



THE NATURALIST

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

<http://historicrivers.org>

A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

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

Two Exciting Photos from Annual Picnic 2013

More to come in next newsletter



Mr. Raccoon (or Mrs.) eating persimmons.



Frozen spider web seen on the early morning bird walk.

Photos by Shirley Devan

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Basic Training Program (Cohort VIII)

Following an Informational Meeting at the Williamsburg Library in August, the class was launched on September 3 with a wonderful talk by Bill Williams on nomenclature. Cohort VIII is an enthusiastic group of 21 students who have enrolled with a wide range of background interests and ages, as in previous years. They heard about the program in many different ways: HRC members (6), our website (4), newspapers (3), farmer's market (3), work places (3), College of William & Mary (1), Harris Teeter (1). Thanks to Shirley Devan for arranging and distributing ads: clearly the effort of posting them in many places and media is worthwhile.

The training fee, unchanged this year (\$150), provides a core of useful publications, tote bags, binders, magnifying lenses, etc. and a full day at the Virginia Living Museum which provides a rich training experience in mammalian and fish biology and ecology.

A class of 21 students fills all the seats around the classroom tables, but there are vacant seats for chapter members in the periphery. Attendance qualifies for Advanced Training.

I am very grateful for all the work that Training Committee members are putting into the program: Jean Balutanski, Shirley Devan, Walt Harris, Cheryl Jacobson, Patty Maloney, Sharon Plocher, Susan Powell, Jennifer Trevino, and with lots of helpful advice from Linda Morse. This promises to be another successful year!

Welcome Cohort VIII



Front Row -- left to right: Nancy Pledger, Deborah Eichelberger, Caitlin Verdu, Sarah Stefan, Bill Wallace, Kathy Cross, Cortney Langley, Suzanne Masten, Scott Kaplan, Paul Cuomo

Back Row -- left to right: Judy Jones, Danielle Lawson, Bob Gibbs, Mike Woodward, Daniel Keener, Doug Dwoyer, John Gresham, Steve Pope, Travis Will, Sandy Robertson, Helen Casey-Rutland

Nature Hike for 4th graders

Here are some photos from the Nature Hike several of the HRC Master Naturalists led for the 4th graders from Stonehouse Elementary School at York River State Park,

October 10-11, 2013.



Les Lawrence

Mary Meier, a parent from Stonehouse Elementary, contacted our Chapter to request assistance with a Nature Hike, one of the activities the 4th graders would participate in to learn about the Coastal Plain of Virginia. The students would also learn about the York River at the seining station and the Taskinas Creek marsh at the water salinity monitoring station at the dock.

Thursday HRC hike leaders were: Les Lawrence, Nancy Barnhart, Nancy Gore, Shirley Devan. Friday hike leaders were: Les Lawrence, Joanne Sheffield, Cheryl Jacobson, Shirley Devan. Geoff Giles helped Mary Meier at the river's edge with the seining activity.

Both days were windy, misty, drizzly, and damp! But, according to Mary, the teachers, students, parents, and volunteers persevered and had a blast,

First 3 photos by Shirley Devan



A very sharp-eyed 4th grader spotted a Red Eft on the Beaver Pond Trail



Joanne Sheffield



Shirley Devan showing the kids a snake skin--an example of seeing evidence of animals in the area. They also saw deer tracks, deer scat and tree stumps left from beavers. Photo by Joanne Sheffield

Check out these videos on the web:

A teenager found a baby hummingbird after it was attacked, and nursed him back to health. Healed, the little bird decided to stay with the young man. This video is lovely. Be sure to see it with sound. The background song is almost as good as the video itself. I have never seen such a calm hummingbird. <http://www.wimp.com/babyhummingbird>

(sent to me by Clyde Marsteller)



Amazing footage of an Osprey catching a variety of fish

http://www.youtube.com/embed/nA3LtXnNlto?feature=player_embedded

(sent to me by Tom Dougherty)



New Virginia Wildlife Conflict Helpline

The Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (VDGIF) is pleased to announce a new **Virginia Wildlife Conflict Helpline**, a resource for resolving human-wildlife conflicts. The helpline is a collaborative effort between the VDGIF and the U.S. Department of Agriculture – Wildlife Services (WS) to address human-wildlife interactions by sharing science-based wildlife information. The helpline is available toll-free at **(855) 571-9003**, 8:00AM-4:30PM, Monday through Friday.

The development of the helpline resulted from the expansion of suburban development into rural Virginia, and significant human population growth topping 28 percent over the past 20 years. These trends have created more interactions between humans and wildlife; many, leading to negative consequences. Concerned citizens seeking information and assistance related to human-wildlife interactions now have to go no further than their telephone for technical information and assistance.

Techniques recommended to the public are environmentally sound, safe, and selective and meet wildlife professionals' standards. Individuals are helped with "do-it-yourself" instructions and are provided with the necessary information and literature, referred to websites when appropriate, or directed to other sources of assistance. In those instances where more specific technical assistance is needed, callers are linked up with subject matter experts.

Helpline activities are conducted in cooperation with VDGIF in accordance with WS Policy Guidelines and federal, state, and county laws, regulations and policies. The Farm Bureau of Virginia, Virginia State University and Virginia Tech Extension are partners assisting in the development of outreach and educational materials from information and data gathered from the helpline.

“Does this bark make me look fat?”

By Kathi Mestayer

This is a cork oak tree in France, with its bark removed up to about five feet. We saw them throughout the woods near Nice, and were amazed that they seemed none the worse for being stripped of their bark. So I emailed Stewart Ware, who sent me the off-the-cuff reply below.



The outer part of the bark of all trees is completely dead; it is there for protection from damage from insects, fungi, vertebrates, and fire. If one removes only the dead outer part, then the tree is unaware and unaffected. In most trees the dead part is securely attached to the living part, and only the outer flakes are easily removed. In cork oaks, the amount of dead outer bark is both thicker than in other trees and more easily separated from the underlying living bark. Beech trees are about the opposite end of the spectrum; their dead bark is very thin and not safely separated from the living bark underneath. So in cork oaks the rate of growth is related to moisture and sunlight, not how much corky bark is left on the tree.

Both thickness and separability of cork oak bark have been selected for by human cultivation, so while both were originally impressive, in plantation trees both are even more so. Even the volunteer seedlings are mostly from trees that themselves are descendants of those selected for high yield of bark.

When I taught a botany course I used to give a lengthy discussion of what bark is, and used the cork oak as an illustration of the extreme. I used to pass around corks from wine bottles so students could observe the cell structure of the cork. As a non-drinker I used to have to get friends who imbibed to save the corks from their emptied bottles for me.
Stewart

Watershed Educators

Story and photos by Les Lawrence

Two members of the HRC, Les Lawrence and Paul Cuomo, participated in the first of five workshops offered by the Watershed Educators Institute, on October 25th, and required to earn a certificate of recognition as a Watershed Educator in Virginia. The program was held at Camp Albemarle, outside of Charlottesville, and addressed procedures for assessing the health of a watershed. Of the 32 attendees 12 were active Master Naturalists from throughout the state.



The guest presenter was Mr. Pat Calvert, Upper James River Keeper, from the James River Association, who discussed the state of the James River watershed. (He gave it a B- .)

In the afternoon, we had the opportunity to do actual testing and evaluations of the chemical, biological and physical conditions of the local river.



From all the critters found and the chemical conditions, we had to rate this hydrological habitat as good. It was loads of fun!

Become a CoCoRaHS (Community Collaborative Rain, Hail, and Snow Network) volunteer-

By Cheryl Jacobson

Growing up on the South Dakota prairie, I soon learned that weather meant survival, survival of crops, animals, our livelihood, and even life itself. I will never forget the images of going out onto the prairie following an unexpected and fierce blizzard and seeing thousands of dead livestock. In one corner, hundreds of sheep had piled up, became covered by snow, and suffocated. They had put their backs to the wind and had drifted until coming to the corner and had not been able to travel future. The weather this summer has demonstrated over and over the importance of accurate forecasts. Later moving to Colorado and hiking the 14ers, I learned that any hiker who goes above timberline must know to leave early and be off the mountain by afternoon when lightning can kill. So, it is no wonder that I still monitor weather everyday and as a Master Naturalist decided to get an official rain gauge from Dean Shostak and become a **CoCoRaHS** participant.

Participating in this activity provides a bonus from the website of data that is shared from the local area as well as nation wide. Also, there are opportunities to learn about weather from webcasts and written highlights.

One of the lesson plans on the CoCoRaHS Web site talked about the history of rain measurements which I found interesting. Here is a short excerpt from that document: "The earliest quantitative rain gauge seems to be credited to a king in Korea called King Sejong who lived from 1397 to 1450. One of his greatest goals as king was to make his people literate, so not only did he invent a rain gauge, but more importantly, he invented a language and movable type for that language.

He decided that instead of digging into the soil to check for moisture, it would be better to have a standardized container about 30cm in depth and 14cm in diameter that stood on a pillar to measure the rainfall. His standard of measurement however is not known. These containers were to help villagers determine their potential harvest, to give him a better idea of how much the farmers should be taxed. So these standard containers were distributed to each village. The gauge was invented in the fourth month of 1441 according to records."



Next General Membership Meeting November 13, 6:00

HOW DO THEY DO IT??

PLANT SEX—THAT IS

Mark your calendar now for this wonderful presentation by Helen Hamilton at the November General Membership Meeting, November 13th 6:00 - 9:00 at JCC Human Services Bldg., 5249 Olde Towne Rd., Williamsburg

How do plants make flowers? While the pollination of agricultural crops by bees is familiar, less well known are the interactions of the microscopic sperm and eggs in vascular plants, and how mosses and ferns send out swimming sperm in a drop of water. A light-hearted and informative look at how plants implement and prevent self-pollination, how plant reproduction is facilitated by insects, mammals, and us humans. The talk is illustrated with powerpoint slides and handouts.

Biography

Helen Hamilton taught biology in local high schools, worked as a plant technician for the National Park Service, and completed Master Gardening training in 2004. She has been president of the John Clayton Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society and Program/Publicity Chair for the Williamsburg Botanical Garden.

WOW—How can I get a copy of Helen's book?!

Copies of Helen's book "Wildflowers and Grasses of Virginia's Coastal Plain" can be purchased from:

- (1) Helen's website www.wildflowersofvirginia.com
- (2) Directly from Helen after the presentation
- (3) from Brit: www.brit.org/brit-press/books/VAwildflowers - or
- (4) from amazon.com

Also: Dorothy Geyer, National Park Service, will provide an update on the 2013 Jamestown/Yorktown marsh bird survey.

Book Review

This month's book review is written by Sherry Brubaker

Who on Earth is Aldo Leopold? Father of Wildlife Ecology

This is a "kid" book in a series with other "Scientists Saving the Earth" including Rachel Carson, Archie Carr, Sylvia Earle, Dian Fossey and Jane Goodall. For those of you who want a synopsis, the kid section of the library is a treasure. This book introduced me to the etymology of ecology: "This term was coined in 1866 by the German biologist Ernst Haeckel from the Greek *oikos* meaning "house" or "household" and *logos* meaning "study" or "knowledge." Ecology literally means the "study of household".

Sherry also sent this from "365 Amazing Trivia Facts Calendar"

What did science writer and sic-fi novelist Isaac Asimov say is "the most exciting phrase to hear in science, the one that heralds new discoveries"?

"That's funny."

HRC-VMN BLUEBIRD TRAILS 2013 REPORT TOTAL FLEDGES

By Jan Lockwood and Lois Ullman



Members of the Historic Rivers Chapter–Virginia Master Naturalists monitored nine area bluebird trails in 2013, eight of which are listed in the chart below and reported to the Virginia Bluebird Society by Jan Lockwood and Lois Ullman, coordinators for James City and York Counties. The ninth trail at Deer Run Golf Course in Newport News Park is monitored and reported by Dave Youker.

Congratulations to the HRC monitors. In all, 1,174 chicks successfully fledged from the nine trails this season: 751 from the Chapter's 8 trails and 423 from the Deer Run Golf Course trail. We couldn't enjoy this success without your hard work and ongoing commitment to this citizen science project. We applaud and thank you for making your weekly trips around the boxes, consistently recording your findings, and rejoicing with us when those first eggs, chicks, and fledges finally arrived. We look forward to continued bluebird adventures in 2014.

TOTAL FLEDGES FROM 8 HRC-VMN BLUEBIRD TRAILS, 2013

<u>Trail</u>	<u># Boxes</u>	<u>Eastern Blue-bird</u>	<u>% BB eggs Fledged</u>	<u>Carolina Chickadee</u>	<u>Tufted Titmouse</u>	<u>Carolina Wren</u>
Eco-discovery Park (new)	5	9	100	0	0	0
Ford's Colony	34	76	80	6	46	0
Freedom Park	26	66	83	11	0	0
Kiskiack Golf Course	19	115	88	0	0	0
New Quarter Park	21	102	78	3	0	4
Newport News Park	39	125	77	10	3	0
York River State Park Trail 1	24	73	75	15	0	5
York River State Park Trail 2	36	60	57	22	0	0
TOTAL Fledges All Species 8 HRC Trails 2013 - 751	204	626		67	49	9
TOTAL Fledges 7 HRC Trails 2012 - 801	190	686		92	13	10
% Change in Fledges 2013 - 6%		-9%-		-27%	+354%	-10%

These results reflect a six percent decline in fledges from the HRC trails in 2012 when 801 chicks fledged from 14 fewer boxes. The reasons for this decline may be linked to the cool, wet spring we experienced this year, leading to a later than usual start to the nesting season and ultimately to fewer chicks being fledged. Interestingly, the Tufted Titmouse fared much better in 2013, perhaps because they initiated nesting before the bluebirds and were able to prevent the bluebirds from entering the boxes.

~continued on next page~

HISTORIC RIVERS CHAPTER

~Bluebird Trail Final Report—continued from previous page~

The difference between the two seasons can be seen when the nesting history of the Eastern Bluebird on the eight HRC trails is compared.

EASTERN BLUEBIRD NESTING HISTORY 8 HRC TRAILS 2012-2013

	2012 season	2013 season
Date first egg laid	March 22	April 11
Total eggs laid	929	807
Eggs hatched	734 – 79% of eggs laid	673 – 83% of eggs laid
Bluebirds fledged	686 – 74% of eggs laid	626 – 78% of eggs laid

The 2013 season lagged behind the 2012 season in the number of eggs laid and hatched, as well as bluebirds fledged. The reduction of fledges in 2013 can probably be directly attributed to the shortened season and fewer opportunities to nest.

TOTAL FLEDGES DEER RUN GOLF COURSE BLUEBIRD TRAIL 2013

<u>Trail</u>	<u># Boxes</u>	<u>Eastern Blue-bird</u>	<u>% BB eggs Fledged</u>	<u>Carolina Chicka-dee</u>	<u>Tufted Titmouse</u>	<u>Carolina Wren</u>
TOTAL Fledges All Species Deer Run Golf Course Trail 2013 - 423	107	405		12	0	6

Information provided by Dave Youker – thank you!

THANK YOU HRC BLUEBIRD MONITORS!



Coastal Virginia Wildlife Observatory (CVWO) President ,Brian Taber, has invited Master Naturalists to their Open House Sunday, Nov 10, from 3-6 p.m, in Lodge 5 at Kiptopeke State Park.

You can meet CVWO staff and volunteers and learn about their 2013 programs and upcoming opportunities. Some of you have participated in the Eastern Shore Butterfly Count as well as the College Creek Hawk-watch, both of which are CVWO-sponsored programs.

At least one car will be going to Kiptopeke that day and more can be arranged if you want to go. Let Shirley Devan know if you're interested.

You can visit their web site at: <http://www.cvwo.org>

Advanced Training for November 2013

Remember to go to our chapter's calendar for all event details! http://www.historicrivers.org/?page_id=1246

[AT] [HRBC Bird Walk](#) - November 3, 2013 from 7:00 am to 10:00 am at Newport News City Park

[AT] [WBC Bird Walk at New Quarter Park](#) - November 9, 2013 from 8:00 am to 10:00 am at New Quarter Park, 1000 Lakeshead Dr., Williamsburg

[AT] [Hampton Rds Bird Club Field Trip](#) - November 10, 2013 from 7:00 am to 12:00 pm at Grandview Nature Preserve and Fort Monroe

[AT] [Dendrology Training](#) - November 12, 2013 6 to 9:00 pm at 5249 Olde Towne Road, Williamsburg

[AT] [Monthly meeting: HOW THEY DO IT: PLANT SEX](#) - November 13, 2013 from 6:00 pm to 9:00 pm at JCC Human Services Bldg., 5249 Olde Towne Rd., Williamsburg

[AT] [Native Plant Society Talk: Native Orchids](#) - November 14, 2013 from 6:45 pm to 8:45 pm at Yorktown Public Library (may change to Rec Center) -

[AT] [WBC Field Trip](#) - November 16, 2013 from 7:00 am to 1:30 pm at WBC Field Trip

[AT] [HRBC Bird Walk](#) - November 17, 2013 from 7:00 am to 10:00 am at Newport News City Park

[AT] [Prince William Wildflower Society Membership : Ferns in the Natural Landscape](#) - November 18, 2013 from 7:30 pm to 8:30 pm at Bethel Lutheran Church, Manassas, VA

[AT] [Entomology](#) - November 19, 2013 from 6 to 9:00 pm at 5249 Olde Towne Road, Williamsburg

[AT] [WBC Monthly Meeting](#) - November 20, 2013 from 7:30 pm to 9:00 pm at Millington Hall, Rm 150, College of William and Mary, 601 Jamestown Rd., Williamsburg, VA

[AT] [Public Archaeology](#) - November 21, 2013 from 9:00 am to 10:00 am at New Quarter Park

[AT] [Public Archaeology](#) - November 22, 2013 from 9:00 am to 10:00 am at New Quarter Park

[AT] [WBC Bird Walk](#) - November 23, 2013 from 7:00 am to 9:00 am at New Quarter Park, 1000 Lakeshead Dr., Williamsburg
Lucy Manning, Advanced Training Chair; (757-646-0877; lucymnng@gmail.com)

Also—remember that all are invited to participate in Wildlife Mapping:

York River State Park on Mondays at 9:00 am

New Quarter Park on November 12, 8:30 am (every other Tuesdays)