



## THE NATURALIST

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

<http://historicrivers.org>

A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

Volume 8 No. 7 July/August 2014

### Chapter Board of Directors 2014-2015

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*Dean Shostak, Field Trip Coordinator*

### President's Message

By Shirley Devan

Master Naturalists have been busy this summer! That's our "nature!" We can't help ourselves!

The Annual Photo Exhibit at the Williamsburg Library is in place & will continue until September 8. I hope to see you all at the Reception for the entire Chapter August 16, 2 – 4 pm in the Gallery at the Library on South Henry Street. You'll have an opportunity to see stunning photos and meet the photographers. You'll agree we have a talented bunch! Many thanks to Linda and Jeff Miller and Ted Sargent for putting the exhibit together and installing it.

Adrienne Frank and Gary Driscole have toiled tirelessly for the past six months (longer?) to organize our first annual butterfly count sanctioned by the North American Butterfly Association (NABA). August 9 will be an important date in the life of our Chapter as teams scour our "circle" for every butterfly and skipper we can find. Personally, I can't wait! The results will be fascinating and intriguing. More fun comes later as we compare data across years. Stay tuned!

Several members have been preparing to help lead a Nature Camp for children 6-10 at Freedom Park August 18 – 21. Les Lawrence, Jan Lockwood, Catherine Short, Suzanne Masten, and I have met with Freedom Park staff to coordinate plans. We're focusing on hands-on experiences in the park.

August 23 will find our Chapter at the Annual Estuaries Day at York River State Park. Catherine Short will bring butterflies (yes!) and Kathy Cross is taking the lead with our HRC exhibit. Save the date and plan to join us.

The Basic Training Committee, chaired by Roger Gosden, has met regularly all summer to organize and recruit members for Cohort IX of Basic Training. The new members will start September 2. With more than a month to go before the first session, the class is full! Look for the Basic Training schedule in another part of this newsletter. As always, members may attend Basic Training sessions and count the time as Continuing Education.

Dean Shostak, our Field Trip Coordinator, hit the ball out the park with the upcoming trips to the National Weather Service in Wakefield, VA. Didn't know we had so many weather "nerds."

And I can't finish up without mentioning the bluebird monitors and the wildlife mapping teams! Plus the VMN State Conference September 26-28 that we are co-sponsoring with the Peninsula Chapter. Several members are planning workshops and field trips for our visitors that weekend.

Many thanks to the project leaders for these and other projects that make our Chapter so successful. As you can see our members enjoy volunteering and jump right in when we need boots on the ground. I am proud to be in this Chapter and I enjoy working with all of you on as many projects as I can fit in. Continue your good works. I look forward to seeing you "on the trail."

## Butterfly Circle News

On July 26, several (4) HRC-VMNs participated in the Dismal Swamp Butterfly Count. It was one of the lowest counts ever but there were still some great sightings. A few life-time species for some of us: a Reversed Roadside Skipper and a Yehl Skipper. The largest number of one species was the Palamedes Swallowtail. Jamestown Island had just a few of these this summer. The most colorful was the Great Purple Hairstreak whose host plant is mistletoe.

No bear sightings this year, but we heard Carpenter, Green, Green Tree, and Cricket frogs and saw this snapping turtle walking down the road.



Story and photos by Adrienne Frank



## Butterfly Stewardship . (Summer 2014). Butterfly Gardener. [www.nababutterfly.com](http://www.nababutterfly.com)

Plant native host plants and make your yard a butterfly habitat.



Eastern Tailed-blue, Photo by Deb Woodward

Refrain from using pesticides, instead remove pests by hand or spot-spraying with an insecticidal soap or diluted solution of alcohol.

Ask the community mosquito abatement spraying to bypass your house.

Put overripe, fermenting fruit in a designated spot in your garden.

Create a damp "puddling spot"

where butterflies can get minerals, salts, and nitrogen-rich substances (e.g., fertilizer, urine).



Photo by Hart Haynes

Reduce the size of your lawn by enlarging your flowerbed or wildflower meadow.

Avoid electric "bug zappers" and peripheral insecticidal mists.

Mow your lawn high and sparingly. Grasses are host plants for skippers, satyrs.

Ask local politicians to create more green spaces.

Ask local transportation agencies to use mowing but not herbicides.

Suggest that mowing be restricted to a 3-4 foot strip, so that outer portions of the roadside can support wildflowers.

Ask that wildflower seeds be sown along roads to encourage butterflies.

Support local programs or associations (e.g., school gardens, garden clubs)

Involve children in learning activities and experiences.

Educate adults by discussion, giving programs, writing articles, etc.



Photo by Hart Haynes



# HISTORIC RIVERS CHAPTER

In the last newsletter, Inge Curtis share a photo story about a Pine Warbler in her yard that had been “tricked” into hatching and raising a Brown-headed Cowbird. Now she has another photo story to share about another mother bird that was similarly tricked:



The end of the cowbird story, by Inge Curtis:

I believe my tree swallows were invaded. The baby looking out of the box is clearly not a tree swallow!

Fortunately, the Prothonotary Warblers were lucky. The cowbird is checking out their nest box, however, the opening is too small. Shortly after the invasion attempt the female exited the box.



## **Wild life Mapping at New Quarter Park, Aug 5.**

**We're happy to see Clyde Marsteller back on the Trail!**





## Project Osprey Watch

Cheryl Jacobson asked Libby Mojica of W&M's Center for Conservation Biology to talk to HRC Volunteers about the 2014 Osprey nesting season.



**front row: Jan Lockwood, Libby Mojica, Nancy Barnhart, Ginny Broome, Joanie Haury, Sherry Brubaker, Cheryl Jacobson, Sharon Falconer  
Back row: Shan Gill, David Lunt, Bruce Glendenning**

**Ginny Broome, Shan Gill, and David Lunt are members of the new Cohort IX.**

**This photo was taken by Shirley Devan at York River State Park of the Osprey nest behind the Visitor Center. As you can see, there are still two infertile eggs in the nest along with the female.**



**Mark Your Calendar!!  
Upcoming General Membership  
Meetings**

**September 10 - Doug Dwoyer (Cohort 8) on climate change - "Hampton Roads in the Dynamic Anthropocene Climatic Regime: Large Changes are Coming Soon"**

**October 8 - Randy Chambers, Director, W&M Keck Lab - "The Diamondback Terrapin. Virginia's Version of Maryland's Mascot"**

**November 12 - Felice Bond (Cohort 1)- her beautiful photographs showing how climate change is affecting the flora and fauna in Costa Rica**

**December—Date to be Announced—Holiday Party**

**February 18 - Pearl Beamer, wildlife rehabilitator - combined meeting with Williamsburg Bird Club**

**Notes from the Board**

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

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## Looking for a home for your pollinators?

Look into making this work of art to house your solitary bees!



See more about how this solitary bee box is made at:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u7UXQnJ2L-4>

(you may want to skip the ad that pops up when you open this you-tube video– although I found it kind of humorous)



Recently Joanne Sheffield visited Seattle. While there she saw John Shoosmith from Cohort VIII. He sends his greetings to the HRC. He now is living in West Seattle. His e-mail address is [jnshoosmith@gmail.com](mailto:jnshoosmith@gmail.com) should anyone want to get in touch with him.



## Ramblin Clyde Relates a Childhood Remembrance:

In the late spring of 1950, a pair of Blue Jays built a nest in the Black Willow tree by the creek and raised a family of four nestlings. One afternoon I gingerly climbed the willow to see the babies. Mother and Daddy Blue Jay dive-bombed me and knocked me out of the tree. With all the commotion one of the babies also tumbled down. We both hit the ground at the same time. I couldn't get him back up to nest so I put some grass in a cardboard box and put the baby bird in. The parents continued to feed him during the day.

At night I brought him in the house and played with him until he fell asleep. Knowing what I know now, I realize he "imprinted" on me and I became part of his family. During the next few weeks he grew into a juvenile and learned to fly. It was fun to toss him gently into the air and watch him until he could fly into the willows and stay there all day. At night he would fly down to me and stay in the house all night. He would sit on my shoulder as I read or listened to the radio. When he fell asleep he would tuck his head under his wing. When he woke up he would stretch one wing at a time and yawn. Dad made a perch for him out of an old floor lamp and a beer tray. He was so mischievous so I named him "Satan". In the mornings he would fly from his kitchen perch into my bedroom, land on my head and peck or pull on my ear until I got up and let him out for the day. He would play in the neighborhood until I got home from school. When I got off the school bus he would fly down from the willows, land on my head and jump down to my shoulder. As we walked home he would tell me how glad he was to see me and how his day had been. If it rained during the day he stayed in the house. In the evenings he would fly to the kitchen faucet and wait until I turned it on for him to take a drink. If I left it on he would hop down and take a bath.



Unfortunately, he and my mother never got along although he loved Dad ( he ignored my brother). He loved to pull the clothes pins off the wash line and watch the clothes drop. When my mother washed sheets he knew just where his toilet would be. If Mother chased him he would screech and dive at her.

At supper time Satan would sit on his perch next to Dad and hop on his shoulder. He would walk down his arm to his plate and, of course, get fed. He loved mashed potatoes, peas, and corn. One Sunday we had mashed potatoes, gravy, peas and a pork roast. Dad had a mug of beer. Satan did his thing and then jumped onto the beer mug. He proceeded to drink his fill (aided and abetted by Dad). Before we realized he was drunk he had fallen into the gravy bowl. He hopped out and left little birdie tracks all over Mother's good linen table cloth. We washed the gravy off of Satan, dried him and let him sleep it off.

Then, in the fall of 1952, a ball of fluff and love with a mask on her face and an insatiable curiosity came into my life. Mamie the Raccoon arrived. She was born in Minnesota and had been found, along with her brothers and sisters, by hunters, one of whom was a co-worker at Bethlehem Steel with Dad. She was perpetual motion that poked her nose into every corner, under every piece of furniture, and into every closet in the house.

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# HISTORIC RIVERS CHAPTER

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If she found something that looked edible she would pat with her front paws (they were like human hands), put it into her water dish and wash it off. She loved Major, our Collie, and would crawl all over him growling ferociously and ambushing him from behind furniture. She snuggled on my lap, burrowing her nose in her tummy and wrapping her little ring tail around herself. She would give out little chirps that sounded like a coffee percolator. She wore a collar and she walked with me on a leash. She would sleep at the foot of my bed and in the morning she would pounce on my feet and bite my toes to wake me up.

Mamie just knew that Satan was really meant to be her dessert and was constantly trying to catch him. Satan on the other hand loved to tease her and would wait until Mamie fell asleep, hop down from my shoulder and quickly pull a couple hairs out. One night as I was sitting on the couch reading Satan was on my shoulder and Mamie on my lap as usual when Satan decided to fly down to the floor. As he landed on the throw rug he fell on his back. In a flash the raccoon pounced on him. Mamie ended up with a mouth full of blue tail feathers and Satan ended up with a short tail and his pride injured. After that Satan let Mamie strictly alone.

Mamie lived in the house with us for a year until she decided it was time for nest building. She tore apart an easy chair and carried the stuffing into my bedroom to make a cozy hide-a-way under the bed. Mother issued an ultimatum. Mamie was given a dog house in the yard with a chain leash. She grew into a mature adult. One day she bit Dad in the hand. We had a family conference and it was decided to release her at our summer home in the Poconos. Dad made a transport kennel and we took her to the mountains. Mamie hung around the summer home and would greet us when we went up on weekends. But as the summer went by she became wilder and would not let us get close to her. Finally she disappeared. In the spring of the following year, I think it was in May, Dad and I were cutting grass at the home and we heard Mamie chirping. She wouldn't get close and we could not tempt her with food. That was the last we ever saw of her.



The Morning Call Chronicle newspaper visited us and did story about us (November 1, 1953-Sunday edition). That winter Satan caught pneumonia and God took him to live up Heaven. I cried over him for many days. He taught me a great deal about love and responsibility. I learned that wild creatures really belong in the wild. It is wrong to cage or make pets out of them. I buried Satan under the willows he loved to perch on.

## The Blue Jay

I took a Child of Nature  
and raised it for my own.  
And by little acts of Kindness  
seeds of Love were sown.

Those flashing Wings of azure blue  
his wild and raucous sounds.  
The worlds of sky and earth He knew  
only by Love were bound.

Within His breast a wild Heart beat  
unchained from worldly care.  
Yet he loved a Boy, a selfish Boy  
this Child of God so fair.

He gave to me his very being  
his Love a precious thing.  
Perched on my shoulder every night  
a song of Life he'd sing.

Puffed up and vibrant He would fly  
above my bed each morn.  
And Tidings of a new day come  
upon his Wings were born.

But now my Life is emptied  
of this bit of little Bliss.  
there is a dark and lonesome Void  
left by Death's cruel kiss.

He symbolized a link between  
God's natural world and mine.  
But now to God I give Him  
Oh Lord he's wholly Thine.

His grave beneath the Willow lies  
marked by the Laurel green.  
A little bit of Life now stilled  
Oh Death your aim unseen.

To be alone is not Life's way  
Through Love the World is made.  
Yet for the gift of Life and Love  
the Price of Death is paid.

Clyde Marsteller  
1954





Looking for a good book? Read below an excerpt and what Sherry Brubaker has to say about this book:

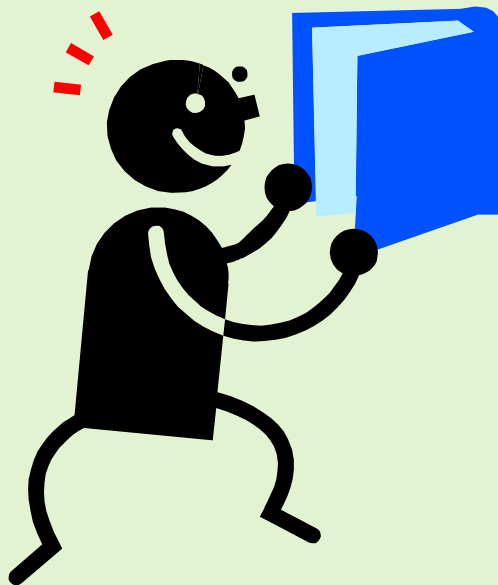
From the excellent book *Why Moths Hate Thomas Edison And Other Urgent Inquiries into the Odd Nature of Nature*. The best of Outside Magazine's "The Wild File" edited by Hampton Sides.

pg. 185

**Question:** Most ticks are deaf, blind and slow as Christmas. So how do they find you?

**Answer:** They smell you. Scientists have learned what sets ticks off by attaching itty-bitty electrodes to the olfactory organs on their legs. At a range of about twenty or thirty feet, a tick can smell the carbon dioxide on your breath. Closer in--a few feet away--it begins to respond to ammonia and other chemicals in your sweat, and closer still, it becomes stimulated by your body heat. Basically there are two kinds of ticks: "Ambush" ticks sit patiently on vegetation, waiting with their forelegs extended, until a likely critter brushes against them. "Hunter" ticks, on the other hand, will actually go after their prey, engaging in hot pursuits of thirty feet or more. And they're faster than you might think. Daniel Sonenshine, author of *The Biology of the Tick*, has clocked a tick crossing his desk in less than ten seconds. Impressive, yes. But consider that only one tick in a million finds enough food to survive to adulthood. Nature is inefficient, thank goodness.

I thought this book was very fun, with just questions and answers--not a whole essay.  
*Sherry Brubaker*



## Wildflower Spot– August 2014

John Clayton Chapter, Virginia Native Plant Society

### Arrow Arum

*Peltandra virginica*

In early summer, the most conspicuous part of this plant are the arrowhead-shaped fleshy leaf-blades, up to 10 inches long. They are on long stalks from a tuberous root. In late summer and early fall the leaves begin to fade, becoming dormant over the winter.

The flowers are similar to other members of the Arum Family - Jack-in-the-Pulpit (*Arisaema triphyllum*) Skunk Cabbage (*Symplocarpus foetidus*) and Golden Club (*Orontium aquaticum*). A tapering, leaf-like bract (spathe) with wavy edges is curled around a yellowish rod-like spike (spadix). This is the reproductive part – the female flowers are at the base of the spadix with the male flowers above, all tiny and inconspicuous.

In late summer the arrowhead-shaped appendage at the end of the flower stalk lying in wet ground. Inside are numerous black-green berries which are dispersed by water.

Growing in swamps and shallow waters, the plant survives with oxygen from its leaves. Arrow Arum requires standing water to 6 inches deep or in consistently moist boggy soils, in full sun to part shade. It occurs in the Coastal Plain and Piedmont region of Virginia and ranges from southern Maine to Florida, west to Michigan, Missouri and Texas. Spoonflower (*Peltandra sagittifolia*) is similar, but does not grow in our area. The range of spoonflower is from eastern North Carolina south to Florida and Louisiana.



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The genus name comes from the Greek *pelte*, “small shield,” and *aner*, “stamen,” referring to the shield-like contour of the stamens. While the roots are rich in starches, they contain crystals of calcium oxalate which cause intense burning. Capt. John Smith said “Raw is no better than poison,” and “it will prickle and grate the throat extremely” unless roasted, sliced, and dried in the sun. The name “Tuckahoe,” was used by the Algonquin who ate the plant after prolonged cooking or drying which destroys the crystals.

For more information about native plants visit [www.claytonvnps.org](http://www.claytonvnps.org).

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

**Photo:** Arrow Arum (*Peltandra virginica*) taken by Phillip Merritt

## Continuing Education for August+ 2014

Lucy Manning, Continuing Education Chair (757-646-0877 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)*

**[CE]: Historical and Cultural uses of Native Plants + Walk** - August 12, 6:00 pm to 7:00 pm at Sandy Bottom Nature Park, 1255 Big Bethel Rd, Hampton

**[CE] Life Stages of March Butterflies** - August 16, 10:00 am to 11:30 am at Freedom Park, Centerville Road, Williamsburg

**[CE] Design a Native Garden** - August 16, 10:00 am to 11:30 am at Freedom Park Interpretive Center

**[CE] HRBC Bird Walk** - August 17, 7:00 am to 10:00 am at Newport News City Park

**[CE] WBC Bird Walk** - August 23, 7:00 am to 9:00 am at New Quarter Park, 1000 Lakeshead Dr., Williamsburg

**[CE]: Walk & Talk: Water Monitoring** - August 23, 10:00 am to 12:00 pm at New Quarter Park, 1000 Lakeshead Dr, Williamsburg

**[CE]: Nature of Naming - Cohort IX Training** - September 2, 6:00 pm to 9:00 pm at 5249 Olde Towne Road in Williamsburg

**[CE] HRBC Bird Walk** - September 7, m 7:00 am to 10:00 am at Newport News City Park

**[CE] Butterflies** - September 7, 2:00 pm to 5:00 pm at Freedom Park, Williamsburg

**[CE] Monthly meeting** - September 10, 6:00 pm to 9:00 pm at JCC Human Services Bldg., 5249 Olde Towne Rd., Williamsburg

**[AT] Macro Photography** - September 11, 7:00 pm to 9:00 pm at James City/Williamsburg Community Center, 5301 Longhill Road, Williamsburg

**[CE] WBC Bird Walk at New Quarter Park** - September 13, 8:00 am to 10:00 am at New Quarter Park, 1000 Lakeshead Dr., Williamsburg

**[CE] World of Worms** - September 13, 10:00 am to 11:30 am at Freedom Park, Centerville Road, Williamsburg

**ALSO - CHECK OUT THE CLASSES OFFERED THROUGH THE CHRISTOPHER WREN PROGRAM THIS FALL!!**

<http://www.wm.edu/sites/cwa/course-info/semestercatalog/CourseCatalog.pdf>