

The Naturalist

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER
FROM THE HISTORIC RIVERS CHAPTER
VIRGINIA MASTER NATURALISTS

Virginia
Master
Naturalist



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**Male Prothonotary
Warbler**

Photo by Inge Curtis

The President's Report

You may not have had a chance to meet one of the newest jewels in our Historic Rivers Chapter. Fred Matthies transferred his membership to us in 2016, so he is a recent but profoundly appreciated new member. Fred is always visible at outreach events, volunteering at most of our education/outreach opportunities. But, although he enjoys the social aspect of these activities, his heart truly belongs to the stewardship opportunities of Wahrani Natural Trail in New Kent County. He is walking the trail three or four times a week and is always looking for ways to enhance, improve, and develop the trail. And so, Fred is our stewardship focus of the month. As the advocate and champion of the Wahrani Trail, he's written a beautiful description below and is looking for volunteers to help him with this project. Read on and see if you aren't swayed to devote some energy to this mission.

Judy Jones, President

Wahrani Nature Trail in New Kent County

By Fred Matthies

If you have seen the online comments about the Wahrani Nature Trail, you might be a bit leery: "Got lost"... "Bring bread crumbs"... "Lost and confused for 3 hours"...! Don't let these "old" comments keep you from hiking one of the best trails within 60 miles of Richmond! This trail has a rich history and was opened by the Chesapeake Forest Products Company in 1973. After nearly 40 years, it was transferred to New Kent County Parks & Recreation Department. The nature park comprises 138 acres, and is shaded by pine, beech, poplar and other hardwoods. After a brief rain, you will also see many different types of mushrooms. While hiking the trail on rainy afternoons, mist enshrouds the fern-blanketed hills, and you may be reminded of the Smokey Mountains rather than our coastal plain. While on the 3.4+ mile "moderate" hike, you can observe numerous rivulets, the ruins of the Warreneye Church (1703) and two 18th century gravesites. In addition to the plants and points of interest, there is also a considerable variety of wildlife along the nature trail. Wild turkey, deer, squirrels, raccoons, opossums, snakes, skunks and many types of birds have all been observed near the trail. If you are a quiet and observant hiker, you might see some of these animals.

In late 2015, the Nature Trail was approved as Project S2a9 for our Chapter. Over the past few years, the trail has seen vast improvements and no one ever gets lost anymore....mostly! The Trail is maintained by a caring posse of avid volunteers: New Kent County Parks & Rec, the Eastern Virginia Mountain Biking Association and the Historic Rivers Master Naturalists. If you have hiked the trail recently, you will notice new bridges, tri-fold brochures with updated maps at all bulletin boards and added signage. The park's multi-use trails are for both hikers and mountain bikers and

Nature Trail continued

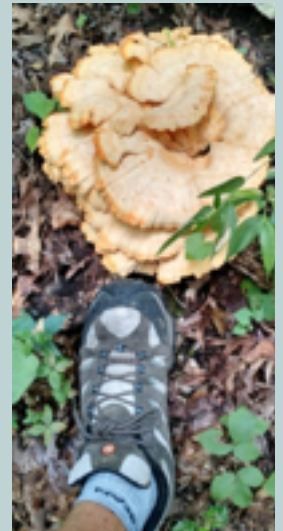


A local hiking club takes advantage the Wahrani Nature Trail in New Kent County.

provide a good deal of shade from the forest canopy. There are other facilities, such as a large parking lot, a playground, a picnic pavilion and a composting toilet.

The Wahrani Nature Trail presents us with a unique opportunity for volunteer service: conducting nature hikes/environmental education, wildlife mapping, trail maintenance, habitat improvement, monitoring & relocating bird houses and for any number of related special events. To help you navigate the trail, be sure pick up a map at one of the 4 bulletin boards located throughout the park, then orient the map to the trail. I would love to give you an introductory hike, so please give me a call (804-557-2661).

The Wahrani Nature Trail is easy to find. If coming from Williamsburg, take I-64 West and then Exit 220 toward West Point. The Trail is just five miles west of West Point. 17343 Eltham Rd. West Point, VA23181



A polypore mushroom found along the trail compared to a men's size 14 shoe.

Chapter Board 2017

President	Judy Jones
Vice President & Programs	Jan Lockwood
Co-recording Secretaries	Sue Mutell
Treasurer	Barbara Neis
Membership	Renee Dallman
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Joe Beene

Recognitions

JAN LOCKWOOD IS RECOGNIZED AS YORK COUNTY VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR

by Sara Lewis

Each year, the divisions of the York County Department of Community Services recognizes volunteers who have helped the county better serve its citizens. This year, New Quarter Park nominated Jan Lockwood, Virginia Master Naturalists and park neighbor, to receive the award for the Parks, Recreation, and Tourism Division. She was recognized during a ceremony held before the York County Board of Supervisors meeting on Tuesday, April 18.

Jan Lockwood and her husband, John, retired to the Williamsburg area in 2009 from Rockford, Illinois, where Jan had worked for the municipal park system. There, she remembers her director worked hard to secure funding for much-needed recreation programs, which people in the area, including the Lockwood family, benefitted from and enjoyed. Jan said, "I also saw the impact that a caring, passionate individual can have on a community and the value of service. And that led me to New Quarter and its bluebirds (almost my backyard) when we moved here."

Soon after discovering the bluebird trail at New Quarter, monitored by Historic Rivers Chapter Virginia Master Naturalists members, Jan volunteered to take over monitoring management responsibilities for the trail with Lois Ullman. While she heads up a group of volunteers who monitor New Quarter's trail of 19 nest boxes, she & Lois also coordinate data collection on bluebird trails throughout the area for the Virginia Bluebird Society. Jan has presented programs on bluebirds to club monitors, to the public during Saturday Walk and Talk programs, and to school children who take field trips to New Quarter.

After a year or two in the area and becoming involved as a member of the Master Naturalists and Williamsburg Bird Club, Jan initiated regular Wildlife Mapping walks at the park. Jan leads two to three 2-hour walks each month and area citizens are invited to join her. She also coordinates bird walks at the Park, held every 2nd and 4th Saturday, and led by a member of the Williamsburg Bird Club. Jan is the count circle organizer for annual Christmas and Spring Bird Counts and a summer Butterfly Count that includes New Quarter. When Jan isn't the organizer, she almost always in attendance at programs like Bug Nights and other New Quarter Walk and Talk programs.

Bird Club and Master Naturalists chapters as well as New Quarter Park staff count on Jan for so many projects and citizen science efforts that involve the park. Because she lives in Queen's Lake and comes to the park almost every day, she's been called on to help with everything from wildlife veterinary suggestions to making sure a beaver skeleton got to the Master Naturalists for use in educational programs. Jan is indeed a caring and passionate person who is making a difference for citizens and citizen science at New Quarter Park.

Congratulations, Jan!



VIRGINIA STATE PARKS RECOGNIZES THE HR CHAPTER

The 2016 Virginia Blues Award for Exemplary Volunteer Service was presented to the Historic Rivers Chapter of the Virginia Master Naturalists by Jon Tustin, Manager of York River State Park. He presented this award to the chapter at the general membership meeting on March 12th. It was awarded for the myriad of support services the chapter's volunteers offer to York River State Park, including but not limited to monitoring two bluebird trails consisting of 56 boxes, inventorying park wildlife through the Wildlife Camera Trap project as well as Wildlife Mapping, assisting with leading school groups, helping with native plant gardens and, of course, stewardship through the removal of invasives,

A DOUBLE-DUTY MASTER NATURALIST IS RECOGNIZED

There are some Virginia Master Naturalists who enjoy volunteering so much that they have also committed to the VCE Master Gardener program. Since volunteer service cannot be double-counted for these two programs, Master Gardeners who are also Master Naturalists must complete and report enough service to maintain their status with each program separately. VMN-Historic Rivers Chapter member Gwen Harris recently received the York County Master Gardener of the Year award.

Congratulations, Gwen!

Recognitions continued



SUSAN POWELL REACHES 5,000-HOUR MILESTONE

In 2016, Susan Powell, VMN-Historic Rivers Chapter, reached the noteworthy milestone of 5,000 volunteer hours completed and reported. Susan has been a VMN volunteer since 2006. She's been a significant leader in the chapter, serving on the board for many years, teaching classes for the basic training course, and overseeing risk management for chapter projects. She also teaches workshops to train new volunteers in the Wildlife Mapping project; the Historic Rivers Chapter has an extremely organized Wildlife Mapping project that they carry out as a group in several local parks. Susan also manages to get outdoors to do bird and butterfly counts. One of Susan's most significant accomplishments was leading the kiosk project at Freedom Park. In this project, chapter volunteers collected photos, audio files, and descriptions of local wildlife for an electronic kiosk at the park so that visitors can learn about the plants and animals they might see while exploring the area.

Only one other VMN volunteer has completed and reported 5,000 hours: Tom Adkins, VMN-Shenandoah, who achieved the milestone at the end of 2014.

Shirley Devan's Monarchs

We usually see most monarchs in late summer but they migrate through our area in the spring and lay eggs if they find milkweed. I was really excited to see a female Monarch in my front garden April 17 when she spent several hours laying eggs on the four kinds of milkweed in my garden — Common Milkweed, Swamp Milkweed, Butterfly Weed, and Whorled Milkweed.

As eggs do, they hatched and at one point I counted a dozen tiny caterpillars munching on the milkweed.

Monarchs continued

On May 10 I moved 10 large caterpillars to my butterfly pavilion loaded up with Swamp Milkweed I purchased at the John Clayton Chapter Native Plant Sale still in pots that I had been slow in planting.



Monarch on milkweed — April 17; Photo by Shirley Devan



Caterpillars on milkweed — May 9; Photo by Steve Devan



Caterpillars in butterfly pavilion — May 10; Photo by Shirley Devan

A Tale of the Prothonotaries



Above left: Female with nesting materials; above right: female in nesting box; below: male inside Inge's kitchen window.

Photos by Inge Curtis



For the past eight years Inge Curtis has had a pair of Prothonotary warblers nesting in her yard. She is quite certain the male is the same one that has been here all these years. However, she believes the female is not the same. Her behavior is different from all the other year's birds. Also, they arrived quite a bit later this year than in previous years. She hopes all goes well with them. Here are three images from this season's couple.

Historic Rivers Chapter at the Earth Day Monarch Festival



On Earth Day, April 22nd, our Historic Rivers Chapter staffed a table at the William and Mary Monarch Festival. While myriads of folks wandered through two huge butterfly tents under the supervisor of butterfly champion Catherine Short, the rest of our volunteer team shared with all who wandered by the incredible joy of being a Virginia Master Naturalist. Volunteers are (left to right in the photo)—Judy Jones, Joni Carlson, Barb Dunbar, Jill McCarn, Abby McCarn, Cindy Baker, Sarah McCarn, Patty Maloney, and Dean Gordon. Not pictured are Deb Woodward, Dorothy Geyer, Christina Clarke, and Jan Lockwood. Many special thanks go to Barb Dunbar and Patty Maloney, who coordinated the display and provided all the materials to make the children's crafts.

Wildflower of the Month—May 2017

JOHN CLAYTON CHAPTER OF THE VIRGINIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

JAMESTOWN (ATAMASCO) LILY

Zephyranthes atamasca

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

Jamestown lilies were among the first of many beautiful wildflowers to be noticed by the Jamestown colonists. A writer in 1629 reports: "The Indians in Virginia do call it *Attamusco*, some among us do call it *Lilionarcissus Virginianus*, because of the likeness of the flower to a Lilly (sic), and the leaves and root to a Daffodil." The Indian name refers to the location of the bulb under grass-like leaves. The genus name comes from the Greek, *zephyros*, meaning west wind, a reference to their origin in the Western Hemisphere from which they were first introduced to European gardeners in the 1800s.

Many species of *Zephyranthes* live in dry regions where they emerge from dormancy and quickly burst into bloom after infrequent heavy rainstorms. Hence, other common names are "rain lily", "fairy lily", and "zephyr lily". With a flower form like a trumpet, an alternative common name is "Easter lily", although it is not closely related to the Easter lily of florist shops. A member of the Amaryllis Family, the Jamestown Lily is related to the familiar daffodils, amaryllis, and snowdrops.

The bulb may have been used medically by some southern Native American tribes for toothache but all parts of the plant are poisonous if eaten. Also called "stagger lily" because horses eating the leaves or bulbs succumb to a cerebrospinal disease. Bacon's Rebellion was put down when the settlers served a tea made from the leaves to the English soldiers, who seemed to be intoxicated for several days.

The fragrant flowers are white with a yellowish center, and the stems may be as tall as of 12-18 inches. They grow well in shade to part shade to full sun, preferring a low, damp location. Rafts of these lovely white lilies announce the arrival of spring in moist open woodlands, meadows and along country roads throughout the southeastern U.S. from Virginia to Mississippi and the northern half of Florida. Another of its habitats is on low ground adjacent to brackish marshes, such as at Jamestown Island.

Jamestown lily is hardy in zones 7-10. To propagate, divide the small bulblets from the mother bulb. The seeds can be planted as soon as they ripen, and will germinate quickly, but it will be 2-3 years before seedling plants produce their first flowers. Jamestown lilies look best in masses. They can be grown right in the lawn where they will rise and flower in early spring before you have to begin mowing the grass, or in a woodland garden.

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



Photo by by Helen Hamilton

Litter

How many times have you driven along one of our roads and noticed all the litter on the shoulders? I ran into the same thing in God's Three Acres. As I was picking up the junk I decided to keep representative kinds of litter I had collected and do some research on how long the stuff stays in the environment before it decomposes.

Here is a listing:

Piece of paper	2 to 4 weeks
Candy Wrapper	1 to 3 months
Aluminum Can	350 years
Soda/Beer six pack plastic holder	450 years
*Plastic Bottle	1000 years
Glass Jar/Bottle	1 Million Years
Plastic Water/Soda Bottle	NEVER
Any Styrofoam Product	NEVER

[Taken from Food Democracy July 16 2008]

Plastic bags are made from oil. It takes about 4,301,000 gallons of oil to produce 100 million plastic bags. The U.S. goes through 380 BILLION of them a year.

A statistics class at Indiana University did the math: more than 1.6 BILLION gallons of oil are used each year for plastic bags alone. Compounding the problem is the fact that not only do we make tons of plastic bags (and use lots of oil in the process) we only recycle 1 percent. One lousy percent. It's pitiful. G3A is across the street from a 7-11 and a Food Lion. More than half the trash I picked up was plastic bags.

But the plastic problem gets worse. Under perfect conditions a bag takes a thousand years to biodegrade, and in a landfill plastic bags decompose even slower. If buried, they block the natural flow of oxygen and water in the soil. If burned, they release dangerous toxins and carcinogens into the air. The

damage is even more severe when the bags end up in the ocean where thousands of sea turtles and other marine life die each year after mistaking plastic bags for food. (Peninsula to the James & York Rivers to the Bay to the Ocean).

Ireland, Taiwan, South Africa, Australia, and China have heavily taxed plastic bags or banned their use entirely. In 2001, Ireland consumed 1.3 billion plastic bags. A plastic bag consumption tax of 37 cents per bag was introduced. In one year it reduced consumption by 90%. Approximately 181,000,000 liters of oil have been saved by the Irish. (I'll drink to that)!

How many recycled newspapers does it take to save a tree?

[Extracted from an article by Bruce G. Marcot, Ph.D. Research Ecologist, USDA Forest Service, PNW Research Station, Portland OR.]

If one family recycles 365 newspapers, they will save about 0.48 trees, or about half a tree. My elementary school classes average 22 students so I tell them if they have their families recycle all their newspapers for a year they will save 11 trees which is enough habitat for one family of woodpeckers or 3 or 4 nests of songbirds!

QED (math talk for the Latin "Quod Erat Demonstrandum, Thus it Has Been Proven.)

Steven King in his novel "IT" called plastic bags blown across the landscape and caught in trees and bushes "Junkyard Dandruff."

Please brush the dandruff off our landscapes and recycle!

Finally I came across this Native American proverb that I am going to take as my own personal credo: "We do not inherit the earth from our ancestors; we borrow it from our children."



Clyde's personal credo:

"WE DO NOT INHERIT THE EARTH FROM OUR ANCESTORS, WE BORROW IT FROM OUR CHILDREN."



Felice Bond donated plants to the new James River Elementary butterfly garden.

Nancy Norton Nature Camp Scholarship Winners

By Judy Jones

Virginia Master Naturalists Meet Nature Camp Scholarships Recipients

The Historic Rivers Chapter of the Virginia Master Naturalists was proud to congratulate their three Nancy Norton Nature Camp scholarship recipients on Wednesday night, May 10th. The three students will be attending the 2017 sessions of Nature Camp, nestled in the Blue Ridge Mountains of Rockbridge County, VA. The three students (left to right--Jacob Hinton, Zane Eckols, and Allyson Motter, with HRC President Judy Jones) were selected because of their love of nature and their commitment to environmental studies.

Our three Nancy Norton Nature Camp scholarship winners have been chosen. They are Allyson Motter, Zane Eckols, and Jacob Hinton. Let me tell you a little bit about each!

Ally Motter is an 11th grader from James City County and a returning camper. She hopes to study herpetology at Nature Camp next summer. She writes in her application, "Nature Camp has been the single most defining experience of my young-adult life. Having a scholarship would not only reduce expenses at home as I look to the looming cost of college, but also give me an organization to owe my gratitude and share my experiences with. Because of Nature Camp, I have become involved with our school program to raise awareness among the student body about environmental issues and how to combat them. I also do research at Christopher Newport University regarding the impact of environmental stress on zebra fish. Because of my experiences at Nature Camp, I now hope to pursue a career in an environmental field."

Now meet Zane Eckols. Zane is a 10th grader from upper York County whose major interest is in Mycology. He's also attended Nature Camp in the past. He is interested in Marine Biology as a career and writes that "I'd like to learn more about getting rid of pollution in our creeks, streams, and rivers so as to better preserve marine life. I am on the York County Youth Commission which means that I have a leadership position for the youth of York County. I want to create more special events for teens to get involved and to help make our county's environment healthier. I also volun-

teer with our school's Key Club and love to make a difference."

Our third scholarship recipient is Jacob Hinton, a 9th grader from Gloucester, who has never attended Nature Camp before. He is fascinated by herpetology and writes, "As kids, most people dug up worms and played with various creatures they found around their yards for fun. Not me. For me it was a fascinating study and made me wonder what other kinds of creatures were out there. When I was younger, I had a lack of knowledge about reptiles and amphibians. In recent years, I have studied and studied everything. I can now identify almost every herpetological creature in the state with ease, and I have memorized their Latin names and where they range. I joined the VA Herpetological Society this year and find it to be an amazing experience. I hope you think I'm a worthy candidate because I would love this experience and education." Just as a side note, his recommending teacher commented,

"Jacob made an impression on me when, in English class, he completed an assignment to show the emotional development of a character through the metaphor of frog metamorphosis."

I think you'll agree that we have three delightful and dedicated young environmentalists who will represent us well at Nature Camp this summer. Many thanks to all of you who have purchased t-shirts, calendars, and made donations to our chapter to support the Nancy Norton scholarship program. Your donations are generous and show that, together, we can touch lives and make a difference!

**From left to right:
Jacob Hinton, Zane
Eckols, Allyson Motter,
and Judy Jones.**



Wood Duck Monitoring

by Dave Youker

A number of us master naturalists got involved with the Prothonotary Warbler project shortly after graduating from Cohort 3. I've been monitoring a set of boxes at Newport News Park and Harwoods Mill reservoir in lower York County since 2009. During those monitoring forays, I noticed some dilapidated Wood Duck boxes affixed to trees that were occupied by squirrels. So I contacted Newport News Parks & Recreation and requested permission to monitor Wood Duck nesting at the reservoir. In 2012, I constructed seven new boxes and hung them on poles, then waited patiently. For three years, nothing! Well almost nothing. I did have a Carolina Wren, Prothonotary Warbler and Eastern Bluebird nest in the boxes. There were also the battles with wasps and one particularly determined flying squirrel.

Finally in 2015, I fledged 19 Wood Ducks from 2 boxes. Many people told me that Wood Ducks don't use these boxes, and I had almost conceded defeat. So over that winter I dutifully cleaned the boxes and hoped for similar success in 2016. Well last year I had Wood Ducks in 6 of the 7 boxes and fledged 67 ducks!



Wood Ducks are precocial meaning they must feed on their own soon after hatching. Anyone having seen one of the documentaries on Wood Ducks knows that they all hatch roughly the same time and leave the nest as soon as they are dry. You have to be lucky to catch them the moment they emerge from the nest which I've yet to have the good fortune to witness. I have seen them all congregated near the nest sites. So to determine the number of fledged ducks, you simply count any remaining eggs.

It was truly amazing going from 19 to 67 Wood Ducks and having an occupancy rate of 86%. I felt like I had made a conservation contribution, even if I couldn't replicate that success again. Well, as of my check on 12 April, there are again 6 of 7 boxes occupied with a total of 97 eggs! I should know by the end of April how many fledged for this year.



Osprey and Bluebirds and other things



Take a close look. There are Osprey chicks in that nest on the Chickahominy River. They are so small they can barely hold their heads up.

Photo by Jim Easton (much better without the arrow and circle).

JOE BEENE PHOTOS



Joe Beene found a black snake at his front door one morning before going out for a walk. The poor snake looks emaciated and dehydrated. Probably tried to stay warm by spending the night on the bricks.



Joe Beene held his cell phone about 5 inches from the bird box opening where a bluebird chick about ready to fledge had been sitting for about an hour. As soon as the phone made the click the baby bluebird and one of the parents dive-bombed Joe.

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, jbktrevino8@cox.net

Sat 27 May 2017	Williamsburg Bird Club Bird Walk, New Quarter Park, 7:00 am
Sat/Sun 27-28 May 2017	Black Light & Owls X (BLO X), VCU Rice Rivers Center, 7:00 pm Sat until 9:00 am Sun
Sat 03 Jun 2017	HRC Master Naturalist in Action Field Trip, 9:00 am—Homes of Gordon, Powell, Frank/Driscole
Sun 04 Jun 2017	Hampton Roads Bird Club Sunday Bird Walk at Newport News Park, 7:00 am
Sat 10 Jun 2017	Williamsburg Bird Club Walk, New Quarter Park, 8:00 am
Sat 10 Jun 2017	John Clayton Chpt VNPS, Plants of A Salt Marsh Walk, 9:00-11:00 am, Langley Air Force Base
Wed 14 Jun 2017	HRC Gen Meeting, 6 pm, Tim Christiansen—Understanding Snake Venom
Sat 17 Jun 2017	WBotGarden—HOW & WHY OF RAIN GARDENS, Freedom Park, 10:00 am
Sat 17 Jun 2017	Photography for the Master Naturalist w George Reiske, 1:00-3:30 pm Freedom Park
Sun 18 Jun 2017	Hampton Roads Bird Club Sunday Bird Walk at Newport News Park, 7:00 am
Sat 24 Jun 2017	Williamsburg Bird Club Bird Walk, New Quarter Park, 7:00 am

DON'T FORGET

Please have your content into me Cindy Baker by June 7, 2017 for the June newsletter. After June, there will not be a newsletter until September 2017.