

The Naturalist

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER
FROM THE HISTORIC RIVERS CHAPTER
VIRGINIA MASTER NATURALISTS



April 2017

Volumn 11, Number 4

The President's Report

If you ever wander through New Quarter Park, maybe bluebirding the trail, osprey watching, or wildlife mapping, or maybe just enjoying the beauty and solitude the park provides, then you've probably seen the whirlwind of energy we call our friend, Sara Lewis. She wears a lot of hats in the park, but the one I like seeing best on her is her HRC VMN hat—the one that allows us to claim her as one of our own.

As you'll read below, Sara is a great advocate of stewardship, and routinely offers each of us a chance to get out and help our environment through a variety of avenues, such as oyster restoration, working in the pollinator garden with Anita Angelone, or washing artifacts. But her words are more powerful than mine, so read on and discover for yourself what great opportunities she has in store for us....

FIVE QUESTIONS FOR ONE AMAZING LADY—SARA LEWIS

FILL IN A LITTLE BACKGROUND INFO ABOUT YOURSELF, PLEASE.

I grew up in far-away Gloucester County. My parents grew up in Mathews, and my ancestors are all from Mathews too. All my ancestors came from England, Wales, and Scotland, dating back to 1635. There was only one so-called "gentleman" in the bunch, as far as I can tell. Most came as indentured servants and lots of them have salt water for blood – sailors and seamen and even a Triangle Trade merchant or two. Can you tell one of my hobbies is genealogy? I've always loved history. In fact, as a high school student my big dream was to work for Colonial Williamsburg and live in Queen's Lake. It seems that I time-traveled a lot but didn't travel far afield except on a vacation or two. When I was called to interview for my first job as a museum curator at the Mississippi State Historical Museum in Jackson, I had to find a map fast. After a few years, I came back to William and Mary to get an MBA degree. Then I went to the Dark Side for a few decades until I quit . . . and found the perfect part-time job at New Quarter Park.

FILL IN A LITTLE ABOUT YOURSELF NOW.

These days I plan programs and do marketing for New Quarter Park and York County Parks, Recreation and Tourism. I also have another part-time job working as

Chapter Board 2017

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Photo by Inge Curtis



Rain Garden Before



Rain Garden After



Weeding the Bobwhite/Butterfly Meadow



Sara Lewis

a speech-language pathologist with The Communication Company. When I'm not working at one of these jobs or volunteering as a Master Naturalist, I'm volunteering as facilitator of the Williamsburg Brain Injury Survivors Support Group. I was in a bad car crash in 1977, back before "traumatic brain injury" was a term of art. Going back to school in 2010 at the age of 54 to get an MS in Communication Sciences and Disorders was the therapy I never got back in the day.

Oh, and I also spend time with my husband, Ken. We celebrate 20 years of marriage this year. Our blended family includes his two boys (one in Chicago and one in Newport News) and my daughter and son (in Gloucester and Newport News). We have 4 grandchildren, ages 9, 6, 3, and 2. Ken and I like to go to concerts and movies and we love to vacation in Oregon, where his 4 siblings live.

WHY DID YOU CHOOSE TO BECOME A MASTER NATURALIST?

Shirley Devan and Susan Powell talked me into it. I was working at New Quarter because of my marketing communication background. I hadn't taken a science course since freshman biology. But we met when New Quarter Park opened in 2005. The Bird Club started their regular twice monthly walks in February 2006. Shirley and Susan kept telling me about this Master Naturalists group they had started and how, because I worked at New Quarter, I really needed to get trained. At the time, I was much more advocacy-oriented and became a Chesapeake Bay Foundation Voices Volunteer first. It was the salt water in my veins. Eventually, though, I applied to HRC and am a Cohort 3 graduate.

WHY DO YOU THINK STEWARDSHIP IS IMPORTANT?

It comes out of my environmental advocacy leanings, and stewardship is simply what I can do best as a Master Naturalist since I don't have a background in science or education. I had an "environmental epiphany" in 2000 when I started kayaking. I saw that the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries didn't look the way I remembered them looking when I was a child. I started reading about the environment and paying attention to environmental issues. (My children like to say I "went all Al Gore" on them.) Also, as a marketing communicator, I do a lot of writing, of course, and attend writing conferences on the side. When I was working at the National Center for State Courts, I told my colleague Brenda Uekert (Cohort 9) about my environmental epiphany and a story I was nursing that I wanted to write. She gave me a software program, something like a fiction writing decision tree, that helped me organize my thoughts and so my first book, "Waterfront Property" was born. After reading and researching for the book and struggling with environmental issues, I came to realize that I had to do what I could do to "save" the environment. I couldn't read enough books or give enough money to the Chesapeake Bay Foundation to make a difference, but I can weed invasive species and save a native plant or two that will feed a bird, that will feed a hawk, that will eat a mouse, that has spread native plant seeds and aerated the soil, etc. I can save the environment by being a good environmental steward.

WHAT STEWARDSHIP OPPORTUNITIES AND ACTIVITIES CAN YOU ENCOURAGE US TO PARTICIPATE IN AT NQP?

The stewardship opportunities and activities at New Quarter Park involve maintaining some of the Historic Rivers Chapter's earliest projects so that our hours and efforts spent building a rain garden,

a teacher trail, and a Bobwhite/butterfly habitat won't have been in vain. These projects were all started by us 6 to 10 years ago. I know that weeding, raking, and mulching aren't as exciting as some of our citizen science and education projects, but we have a responsibility to follow-through. I'm not going to mince words here - I think it reflects badly upon our chapter that we aren't properly maintaining these projects. Okay, I had to push that guilt button. Forgive me. Anyway, maintenance doesn't have to be a chore. I find it to be quite meditative.

And everything comes around again, doesn't it? We've lately discovered that New Quarter Park is historically unique and an archaeologist's dream come true—artifacts in nearly every scoop of dirt out there. I am having so much fun that my history cup runneth over as we uncover the Armistead manor house that no one knew was there until two years ago. Wow. Just WOW! It's moved my planting and weeding stewardship activities to a whole new level as I pay attention to what's in the soil. Some HRC volunteers found bricks (maybe a chimney) under the leaves and trees growing up in the middle of the metal strap that once wound around a wooden wagon wheel. Up in the woods where the bike trail is located, there are historic shell middens about every 200 feet and millions-of-years-old fossil beds under almost every tree fall. Is it just the history nerd in me or have I encouraged anyone else to help with our archaeology stewardship opportunities?

If Sara's enthusiasm has touched the stewardship button in your brain, then write these dates on your calendar and please join us.

POLLINATOR GARDEN MAINTENANCE:

Saturday, May 13 (pollinators) 9am-12noon
 Saturday, June 10 (pollinators) 9am-12noon

BOBWHITE/BUTTERFLY GARDEN MAINTENANCE:

Friday, April 21 9am-12noon
 Saturday, April 29 9am-12noon
 Friday, May 5 9am-12noon
 Friday, May 19 9am-12noon
 Saturday, May 27 9am-12noon
 Friday, June 2 9am-12noon
 Friday, June 17 9am-12noon
 Saturday, June 24 9am-12noon

ARTIFACT WASH AND TALK:

Thursday, April 27 10-12noon or 1-3pm
 Friday, April 28 10-12noon or 1-3pm
 Friday, May 12 10am-12noon
 Friday, May 26 10am-12noon
 Friday, June 9 10am-12noon
 Friday, June 23 10am-12noon

ARCHEOLOGY DIG DAYS

Thursday, April 27 9-12 or 1-4
 Friday, April 28 9-12 or 1-4
 Saturday, April 29 9am-12noon

“WE’VE LATELY DISCOVERED THAT NEW QUARTER PARK IS HISTORICALLY UNIQUE AND AN ARCHAEOLOGIST’S DREAM COME TRUE—ARTIFACTS IN NEARLY EVERY SCOOP OF DIRT OUT THERE.”

Way to go, Jan

Jan Lockwood, Volunteer of the Year, York County

On Tuesday night, April 18, a number of members from the Historic Rivers Chapter of Virginia Master Naturalists gathered to pay tribute to Jan Lockwood. She was awarded York County's Volunteer of the Year for 2016 for her outstanding work at New Quarter Park. The award was presented to Jan by Molly Nealer, Park Supervisor .



Left to right: Molly Nealer, New quarter Park Supervisor, Jan Lockwood, Sara Lewis



MN friends join Jan in celebrating. Left to right: Barb Neis, Sue Mutell, Gwen Harris, Walt Harris, Shirley Devan, Sharon Plocher, Jan Lockwood, Jeanette Navia, Keith Navia, Sara Lewis

We're baggin' in the rain by Sara Lewis

Neither rain, nor snow, nor gloom of night can keep these Master Naturalists from their appointed rounds! Even though the forecast was spot on about that rain, Bill and Janet Harper, Bill Wallace, Ginny Broome, Barb Bucklin, and I showed up to wash and bag oyster shells for the Chesapeake Bay Oyster Restoration Project at VIMS on Friday, March 31. Because it was our regular Fifth Friday and we've promised CBORP staff Heather North and Jackie Shannon that we'd be there to help out every fifth Friday this year, we worked on in the rain for about an hour until we were thoroughly soaked (note to self: don't wear blue jeans if it's supposed to rain!).

We bagged up 140 bags of oysters, with a little help from a Peninsula Chapter Naturalist, a grad student, and Heather and Jackie. Here's your math quiz for today: If we bagged 140 bags that will nurture 1,000 oysters who, in about three years will each filter 50 gallons of Chesapeake Bay water, how much clean water will these (wet but happy) Master Naturalists have contributed to the Bay for the next 10 or so years? Now add that to the number of gallons cleaned by the 319 bags we bagged in January—and WOW!

Our next Fifth Friday Wash and Bag event at the CBF/VIMS site is June 30. Can you join us? Let me know (slewis@cox.net). I hope to see you there and then!

Zen and the Art of Bobwhite/Butterfly Habitat Maintenance by Sara Lewis

Do you love seeing and counting all of the species of birds and butterflies in New Quarter Park's B/B Habitat? Well, it takes a lot of "practice" (aka stewardship) to make it an attractive place for these creatures! Without our TLC, non-natives could take over. So plan to join us as we weed, nurture, and plant. Upcoming sessions will be held on a mix of Fridays and Saturday, April 21, April 29, May 5, May 19, May 27, June 2, June 16, and June 24, from 9 am to noon. If you can only come for part of the time, your presence is still most welcome! Bring gardening tools and water and dress/prepare for the outdoors.

Again this year we will be receiving leftover plants from the Native Plant Society Sale to be held at the Williamsburg Community Building on April 29 from 10 am to 2 pm. If you can help beginning at 2 pm with getting the plants from the sale to the park, your assistance will be greatly appreciated! Please let me know if you can help with plant transportation at slewis@cox.net or [757-784-0344](tel:757-784-0344).



Sara Lewis and Anita Angelone weed in the bobwhite/butterfly habitat



Ginny Broome, Jackie Shannon, Heather North



Bill Harper, Bill Wallace, Janet Harper



Barb Bucklin



Osprey sitting on nest in James River

Photo by Bryan Watts, Director of the Center for Conservation Biology

For osprey and osprey watcher tenacity abounds by Cheryl J. Jacobson

On Feb 23, 2017, a kick-off meeting was held at Freedom Park for experienced watchers, new watchers, and master naturalists who love osprey and wanted to learn more about them. One focus of the meeting was to pair experienced watchers with new watchers. I am so thankful that we have many skilled osprey watchers who are assisting new watchers in this fun and exciting project. Currently 61 master naturalist watchers are monitoring 110 nests in Virginia. Many experienced watchers have stepped up and become a mentor/team with a new watcher.

This project is exciting because it is a global project that has significant importance and impact. It is a global community of observers focused on breeding osprey. Currently there are 2,501 watchers monitoring 6,124 nest world wide. The observers are linked by an interest in osprey, concern for the health of aquatic environments, and data submitted to a repository through the OspreyWatch website. The mission of OspreyWatch is to collect information on a large enough spatial scale to be useful in addressing three of the most pressing issues facing aquatic ecosystems including global climate change, depletion of fish stocks, and environmental contaminants.

Osprey are one of very few truly global sentinels for aquatic health. They feed almost exclusively on live fish throughout their entire life cycle. They are a top consumer within aquatic ecosystems and are very sensitive to both overfishing and environmental contaminants. Nearly all populations breed in the northern latitudes and winter in the southern latitudes, effectively linking the aquatic health of the hemispheres. Their breeding season in the north is highly seasonal making them an effective barometer of climate change.

You still have time to become involved. Go to www.osprey-watch.org to learn more. Also, watch for emails about monthly meetings where members will meet at nest sites to observe and discuss osprey behaviors. We'd love to have you join us!

OSPREY WATCH CO-LEADS, CHERYL J. JACOBSON AND JUDY JONES

Announcement

DEER AND PLANTS—COEXISTENCE? MAY 18, 2017

Where: Multi-purpose room 2, Quarterpath Recreation Center, 202 Quarterpath Road, Williamsburg, VA, 23185,

When: 7:00 pm.

At the next meeting of the John Clayton Chapter, Virginia Native Plant Society, Deborah Green, Professor Emerita at the Collect of William and Mary will talk about the ethical issues of hunting, the public perception of deer management, and how deer affect plant communities. Dr. Green has conducted workshops and has written widely about deer management strategies.

For information: Contact Donna Ware, 757 565 0657. The meeting is

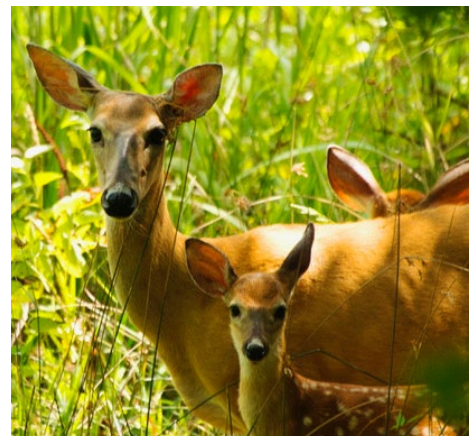


Photo by Seig Kopinitz

Spring Butterfly Sightings

We've had roller coaster temperatures in the last few weeks, and the butterflies started to come out really early. We have new early sighting dates for several butterflies, and here are some of the photos taken by members.

Be on the lookout for the Spring butterflies in the coming weeks. We should see...

ORANGETIP FALCATES - Small white butterfly and the male has orange tips to his forewings.

CLOUDED AND ORANGE SULPHERS - Most look yellow, but they can look white or orange.

AZURES—These little blue butterflies can be different species but you can't tell them apart without close inspection.

EASTERN TIGER SWALLOWTAIL—ETSs come out early, then have multiple broods throughout the summer.

ZEBRA SWALLOWTAIL AND BLACK SWALLOWTAIL—We've seen just a couple of these.

HENRY'S ELFIN AND A COUPLE OF SATYRS—Small dark butterflies that can be seen in groups.

OTHERS...

Thank you everyone for your photos and reports! Please keep track of the first dates of your observations.

Adrienne



Eastern-Tailed Blue
by Shirley Devan



Gemed Satyr
by Nancy Barnhart



Orange Sulphur
by Ken Lorenzo



Ragged-looking Henry's Elfin by Judy Jones

My Groundhog Day

by Roger Gosden <http://rogergosden.com>



THIS FIRST ENCOUNTER WITH A SYMPTOMATIC RABIES VICTIM WILL REMIND ME IN FUTURE TO BEWARE OF ANY MAMMAL BEHAVING CONTRARY TO ITS NATURE."

A gentle dog walk at Jamestown Island turned into a rabid animal attack today. You might ask how I knew it was rabid. Was it tested for the rabies virus? [No] Have I encountered a rabid animal before? [No] I only had symptoms to go on, as well as familiarity with normal groundhog behavior. They often visit our yard to check if the veggie garden is ripe for a nocturnal raid, but whenever I encounter them they run in the opposite direction. So, what happened this morning?

I let our two golden retrievers off the leash in the large meadow bordering the historic area which we visit most weeks. While the dogs were scampering a hundred yards ahead I noticed a large ball of brown fur in the grass and wandered over to examine it. I assumed it was a dead animal that scavengers hadn't found yet, because I passed two dozen black vultures gorging on the carcass of a road-kill deer thirty minutes earlier.

When I was less than six feet away and bending over for a closer look at the body it suddenly unrolled and sprung to its feet in obvious fury, baring its incisors and making a strange gurgling sound. It was a large groundhog in a very bad way. Its coat was unkempt, not sleek from grooming, and its short tail looked like a chimney brush instead of a bushy duster. This groundhog had been fighting.

I expected it would run away but it ran at me, nipping at my loose trouser leg. It was crazy! When I stepped back it attacked again and again. I started to run until it flagged, and then stopped to take its photo with my cell phone from a cautious distance. It was a pathetic sight, and if I could I would have killed it humanely.

I hurried over to warn a ranger, passing dozens of kids pouring out of a bus to tour the area, but first I gathered and leashed the dogs. Had they encountered the beast I would be telling another story because one or more of our trio would have been bitten.

Chickahominy Riverfront Park “Camp Out” March 31 – April 2

by Shirley Devan

Mother Nature doesn't care what your plans are! Master Naturalists have learned that lesson numerous times. So when Historic Rivers Chapter “Camp Out” at Chickahominy Riverfront Park started out with severe thunderstorms on Friday March 31, we knew Mother Nature had other plans for us.

We didn't take it personally and eagerly forged ahead with the activities to explore the habitat and wildlife at this county park on the shore of the Chickahominy River.

A HUGE FIND

Nine MNs participated in the Bird Walk on a chilly Saturday morning led by Cheryl Jacobson and me. We watched Osprey-Bald Eagle interactions over Gordon Creek, observed two Ospreys building a nest on the duck blink, and spied Greater Yellowlegs foraging in the marsh. Anne-Marie Castellani upped our game to a new level when she spotted a Peregrine Falcon underneath the bridge structure. Then there were two falcons! Oh my! Cameras, spotting scopes, binoculars trained on the two falcons. Which was the male? Which was the female? Are they nesting? All questions we bounced around as we observed in stunned disbelief at birds hardly ever seen this close up and this clarity. Can you hardly blame us that we returned to the fishing pier near the bridge several times over the two days to see what the falcons were doing. We observed a total of 37 species in challenging conditions.

BASE CAMP

Alister Perkinson, Manager of the Park, graciously allowed us to occupy three campsites along the Creek for the weekend. Though no one camped overnight, Master Naturalists used the sites both days as our “base camp” for parking, lunch, and hanging out.

WINDY ACTIVITIES

Barbara Bucklin, in charge of the daily kayak trips, declared the water too rough for a Saturday kayak outing, but she did venture out Sunday morning with MN Bruce Glendenning and her husband Harris to explore Morris Creek across the river and Gordon Creek along the Park's northern edge.

The 1:00 pm butterfly walk turned up just a few of the usual suspects on a windy afternoon. With Les Lawrence's help, we did spy an “anglewing” but were not able to pin it down to a Question Mark or an Eastern Comma. Oh well! Mother Nature was in charge.

Judy Jones and Cheryl Jacobson checked the Osprey nests around the park for their weekly OspreyWatch Project. One possible nest near the W&M Boathouse showed no activity while we were there but bears watching because a hawk may still decide to take up residence. We observed an Osprey drop down and lift off with a huge fish right in front of our eyes, and George Reiske snapped a few action photos.



Osprey plucks a fish out of the Chick.

Photo by George Reiske



One of a pair of Peregrine Falcons who hangs out near the Rt. 5 Bridge.

Photo by Inge Curtis

BUTTERFLIES AND FALCONS AND SNAKES, OH MY

Sunday morning's Bird Walk turned up 50 species in more favorable weather conditions and the five participants enjoyed good looks at Yellow-throated Warblers, Blue-gray Gnatcatchers, dozens of Tree Swallows, and Palm Warblers. Many thanks to Nancy Barnhart for bringing her keen ears (and eyes!) and for keeping score on the four hour meander around the park. We were excited to see the Peregrine Falcons at the bridge again and thrilled seeing one grab an unfortunate bird out of the air for a mid-morning snack.

While we were admiring the falcons on the bridge, Les Lawrence turned 180 degrees and spotted a Northern Watersnake sunning itself on the shoreline directly behind us. Cameras snapped and we admired this good-sized snake.

The afternoon butterfly walk led by Les Lawrence turned up three Henry's Elfins, numerous Eastern Tailed-Blues, Eastern Tiger Swallow-tails, Cloudless Sulphurs, and a Zebra Swallowtail.

Judy Jones, Jeanette and Keith Navia, and George Reiske performed the weekly check of the bluebird boxes at the Park and found four active bluebird nests and a total of 19 eggs. Box 10, by the pool, has five eggs and the female is already incubating. All the others were still in the process of adding eggs

Warmer weather from Mother Nature would have brought out more Master Naturalists for the weekend's "naturalizing." Everyone who joined in had a great weekend with memories of great birds, butterflies, and a snake! Thanks to Barb Bucklin for getting us organized and to the leaders who showed us the wildlife. Also, thanks to Alister and the Park staff for cooperating to make the weekend possible. Perhaps we'll try again when the weather warms up.



Les Lawrence (center), discovered a Northern Watersnake sunning itself underneath the bridge with Shirley Devan (l) and Barb Bucklin (r) looking on. Photo by Katie Johanson

MN weed invasive species



Ten volunteers from the Historic Rivers Chapter gathered at the Williamsburg Botanical Garden this morning (Feb 24) to clear Japanese Honeysuckle and raspberry brambles from the Wildflower Meadow. We were under the direction of HRC member Gary Driscole, a regular volunteer at the Garden. This is a Stewardship project of the Historic Rivers Chapter.

Left to right: Gary Driscole, Nancy Gore, Keith Navia, George Salwasser, Adrienne Frank, Shan Gill, Karen Grass, Susan Engle, and Mary Jo Davis-Headley (kneeling). Photo by Shirley Devan

Trivia

These Central and South American-dwelling animals, often confused with beavers or even pigs, are actually the world's largest rodents. What are they?

ANSWER: Capybaras. They spend a lot of time in the water, so they have slightly webbed feet and beaver-like faces, but they're most closely related to guinea pigs.

What common garden pest can sleep for up to three years at a time?

ANSWER: The snail. They typically only hibernate through the winter but they are capable of remaining asleep for much longer.

Wildflower of the Month – April 2017

JOHN CLAYTON CHAPTER OF THE VIRGINIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY



Photo by Phillip Merritt

JACK-IN-THE-PULPIT

Arisaema triphyllum

BY HELEN HAMILTON, PAST PRESIDENT, THE JOHN CLAYTON CHAPTER

This easy to grow native wildflower has unusual foliage and flower. The striped green and purple canopy (spathe) curves gracefully over a club-shaped spadix (the “Jack” or preacher in his canopied pulpit). The lower portion of the spadix carries tiny flowers of one or both sexes, where heat and odor are produced, attracting pollinating flies. A single 3-parted leaf on a long stalk then expands and overtops the spathe. Appearing along with the flowers, the leaves are divided into 3 parts, the two lower leaflets more or less horizontal to the third leaflet. Jack-in-the-Pulpit leaves could be confused with those of trillium, but the 3 leaflets of trillium are all equidistant from each other.

Fruits are smooth, shiny green berries clustered at the base of the thickened spadix; they ripen in late summer when the spathe and leaf wither, revealing the cluster of bright red berries borne on a stalk 1-2 feet high, replacing the leaf and flower.

Jack-in-the-Pulpit is an excellent choice for a shade or woodland wildflower garden where it will thrive in rich soil and partial to full shade. It is very easy to cultivate and requires little care, and grows under a variety of conditions. It partners well with columbine (*Aquilegia canadensis*) and foamflower (*Tiarella cordifolia*).

Native in all counties of Virginia, this woodland plant is found in every state east of the Mississippi, and extends through central U.S. to the borders of Colorado and Utah and into Canada.

While birds and mammals eat the berries of this plant, all parts produce intensely irritating calcium oxalate crystals. American Indians knew that cooking and drying eliminated the bitter taste; roots were used as a vegetable, ground for bread doughs, and used for a variety of medicinal purposes.

Arisaema refers to the plant’s resemblance to other members of the Arum family, the Araceae – Skunk Cabbage (*Symplocarpus foetidus*), Arrow-arum (*Peltandra virginica*), and Golden Club (*Orontium aquaticum*) are native to Virginia. Other members of this family from the tropics are grown as familiar house plants. Peace Lily (*Spathiphyllum*), *Philodendron*, and *Dieffenbachia* are sold locally in garden centers and nurseries. Another relative *Caladium*, also known as Elephant Ears, is grown for its colorful foliage and is often planted in woodland gardens.



This is an Eight-Spotted Forester Moth (*Alypia octomaculata*) Clyde Marsteller found in his Holly bushes. This gorgeous moth is very tiny but it is unusual in the fact it is a day flier. Caterpillar feeds on Virginia Creeper and Pepper Vine. Photo by Clyde Marsteller

Wildflower of the Month – April 2017

JOHN CLAYTON CHAPTER OF THE VIRGINIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

This tree is easily recognized in winter condition with the corky twigs and drooping, spiny fruit balls. Sweetgum is a large tree with a straight trunk, rounded crown, and deeply ridged gray bark. In early spring inconspicuous greenish flowers are in ball-like clusters along with shiny green leaves arranged alternately on the branch, with distinctive 5-7 starlike lobes. They are aromatic when crushed, and turn reddish in autumn. The leaves of Sweetgum are sometimes confused with those of maples which also show palmate lobes, but the leaves of maples are arranged opposite each other on the twig.

Sweetgum grows in moist or wet woodlands and is widely distributed, ranging from the Connecticut coast to the highlands of Guatemala, mostly in the coastal zone. In Virginia, Sweetgum is found in the eastern and central counties. Flowers appear in April-May; fruits in September-November.

The common name is derived from *liquidus*, “fluid”, and the Arabic *ambar*, alluding to the fragrant gum which exudes from the tree. An important timber tree, Sweetgum is a leading furniture wood, used for cabinetwork, veneer and boxes. It takes stains readily and is often finished to resemble expensive woods.

While much used as a fast-growing ornamental tree, the fallen seedheads are a nuisance on lawns. But the fruit-balls, sometimes spray-painted, are popular in dried floral arrangements.

Several species of songbirds and squirrels eat the seeds; beaver often use this species when available. Sweetgum was first reported by the Spanish naturalist, Hernandez, in Mexico City in 1615, and introduced to England in 1688.

SWEETGUM

Liquidambar styraciflua

BY HELEN HAMILTON, PAST PRESIDENT, THE JOHN CLAYTON CHAPTER



Photo by Shirley Devan

Wildlife mappers at Freedom Park



(Left to right) Alister Perkinson, Shan Gill, Nancy Barnhart, Les Lawrence, Joyce Lowery, and leader Hart Haynes. Photo by Judy Jones

WE'RE UPDATING OUR RECORDS WITH THE 2017 VOLUNTEER DISCLOSURE RELEASE

On March 8th, our chapter said a grateful farewell to our previous chapter advisor, Mary Apperson, and a warm hello to our new advisor, Page Hutchinson. During a conversation with Mary Apperson and Michelle Prysby, it came to light that we should have been saving every application from every cohort over the years and keeping them in a safe, secure spot. When I said that our chapter was worried about confidential material being too accessible, Michelle explained that it's for that reason that all applications are always kept with the chapter advisor, in a locked box, in a sponsoring agency's office.

We didn't save them. Our training committee explained to me that they have always been shredded to preserve confidentiality. However, now we know that we must keep in storage the sheet that we all signed with the media release, the 'have you ever been convicted of a crime', and the 'I know we are Equal Opportunity'.

So, we've taken that sheet from the most recent application, squished it all onto one page, and are sending one to each of you for your perusal and then signature. We are asking all cohort members to print this page, sign it, and then send it back to our post office box by May 31st. They will then be collected and stored with Page. Our HRC address is:

**Historic Rivers Chapter, Virginia Master Naturalist
PO Box 5026, Williamsburg, VA 23188**

To make life a little easier on you, we will have copies ready for signature at the April and May general membership meetings. (That will save your stamp for another even more important piece of mail!)

As a way forward for future volunteers, the whole application (not just the signature page) will be saved and stored in Page's office in her locked box.

VIRGINIA MASTER NATURALIST PROGRAM - HISTORIC RIVERS CHAPTER

Volunteer Enrollment Update

The Virginia Master Naturalist Program is sponsored jointly by Virginia Cooperative Extension, the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality, the Virginia Department of Forestry, the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, the Virginia Institute of Marine Science's Center for Coastal Resources Management, and the Virginia Museum of Natural History.

VOLUNTARY DISCLOSURE

(This information will be kept in a confidential manner and accessible only to authorized personnel. A "yes" answer does not automatically exclude you from volunteering with the Virginia Master Naturalist program.)

Have you ever had any criminal convictions? YES NO

I understand that records and criminal background or reference checks may be conducted on me at any time during the volunteer service for the Virginia Master Naturalist program.

Signature, Volunteer _____ Date

VOLUNTEER AGREEMENT

I am volunteering my time to further the mission of the Virginia Master Naturalist program and its sponsoring agencies. I understand that the Virginia Master Naturalist program is open to all, regardless of age, color, disability, gender, gender identity, gender expression, national origin, political affiliation, race, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, veteran status, or any other basis protected by law. I recognize that VMN is an equal opportunity/affirmative organization.

I agree to abide by all policies and procedures of the Virginia Master Naturalist program and its sponsoring agencies. I understand that the Virginia Master Naturalist volunteers serve at the sole discretion of the Virginia Master Naturalist program and its sponsoring agencies. The program or its sponsoring agencies may at any time, for whatever reason, decide to terminate the volunteer's relationship with the organization or to make changes in the nature of his or her volunteer assignment.

Signature, Volunteer _____ Date

MEDIA RELEASE

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Signature, Volunteer _____ Date

Upcoming Continuing Education (CE) Opportunities

The Continuing Education (CE) calendar is posted on the VMN Volunteer Management System website. When you log in to enter your hours, you can find the link to the CE calendar in the left-hand column under, Event Calendars—Continuing Education. Click an activity on the calendar and open to find a more detailed description (including registration information, contact information, any cost, etc.) of the continuing education activity.

Christopher Wren (CW) classes that contain content on the natural environment are accepted as CE training. CW classes require registration and payment (\$\$\$) through the W&M Christopher Wren Association. Virginia Living Museum (VLM) programs require registration through the VLM. Virginia Institute of Marine Science (VIMS) programs require registration through the VIMS. If you have a question about the relevance of a topic for Continuing Education or wish to check whether or not you can obtain CE hours, please contact the Continuing Education Chair, Jennifer Trevino, jbktrvino8@cox.net

Sat 22 Apr 2017	Williamsburg Bird Club Bird Walk, New Quarter Park, 7:00 am
Sat 22 Apr 2017	NPS - Sinkhole Ponds & Orchids, Grafton Ponds, Yorktown, 10:00 am
Tue 25 Apr 2017	VIMS Discovery Lab: Jelly Fish - Catlett-Buress Res & Ed Lab, 7577 Spencer Rd, Gloucester Pt., 6:00-8:00 pm
Thu 27 Apr 2017	Naturally Speaking - Turning Blooms to Butterflies, VLM, 6:30-8:00 pm
Tue 02 May 2017	Naturally Speaking - Turning Blooms to Butterflies, VLM, 6:30-8:00 pm
Sat 06 May 2017	John Clayton Chpt-VA Native Plant Society (VNPS) Spring Flowers Walk, Newport News Park, 10:00 am
Sun 07 May 2017	Hampton Roads Bird Club Sunday Bird Walk, Newport News Park, 7:00 am
Wed 10 May 2017	HRC General Mtg - Jamie Brunkow-James River Org-Role of River-Keeper, 6:00 pm
Sat 13 May 2017	Great Snakes with Tim Christiansen, New Quarter Park, 10:00 am
Sat 13 May 2017	Photography for the Master Naturalist with George Reiske, Freedom Park, 1:00 pm
Wed 17 May 2017	Williamsburg Bird Club Monthly Meeting, W&M Andrews Hall, Rm 101, 7:00 pm
Sat 20 May 2017	Naturally Speaking - Wildlife Photography 101, VLM, 9:00-4:30 pm (\$\$\$)
Sat 20 May 2017	Williamsburg Bird Club Field Trip to James River Park, Richmond, 7:00 am
Sun 21 May 2017	Hampton Roads Bird Club Sunday Bird Walk, Newport News Park, 7:00 am
Sat 27 May 2017	Williamsburg Bird Club Bird Walk, New Quarter Park, 7:00 am

A BIG THANKS

A big thanks to Doug Dwoyer for his help, encouragement and advice. He left all the material I could ever need or hope for in such good shape. Thank you again, Doug.

And thank you to Shirley Devan and Judy Jones (excellent proofreading and encouragement) and other Master Naturalists for their encouragement. I couldn't have done this first issue without any of you. *Cindy Baker*