



THE NATURALIST

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

<http://historicrivers.org>

A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

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President's Message

By Shirley Devan

Save these dates – September 26 – 28! The Virginia Master Naturalist State Conference will be in our backyard and we are co-sponsoring the conference with the Peninsula Chapter. Patty Maloney and Patty Riddick from our Chapter are helping with the planning. Felice Bond is handling the Photo Contest. Planners expect about 200 Master Naturalists from all over Virginia to attend.

The two dinners and most of the workshops will be at The Living Museum in Newport News. Field trips will range across the coastal plain with at least one in our area – York River State Park, specifically.

Several of our Chapter members are on tap to lead sessions and field trips. As planning progresses, the call will go out to our members to help onsite the weekend of the conference. I'm sure everyone will respond enthusiastically as you always do when help is needed.

Registration for the conference will open around July 1. Be on the lookout for that announcement! We are looking forward to showcasing our Chapter and our beautiful "historic rivers" part of the state.

NOW THIS IS A 'COOL' PHOTO!

**Taken by Hart Haynes during Wildlife Mapping at
Greensprings on May 8, 2014**



Moths on display at New Quarter Park

By Sara Lewis

Approximately 25 Master Naturalists and park visitors came to New Quarter Park on Saturday night, May 17, to observe the creatures of the night during a special program, "Black Lights and Bugs". Naturalist Teta Kain spoke to the group and showed beautiful photos of moths that are frequently seen at night. After her presentation, visitors looked for moths in four areas set up to attract moths and other bugs to white sheets backlit by black lights.

Members of the Historic Rivers Chapter of Virginia Master Naturalists were on hand to help identify moths.

Moth identification is sometimes a puzzle. Teta Kain spent some time trying to identify this one and guesses that it is a One-spotted



Teta Kain, Jan Lockwood, Seig Kopinitz



Bob Gibbs, Dean Shostak

Field Trip to The Great Dismal Swamp

By Dean Shostak



Photo by Avery Gibbs

May 8,9. 2014

Twenty HRC-VMN members went to the Great Dismal Swamp (GDS) to learn all about the flora and fauna of that region. The weather was clear and the temps were in the 80's both days making it ideal for hiking and exploring. Our guide was Penny Lazauskas of *Nature's Calling*, who did a fantastic job leading our group.

Our trip started with a noon lecture on Thursday. Penny had us taste several native plants we would be seeing on the trip. Cattail is surprisingly like celery.



Our field guide, biologist Penny Lazauskas, let us sample edible plants found in the Dismal Swamp this was "Cattail" (Family: Typhaceae). Photo by Sherry Brubaker

We loaded up and headed out to the GDS for the remainder of the day, hiking the West Ditch Boardwalk, where we saw an abundance of wildlife.



Eastern Rat Snake. Photo by Sherry Brubaker



Southern Leopard Frog, Photo by Mike Woodward



"Stick Snake". Photo by Sherry Brubaker

Continued on next page



Luna Moth, Photo by Mike Woodward

Great Dismal Swamp Field Trip—continued

Back at the hotel many headed out for the surprising array of great restaurants offered in Suffolk. Others enjoyed room service and an early night at the hotel.

Friday began around 8 am with a snake greeting us in the parking lot of the GDS Visitor Center. We drove out to the Underground Railroad Ditch road. We had many chances to get out and explore the GDS all the way to Lake Drummond. The evidence of the fires of a few years back was still everywhere. Lunch at the lake was a nice break in a beautiful setting. It would be fun to come back another day for a kayak trip on the lake. We headed back to the visitor center for one more birding hike and farewells by 3 PM.

PS. I brought my daughter Josie, age 11, who had a great time. She wrote a paper for her school about the trip and had this to add:

Top 10 cool things on Great Dismal Swamp Trip

1. Lot of edible plants. Cattail taste like celery.
2. Lake Drummond formed from wildfires sinking the land. So much iron in sediment makes your compass go crazy.
3. Swamp fires burn underground and last years. Although they try to dam up the water in areas to put it out, it usually takes a hurricane to put it out. Smoke all the way to Washington DC in 2008.
4. You should keep a watchful eye at all times to spot owls, snakes and rare birds.
5. When birds make warning calls look and listen for hawks.
6. When looking for animals it's good to know whether they are nocturnal or Diurnal. We set cameras to see nocturnal animals and saw an opossum. Water snakes, bear, most songbirds are diurnal. Some are active at dawn /dusk (mosquitoes). Luna moths sleep during the day to look like leaves.
7. Dismal swamp named from old meaning—cannot support life, but had native Americans, Underground Railroad etc.
8. Protected by federal laws as wildlife refuge.
9. No paved roads—only old logging dirt roads.
10. Have to register your name every time you go in and out of Great Dismal Swamp. Easy to get lost.

Birds Heard or Seen—Great Dismal Swamp Field Trip

compiled by Cheryl Jacobson & Jan Lockwood

Northern Bobwhite X	Red-bellied Woodpecker X
Wild Turkey X	Downy Woodpecker X
American Bittern X	Northern Flicker X
Great Blue Heron X	Pileated Woodpecker X
Black Vulture X	Eastern Wood-Pewee X
Turkey Vulture X	Acadian Flycatcher X
Osprey X	Great Crested Flycatcher X
Red-shouldered Hawk X	Eastern Kingbird X
Red-tailed Hawk X	White-eyed Vireo X
Clapper Rail X	Yellow-throated Vireo X
Killdeer X	Red-eyed Vireo X
Rock Pigeon (Feral Pigeon) X	Blue Jay X
Mourning Dove X	American Crow X
Yellow-billed Cuckoo X	Northern Rough-winged Swallow X
Eastern Screech-Owl X Gray morph, seen in cavity	Tree Swallow X
Barred Owl X	Carolina Chickadee X
Ruby-throated Hummingbird X	Tufted Titmouse X
Red-headed Woodpecker X	White-breasted Nuthatch X
	Carolina Wren X

HISTORIC RIVERS CHAPTER

Other critters and “things” we saw while at the Great Dismal Swamp. Please note that some items on the list are “tongue and cheek”. Compiled by Sherry Brubaker

Critters List

Other

Fowler’s toad
American toad

Cope’s Gray
Green frog
Green tree frog
Southern leopard frog
Bullfrog
Cricket frog
Red bellied cooter
Red eared slider
Yellow bellied slider
Painted turtle
Ebony Jewelwing
White tailed dragonfly
Blue dasher
“Betsy” beetle
leaf roller/spider
whirly gig (4 eyes)

Tent caterpillar hootenanny
robber fly
Hummingbird moth
Luna moth
Viceroy
Orange sulfur
Pearl crescent
Carolina satyr
Zebra swallowtail
Black swallowtail
Comma butterfly
Red Admiral
Red spotted purple
Blue dasher
Eastern rat snake
Red bellied water snake
Brown water snake

Deer tracks
Tadpoles
star shaped caterpillar poop
7-day old bear scat
“white wash” (bird poop)

witch’s butter, fungus
Cranefly orchid
Muscadine grape

Buttress—tree root prop
900 year-old cypress

cinnamon fern

Cotton wood
Carolina jessamine
phragmites
blue eyed grass
sorrell
alligator grass

crayfish

Also reported:

large mouthed stick snake
humpback whale
rare Nike night stalker
elusive whistling Tom bird
elusive slithering boardwalk
snake

Other info:

Fire was in 2011 from June to November & burned 6,000 acres.

There is a great Audubon app. for butterflies

There are 408 bears in the refuge.

The alligator weed which was introduced on the wheels of firefighting equipment, invades the ditches.

Disclaimer: not responsible for spelling or completeness!

Dismal Swamp, May 8 & 9, 2014.

HISTORIC RIVERS CHAPTER

Inge Curtis shared this story of an adorable Pine Warbler that has been visiting her all winter and spring. *"Lately he has been coming to the feeder in very frequent intervals."*



I finally saw who he was feeding:



a baby Brown-headed Cowbird"



HISTORIC RIVERS CHAPTER

Maria Myers sent this photo of a discovery her daughter made:

“The mama opossum used her ‘fingers’ to open the garbage can at my daughter’s house and placed her babies inside... It looks like she may have made a type of nest inside. Food and shelter! “



Kathi Mestayer added this possible comic caption for the photo: "type of nest? - that's the deluxe room with the twin king-sized beds and the fluffy terrycloth robes!"

Ginny Carey suggested this caption: "Hey! Stop hogging the remote..."

HISTORIC RIVERS CHAPTER

Great fun trekking around New Quarter Park on May 18th for Wildlife Mapping and Bluebird Monitoring with Jan Lockwood and Joyce Lowry. Here are a few photos: By Shirley Devan



Eastern Tiger Swallowtail (looks very fresh!)



Joyce and Jan outstanding in their field!



Blue-gray Gnatcatcher nest



azure butterfly (spring? summer? who knows!)



older bluebirds in box 19



new bluebirds in box 17

NOTES FROM THE WILDSIDE— BY RAMBLIN CLYDE

You Can't Have Enough Turtles

I was raking up a drift of last year's leaves by my backyard gardening work table. I had the help of one of our resident Gray Catbirds. He fearlessly sat a few feet away on the table and as I uncovered an insect or bug he would fly down and grab it. About half way through I uncovered Jacob our male Box Turtle buried in the leaf mold. I gave him a quick dip in the fish pond and fed him a Nightcrawler worm. As I was finishing up raking, to my utter delight, I uncovered our first ever Grandchild turtle. It is a little larger than a quarter. I guess Jacob and Miss Terry, our female Box Turtle, must have figured things out. I took it inside to show Miss Ellie who immediately fell in love with it. We decided to name it Bee Tee (Baby Turtle). I fixed up a home and took it to show the Poquoson 3rd grade classes on June 9th & 11th. It will then be put back in my leaf compost pile. Later on in the afternoon, Miss Terry emerged from

the brush pile and followed Jacob into the fish pond and enjoyed a worm meal. I swear she has a "Did you see what I did" attitude. Wikipedia says Box Turtles lay clutches up to six eggs in size so I'm hoping Bee Tee has some more siblings in the yard. You just can't have enough turtles!



More Zoo news:

As I cleaned out my flower pots I came across a nice Black Widow Spider who immediately folded her legs and dropped to the bottom of the pot. I brushed her into a collection jar and she is replacing the spider who passed away this winter. When I was watering my Hostas I scared out a fat toad who has replaced Toad Stool. I can now rotate it with Mushroom in presentations and not stress either one unduly.



G3A yielded up a beautiful Worm Snake and a large Rough Earth Snake for next week's Zoo visits. They will be returned to the woods after their tour.

I must tell you about the juvenile Rough Green Tree Snake I collected several weeks ago. I have a special place in my heart for these animals as I had a "pet" Green Snake for a few years as a child. I made the mistake of taking her to my fourth grade class. I had her inside my shirt. After morning prayer and the Pledge she decided to crawl around my neck. The two 10-year old girls sitting aside of me screamed and ran out the door followed by the rest of the class and Mrs. Horne, our teacher. I soon found myself in the Principal's office awaiting my father's appearance. I was suspended for only a day plus a paddling. Things were a lot different in the 1940's.

Anyhow, Mo Jo has adapted and is voraciously eating crickets, worms and bugs. He has grown about two inches and is now approaching a foot in size.

So now I can say with pride, like Peggy Sue, "I got my MoJo back"!

Ramblin Clyde



HISTORIC RIVERS CHAPTER

BLUEBIRD BULLETIN

We are hearing reports that it's quiet on the bluebird trails as most of the chicks from the first nesting have fledged and the parents have taken their young to other areas to learn to forage. At the same time several females are building new nests for a second nesting. However, the second nesting is generally less productive than the first and many trail leaders report that it has slow to get underway. (Chickadees and Tufted Titmouse nest only once per season.) The chart below reflects this transition between nestings.

HRC BLUEBIRD MONITORING TRAILS SUMMARY AS OF JUNE 6, 2014			
# Nestboxes 228	# Bluebird Eggs 90	# Bluebird Chicks 59	# Bluebird Fledges 324
	# Other Species Eggs 6	# Other Species Chicks 26	# Other Species Fledges 53
	Total Eggs 96	Total Chicks 85	Total Fledges 377

COMPARISON OF BLUEBIRD FLEDGES		
	June 6, 2014	June 1, 2013
# Fledges	324	274
# Nestboxes	228	204
Date first egg	April 2, 2014	April 11, 2013

At first glance it may seem that the trails are more productive in 2014. It is important to note that we have more boxes in place in 2014 and milder weather allowed the birds to nest earlier. More analysis is needed once the season has closed.

It is thanks to the efforts of our monitors that we have this information. We thank them again and again for their hard work and consistent reporting.

News: More York County bluebirds will soon have new homes.

Congratulations to Stephanie Schmuck who reported, "The Girl Scout daisy troop 1036 helped me put up 7 boxes at Grafton Bethel Elementary School on 06/04/14. We decided to dedicate the trail to the retiring Principal, Dr Grass, who has been open to all of my nature themed projects through the years. She had always wanted to put up a nature trail at the school, so hopefully this is at least a start. The girls really enjoyed putting them up and will come with me to check the boxes in the summer. Hopefully the students at the school will get involved next spring."

NEW Grafton Bethel Elementary Bluebird Trail



The success of the York County Sports Complex trail has spurred on another trail.

With the help of 5 Daisies and one Junior from Troop 1036, we put up a trail of 7 boxes around the school. The girls, their mothers and one brother came out on a hot afternoon at the end of the school day on June 4th, 2014. They had a great time hammering in the anchor posts, putting up boxes, and collecting flowers, leaves, and various other treasures along the way. Afterwards we all cooled off with some frozen yogurt.

The Grafton Bethel Elementary school principal, Dr. Karen Grass, was delighted with the idea, especially since she has always wanted to set up a nature trail at the school. She has been a great supporter of put-

ting in native plants, the Monarch Initiative, and now the Bluebird trail. She is retiring this year, so we decided to dedicate the trail to her and hope to expand the bluebird trail into a nature trail in the years to come.

The Girl Scouts will help with checking the boxes through the summer, and hopefully the students will be involved next season.

Thank you again to Jan Lockwood, Dan Cristol, Judy Jones, Jim Booth and Stephen Living for providing us with all the boxes, poles, baffles and labels to make this trail happen; to all the Girl Scouts and their moms for putting up the trail, and to Dr. Grass for supporting us on another nature project at the school.

Story and photos by Stephanie Schmuck



CLEAN THE BAY DAY

On Saturday morning, June 7, Ten Master Naturalists, one granddaughter and a visiting guest gathered at Indian Field Creek on the Colonial Parkway to help pick up litter and trash in the area.

It was a perfect day and armed with gloves and grabbers our group found enough trash in the parking pullouts, grassy areas, under the shrubs and along the river shoreline to fill several bags. Our help was needed!

Once again our members showed their pride in our community and that they can have fun in any circumstance. They are a great group. A huge thank you goes to:

Ginny Carey, Sharon Falconer, Nancy Gore, Bob Gibbs, Thad Hecht, Jeanne Millin, Mike Millin and Judy Jones, her granddaughter and her visitor, and an especially huge thank you to Nancy Barnhart who graciously agreed to lead this project.

Clean the Bay Day is directed by the Chesapeake Bay Foundation and coordinated locally by York County staff and volunteers. It is a wonderful way to give back to our community and preserve and protect our most vital resource.

Jan Lockwood



Judy Jones, Nancy Barnhart, Thad Hecht, Nancy Gore



Jeanne and Mike Millin

Bob Gibbs



HISTORIC RIVERS CHAPTER

RECOGNIZING OUR POLLINATORS!

Article by Helen Hamilton

There's a lot of reproduction going on in a garden with flowers. Most are brightly colored, fragrant, with lines on the petals guiding pollinating insects to the center where nectar is stored. Wiggling into the flower, insects can't avoid being dusted with pollen which they carry to other flowers. Those with receptive stigmas (female parts) receive the pollen and begin the process of generating seeds and fruits. Those seeds and fruits ensure our gardens will have a new supply of plants next year.

Seventy-five percent of all flowering plants and over one-third of the foods we eat require animal pollination. Truckloads of honeybees pollinate almond orchards in California. But honeybees are not native here – they originated in Asia and were brought by the colonists for their honey production. Now colonies are in decline, stressed from diseases, mite infections, and pesticide poisoning.

Over 4,000 species of native bees were pollinating plants here in the U.S. before the colonists' arrival. Since they forage early and late in the day, and in wet or cold conditions, in many cases they are more effective pollinators than honeybees. When native bees forage near agricultural fields, more fruits and vegetables are produced. Bumblebees are crucial for pollination of tomatoes, peppers, blueberries and cranberries. They “buzz-pollinate” by disconnecting their flight muscles from their wings, setting up vibrations that cause bursts of pollen from the flowers.

Most native bees are solitary, do not build hives, and only a few species produce small amounts of honey. They nest in the ground, in brush piles and hollow logs. Bumblebees make nests in small cavities, under grass clumps or dense piles of brush or stones. Mason bees and leaf-cutter bees nest in natural cavities, holes in wood, plant stems, using mud and chewed leaves to divide brood cells. Solitary wasps feed on a wide variety of pest insects. With no hive to defend, they are non-aggressive, constructing nests of clay or mud or in the ground.

Insects feed over 90 percent of birds and their young, and more insects will feed (and pollinate) on native plants than on those introduced from another continent, state, or region. Pollinators are happier with a mixture of plants throughout the season with different colors, shapes and scents. Shrubs and trees such as dogwood, blueberry, cherry, plum, willow, and poplar provide pollen or nectar, or both, early in spring when food is scarce. With limited space, flowers can be planted in containers on a patio, balcony, and even window boxes.

Pollinators need homes near flowering plants where they can nest and hibernate and hide from predators. Ground-nesting bees prefer loose, bare soil in a sunny spot, flat or sloped. A wildlife habitat can be simply constructed of hollow stems, dead logs with drilled holes, bark, stones, or wooden pallets and perforated brick. These “pollinator hotels” are provide safe homes for bees, beetles, wasps, lizards and many other beneficial animals. Such a structure was recently completed in the Williamsburg Botanical Garden in Freedom Park.

Largely unnoticed, insects are working our gardens – pollinating our flowers, recycling dead material, eating each other. Predatory animals living on many different plants that provide a variety of environments can control pest organisms. A healthy garden has clumps and drifts of plants of all sizes and shapes, closely planted. Not much habitat is available for pollinators with a few decorative plants surrounded by yards of mulch.

While First Lady Michelle Obama helped students plant the White House Kitchen Garden in April, also planted was the first White House Pollinator Garden to support bees, monarch butterflies, and other pollinators.

Recognizing the urgent issue of declining pollinator populations, the U.S. Senate has designated the week of June 16-22 as “National Pollinator Week.” Virginia has joined other states with a proclamation from Governor Terry McAuliffe. We can help by densely planting pollinator-friendly plants and creating habitats. Many references are available for habitat construction, and www.xerces.org has lists of suitable plants arranged by region. Plants for coastal Virginia are on the website of the John Clayton Chapter, Virginia Native Plant Society – www.claytonvnps.org.

HISTORIC RIVERS CHAPTER

Angier Brock and Kathi Mestayer prepare to help Natural Resource Specialist Dorothy Geyer (not pictured) locate Eastern Meadowlark nests near the NPS Yorktown Visitor's Center. Information gathered about the nesting birds will help inform mowing schedules at the Park. (June 2, 2014)



Update on Umbrella Habitat: Carolina Wren Takes Over: Frog Wherabouts Unknown

By Kathi Mestayer

Remember that umbrella where the Cope's Gray Tree Frogs were hanging out?



Well, now there's a new tenant in the co-op; a Carolina Wren. She/he is building a lovely nest.

The other umbrella remains under human control....for the time

being.



Caitlin Verdu, Cohort 8, would like you to know that she is maintaining a blog about her internship at the Manassas National Battlefield Park and the Conway Robinson State Forest. It's got some pretty cool information about land conservation. She hopes you enjoy!

Here's the link:

<http://thefrontlinesofconservation.wordpress.com/>

Butterfly Circle News



"Winter sowing" success! Swamp milkweed seeds were sown outside in mini-green houses made from plastic soda bottles and milk jugs. As of 1 June, the swamp milkweed was curling out the top of the soda bottles. All plants are now in the ground awaiting the monarchs! Photo by Patty Maloney



Members of the Butterfly Circle group (Nancy, Mary and Gary) planning and planting native plants in a field at Warhill Sports Complex. Photo by Patty Maloney

This beautiful display was created at James City County Public Library by JANET CURTIS Photo by Judy Jones



The Chippokes Count may be on Sunday July 13, organized by Teta Kain

<http://www.cvwo.org/calendar.php> The Delmarv Tip butterfly count set for July 19.

http://www.fws.gov/refuge/great_dismal_swamp/ Don Schwab set the date for July 26 for Dismal Swamp

<http://www.historicrivers.org> Our Williamsburg Count is set for August 9th, but it's not on the website yet.

If you have any questions, let me know. Adrienne adrienne-gary@cox.net

Continuing Education for June+ 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

[\[CE\] Forests for the Bay](#) - **June 18, 9:00 am to 12:00 pm at Virginia Institute of Marine Science, Greate Road, Gloucester Point**

[\[CE\] June After Hours Lecture: Gliderpalooza!](#) - **June 26, 7:00 pm to 8:00 pm at Virginia Institute of Marine Science, Greate Road, Gloucester Point**

[\[CE\] WBC Bird Walk](#) - **June 28, 7:00 am to 9:00 am at New Quarter Park, 1000 Lakeshead Dr., Williamsburg**

[\[CE\] Walk & Talk: Osprey Watching on Queens](#) - **June 28, 2014, 10:00 am to 12:00 pm at New Quarter Park, Lakeshead Drive, Williamsburg**

[\[CE\] John Clayton Chapter: Warhill Trail Plant Walk](#) - **June 28, 10:00 am to 12:00 pm at Warhill Trail, Williamsburg**

[\[CE\] HRBC Bird Walk](#) - **July 6, 7:00 am to 10:00 am at Newport News City Park**

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