



THE NATURALIST

*The monthly newsletter of the Historic Rivers Chapter
Virginia Master Naturalist Program*

<http://historicrivers.org>

A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

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Spring Peeper, photo by Felice Bond



*Heralds of
Spring?*

Notes from the Board

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

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Cohort VII Graduates from Basic Training!

By: Jennifer Trevino

March 13, 2013, was a memorable evening for all, as our Historic Rivers Chapter celebrated the many accomplishments of Cohort VII members, at the annual HRC meeting and graduation. Twenty dedicated, talented, and hearty individuals completed a rigorous seven months of Basic Training requirements to become the most recent HRC VMN members and volunteers. State VMN Coordinator, Alycia Crall, assisted the Basic Training team in presenting certificates to Cohort VII members. Congratulations to graduates, Cathleen Campbell, Bill Davis, Dee Davis, Sharon Falconer, Deane Gordon, Gwen Harris, Walt Harris, Joanie Haury, Lucy Manning, Lane McCann, Linda Morse, Samuel Morse, David Murphy, George Sallwasser, Joanne Sheffield, John Shoosmith, Jessica Spickler, Claire Stephens, Mary Turnbull, and Peggy Whitney. Bruce Glendening, a transfer VMN Master Naturalist from northern Virginia also participated in the HRC Basic Training program. In addition, six members of Cohort VII completed 40 hours of volunteer service and 8 hours of advanced training, and received VMN certification. Congratulations and applause to Deane Gordon, Lane McCann, Lucy Manning, George Sallwasser, Mary Turnbull, and Joanie Haury. Way to go, Cohort VII!



Front row: Claire Stephens, George Salwasser, Joanne Sheffield, Cathleen Campbell, Sharon Falconer, Joanie Haury
Back row: Dee Davis, Walt Harris, Bruce Glendening, Bill Davis, Gwen Harris, David Murphy, Linda Morse, Samuel Morse, Mary Turnbull, Deane Gordon, Peggy Whitney, John Shoosmith, Jessica Spickler, Lane McCann. Not pictured: Lucy Manning

Letter from the President

Greetings, Historic Rivers Chapter:

“The show begins on the first warm evening at exactly 6:50 p.m.Do not be late, and sit quietly, lest he fly away in a huff.... He flies in low from some neighboring thicket, ... and at once begins the overture a series of queer throaty “peents” spaced about two seconds apart, and sounding much like the summer call of the night hawk. Suddenly the peenting ceases and the bird flutters skyward in a series of wide spirals, emitting a musical twitter. Up and up he goes, the spirals steeper and smaller, the twittering louder and louder, until the performance is only a speck in the sky. Then, without warning, he tumbles like a crippled plane, ... and returns ... usually to the exact spot where the performance began, and there resumes his peenting.” Aldo Leopold, “A Sand County Almanac, Sky Dance”

The above describes the antics of the American Woodcock. Reports indicate that the American Woodcock is doing his sky dance at several local areas including Warhill Sports Complex, Freedom Park, New Quarter Park, and the Colonial Parkway. If you want to try and spot the sky dance, go around sunset, sit quietly, listen and maybe you will be lucky enough to catch the performance!

Even though the calendar says “Spring” and the weather says “Snow”, nature seems to continue to be on track. The ospreys have returned to their nests, the bluebirds are starting to find their nest boxes, the frogs are croaking, the trees are budding, the woodcocks are skydancing, and Cohort VII has graduated!

Our “Spring” calendar is full of educational & volunteer opportunities:

Help in the gardens at York River State Park on Mondays, Eco Discovery Park on Thursdays and the Williamsburg Botanical Garden at Freedom Park on Fridays.

Join Wildlife Mapping walks on Monday mornings at York River State Park or on scheduled days at New Quarter Park. You don't have to have wildlife mapping training to join these folks for a walk in the woods to spot wildlife.

Sign up for the Wildlife Mapping Class on May 11. Once trained, you will be able to monitor and report wildlife spottings to the State. You can easily earn volunteer hours by monitoring and reporting wildlife in your own yard, at a local park/area, or at one of the Chapter-approved sites. Contact Susan Powell if you are interested in the training.

Join the “Bio Blitz” at Pleasure House Point Park in Virginia Beach on 4 and 5 May. No experience necessary...many eyes and ears are needed to spot the wildlife and plants on this site!

Mark your calendars for our June 12th General Membership Meeting. We will be showing the film, “Green Fire” on the life and teachings of Aldo Leopold at the Williamsburg Library. Our winning photos from the Chapter's 2012 Photography Contest will also be displayed in the lobby.

Hope to see you in April at the Board Meeting, our General Membership Meeting or at the many other volunteer service or educational activities on the calendar of events,

Patty Maloney

President
Historic Rivers Chapter
Virginia Master Naturalist



Chapter Members Achieve New Milestones in Volunteer Service

The Virginia Master Naturalist program recognizes volunteers who have achieved milestones of 250, 500, 1000, 2500, and 5000 hours of volunteer service. To date, 43 members of the Historic Rivers Chapter have reached at least one of these milestones. Congratulations to those members who recently achieved milestones!! Thanks for your hard work and dedication to the mission of our chapter and of the Virginia Master Naturalist program!

Our most recent milestone achievers:

250-hour milestone

Angier Brock
Pam Camblin
Tom Dougherty
Barb Dunbar
Thad Hecht
Mike Millin
Margaret Ware

500-hour milestone

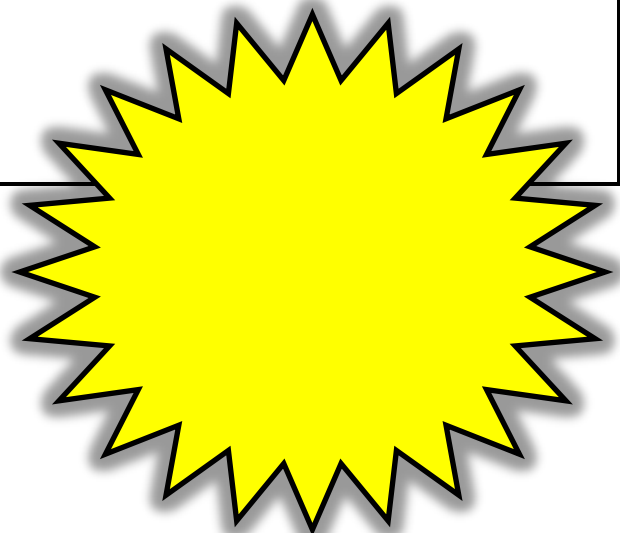
Adrienne Frank
Geoff Giles
Jan Lockwood
Larry Riddick
Lois Ullman
Christina Woodson

1000-hour milestone

Gary Driscole
Cheryl Jacobson
Patty Riddick
Dave Youker

2500-hour milestone

Shirley Devan



Susan Powell
Membership Chair

HISTORIC RIVERS CHAPTER

Frog Walk & Croak at York River State Park and Mojo Pond



At dusk on March 10, a group of us gathered at York River State Park's Croaker Landing. A full chorus of male Spring Peepers greeted us as they called to attract mates for the season. We could hear them but we also wanted to see them.

The conditions were perfect for an early spring frog walk. Nighttime temperatures were above 45 degrees, the winds were low, and there had been recent rain.

Trekking through the darkness in the mud and underbrush at the upper end of the pond, we did our best to spot just one peeper but were unsuccessful. These noisy frogs are only .75 to 1.5 inches long, yet their calls are ear piercing, shrill whistles.

By the time we got back to the parking lot beside the pond, in addition to the peepers calling, we were able to hear several Southern Leopard Frogs and a Pickerel Frog.

Our next frog stop was Mojo Pond across from Les Lawrence's house in Skimino Landing. Several hearty souls walked down the steep embankment in the dark to the edge of the small holding pond.

The peepers' calls were so intense we could not hear our own voices! There were hundreds of frogs with their vocal sacs extended, and Patty Maloney got a recording of their high-pitched calls. Check out the audio file on our chapter's Flickr site, and turn your computer's volume up as loud as possible. You'll feel as if you are beside the pond!

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/historicrivers/8548886790/in/photostream>

Join us in April for the second Walk & Croak of the 2013 season. When conditions are right, details of the trip will be emailed to HRC-VMN members. In the meantime, load your *Calls of Virginia Frogs & Toads* CD in your car player and learn to recognize the calls of some of the mid-season callers: Leopard Frog, Pickerel Frog, American Toad, Southern Toad, Cricket Frog, Green Frog, Cope's Gray Treefrog, and Bullfrog.

Felice Bond

Getting Ready for the Prothonotary Warblers



Prothonotary Warbler nest boxes ready for the season in Jim Booth's garage workshop. *Photo by Jim Booth*



PLEASURE HOUSE POINT BIOBLITZ

HRC members visit to learn more

On a cold, blustery March 14th, a group of HRC naturalists drove to Virginia Beach to explore Pleasure House Point for an upcoming BioBlitz May 4-5. We were excited to discover 118 acres of maritime forests, brackish ponds, tidal marshes and creeks, and sandy shores.



The property is a rare natural area that is an essential stopover location for migrating birds on the Atlantic Flyway. Endangered Kemp's Ridley Sea Turtles and Roseate Terns, and Threatened Piping Plovers and Loggerhead Sea Turtles have been known to visit the property. Diamondback Terrapins (Species of Concern) have been found to nest on the property.

Karen Callaway, BioBlitz planning technician from Virginia Beach Parks & Recreation, led our hike through the forest and out to Pleasure House Creek. We hiked the tidal marshlands and struggled a bit to identify shrubs, trees, and grasses. A coastal wetland plants field guide would have been a useful resource at the time! Birds were no problem, though, for our expert birders, who easily recognized and recorded 21 species by the end of our hike.

~continued on next page~

The BioBlitz will be a joint project with Virginia Beach Parks & Recreation, Tidewater and Peninsula Chapters of Virginia Master Naturalists, Virginia Native Plant Society, and several other organizations. The major goals of the biological survey are to identify native and non-native plant and animal species and to determine where they are located.



PRICKLY PEAR CACTUS_ *Opuntia compressa*



LUNA MOTH COCOON

Officials will use this comprehensive inventory to make educated decisions about how to reduce disturbances and maximize habitats for species of concern. Some of the intended projects for the property, which will be managed as a natural area, are an oyster bed restoration project, a wetlands restoration project, and construction of a kayak/canoe ramp.

After the checkout, we now have a better feel for the property and for our role in the BioBlitz. On May 4th and 5th our backpacks will be loaded with field guides, binoculars, sunscreen, cameras, snacks, water bottles, notebooks and pencils – all the usual supplies and equipment for a naturalist's exciting outing with fellow citizen scientists!

Felice Bond

HRC BioBlitz Contact



PAWPAW

Asimina triloba

Wildflower of the Month – April 2013

John Clayton Chapter, Virginia Native Plant Society

While this small tree can grow to 25 feet tall, often it occurs as a large shrub with drooping branches. Leaves are large, to 12 inches long, and lance-shaped with a fetid odor when crushed. Dull purple bell-like flowers hang below twigs in the spring along with new leaves. Lumpy, oblong fruits to 4 inches ripen in autumn after leaf fall.

Pawpaw grows in rich, moist woods in all counties of Virginia. The range is from western New York and southern Ontario to southern Michigan and eastern Nebraska, south to Florida and Texas. Blooms March-May, fruits August-October.

With a taste similar to banana, the fruits were once widely eaten by Native Americans and early settlers. Both the leaves and seeds have insecticidal properties. Areas with an abundance of Pawpaw seedlings often indicate heavy deer browse, since this species is unpalatable to deer.

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

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

Photo: Pawpaw (*Asimina triloba*) taken by Helen Hamilton

OspreyWatch at Chickahominy Riverfront Park

Story and Photos by Shirley Devan

I signed on this year to participate in OspreyWatch as a Volunteer Service Project. 2012 was the first year of the project and many of the local nests were scooped up before I got on board. This year, Patty Maloney, who had monitored nests at Chickahominy Riverfront Park, switched her monitoring to different nests and gave me permission to monitor “her” nests at Chickahominy. Last year Patty monitored two nests at the park, in or along the edge of Gordon Creek which borders the north side of the park.

You can learn more about Osprey-Watch at: <http://www.osprey-watch.org> Over 3400 nests are being monitored around the world.

This project is sponsored by the Center for Conservation Biology at W&M/VCU.

Last year Cheryl Jacobson turned the HRC VMNs onto this fun citizen science project and she has organized our Osprey watchers this year too – even hosting a lunch at her house a few weeks ago. Thanks, Cheryl!

I checked on “my” three nests for the first time March 15 and again March 19. Progress so far:

#989 – “Campground Nest”:

March 15, 2013: No evidence of Osprey occupying a loblolly pine in the campground. One Osprey sitting and calling on a nearby cypress tree

March 19, 2013: No evidence of Osprey trying to build a nest in a tree in the campground. I will continue to monitor the campground for an Osprey nest.

#990 – “Gordon Creek 1”:

March 15, 2013: Osprey sitting on nearby branch of the nest tree. Evidence of nest still in tree.

March 19, 2013: Observed from 3:00 – 3:30. Only one Osprey on the nest the full time.



Osprey Nest Monitoring—continued from previous page

#3728 – “Gordon Creek 2”:

March 15, 2013: New nest entered at web site. One Osprey on the nest and another nearby on a dead snag.

March 19, 2013: Observed Osprey bringing nest material. Two birds on the nest for much of the observation time between 1:00 and 1:30. One bird took a bath in the creek and then flew up to a tree near the picnic area to preen and dry off. Also observed a Northern Harrier in the marsh plus a Wilson’s Snipe.

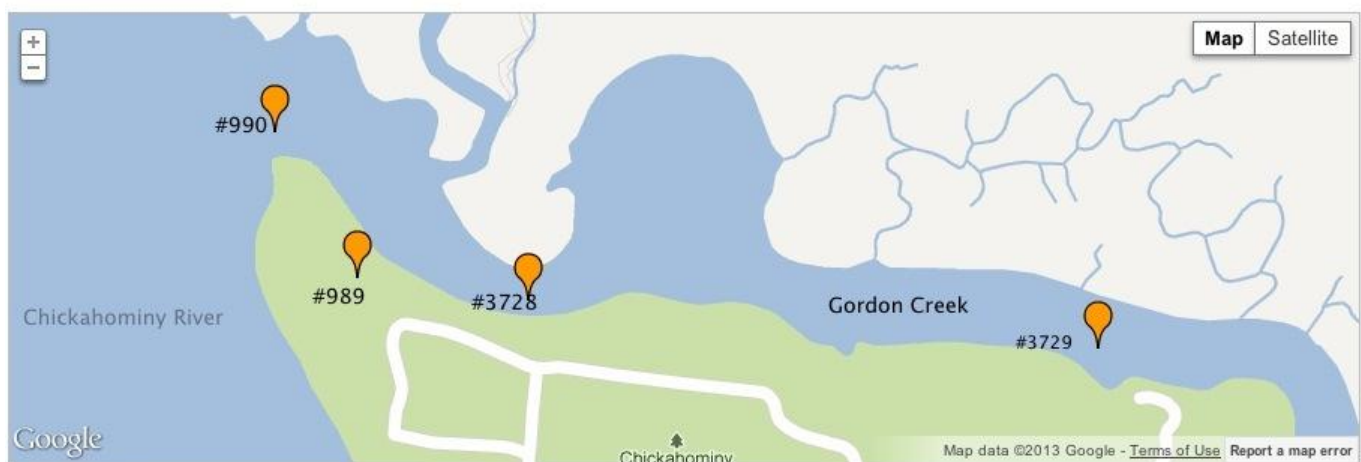
Perhaps the pair on this nest moved from the campground to the duck blind. Potential for disturbance is high because the traffic from the boat launch area will increase with spring and summer boaters launching from the park’s boat ramp.

#3729 – “Gordon Creek 3”:

March 15, 2013: New nest entered at web site. Two Ospreys on the nest.

March 19, 2013: Observed an Osprey bringing nesting material. A Bald Eagle flew over the nest and everybody took off. Later a Belted Kingfisher perched higher up in the tree.

This nest is farther up Gordon Creek and subject to less disturbance from boat traffic.



HISTORIC RIVERS CHAPTER

YORK COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS HORTICULTURAL EXTRAVAGANZA

Story and Photos by Patty Riddick



Mary Turnbull, Patty Riddick, George Sallwasser

On Saturday, March 9th, Historic Rivers Master Naturalist volunteers participated in the "Horticultural Extravaganza" which was held at Tabb H.S. This is the fifth year the chapter has been invited to attend. We were represented by Clyde Marsteller with his Zoo display of "Mother Nature's Mulchers" to include earthworms, roly-polys, roaches and the ever popular Betsy beetles. At least 50 visitors stopped by to meet and talk with George Sallwasser, Mary Turnbull, Patty Riddick, and Alice and Seig Kopinitz. A hardy thanks to all for a great job and a fun day.



Alice Kopinitz & Clyde Marsteller



Clyde Marsteller & Larry Riddick

ADVANCED TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

[AT] VLM Evening Seminar - Wild Dogs of Virginia - April 2, 2013; 6-7:30 pm at Virginia Living Museum, 524 J. Clyde Morris Blvd., Newport News, VA

VIMS: Phy Sci Noon Seminar - April 4, 2013; 12 to 12:50 pm at VIMS - Andrews Hall, Dominion Classroom 326

JRA: Train to Test Water Quality Project - April 6, 2013; 9 to 12:00 pm at Eco-Discovery Park; 2054 Jamestown Road, Williamsburg

NPS Spring Wildflower Walk - April 6, 2013 from 10 to 12:00 pm at Lafayette High School on Longhill Road

[AT] HRBC Bird Walk - April 7, 2013 from 7:00 am to 10:00 am at Newport News City Park

[AT] Monthly meeting - April 10, 2013; 6-9 pm; JCC Human Services Bldg., 5249 Olde Towne Rd., Wmsburg

VIMS lecture: Where does oyster poop go? - April 12, 2013; 3:30-4:30pm; VIMS-Watermen's Hall, McHugh Auditorium

[AT] WBC Bird Walk at New Quarter Park - April 13, 2013; 8-10am; New Quarter Park, 1000 Lakeshead Dr., Williamsburg

[AT] HRBird Club Field Trip to Dismal Swamp - April 14, 2013; 8 am-noon; Great Dismal Swamp, Jericho Lane

WBC: W&M Grad Students Present Research - April 17, 2013; 7:30 to 9:30 pm; Millington Hall; W&M Campus

William & Mary's Tack Faculty Lecture Series: "Finding Faults in Old Virginia" (geology lecture) -April 17, 2013; 7:00 pm, Williamsburg Kimball Theatre <http://www.wm.edu/news/stories/2013/geologist-to-rock-the-tack-faculty-lecture-series-on-april-17.php>

[AT] WBC Field Trip - April 20, 2013 from 7:00 am to 1:30 pm at WBC Field Trip to the Dismal Swamp

ADVANCED TRAINING—continued

[AT] HRBC Bird Walk - April 21, 2013 from 7:00 am to 10:00 am at Newport News City Park

WBC Bird Walk - April 27, 2013 from 7:00 am to 9:00 am at New Quarter Park

Butterfly Society Lecture - April 28, 2013; 2-4pm; Wesleyan College, Blocker Hall, 1584 Wesleyan Drive, Norfolk, VA

Tree Tour at William and Mary - May 4, 2013 from 9:30 am to 11:30 am at William & Mary campus

[AT] HRBC Bird Walk - May 5, 2013 from 7:00 am to 10:00 am at Newport News City Park

[AT] Monthly meeting - May 8, 2013; 6-9 pm; JCC Human Services Bldg., 5249 Olde Towne Rd., Wmsbg

[AT] WBC Bird Walk at New Quarter Park - May 11, 2013; 8-10am; New Quarter Park, 1000 Lakeshead Dr., Williamsburg

[AT] Native Plant Society Talk: Reverie: Midwest Images - May 16, 2013; 6:45-8:45 pm; Yorktown Public Library, Route 17