



THE NATURALIST

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

<http://historicrivers.org>

A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

Volume 7 No. 2 February 2013

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Cover Photo by Shirley Devan



Northern Flicker—yellow-shafted race

Chapter Board of Directors 2012-2013

Officers

Patty Maloney, President

Kathi Mestayer, Vice President

*Ruth Gordon and Jan Lockwood ,
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*Jennifer Trevino and Sharon
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Susan Powell, Membership

*Lois Ullman, Volunteer Service
Projects*

*Adrienne Frank and Gary
Driscole, Advanced Training*

Kathi Mestayer, Programs

Patty Riddick, Newsletter

Janet Curtis, Host

*Les Lawrence, Field Trip
Coordinator*

Greetings, Historic Rivers Chapter:

Hope you are enjoying our week of winter! Unfortunately, the snow event canceled our Fresh Water Ecology Class for Cohort VII at Freedom Park last weekend. The MWEE team (Meaningful Watershed Educational Experience) comprised of Ted Sargent, Judy Tucker and myself was ready. I even broke the ice on my backyard stream to scoop some live critters. The good news is there were tadpoles, dragonflies and other larvae just waiting for the spring thaw this week!

While you are waiting for the spring thaw, we have plenty of events scheduled:

-The Nude Tree Walk on Saturday, 2 February at the College of William and Mary.

-Monday "Weed and Walk" at the native plant garden at York River State Park.

-The Bluebird Monitoring Kickoff Meeting on 24 February at Freedom Park.

-Monarch Initiative planning sessions and soil preparation for butterfly gardens at all the York County and Poquoson elementary schools. If you are interested in helping in the preparation, planning and/or planting, contact Barb Dunbar.

-The 125th Annual Meeting of the Wilson Ornithological Society, 7-10 March, at the College of William and Mary. A special "local birders" \$50.00 registration fee is being offered.

-And if you just want to stay inside and look out your window at the bird feeder, dust off your "The Calls of Virginia Frogs and Toads" CD and get ready for our frog walk at Croaker Landing, York River State Park. The evening frog walks are best just after a rain and when the temperatures are 50 degrees or above. Felice Bond will send out an email to let us know when the time is right!

Hope to see you on the trails, at the meetings and in the gardens this month,

Patty Maloney
President
Historic Rivers Chapter

Notes from the Board

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

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Proposed Slate of Officers for the 2013-2014 HRC Board

The nominating committee proposes the following individuals for the 2013-2014 Board of Directors:

President: Patty Maloney

Vice President: Kathi Mestayer

Co-Secretaries: Jan Lockwood and Ruth Gordon

Treasurer: Cheryl Jacobson

Members- at- Large: Hart Haynes, Tom Dougherty, Les Lawrence, and Joanne Sheffield

Historians: Adrienne Frank and Gary Driscole

Publicity and Outreach: Shirley Devan

Basic Training: Roger Gosden

Membership: Susan Powell

Volunteer Service: Lois Ullman

Advanced Training: Lucy Manning

Programs: Kathi Mestayer

Newsletter: Deb Woodward

Host: Sherry Brubaker

Field Trips: Dean Shostak

Elections will be held at the General Membership Meeting on March 14, 2013.

Thanks to all of you that have served this year and have reached the end of your two-year term. You all are truly exceptional and you are what makes our Chapter great!

Patty Maloney, President
Historic Rivers Chapter
Virginia Master Naturalist

Bluebirds at Freedom Park! How it all began...

Submitted by Nancy Gore, Nancy Barnhart, and Ginny Carey, Trail Leaders

During the January 2012 General Membership meeting of the Historic Rivers Chapter, Virginia Master Naturalists, Geoff Giles shared the idea of establishing a bluebird trail at James City County's Freedom Park in Williamsburg. Nancy Gore and Ginny Carey from Cohort VI were there, and when someone suggested this would be a good project for Cohort VI, they presented the idea at the Cohort training meeting the next week. The rest is history!

Much effort came from members of Cohort VI as they came through on every request asked of them, and still do. This really was a team effort. Jan Lockwood, also of Cohort VI and a VBS County Coordinator, played a huge role throughout the process, as did Shirley Devan, former President of the Chapter and President of the Williamsburg Bird Club. Early on, they guided the group, providing information on bluebirds and showing where to set up the boxes. They patiently answered tons of questions.

As newly graduated Master Naturalists, we were excited to have a "class project". We were anxious to learn and participate in citizen science and stay in touch with fellow classmates and friends. Starting in March, we created a weekly monitoring schedule that had us working in pairs. The monitors included Nancy Gore, Nancy Barnhart, Tom Dougherty, Jessica Ebers, Ruth Gordon, Hart Haynes, Megan Kobiela, Sherry Brubaker, Deb Woodward, and Judy Tucker, and substitutes Ginny Carey, Cheryl Jacobson, Jan Lockwood, and Jim Corliss. It did not take long for the weekly team to expand to our weekly "gang". Monitoring bluebird nesting was a first for us, and we did not want to miss any of the developments, activity, and fun. Armed with the "bluebird bucket", binoculars, field guides, and cameras, we made the rounds of the trail. We never tired of finding the brilliant blue eggs of the Bluebirds, the tiny ones of the Chickadees, the littlest creatures with gaping mouths, or big hungry chicks demanding action from their parents.

Freedom Park bluebird boxes came from many sources. Geoff had some, and Shirley and her team (Nancy Gore, Ginny, and Jan) were given permission to liberate several from former College of William & Mary trails. Cohort VI members donated boxes and WildBirds Unlimited donated two boxes. Nancy and Ginny sought donations from Cohort VI for hardware (poles and baffles, etc.), recruited monitors from Cohort VI and arranged for training, which Jan provided. The trail went up in a weekend. A Cohort VI work party repaired and fabricated the original 11 boxes and hardware on Saturday, and another work party installed them on Sunday. After a short time, the five boxes in the Williamsburg Botanical Garden (located in the park) also became part of the trail.

The boxes have been remarkably successful. The adage about bluebirds not using new boxes does not hold true here. Freedom Park had a bluebird nest within a week of the trail going up. Of our 19 boxes, 11 eventually had bluebird eggs, three had chickadees, and one had both bluebirds and chickadees. We found our first bluebird chicks on April 12. The first round of nesting was completed and all boxes were empty by June 1. Our final nesting was over and boxes cleaned on August 16. A total of 51 bluebird chicks and 14 chickadee chicks had fledged.

HISTORIC RIVERS CHAPTER

Besides the thrill of watching the progression of nest to fledgling, we had an equally exciting time finding and (usually) identifying much of the flora and fauna we encountered. We are fortunate to have some outstanding photographers – Tom Dougherty, Hart Haynes, Shirley Devan, Inge Curtis – in the Cohort who captured many of our memorable moments. With our photographers leading the way, we particularly looked forward to checking the five boxes in the Ellipse Garden. In addition to our bluebird mission, we learned much from watching the seasonal progression of the native plants and wildflower meadow that, in turn, attracted hundreds of butterflies and dragonflies. We learned to spot such frequent visitors as the Common Whitetail, Common Green Darner, American Lady, Painted Lady, and Crane flies and found an abundance of dreaded ticks and chiggers.

This fall the Cohort came together once again to do a few repairs and to add seven more boxes, bringing the trail total to 26. We chose the locations of the new boxes based on this past year's bluebird activity.

The James City County Parks and Recreation administration and Freedom Park staff have been extremely helpful and supportive of our effort, and we believe it is the first park in James City County to host a bluebird trail.

Please go to this link to enjoy a day on the Freedom Park Bluebird Trail <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=etVoDyxG2ro>

Addendum: The Freedom Park Trail is the newest of eight trails monitored by the Historic Rivers Chapter, Virginia Master Naturalists in James City County, York County, and the Cities of Newport News and Williamsburg. Nesting results are reported to the Virginia Bluebird Society – a grand total of 1,154 Eastern Bluebirds, 131 Carolina Chickadees, 13 Tufted Titmouse, and 10 Carolina Wrens fledged from 298 boxes during the 2012 season. We thank our trail leaders and monitors for their outstanding diligence and commitment. We also recognize and appreciate the guidance and support received from the Virginia Bluebird Society.

Lois Ullman and Jan Lockwood, County Coordinators

Editor's Note: The article above will be appearing this spring in the Virginia Bluebird Society Newsletter.

HISTORIC RIVERS CHAPTER

A Visit to Montpelier.....

Submitted by Sara Lewis



Master Naturalists Cathleen Campbell, Shirley Devan, Susie Engle, Sharon Plocher, Cheryl Jacobson, Sara Lewis, Jennifer Trevino, Sherry Brubaker, and Geoff Giles enjoyed a trip to James Madison's Montpelier in Orange, Virginia, on Sunday, January 20. After touring the historic house, the group took a two-hour guided hike through a portion of the National Landmark old-growth forest. Highlights of the forest include American Chestnuts, a 300-year-old white oak, and other champion trees.

HISTORIC RIVERS CHAPTER



Above: “Sara Lewis, our fearless organizer, with the view from Montpelier behind her.”

Sherry Brubaker shared these pictures and an interesting fact she learned on the Montpelier trip.....



“It was great fun and a beaut (as they say in Australia) day. Sunshine, calm, good people, great tour leader--who could ask for anything more. We learned that dogwood trees give back more to the soil (and in general) than any other tree. Sandy, our leader, said dogwood help balance the pH with less acidic leaf mulch. She also said lactating deer get calcium from them (don't ask me how but that must be why I have zillions of healthy deer eating all my plants since I also have dogwood trees!).”

HISTORIC RIVERS CHAPTER

Greetings!

The bluebird nest box monitoring season is rapidly approaching and we feel a brief meeting of both old and new trail team leaders and box monitor volunteers is in order. By doing so, we hope to create an opportunity for teams to shift members and those newly interested to join in the fun...and, perhaps, initiate a new trail!

Sunday, February 24, 2013

Freedom Park Meeting Room

2 pm

open to anyone interested in the opportunity to BOTH enjoy bluebirds AND perform a needed service

2012 was an outstanding year for our local bluebird monitoring! Our results were terrific; the data we presented to the Virginia Bluebird Society clear, clean and accurate (we even received a special thank you from the VBS data collector for our efforts)! New trails were created; others improved, and – we are looking forward to an even better season for 2013!

Please plan to join us at Freedom Park! *If you wish to participate, but can't make the meeting, please email either of us and we'll get you on board.*

Very bluebirdly yours,

Jan Lockwood, nzedr@msn.com

Lois Ullman, jlullman@verizon.net

VMN HRC members & Virginia Bluebird Society County Co-Coordinator

Mark your calendars for the HRC General Membership Meeting on Wednesday, February 13, at 6:00 p.m. in the auditorium at the Human Services Building on Olde Towne Road, Williamsburg. Our speaker for the evening will be Dr. Norman Fashing, an entomologist at the College of William and Mary.

He will speak about "How Insects Defend Themselves."

HISTORIC RIVERS CHAPTER

Forest Conservation and Management Field Trip at New Kent Forestry Center, January 12, 2013, led by Billy Apperson and Lisa Deaton of the Department of Forestry.



Photo and link to latest Playlist including Field Trip 4 provided by Tom Dougherty.

<http://www.youtube.com/user/vmncohortvii>

THE 16TH ANNUAL GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT!



Red-breasted Nuthatch

Photo by Inge Curtis

The 2013 GBBC will take place Friday, February 15, through Monday, February 18.

The Great Backyard Bird Count is an annual 4-day event that engages bird watchers of all ages in counting birds to create a real-time snapshot of where the birds are.

Beginning in 2013, GBBC checklists will be accepted from anywhere in the world!

Everyone is welcome--from beginning bird watchers to experts. It takes as little as 15 minutes on one day, or you can count for as long as you like each day of the event. It's free, fun, and easy—and it helps the birds.

Participants tally the number of individual birds of each species they see during their count period. They enter these numbers on the GBBC website.

Beginning in 2013, each participant must set up a free GBBC account to submit their checklists.

You'll only need to do this once to participate in all future GBBC events.

As the count progresses, anyone with Internet access can explore what is being reported from their own towns or from anywhere in the world.

Participants may also send in photographs of the birds they see for the GBBC photo contest. A selection of images is posted in the online photo gallery.

Continued on next page...

WHY COUNT BIRDS?

Scientists and bird enthusiasts can learn a lot by knowing where the birds are. Bird populations are dynamic; they are constantly in flux. No single scientist or team of scientists could hope to document and understand the complex distribution and movements of so many species in such a short time.

Scientists use the GBBC information, along with observations from other citizen-science projects, such as the Christmas Bird Count, Project FeederWatch, and eBird, to get the “big picture” about what is happening to bird populations. The longer these data are collected, the more meaningful they become in helping scientists investigate far-reaching questions, like these:

- How will the weather influence bird populations?
- Where are winter finches and other “irruptive” species that appear in large numbers during some years but not others?
- How will the timing of birds’ migrations compare with past years?
- How are bird diseases, such as West Nile virus, affecting birds in different regions?
- What kinds of differences in bird diversity are apparent in cities versus suburban, rural, and natural areas?

The Great Backyard Bird Count is led by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and National Audubon Society, with Canadian partner Bird Studies Canada and sponsorship from Wild Birds Unlimited.

FOR MORE INFORMATION AND TO SIGN UP GO TO: <http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc>

This is a Volunteer Service Project: C2j -- Great Backyard Bird Count!

HISTORIC RIVERS CHAPTER

2013 Membership Renewal Form for the Historic Rivers Chapter-Master Naturalist

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Please check the line next to your selection

_____ Renew membership at \$ 25.00

_____ I wish to make a voluntary contribution for the
Nancy Norton Nature Camp Scholarship Fund

_____ Amount of scholarship contribution

Make your checks payable to the HRC-MN and mail to:

HRC-MN
PO Box 5026
Williamsburg, VA 23188

Nude Tree Walk



Charlie Dubay, retired biology teacher, formerly with Jamestown High School, will help participants identify native trees in their bare state by looking at their bark, twigs, terminal buds and leaf scars during a winter tree walk on February 2 at the College Woods on the Campus of the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg. The walk will begin at the student recreation center at 1:30 pm. Please register at 757-870-0284 or www.claytonvnps.org (Fieldtrips and Events). The event is sponsored by the John Clayton Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society.

Photo left: Charlie Dubay taken by Jan Newton.

Photo right: Bitternut Hickory twig showing terminal bud and leaf scars taken by Jan Newton.

Note: Photos and announcement were shared by Jan Newton, John Clayton Chapter, Virginia Native Plant Society.

HISTORIC RIVERS CHAPTER

HRC VMN bumper stickers have arrived! If you would like to "show your pride" and purchase one for 80 cents, please see Patty Maloney.



COHORT VII BASIC TRAINING COMING ATTRACTIONS

FEBRUARY, 2013:

Tues., Feb. 5:	Class: Ornithology	6:00-9:00pm.
Tues., Feb. 19:	Class: Ecology Concepts	6:00-9:00pm.
Sat., Feb. 23:	Field Trip/Class: Mammalogy and Ichthyology – at Virginia Living Museum	9:00am.-4:00pm.

MARCH, 2013:

Tues., Mar. 5:	Class: Butterflies	6:00-9:00pm.
Wed., Mar. 13:	COHORT VII GRADUATION and HRC Annual Meeting	6:00-9:00pm.

HISTORIC RIVERS CHAPTER

Advanced Training Activities through March 16, 2013

For more information about AT opportunities go to: <http://www.historicrivers.org>

- ⌋ [\[AT\] Energy and sustainability Conference - 1/30 & 1/31](#) - **January 30, 2013** from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm at Richmond Convention Center, 403 North Third Street Richmond, VA 23219
- ⌋ [\[AT\] VIMS - Recurrent coastal flooding: After hours lecture](#) - **January 31, 2013** from 7:00 pm to 8:30 pm at McHugh Auditorium in Watermen's Hall Virginia Institute of Marine Science (VIMS) 1375 Greate Road Gloucester Point, VA 23062
- ⌋ [\[AT\] Free Emerald Ash Borer Online Course](#) - **February 1, 2013** all day - online
- ⌋ [\[AT\] Nude Tree Walk](#) - **February 2, 2013** at 1:30 pm at College Woods at W & M College
- ⌋ [\[AT\] HRBC Bird Walk](#) - **February 3,** from 7:00-10:00 am at Newport News Park
- ⌋ [CLASS: Ornithology](#) - **February 5, 2013** from 6:00 pm to 9:00 pm at JCC Human Services Center, 5249 Olde Towne Rd., Williamsburg
- ⌋ [\[AT\] WBC Bird Walk at New Quarter Park](#) - **February 9, 2013** from 8:00 am to 10:00 am at New Quarter Park, 1000 Lakeshead Dr., Williamsburg
- ⌋ [\[AT\] Monthly meeting](#) - **February 13, 2013** from 6:00 pm to 9:00 pm at JCC Human Services Bldg., 5249 Olde Towne Rd., Williamsburg
- ⌋ [\[AT\] WBC Field Trip - Dutch Gap Conservation Area](#) - **February 16, 2013** from 7:00 am to 1:30 pm at Dutch Gap C Area, Chesterfield VA
- ⌋ [Williamsburg Botanical Garden- Bluebirds](#) - **February 16, 2013** from 10:00 am to 11:00 am at Freedom park
- ⌋ [\[AT\] HRBC Bird Walk](#) - **February 17, 2013** from 7:00 am to 10:00 am at Newport News City Park
- ⌋ [CLASS: Ecology Concepts](#) - **February 19, 2013** from 6:00 pm to 9:00 pm at JCC Human Services Center, 5249 Olde Towne Rd., Williamsburg
- ⌋ [\[AT\] WBC Meeting](#) - **February 20, 2013** from 7:30 pm to 9:30 pm at William & Mary, Millington Hall room 150
- ⌋ [\[AT\] WBC Walk at New Quarter Park](#) - **February 23, 2013** from 7:00 am to 10:00 am at New Quarter Park
- ⌋ [\[AT\] Project WET Facilitator Training, VA DEQ](#) - **February 23, 2013** from 8:30 am to 5:00 pm at First Landing State Park, Virginia Beach
- ⌋ [CLASS: Mammalogy; Ichthyology](#) - **February 23, 2013** from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm For participation, contact Jennifer Trevino <jbktrevino8@cox.net> or Sharon Plocher <sharonjp4@cox.net>
- ⌋ [\[AT\] Virginia Marine Debris Summit, VA DEQ](#) - **February 27, 2013** from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm at Virginia Aquarium and Marine Science Center, Virginia Beach, VA
- ⌋ [VIMS - Uranium mining in VA](#) - **February 28, 2013** from 7:00 pm to 8:30 pm at VIMS - Watermen's Hall, McHugh Auditorium
- ⌋ [\[AT\] HRBC Bird Walk](#) - **March 3, 2013,** 7:00-10:00 am at Newport News City Park
- ⌋ [CLASS: Butterflies](#) - **March 5, 2013** from 6:00 pm to 9:00 pm at JCC Human Services Center, 5249 Olde Towne Rd., Williamsburg
- ⌋ [\[AT\] Guesstimating the Environment, Jefferson Labs](#) - **March 7, 2013** from 7:00 pm to 9:00 pm at CE-BAF Center Auditorium, 12000 Jefferson Ave. Newport News

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HISTORIC RIVERS CHAPTER

- ⌈ [\[AT\] Wilson Ornithological Society Meeting](#) - March 8-10, 2013 At the College of William and Mary
- ⌈ [\[AT\] WBC Bird Walk at New Quarter Park](#) - March 9, 2013 from 8:00 am to 10:00 am at New Quarter Park, 1000 Lakeshead Dr., Williamsburg
- ⌈ [\[AT\] Native Plant Society - Geology Field Trip](#) - March 9, 2013 from 10:00 am to 4:00 pm at Strasburg and Fort Valley, VA.
- ⌈ [\[AT\] HRC Annual Meeting](#) - March 13, 2013 from 6:00 pm to 9:00 pm at JCC Human Services Bldg., 5249 Olde Towne Rd., Williamsburg
- ⌈ [\[AT\] Introducing Watershed, VA DEQ](#) - March 14, 2013 from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm at Virginia Aquarium
- ⌈ [\[AT\] WBC Field Trip - New Kent Forestry Center](#) - March 16, 2013 from 7:00 am to 1:30 pm at Route 60, New Kent, VA
- ⌈ [VA Native Plant Society- 2013 Winter Workshop](#) - March 16, 2013 from 8:45 am to 4:00 pm at Gottwald Center for the Sciences, University of Richmond

Adrienne Frank and Gary Driscole
Advanced Training Co-Chairs

*"Conservation is a state of harmony between
men and land."*

Aldo Leopold