has already arrived! Many mark this as the first true day of summer, but birders might argue that our summer begins when the Neotropical migratory birds return and set up shop for the breeding season. When the trees are full of singing warblers and vireos, I always feel like summer has arrived and so I think we'll call this our 'Mid-Summer' update.

So despite this being the 'first' day of summer, the Atlas project is now 3 months into it's first breeding season. **Let's take a look at how we're doing so far...**

- **8.672** eBird checklists submitted statewide
- **352** VA BBA eBird portal users
- 270 Priority blocks and 1,231 Atlas blocks total receiving data
- 150 confirmed breeding species, 223 total species reported statewide

Fantastic data results for our first few months of this project! If you're curious, here are the VA counties leading the charge with greatest number of effort hours so far...

- Eastern counties: Fairfax, Fauquier, and James City
- Western Counties: Highland, Rockingham, and Shenandoah
- Independent Cities: Virginia Beach and Richmond City

Thanks so much to all the folks working hard to gather data on breeding birds in these and ALL counties and cities, whether you're working hard in the mountain valleys or rolling Piedmont plains or amongst the dunes and islands of the Eastern Shore. Each of your contributions is critical to the success of this effort.

Exciting species and breeding confirmations

The data reported by the Virginia birding community has already yielded some interesting results.

- Mississippi Kites confirmed breeding by Richmond and Virginia Beach area birders this species was not present in VA during the first Atlas project.
- Magnolia Warbler also confirmed as a breeding species for the first time in Virginia Breeding Bird Atlas history by the SW regional coordinator.
- **Chuck-Will's-Widow** confirmed breeding in Isle of Wight County -- the one and only breeding confirmation of this species from the first Atlas occurred on the Eastern Shore.
- Bobolink, Double-crested Cormorant, Brown Pelican, and Hooded Mergansers have been confirmed in more Atlas blocks now than in the first Atlas.

Tips and Suggestions for Breeding Code Use

Hopefully most atlas volunteers have reviewed the Atlas Handbook and become

well acquainted with how and when to use the breeding codes. However, this is a learning year for everyone involved with the project, so mistakes will naturally be made. These shouldn't be a source of frustration, but rather a chance to learn and remember for the next year.

To help with this learning process, here are some common breeding code misuses that coordinators are working to help folks correct:

• Using P (Pair in suitable habitat) when a species has identical males/females and no other behavioral indicators suggesting two birds are actually a 'pair'. This code should only



Photo of recently fledged Brown Thrasher by Shirley Devan

be used when you are certain that two birds are a mated pair.

- •Using NB (Nest-building) for cavity-nesting or dummy-nesting species (woodpeckers, wrens, chickadees, etc.). You should always use the B code when you observe a woodpecker excavating a cavity or a wren building a nest.
- •Entering checklists distances greater than 2 miles. This is only acceptable if you completed a route circuit within the same block and have never crossed block boundaries. Even in this case, checklists should really not exceed 3 miles.

The best suggestion is to err on the side of caution. If you're uncertain on a species ID or what code to use, don't enter it until you've checked with a coordinator. Remember that you can always go back and edit data you've previously entered. In fact, we ask that you always go back and correct errors made on earlier lists.

Bird the season out!

Remember that breeding activity will continue through August! Now is the time when you'll start adding more and more breeding confirmations based on FL (Recently Fledged Young) or FY (Feeding Young). Fledglings are jumping the nests and parents are working frantically to keep them fed. All great evidence for an Atlas volunteer to snatch up!

Remember to that many of our resident breeders are thinking about or working on brood number 2! Keep your eyes peeled for the earlier season signs of breeding, as well.

Most of all, keep getting out there, enjoying the beautiful Virginia summer and watching all those beautiful birds. The coordinators are here to support you and answer all your questions, so please keep that resource in mind if you are ever uncertain about data entry or observations.



On June 18th, our own Adrienne Frank, supported by her incredibly capable assistant, Gary Driscole, presented a wonderful talk entitled *Butterflies and the Plants They Need* at the Freedom Park Interpretive Center. At her talk, sponsored by the Williamsburg Botanical Garden, Adrienne spoke for nearly an hour and then guided folks through the garden, helping them to ID butterflies there and talking about which plants were good host plants and nectar plants. The crowd of nearly 50 were so grateful for her advice, information, and help.



Butterfly Counts in July and August 2016

Chippokes Butterfly Count - Sunday, July 10

Contact: Teta Kain - tkdragonrun7@gmail.com

Dismal Swamp Count - July Butterfly Count - Saturday, July 23, 2016, 8:30AM.

Contact: Deloras at 757-986-3705

Deloras Freeman, Visitor Services Specialist

Great Dismal Swamp National Wildlife Refuge

3100 Desert Rd, Suffolk, VA 23434

www.fws.gov/refuge/Great Dismal Swamp

Delmarv Tip Butterfly Count - Sunday July 31

Contact: Lynn Davidson - Hal.Lynn@comcast.net

Williamsburg Area Butterfly Count - Saturday August 6

Contact: Adrienne Frank – Adrienne-gary@cox.net

Being Prepared for Butterfly Counts



What to Bring

Lunch - Snacks, fruits, or whatever you want to eat during the day, probably best in a small cooler.

Water - Plenty of water/drinks to sustain you for all day, if needed.

Binoculars – Close-focusing binoculars are the best, but you can use any binoculars.

Camera – It is helpful to have someone on your team take pictures of small butterflies to help in identification. A lot of photography can hinder the process.

Butterfly guide – There are cards of common species and several good books. It is helpful for the team to have several books available for comparison. (e.g., "Butterflies of North America" by Kaufmann or "Butterflies Through Binoculars" by Glasberg)

Pencil and Paper - To write field notes.

What to Wear

Be prepared for warm temperatures, rain, the sun, and insects: hat, sunglasses, insect spray, sun screen, cotton long sleeve shirt, long pants, hiking shoes or waterproof shoes.

If you are a photographer and like to get down on the ground close to your subject, you may wish to bring a pair of knee pads.

Other items for personal comfort: handiwipes or a moist washcloth in a plastic bag (on ice in your cooler can be refreshing), lip balm, and first aid supplies (e.g., bandaids, aspirin, lanocaine) or whatever you need.

Helpful Hints

Meet at the designated time and be prepared to leave your car. Often, the leader will designate groups of participants to travel as a team.

A pick-up truck or an SUV is a good vehicle to use during the count for driving on country roads.

Please be prepared for a full day. The group may want to spend the entire day and cover a large territory.

The skippers are starting to emerge.

Here are some recent butterfly sightings that are going down in our record book.



1. Little Glassywing – Les Lawrence



2. Delaware Skipper - Les Lawrence



3. Saltmarsh Skippers – Nancy



4. Broadwing Skipper – Ken

Virginia Master Naturalists Help at the James River Fest by Judy Jones

On Saturday, April 30th, a team of willing Virginia Master Naturalists helped to celebrate the James River and its wildlife. Ten members of the Historic Rivers Chapter shared their knowledge of fossils, ecosystems, native plants, and—thanks to Catherine Short —turtles of the James. It was a great day to share information about the conservation of such an ancient and complex ecological system as the James.

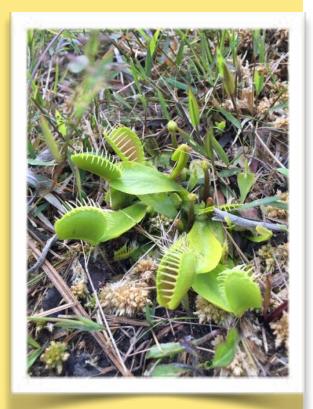


Pictured left to right: Barbara Neis, Renee Dallman, Fred Matthies, Les Lawrence, Catherine Short, and George Sallwasser. Not pictured Sharon Plocher, Jennifer Trevino, Shirley Devan, and Sonny Bowers

Venus Flytrap Plants cam be found in North Carolina by Lou Amato

I was in Wilmington, North Carolina visiting family recently and had a unique stop at the Stanley Rehder Carnivorous Plant Garden, a spot I thought you might want to visit. I walked the paths with my son and three-year-old grandson and was startled to find the park filled with nearly 500 rare Venus Flytrap yearling plants. My grandson was fascinated at his dad swatting flies and feeding the Flytraps. They spent a lot of time watching the traps react and close once they sensed a bug or fly.

The planting of these flytraps was due to the efforts of more than 30 employees and retirees of Duke Energy, who teamed up with NC Coastal Land Trust to plant hundreds of Venus Flytraps at the garden, which is the only public carnivorous garden in the world. Also involved with the project were the "Hands On Northwest North Carolina" (HONWNC) volunteers. These folks worked together to plant the young and delicate flytrap plants in the ground. But before the flytraps could be planted, volunteers had to remove some of the invasive and non-native plants from the garden's grounds to make room for the flytraps to grow. Volunteers also worked to build and install two "learn and touch" raised bed planters at the site to help with the Land Trust's educational programming at the garden.



The garden connects the public to the unique plants which only grow naturally within 100 mile radius of Wilmington. The garden is an area inside the city where people can come and see flytraps as well as Pitcher Plants and understand the uniqueness of the area. A flytrap is an endemic species, so it occurs naturally in Wilmington and in 100 mile radius of the garden...it doesn't grow anywhere else in the world.

Every year the Flytraps spring back and when I was there, some of the older plants were in bloom. Although Venus Flytraps are not listed as endangered, they are a rare and threatened species of plant. A number of things have threatened the species, among them development, loss of habitat, burn suppression, and poaching. Hopefully, the hundreds of Venus Flytraps planted throughout the garden should live for many years to come.

Stanley Rehder Carnivorous Plant Garden, located at 2025 Independence Blvd, is an ADA accessible park that features a walking trail, wooden observation decks and a collection of native carnivorous plants such as Venus Flytraps and Pitcher Plants. I highly recommend a stop there if you're ever in the Wilmington area.

Continuing Education Opportunities

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

[CE] WBC - SUNFLOWERS, A NATIVE AMERICAN BEAUTY. - July 16, 2016 from 10:00 am to 11:00 am at Freedom Park Interpretive Center

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

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

[CE] NPS - Freedom Park Ravine Field Trip - July 23, 2016 from 10:00 am to 12:00 pm at Freedom Park, 5537 Centerville Rd, Williamsburg

[CE] Black Lights and Bugs - **July 27, 2016** from 9:00 pm to 11:00 pm at New Quarter Park, 1000 Lakeshead Dr, Williamsburg, VA 23185

[CE] VIMS July After Hours Lecture: Billfish - July 28, 2016 from 7:00 pm to 8:00 pm at VIMS - Watermen's Hall, McHugh Auditorium 1375 Greate Road Gloucester Point, VA 23062

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

[CE] Butterfly Walk - Freedom Park - August 13, 2016 from 10:00 am to 12:00 pm at Freedom Park, 5537 Centerville Rd, Williamsburg, VA 23188, USA

[CE] WBC - LANDSCAPE YOUR YARD LIKE A PRO - August 20, 2016 from 10:00 am to 11:00 am at Freedom Park Interpretive Center

[CE] HRBC Bird Walk - **August 21, 2016** from 7:00 am to 10:00 am at Newport News City Park

CE WBC Bird Walk - August 27, 2016 from 7:00 am to 9:00 am at New Quarter Park, 1000 Lakeshead Dr., Williamsburg