



## THE NATURALIST

*The monthly newsletter of the Historic Rivers Chapter*

<http://historicrivers.org>

A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

Volume 8 No. 1 January 2014

### MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT:

Greetings, Historic River Chapter:

2014 promises to be an exciting year! We and the Peninsula Chapter are co-hosting the 2014 Virginia Master Naturalist Annual Conference in September. The meetings and break-out sessions will be at the Virginia Living Museum. Field trips will be throughout our area. Our representatives on the planning committee are Patty Riddick, Felice Bond and myself.

If you haven't done so already, put "learn something new" on your resolution list for this year. We have an abundance of volunteer service projects, advanced training opportunities, and field trips planned, including trips to Maymont and the Great Dismal Swamp. Check out the calendar of events on the website, pick something "new" and go for it!

This year our Chapter will again provide scholarships for students to learn something "new" at the two-week Nature Camp in Vesuvius, Virginia. Our Nancy Norton Nature Camp Scholarship applications will be accepted and evaluated this month, so please help get the word out to any interested applicants.

Happy New Year and hope to see you out and about this month learning something "new",

Patty Maloney, President, Historic Rivers Chapter

PS: Many thanks to Sherry Brubaker and her team for hosting our awesome end-of-year party! Great food, great friends, and a great time! Also, a special thanks to Inge Curtis for donating her award-winning photos for the raffle!



## Chapter Board of Directors 2013-2014

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*Patty Maloney, President*

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*Ruth Gordon and Jan Lockwood  
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*Roger Gosden, Basic Training*

*Susan Powell, Membership*

*Lois Ullman, Volunteer Service  
Projects*

*Lucy Manning, Advanced Training*

*Kathi Mestayer, Programs*

*Deb Woodward, Newsletter*

*Sherry Brubaker, Host*

*Dean Shostak, Field Trip Coordina-  
tor*

## Happy New Year

While the Family ate a Christmas ham  
With sides of greens and candied yam,  
Our Cooper's Hawk had a meal of love  
Served by Nature – a Christmas dove!

Later raking leaves into a mound  
By the fish pond a froggy I found.  
I put it in the water, but it was too  
cold.  
So I buried him again in the leaf  
mold.



Momma Mantis is still preying(Amen),  
Crickets are her favorite food.  
Her babies in their cases are staying,  
In Spring she will hatch her brood.

I wrote a letter to Santa – to see an uncommon fowl.  
A rare visitor – a white Snowy Owl.  
Miss Ellie said, “ Don't fret and feel blue,  
Surely Santa will come thru for you”.

Then from my den there came quite a clatter,  
I opened the door to see what was the matter.  
And what to my eyes did  
appear?  
A white Snowy Owl on the  
head of a Deer!



So now to Cohorts far and  
near,  
Here's wishing you all  
a Happy New Year!

Ramblin Clyde

### Notes from the Board

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

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## Baltimore Oriole

**Breeds from Saskatchewan and Nova Scotia south through eastern Texas, Louisiana, and Virginia. Spends winters in Florida and southern Atlantic coast.**

**Preferred habitats include open woods and shade trees.**

**Baltimore Orioles feed primarily on caterpillars, moths, beetles, ants, bugs, scale insects, aphids, and wood-borers; also eats fruits, garden peas, and flower nectar. Forages by gleaning prey insects from leaves and twigs.**

**From: iBird pro**

**Photo taken by Paul Cuomo, Cohort 8**

# HISTORIC RIVERS CHAPTER

## December Party

Meeting Minutes by our Secretary, Ruth Gordon



For the December General Membership Meeting of the Historic Rivers Chapter of the Virginia Master Naturalists, we held our End of the Year holiday party at Legacy Hall in New Town in Williamsburg. Doors opened at 6:00 pm. Upon entering the lovely foyer, Jan Lockwood handled guest registrations while Judy Jones promoted and sold raffle ticket sales.

The Hall was arranged with a series of long tables set at the front of the room, facing eight round tables, all of which were adorned with table clothes. Tables up front were arranged in a modified u-shape to hold our labeled potluck dinner items and allow for two lines to flow about the long tables. Alice Kopinitz greeted everyone bringing potluck items, and hosted the placement of dishes on the potluck table. Round tables were beautifully decorated with centerpieces of evergreens and candles, created and donated by Mary Turnbull. Each guest provided their own dinnerware, utensils, glasses, and napkins to keep things on the “green” side.

President Patty Maloney called the gathering together at 6:30 pm, explaining the agenda for the evening. Patty praised our host, Sherry Brubaker, for the outstanding work done by her and her committee to make the event possible, which was followed by a round of applause. Recognition was also given to Mary Turnbull for the lovely centerpieces. Many thanks went out to Tom Dougherty for the slideshow of all this year’s photo contest winners, to Inge Curtis for her generous donation of framed photographs, and to others who donated other prizes.

Guests were called to the potluck table by each cohort, beginning with Cohort I, with photographs taken of each group. Members from all eight cohorts were represented.

After dinner, we enjoyed a game of “Find Someone Who,” a game that had two versions each with 15 clues. The goal was to move about the party, asking questions of everyone there to find out who the clues matched. If you found the person who matched the clue, then they signed your sheet. The person with the most answers first would win. Winners then got to pick one of the prizes on the side tables.

After the game, we had drawings for the raffle of Inge’s photographs. Then, Shirley Devan asked everyone to find the bird picture placed at each place setting. She called out one bird for each table and the winners received the centerpiece decorations as prizes.

As the party ended, those who wished helped assist the hosting committee with clean up. Patty Maloney thanked everyone who had worked so hard, and to all of us for bringing such delicious potluck dishes and desserts to share.

At the end of the party at 9:00 p.m., 65 people attended, raffle tickets brought in \$197.00, and we covered all our expenses for the hall rental, including hall deposit and the extra insurance policy rider. Great job, Sherry, and the hosting committee!

Ruth Gordon, Secretary HRC-VMN



The Williamsburg Christmas Bird Count took place on December 15th. This year's species total of 114 was one shy of the count's all-time high of 115 set on December 16, 1984. And we were oh so close to beating that record because we know that American Woodcock and Black-and-white Warbler were detected in the count circle 3 days on either side of 15 December, making them "count-week" species, but not included for the final tally because they were not found on the actual count day.

Highlights for this 37<sup>th</sup> Williamsburg Christmas Bird Count included a single Brant at Hog Island, a new species for Colonial Historic Triangle CBCs, bringing the cumulative species total for all counts to 188. Greater Scaup are a rare commodity locally, especially in the last 30 years. So teasing one out from a mixed species flock feeding in the James River was a real prize for the Jamestown team. Scouting prior to the count day revealed a Cackling Goose was in the Jamestown Island/Mainland Farm area. Sure enough one of these tiny geese was detected there among several hundred Canadas making it only the second since one was detected at Cheatham Annex 18 December 2005. Other "staked out" birds included 4 hummingbirds. Photographs of each of these mighty mites indicate 2 of our 15 December birds were adult male Rufous Hummingbirds. The third appears to be a female, either a Rufous or an Allen's Hummingbird. For the record this individual will be listed as *Selasphorus* sp. until a qualified expert can capture it to verify its true species identity. Other noteworthy species for 2013 were 10 Wild Turkeys at Hog Island, 136 Dunlin at Felgate's Creek, a Lesser Black-backed Gull at the Jamestown Ferry, a very reliable Orange-crowned Warbler in Chisel Run, 3 Baltimore Orioles, one a gorgeous adult male nicely photographed at a Ford's Colony feeder, and, for the 3<sup>rd</sup> consecutive year, a strikingly marvelous male Western Tanager in Settlers' Mill.

New all-time high counts were garnered for several species (Black Vultures, Bald Eagles, Red-shouldered Hawks, and Red-tailed Hawks) Stellar feeder-watch effort contributed to additional new high counts including 210 Red-bellied Woodpeckers, 475 American Crows, 433 Carolina Chickadees, 435 Tufted Titmouses, 294 Carolina Wrens, and 493 Northern Cardinals.

It's hard to overstate how immensely grateful the Williamsburg Bird Club is for the contributions 107 people made to the success of the 2013 Christmas Bird Count. This citizen science effort now in its 114 year is one of the most venerable and most valuable efforts of its kind in the world. The count's results locally touch the rim of 5 decades, giving our community one of a growing number of indicators for the quality of life in the greater Williamsburg area. Many thanks to all of the team leaders who rallied their troops for a great day of birding. Many thanks too to Debi Helseth and her staff at Carrot Tree Kitchen for the excellent foods and beverages for our evening tally.

Bird Count Summary provided by Bill Williams via Shirley Devan

# HISTORIC RIVERS CHAPTER

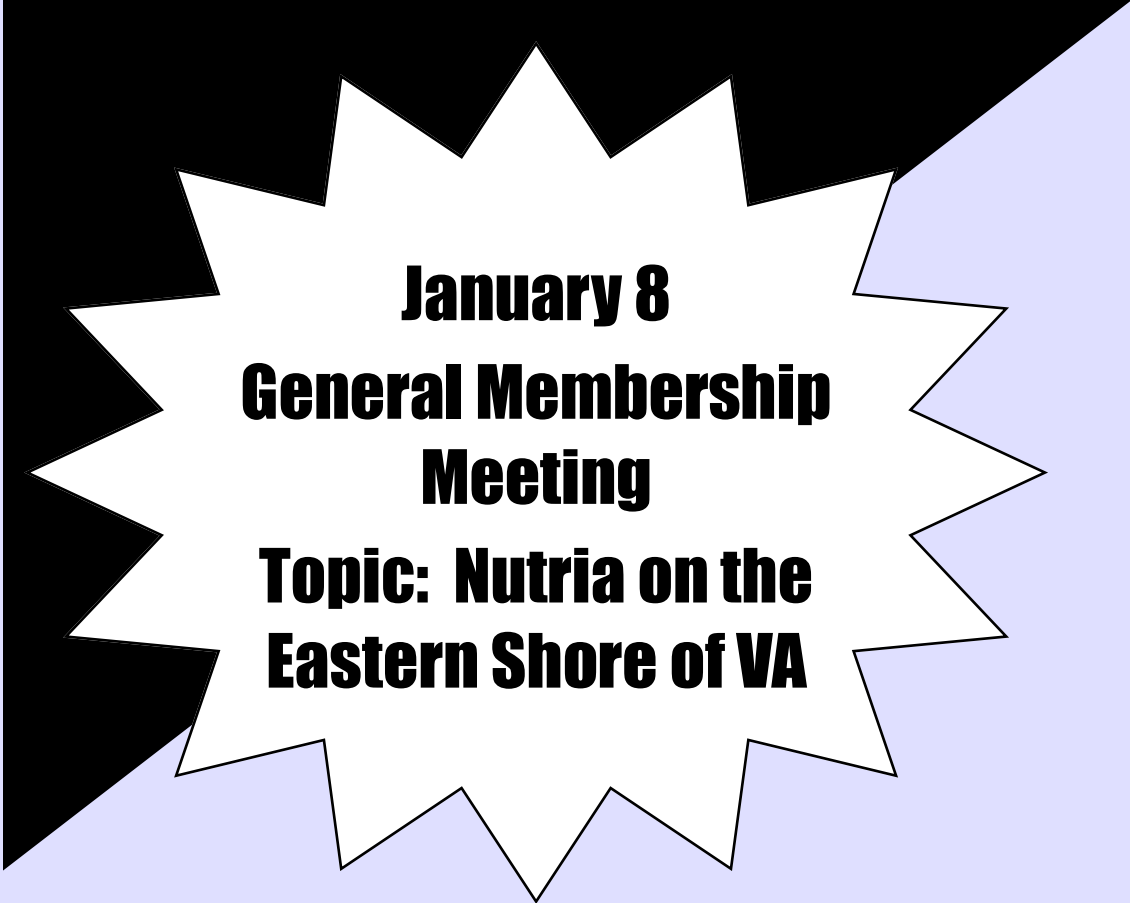


## Red Shouldered Hawk

Observed during Christmas Bird Count

Photos by Inge Curtis





**January 8**  
**General Membership**  
**Meeting**  
**Topic: Nutria on the**  
**Eastern Shore of VA**

**Date:** January 8, 2014

**Time:** 6 pm

**Place:** The Old Same Place (James City County Human Resources Building)

**Speaker:** Todd Engelmeyer, Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries

**Topic:** Nutria on the Eastern Shore of Virginia

**What is a nutria?** Nutria (*Myocastor coypus*) are large aquatic rodents native to South America. Nutria can weigh up to 20 lbs and are up to 3 feet long including the tail. They feed mostly on aquatic vegetation, but will leave the water to feed on land as well. Nutria were brought to North America around 1900 as a new source of fur and were released at various locations throughout the United States.

**Why are wildlife biologists concerned about nutria?** When nutria become established in an area, they can cause tremendous damage to natural ecosystems by eating aquatic vegetation. Removal of this vegetation destroys food and habitat for native wildlife and can result in permanent damage to the wetlands. The wetlands surrounding Chesapeake Bay are extremely important to the health of the bay and its fish and shellfish populations. Nutria also damage private property by gnawing (chewing) landscaping plants and by burrowing into levees and undermining waterfront bulkheads. They also impact agriculture by consuming plants and produce, especially strawberries, melons, and pumpkins. Female nutria can bear young by six months of age and can produce up to 30 young in their lifetimes, so they can infest new habitats very quickly.

This information is from the VA Department of Game and Inland Fisheries

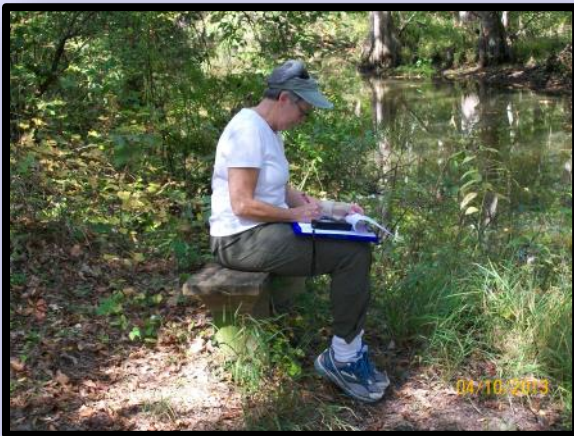
## One person can have a big impact!!

See what I mean by reading about this project completed by Joanie Haury



Joanie completed a project for the Friends of the Dragon Run that the president, Davis Rhodes, has wanted for a long time. This was marking the 6 trails on Big Island along the Dragon with GPS coordinates that correspond with plants, trees, and shrubs. Joanie says this was a challenge for her because she does not consider herself a technical person. So, with the help of a good

neighbor who has GPS savvy, Joanie was able to complete the project over 7 hours. This was a matter of 5 different days. This is a beautiful area.



Joanie says she enjoyed being able to go in and listen to the quiet and observe the beauty of the river.





# HISTORIC RIVERS CHAPTER

## New Park Manager at York River State Park



*Photo provided by Shirley Devan*

Some of the volunteers who help out at YRSP met with the new Park Manager, Jon Tustin, Dec 9, 2013. Jon Tustin shared with the volunteers his desires for changes to the garden around the entrance to the Visitor Center. After the New Year, the volunteers will work to implement changes.

Left to right: John Gresham, Felice Bond, Deane Gordon, Judy Jones, Jon Tustin, Les Lawrence.



Black-crowned Night Heron, Dec 17, Warhill

Photos by Shirley Devan



A first day of Winter photo (Dec. 21)

An Eastern Black snake warming on an exposed tree branch!

## Build a Leopold Bench

“When the famed conservationist and father of the modern environmental movement Aldo Leopold wanted a place to sit down, he built himself a simple bench with timeless appeal. The bench is easy to replicate, so it makes a good garden project for those with little carpentry experience.



After gathering up all the tools and materials, this project can be completed in 2 hours or less. If you start early enough in the day, you can be sitting on a bench in your garden before the sun burns the dew off the grass. The hardest part of this bench project will be deciding where to put it when you're finished making it.”

For complete instructions visit: <http://www.organicgardening.com/learn-and-grow/build-a-leopold-bench>

*This article was shared by Joanne Sheffield*

*From Organic Gardening (online)*

From Professor Randy Chambers,  
Department of Biology  
Director of the Keck Environmental Lab  
College of William & Mary

**"2013 was unusually WET in Williamsburg, although thankfully we missed a Fall storm this year. We had almost 58.5 inches of rain in 2013, which is 18 inches over our annual average. Rainfall exceeded evaporation/transpiration by almost 2 feet this year; those of you with wet basements know what I'm talking about!"**  
(shared with permission by Jan Lockwood)

## Historic Rivers Chapter, Virginia Master Naturalist

### Nancy Norton Nature Camp Scholarship Application – 2014

The Historic Rivers Chapter of the Virginia Master Naturalists is considering candidates for three scholarships to the 2014 sessions of Nature Camp in Vesuvius, VA — The Nancy Norton Nature Camp Scholarships. The 2014 camp dates are:

1st Session (grades 9-12): June 15 – 28, 2014

2nd Session (grades 8-9): June 29 – July 12, 2014

3rd Session (grades 6-8): July 13- 26, 2014

4th Session (grades 5-6): July 27 – Aug. 9, 2014

These scholarships are intended to support students who have a genuine interest learning about the natural world and who can work and learn independently and in groups.

Scholarship applicants should visit the Nature Camp's web site to download a Camp application and review requirements and the Camp's application process: <http://naturecamp.net/applications-and-forms/camper-application/>

Nature Camp is unique in its academic focus. Since its inception in 1942, Nature Camp has emphasized hands-on, field-based, experiential education in natural history and environmental studies. All applicants are advised of the requirements to attend daily classes, to maintain a notebook, to complete all written assignments, and to participate in outdoor activities. Campers are expected to accept academic challenges with enthusiasm, commitment, and hard work. Campers in the past have discovered the joy of learning and have often returned for more of what Nature Camp has to offer.

The scholarship application is available online at: <http://www.historicrivers.org>



# HISTORIC RIVERS CHAPTER

## Advanced Training for January 2014

Lucy Manning, Advanced Training Chair; (757-646-0877 [lucymnng@gmail.com](mailto:lucymnng@gmail.com))

**Remember to go to our chapter's calendar for all event details! [http://www.historicrivers.org/?page\\_id=1246](http://www.historicrivers.org/?page_id=1246)**

**[\[AT\] HRBC Bird Walk](#) - January 5, 2014** from 7:00 am to 10:00 am at Newport News City Park

**[\[AT\] Webinar: An Evening at the Virginia Museum of Natural History](#) - January 7;** 12- 1:00 pm

**[\[AT\] Deep Sea: The Last Great Unknown](#) - January 7** from 6:00 pm to 7:30 pm at VLM

**[\[AT\] Ornithology](#) - January 7** from 6- 9:00 pm at 5249 Olde Towne Road, Williamsburg

**[\[AT\] Monthly meeting: Nutria](#) - January 8** from 6:00 pm to 9:00 pm at JCC Human Services Bldg., 5249 Olde Towne Rd., Williamsburg

**[\[AT\] Joys of Bluebird Monitoring](#) - January 9** from 7-9:00 pm at Women's Club of Newport News, 461 J. Clyde Morris Blvd

**[\[AT\] WBC Bird Walk at New Quarter Park](#) - January 11** from 8-10:00 am at New Quarter Park, 1000 Lakeshead Dr., Williamsburg

**[\[AT\] HRBC January Field Trip](#) - January 11** 8-3:00 pm at Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel Islands

**[\[AT\] Forest Conservation & Mgmt.](#) - January 11** 9- 3:00 pm at New Kent Forestry Center

**[\[AT\] WBC Monthly Meeting](#) - January 15** 7:30-9:00 pm at College of William and Mary, Andrews Hall, Rm 101

**[\[AT\] Native Plant Chapter Meeting: "Heath Diversity in the Mid-Atlantic Region"](#) - January 16** from 6:45 pm to 9:00 pm at Yorktown Public Library on Rt. 17 and Battle Rd

**[\[AT\] WBCbirding boat trip to the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel Islands](#) - January 18** from 9:00 am to 1:00 pm at Lynnhaven Inlet in Virginia Beach

**[\[AT\] HRBC Bird Walk](#) - January 19** from 7:00 am to 10:00 am at Newport News City Park

**[\[AT\] Herpetology](#) - January 21** from 6:00 pm to 9:00 pm at 5249 Olde Towne Road, Williamsburg

**[\[AT\] WBC Bird Walk](#) - January 25** 7-9:00 am; New Quarter Park, 1000 Lakeshead Dr., Williamsburg

**[\[AT\] Field trip: Macro-invertebrates and Winter Trees](#) - January 25** 9 am to 3 pm at Freedom Park, James City County