

THE NATURALIST

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

http://historicrivers.org

A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

Volume 6 No. 5 May 2012

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"......this pic of one of our Carolina Wrens that fledged this morning. The little guy/gal isn't quite sure what to do or where to go."

Hart Haynes

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Janet Curtis, Host

Les Lawrence, Field Trip Coordinator

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Greetings, Historic Rivers Chapter:

Happy "belated" Earth Day! I'm actually writing this note on the official Earth Day, (Sunday, 22 April), and celebrating inside while enjoying the much needed rain. Our Chapter members participated in a variety of Earth Day activities this weekend to include: leading a bluebird talk and walk at Freedom Park; manning our Chapter's booth on backyard habitats at the James River Fest at the Jamestown Yacht Basin; and presenting Clyde and his Zoo at Waller Mill Pond. Many thanks to all who participated in the wonderful events this weekend!

If you were rained out or some how missed Earth Day completely, you have the whole month of May to celebrate "Garden for Wildlife Month." This month would be a perfect time to volunteer at one of the many gardens our Chapter supports throughout the area: the Botanical Garden in Freedom Park; the native plant garden at York River State Park; the teaching and water gardens at New Quarter Park; and the native plant gardens at the elementary schools. Another great gardening option would be to participate this month in invasive plant removal at the National Parks at Jamestown/Yorktown.

In celebrating "Garden for Wildlife Month," think about adding food, water or shelter in your own yard for the many critters that live or migrate through our area.

Food. Plant at least one new native plant, shrub or tree to attract birds, insects and other wildlife to your yard. Check out Doug Tallamy's book, "Bringing Nature Home," for some new ideas.

Water. Consider adding a pond, a bird bath or other water feature to your landscape. I have a water-tight planter on my deck to grow water lilies. Birds and squirrels regularly visit for a quick sip from the rim.

Shelter. "If you build it, they will come!" Actually, Nancy Norton built it, and the bluebirds have come. I put up one of Nancy's bluebird boxes in my yard in early March. The bluebirds arrived and I'm eagerly awaiting the hatching of 5 eggs. Consider adding any kind of bird house, bat house or shelter in your yard to support wildlife.

See you in the gardens, on the trails, in the bus, or at the other great events this month,

Patty Maloney, President

Historic Rivers Chapter

Virginia Master Naturalist

Notes from the Board

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

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COHORT VI ESTABLISHES A BLUEBIRD TRAIL AT FREEDOM PARK

Members shown above are left to right: Nancy Gore, Tom Dougherty, Hart Haynes, Ginny Carey, Deb Woodward, Dean Gordon (husband of Ruth Gordon), Nancy Barnhart, Jim Corliss and Ruth Gordon.

Members of the team not pictured are: Jessie Ebers, Megan Kobiela, Sherry Brubaker, Judy Tucker, Cheryl Jacobson, and Jan Lockwood.



Hart Haynes, Tom Dougherty, and Ginny Carey

Nancy Gore, Hart Haynes, and Ginny Carey

Bluebirds at Freedom Park!

How it all began - Geoff Giles shared the idea of establishing a bluebird trail at a General Membership meeting. Ginny Carey and Nancy Gore were there, and when someone suggested this would be a good project for Cohort VI, they presented the idea at a Cohort VI training meeting. And, the rest is history!

Nancy Gore and Ginny Carey were the two Cohort VI members who coordinated the effort to get the trail open (Ginny stepped back to help out with the arrival of two sets of twin granddaughters in Mississippi and California this summer) and Nancy Barnhart agreed to be co trail leader with Nancy Gore. All three deserve huge amounts of credit . 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 played a huge role throughout the process. She guided the group early on with information on bluebirds, where to set up the boxes, patiently answered tons of questions, and provided training in the monitoring process.

Freedom Park bluebird boxes came from many sources: some Geoff had, half a dozen Shirley "liberated" from former W & M trails, donations from Cohort VI members, and some from the Williamsburg Botanical Garden. Nancy and Ginny sought donations from Cohort VI for hardware (poles and baffles, etc.), recruited monitors from Cohort VI, and arranged for training. The boxes have been remarkably successful, too - the adage about bluebirds not using new boxes doesn't hold true here. Freedom Park had a bluebird nest within a week of the trail going up, the first bluebirds should fledge within the next week, and one of the two WBU boxes already has a nest with 5 eggs!.

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. Shortly after that the team was asked if they'd monitor the ones in the Garden and two more boxes were donated from Wild Birds Unlimited. The total boxes now number 19.





Ginny Carey, Ruth and Dean Gordon

Freedom Park Trail leaders are Nancy Gore and Nancy Barnhart who report that the monitors are doing a great job - and having a lot of fun. They're organized in pairs but other members of the Cohort often join them in checking the boxes.

We are all invited to come out and see the bluebirds!

Nancy Gore and Tom Dougherty

Note: The article above was compiled by Patty Riddick, editor, from information and pictures provided by Jan Lockwood, Nancy Barnhart, Tom Dougherty, Shirley Devan and Nancy Gore.



Freedom Park Bluebird Team and Friends....plus some eggs and hatchlings!



Deb woodward



Photos by Chapter Members

George and Val Copping of WBU help our bluebirds!!!

Much of the equipment used in our area's bluebird boxes is supplied by Wild Birds Unlimited on Monticello Avenue, Williamsburg, where there is always a good supply of what the bluebirds need and expertise on how best to provide it, from nest boxes, to poles and predator guards, to mealworms when the hungry chicks arrive!

While we are we are very happy to have that resource, we are even more appreciative of George and Val's contributions, including a generous donation of some of the bluebird boxes and poles on Williamsburg's newest bluebird trail!! When they learned that Cohort VI of our Historic Rivers VMN Chapter planned to contribute the labor and materials to set up and monitor the new trail at the Freedom Park, George and Valerie promptly offered a generous contribution of some bluebird boxes and poles for the trail!

Since bluebird activity, including house hunting and nest building, is well ahead of schedule this year, as is much of nature's spring awakening, Cohort VI went to work promptly to make the their pooled resources and talents, and the Wild Birds Unlimited contribution, into a lovely new move-in ready bluebird trail. The first happy bluebirds have already been excited to find this trail and begun building nests in the boxes.

You can admire the new trail along the entrance road to Freedom Park, where very productive bluebird habitat was just waiting to be turned into a bluebird trail. Thanks to George and Valerie and to Cohort VI for making that happen!!!!

Geoff Giles

Become an Osprey Watcher: Connect with a Global Community of Observers by Cheryl Jacobson

Cheryl Jacobson, local committee chair, and a group of fourteen Master Naturalists are participating in the new Project Osprey Watch launched by The Center for Conservation Biology. It is a project created to engage a global community to collect data on breeding osprey. The mission of Project Osprey Watch is to bring citizen scientists together in order to collect information on a large enough spatial scale to be useful in addressing three of the most pressing issues facing aquatic ecosystems including global climate change, depletion of fish stocks, and environmental contaminants. The Center for Conservation Biology is a research group shared by the College of William and Mary and the Virginia Commonwealth University.

The local group plans on meeting monthly to share information about osprey and the nests that they are watching. They will meet where they can utilize scopes to observe one or more of the nests that are being monitored. If you would like to join them, contact Cheryl Jacobson at jcheryljoy@aol.com or call her cell at 303-519-0989. The internet site is http://www.osprey-watch.org.

Osprey are one of very few truly global sentinels for aquatic health. They feed almost exclusively on live fish throughout their entire life cycle. They are a top consumer within aquatic ecosystems and are very sensitive to both over fishing and environmental contaminants. Nearly all populations breed in the northern latitudes and winter in the southern latitudes, effectively linking the aquatic health of the hemispheres. Their breeding season in the north is highly seasonal making them an effective barometer of climate change.

Osprey Nesting Timeframe by Cheryl Jacobson

First Egg Laid--2-4 eggs (1-3 days a part)

Incubate Eggs—five weeks (34-40 days) eggs hatch 1-5 days a part

Chicks Brooded—10 days

Chicks flap their wings—3-4 weeks

Young start to feed themselves—6 weeks Mom may leave to hunt

Chicks Fledge—8-10 weeks--(another source said 7-8 weeks take first flight)

Two weeks later follow male on hunting trips

A Report from Les Lawrence on the Meh-Te-Kos Trail

"Hi All,

Friday's trekkers included myself, Felice, Cheryl, and Shirley. With Seig and Alice away on another trip, we actually completed the trail 30 minutes faster; however, with many fewer great pictures! And we sorely missed "Cookies by Alice" at the end of the day - Chips Ahoy just don't measure up. Anyway.....

We still have 10 active BB nests and 4 CC nests. Starting with a total of 49 BB eggs a couple of weeks ago, we now have 47 BB chicks (!) and 2 eggs. The 25 CC eggs we had are now 25 tiny little CC hatch-

lings. We won't be able to check 5 of our BB boxes next Friday, and, after that, it will be time to do our first clutch house cleaning and some needed house mending.

Our wildlife mapping along the trail got exciting. A couple of us spotted life birds; we saw some butterfly/skipper firsts for the year; we saw yet another rough green snake and a black racer (which didn't want to leave when we approached - probably its nest/eggs); Felice found a box turtle carapace; Cheryl spotted a Pink Lady's Slipper (the first I've seen in the park); and we saw several gray squirrels and tracks from deer and raccoons. Good day!"

Les Lawrence



A Rough Green Snake

Opheodrys aestivus

Pink Lady's-Slipper/Moccasin-Flower

Cypripedium acaule

Photos by Shirley Devan

General Membership Meeting

Stormwater to be the topic at the May 9 **General Membership Meeting** (reminder: meeting starts at 6:30 pm) and will feature a presentation by Fran Geissler, James City County's Director of Stormwater. The presentation will be: "**How Native Plants can Save the Bay.**"

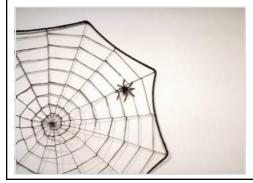
Planting more plants is a strategy to help clean up the Chesapeake Bay and our local waters. Learn how plants and the Bay are connected and what citizens can do to help.

Fran will also be able to discuss and answer our questions about current regulations and other efforts underway to improve water quality in the Bay by managing storm water.

Submitted by Kathi Mestayer, HRC Vice-President and Program Chair

Freedom Cup

Some of the C6BB Gang (that's Tom Dougherty talk for Cohort VI Bluebird Freedom Park Monitoring Team) were discussing new habits formed from our recent training. I had described in my official "autobiography" that our family had a "spider can" for removing unwanted critters from inside the house and replacing them outdoors where they belonged. Nancy Barnhart told us that in their family they call the removal device a Freedom Cup. We like that name!



Shared by CVI Member Sherry Brubaker

Water Stewards named Volunteers of the Year

By Jeanne Millin



Molly Nealer, Jeanne Millin, Carol Fryer, and Anne Nielsen (left to right.)

At the York County Volunteers of the Year ceremony on Tuesday April 17th, Carol Fryer, Jeanne Millin and Anne Nielsen were awarded York County 'Volunteers of the Year' by Park and Recreation Director, Molly Nealer. They were nominated for their work in designing and installing a rain garden in New Quarter Park. Installation of the garden was the work of both Master Gardener-Water Stewards and Master Naturalists from the area including, Shirley Devan, Sara Lewis, Patty Maloney, Jean Balutanski, Thad Hecht, and Nancy Norton, as well as some of the Friends of New Quarter Park. Laurie Fox from the Virginia Tech's Hampton Roads Agricultural Research and Extension Center in Virginia Beach provided both advice and plants. The over 2,000 plants installed in three work sessions were provided by York County funding and plant donations from members of the Native Plant Society and from the James City County/Williamsburg Master Gardener Plant Sale. The garden was put in a shady location at the end of a parking lot drainage pipe. Modification of the original design was required after a heavy storm washed some of the plants down the hilly area. With the design modification and installation of additional plants, the rain garden managed to survive last year's hurricane. The hilly area is no longer being scoured by rushing water. More plants will be installed this year. A plant list for the area is available from the New Quarter Park office and presentations to community groups are now part of the New Quarter Park program offerings.

You know you're a Master Naturalist when you are getting closer....and closer....to that snake that is rearing its head at you, but you need a good shot to get an i.d. on it!



When you do, Clyde the Zookeeper says:

"A copperhead that small would have a vivid yellow tail tip. This is a juvenile non venomous species.

Tim ,of course; is the expert but my money is on a little Black Racer. If you are adventuresome, hold the little one gently behind the head and look at the scales from the anus to the tip of the tail, there should be a double row. Venomous snakes have a single row. If there is a single row, I was mistaken."

Unfortunately, the snake was several blocks back by that time, so I missed the opportunity to view its private parts.



Les Lawrence, Cheryl Jacobson, Lois Ullman, Jan Lockwood and Geoff Giles (left to right).

"These pictures were taken at a student educational event at New Kent Forestry Center, on April 3, co-sponsored by the DOF and DGIF. HRC members Cheryl Jacobson assisted in a presentation about snakes (that's her holding a corn snake, but she also passed around an Eastern rat snake and Eastern king snake); Christina Woodson talked to the kids about the life cycle of Monarch butterflies; and Lois Ullman, Geoff Giles, Jan Lockwood, and Les Lawrence led groups on nature walks. Approximately 128 third graders and parents participated in this program."

Les Lawrence



Christina Woodson



Cheryl Jacobson

Guidelines and Procedures for the Historic Rivers Chapter Listserv

Welcome to Historic Rivers Chapter Listserv ("HRC Listserv"), the listserv for active members of the Historic Rivers Chapter of the VA Master Naturalists.

This document contains information about the purpose and policies for the HRC Listserv. Keep a copy of this message in case you need it in the future.

Controlling Your Listserv Subscription

Your list owner and moderator is Jeanette Navia, HRC webmistress and Listserv coordinator. Listserv-related questions for Jeanette may be directed to: jnavia@gmail.com

If you wish to have your name removed from the list, please contact Jeanette Navia at jnavia@gmail.com **Note** that removal from the list will eliminate the information you receive about Chapter events, activities, projects, training, programs, etc.

Listserv Purpose

The goals of the HRC Listserv are to:

Provide efficient communication between the Board, Committee Chairs, Project Champions, and the members of the Chapter, and

Connect members of the chapter with each other, encouraging the exchange of ideas, information, and best practices for the purpose of having a successful chapter.

The list will be moderated with a light hand, which means that occasionally threads on other topics will be allowed to run their short, natural course. Our Chapter has a natural congeniality and sense of what is appropriate. The moderator does not desire to intercede very often.

Because the Historic Rivers Chapter and the Virginia Master Naturalist program are sponsored by the Commonwealth of Virginia, the HRC Listserv cannot be an outlet for political lobbying or advocacy, or to criticize people, agencies or organizations.

Who Is Subscribed to the Historic Rivers Chapter Listserv

All active members of the Historic Rivers Chapter are automatically subscribed to the Listserv, beginning with the start of your Basic Training class.

Continued on next page...

When using the HRC Listserv:

Do ...

Remember that the HRC Listserv is a mechanism that the HRC Board, Committee Chairs, and Project Champions will use to announce information and updates on Basic Training, Advanced Training, Field Trips, Volunteer Service Projects, Annual and Monthly Membership Meetings, Board Meetings, and other activities, events, operations, and information necessary for the successful operation of our Chapter and participation by our members.

Use subject line headings to help everyone anticipate the content of your message.

- Check your destination address before sending your message. Remember that personal messages or private replies to a single list member should not be sent to the entire list.
- Remember that any personal opinions expressed are the opinion of the author of the message and not the opinion of the Historic Rivers Chapter or the VA Master Naturalists. All emails are copyrighted to the individual writer, whether it says so or not.
- Keep the discussion to activities, events, operations, and information necessary for the successful operation of our Chapter and participation by our members.
- Remember that if everyone were to sent Fwd: posts to the list, it would become overrun very easily. Only post forwarded posts that are directly relevant to Historic Rivers Chapter activities.
- Use DELETE KEY. The subscribers to the HRC Listserv are a diverse group, but we're all here for the same reason: we love learning about the natural world and working in our communities to protect our natural resources. If a particular posting or thread is bothersome to you, use your DELETE KEY first. If it continues to bother you, contact the list owner or moderator. Let the list owner or moderator determine what is appropriate or inappropriate for the list.

Finally, remember that the Internet and e-mail can never be considered 100% private.

Don't ...

- Post messages that are not relevant to the Historic Rivers Chapter activities, events, operations, and information.
- Engage in political advocacy (e.g., vote this way on this issue, vote for this person, or lobby an elected representative to vote a certain way)

Promote commercial, religious, or political messages.

Write anonymous messages. Your email address does not always identify you. Please include your full name after your message. This is a "private" list and includes only active members of the Historic Rivers Chapter.

Be rude, insulting or offensive (to individuals, groups of people, agencies or organizations).

The list moderator retains the right to permanently reject postings by anyone who violates these rules. Except in extreme cases, removing a member from the list will not take place without giving the subscriber a warning.

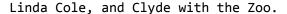
WALLER MILL PARK ON EARTH DAY

"On Saturday some of us participated at the Waller Mill event. I, Linda Cole and Cheryl Jacobson hosted 95 adults and 98 children at the Zoo. After packing up and heading back to our cars we had to walk over a wooden foot bridge. As we started to cross a large (3 - 4 foot) Black Racer crossed

in front of us. You know you're a VMN when you and two ladies run AT the snake to get a good look at it."

Ramblin Clyde







Cheryl Jacobson with a birdfeeder made of peanut butter, an ice cream cone, and birdseed.

EARTH DAY AT ECO DISCOVERY PARK'S JAMES RIVER FEST

The inaugural James River Fest sponsored by the new Eco Discovery Park was held at the Jamestown Yacht Basin on Powhatan Creek. Many thanks to Les Lawrence and Cherie Aukland for setting up our exhibit by 11 am. Susie Engle and Sherry Brubaker helped out during midafternoon. Sharon Plocher and Jennifer Trevino arrived about 3 and helped me take down and pack up the exhibit around 5. We had a great time visiting among ourselves when we didn't have any customers. The Bald-faced Hornets and their nest were a big hit with the kids and the Eastern Bluebird poster that Jan Lockwood prepared got lots of attention. Seems like lots of folks were talking about their bluebird boxes!





Sherry Brubaker would like to thank the Master Naturalists who helped solve the mystery snake identification contest.

"Within 30 minutes, I had 3 responses and they kept coming in. I've always thought our group was special, but I definitely felt support and expertise abounding. Tim Christensen sent me much helpful information and reminded me why I used to carry a walking stick. Think I'll resume that habit!"

Sherry shares the following link to copy and paste:

http://www.virginiaherpetologicalsociety.com/venomous-look-a-likes/copperhead-look-alikes/copperhead.asp

And, per Tom Dougherty.



"Looks a lot like this doesn't it??"

"MOTHERS, EGGS, AND BABIES" Photos and commentary as shared by Felice Bond



"The opossum lives with several babies in a leafy nest in a tree in our yard."

"The chickadee nestlings are in a BB box at YRSP."





"The spotted salamander was laying eggs in a spring pond at our cabin in Charlotte County."



"The red-bellied cooter was found dead at the Dragon Run by a friend of Adrienne's and Gary's when they were on a trip down the Dragon. I just thought the coloration in the juvenile was amazing. I read that fades as the turtle gets older."

Felice Bond



THE GREAT GRAFTON PONDS CAPER

By Patty Riddick



Felice Bond, Dave Youker, Anne Wright, Larry Riddick, Holly Houtz, and Evelyn Parker (l. to r.)

Early in March, Larry and I were pleased to be able to guide Anne Wright, VCU Professor of Biology and Coordinator Life Sciences Outreach Education at Virginia Commonwealth University, and her assistant, Holly Houtz, Life Sciences Lab and Outreach Education Specialist, on a tour of Grafton Ponds. Anne and Holly have been the chapter's mentors in our vernal pools project, hosting us often for training and social events at the VCU Rice Center. Joining us also were Evelyn Parker, Dave Youker, and Vernal Pool coleader for the chapter, Felice Bond. It was an absolutely gorgeous day, the pools were full, and we noted pools in places we had never seen them before. While there we also took advantage of the time to do some wildlife mapping.

Following are pictures of some of our discoveries — but not all — as Dave was busy identifying birds while the rest of us were dipping in the ponds. Dave accounted for 21 bird species! We saw deer, Marbled Salamanders, many frog egg masses, two young Five-lined Skinks and a Southern Leopard Frog plus we dipped a few benthic macro invertebrates.

Here's to the next Grafton Ponds Caper!



Holly and Anne dipping.... Felice and Holly taking a

Two Five-lined Skinks....

A Marbled Salamander....

A Southern Leopard Frog....



Friday April 20 I was riding around Jamestown Island (Historic Jamestown) looking at Bald Eagle nests with Dorothy Geyer, NPS Natural Resources Manager. At the pullout to look at an eagle nest we spotted a large turtle laying eggs adjacent to the pavement! What was she thinking?! She had finished digging the hole and I actually saw an egg drop into the hole. Dorothy counted about 8 eggs. We looked at the eagle for a while and then returned to the turtle and marveled at her earth moving skills as she covered up the eggs.

Today I returned to check the eagle nest and the turtle nest. Things did not turn out so well for the turtle eggs. A predator found the eggs. I saw one broken egg beside the hole and snapped a photo with a sweetgum ball near by for scale. Broken egg is on extreme left of photo.

The turtle is an Eastern River Cooter -- often seen sunning on logs.

By Shirley Devan





THE CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION'S VIRGINIA OYSTER TEAM NEEDS VOLUNTEERS TO ASSIST WITH REEF BALL CONSTRUCTION



Location: VIMS, Gloucester Point, VA
Thursday, May 10, 2012, 9:00am – 2:00pm
Friday, May 11, 2012, 9:00am – 11:00am

RSVP: Tracy Weidert at tweidert@cbf.org. Please include in your email

the dates and times you are available and we will send you more details.

What are reef balls?

Reef balls are molded from marine safe cement and mimic the structure of natural reefs. Fiberglass molds are used to construct the reef balls. A completed reef ball is a hollow sphere, 18" high and 24" wide with several openings on the surface. Oyster spat attach to the reef ball, creating valuable habitat. These reef balls will be placed in the Lafayette River at a later date.

This is an outdoor activity that involves lifting, carrying, bending, and hammering. Volunteers must be 16 years or older.

Advanced Training for May 2012

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- . [AT] WALT Natural History on DOG Street May 3, 2012 from 10:00 am to 12:00 pm at Williamsburg Regional Library, Schell Room Scotland Street
- [AT] VNPS Fieldtrip to Southwest Virginia May 6- 11, 2012 in Wise County, VA
- [AT] HRBC Bird Walk May 6, 2012 from 7:00-10:00 am at Newport News City Park
- · [AT] Monthly meeting May 9, 2012 from 6:00 pm to 9:00 pm at JCC Human Services Bldg., 5249 Olde Towne Rd., Williamsburg
- [AT] WBC Bird Walk at New Quarter Park May 12, 2012 from 8:00 am to 10:00 am at New Quarter Park, 1000 Lakeshead Dr., Williamsburg
- [AT] NASA Mars Mania / Star Party / Lasers May 12, 2012 from 5:30 pm to 9:30 pm at VA Living Museum, Newport News, VA
- [AT] Realities of Climate Change May 16, 2012 from 7:00 pm to 9:00 pm at Hampton Library, 4207 Victoria Blvd, Room B
- [AT] NPS Mushroom Talk May 17, 2012 from 6:30 pm to 9:00 pm at Yorktown Public Library on Rt. 17 & Battle Rd. in Yorktown.
- [AT] Coastal Bay Ecology 4 day workshop May 18-22, 2012 all day at Chesapeake Experience, Yorktown, VA
- [AT] WBC Field Trip May 19, 2012 from 7:00 am to 1:30 pm at WBC Field Trip
- [AT] VIMS Marine Science Day! May 19, 2012 from 10:00 am to 3:00 pm at Gloucester Point
- [AT] HRBC Bird Walk May 20, 2012 from 7:00-10:00 am at Newport News Park
- [AT] VIMS Science Under Sail: "Ghost" Pots in the Bay May 23, 2012 from 2:00 pm to 4:00 pm at Embarks from Yorktown Waterfront
- [AT] WBC Bird Walk May 26, 2012 from 7:00-9:00 am at New Quarter Park
- [AT] VIMS Science Under Sail: From HMS to ROV--the Past and Future of Marine Research May 30, 2012 from 2:00 pm to 4:00 pm

For more information about AT opportunities go to: http://www.historicrivers.org
By Adrienne Frank and Gary Driscole