

# The NATURALIST

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

### http://historicrivers.org

#### A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

Volume 6 No. 10 October 2012

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Les Lawrence, Field Trip Coordinator Greetings, Historic River Chapter:

Autumn is officially upon us...and we kicked the season off with a great Fall Picnic at Fort Pocahontas. The spectacular all day picnic included a bird walk, breakfast, a tree identification walk, lunch, boating and canoeing, fishing, walking the beach, a bug walk, dinner (crabs, oysters, hamburgers, hotdogs and potluck side dishes), the sunset, and a night walk. Many thanks to all who participated and all who led the various programs and events.

Speaking of Autumn, the acorns are dropping and the monarchs are heading south to Mexico. If you are feeling a little "squirrelly" and want to help with the acorn collection project for the New Kent Forestry Center, contact Les Lawrence or Cheryl Jacobson. Acorn collecting will be in Colonial Williamsburg and York River State Park on Oct 4 and Oct 14. Or if you just feel the urge to migrate south, think about volunteering with the Monarch Initiative and helping plan and plant butterfly gardens at York County and Poquoson elementary schools. Contact Barb Dunbar if you are interested in volunteering and attending the upcoming training classes.

The state-wide Virginia Master Naturalist Conference in Martinsville and Fairy Stone State Park in September was a great opportunity to learn, make friendships and share ideas with other Chapter members. For those of you who did not get to attend, here's the top 10 things I learned:

- \* Wear knee-high rubber boots when hiking the woods. (Keeps chiggers and ticks off.)
- \*An altoid box can hold everything you need for your "emergency survival" kit when hiking. (Google" altoid box survival kit" to see what you should "pack".)
- \*A "bioblitz" does not have to be all encompassing and include every species. (Christmas bird counts, Save Our Stream samplings, frog and toad counts...all are a type of blitz.)
- \*Sting Eze is a must have when hiking off the trails. (If you get stung by a bee, pull the stinger out and apply Sting Eze. Immediate relief.)

Continued on next page ....

Notes from the Board

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

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- \*Aldo Leopold, author of "A Sand County Almanac", inspired the Leopold Project which is a youth conservation education project providing direct experiences with the natural world. (I have copies of his book and the Leopold Project workbook if anyone wants to borrow them.)
- \*The book, "Seeing Trees", by Nancy Ross Hugo and Robert Llewellyn, is inspirational in teaching and observing these miracles of nature. (I have a copy of the book if anyone wants to borrow it.)
- \*When photographing lizards, place a hat over them to shade them for 20-30 seconds. Remove the hat and the lizard usually stays in place to be photographed.
- \*You can estimate a box turtle's age by counting the growth rings on its carapace.
- \*Stonefiles drum for mates by banging their abdomen on rocks.
- \*Virginia Master Naturalists are awesome! (But, I really already knew that!)

See you at the October General Membership Meeting and the Photography Contest on Oct 10.

Patty Maloney

President

Historic Rivers Chapter



#### To Cohort VII,

Historic Rivers Chapter welcomes you to its ranks! We are very happy to have you with us! We send best wishes to each of you for some interesting learning opportunities and a great deal of fun. Go Cohort VII!

From your Newsletter Editor on behalf of your Fellow Cohorts I - VI

#### Photo by Felice Bond.

Front row (left to right): Linda Morse, Lucy Manning, Joanie Hoary, Peggy Whitney, Mark Guillotte, Bruce Glendening, Claire Stephens

Second row: Mary Turnbull, Walt Harris, Cathleen Campbell, Sharon Falconer, John Shoosmith, Gwen Harris, Ann Gray, David Murphy, Jessica Spickler, Bill Davis, Dee Davis, Robert Morse, George Sallwasser, Deane Gordon, Lane McCann, Joanne Sheffield, Robert Isdell, Richard Batten, William Collins.

Check out this video prepared by Tom Dougherty featuring the first class:

Copy link below, paste, and hit "enter" at the end of link.

http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLCEAPno9nAfaKYpeATYxAx2svOf5-U\_rj&feature=view\_all

CONGRATULATIONS!



Larry Riddick, Cheryl Jacobson, Sharon Plocher, and Jennifer Trevino receive 500 Milestone Service Hour Awards from Membership Chair, Susan Powell. Dave Youker (not present) also reached 500 Milestone Hours.

Photo by Felice Bond

Jan Lockwood is presented her 250 Hours of Service Award by Susan Powell at the General Membership Meeting in September.

Jim Booth has also reached 250 Hours of Service.

Congrats to Jan and Jim!

Photo by Felice Bond



October 2012

HRC Members reach VMN Certification and **Re-Certification!** 

**Congratulations All!** 



Photos by Felice Bond

Pam Camblin at top right.

Judy Tucker at center left.

Bill O'Connell (not pictured) also reach VMN Certification

Maria Myers at bottom right.



A MESSAGE FROM CLYDE.....

By Clyde Marsteller

"Two months ago Pet World in Denbigh called me that they had an Eft and a Spotted Salamander brought in by GIs who had collected them in the Shenandoah area. They were on orders to Afghanistan. Pet World knew they could not sell or release them and wanted to donate them to the Zoo. I contacted DGIF Permits and got permission to add them to the Zoo roster.

So far they have dazzled the audiences. The Eft stuffed its self with termites and the Spotted Salamander "pigs out" on small crickets & worms. A couple of days ago I noticed the Eft had gotten very thin and lost its color. I don't know how old it was so I decided to put it next to my backyard fish pond under a piece of bark. I figured if it expired I could salvage it in alcohol. Well to my amazement

when I set it down it sprinted to the pond and dived in. Swimming very strongly it dove into the yellow Iris roots there. I am guessing it heard the "Call Of The Newt" and metamorphosis into a Newt has kicked in. It will be interesting to see if it shows up as the aquatic adult next spring.

Earlier this year Geoff Giles and I went to a retention pond in Toano hoping to catch a bullfrog as a second frog for the Zoo. It was loaded with frogs but they were too quick for us to capture. In frustration I swiped my net in the water and to my surprise it was loaded with tadpoles. I put them into a collection jar and put them into my fish pond. By late summer I had a small army of Green frogs,

Green Tree Frogs, Leopard Frogs and Toads in my back yard. A week ago as I was mowing the front yard a very large Leopard frog jumped in front of the lawn mower. I stopped and proceeded to chase the critter around the yard much to the delight of my neighbors three tiny granddaughters. The neighbors are now used to me running around the neighborhood with my collection net or jar. They no longer pull their children in the house and lock their doors.

The Leopard frog allows me to rotate it with my other Leopard frog when I go to a three school visit per week schedule. I am already doing this with the Zoo's two toads. It lowers the stress on them.

This year here in Denbigh has been the Year of the Cock Roaches. The weather has conspired to produce huge hatches of the pests. The Zoo's two roach habitats are full. I know when one invades the house when I hear Miss Ellie scream. She was sure early on that they were Zoo escapees until the neighbor ladies started to complain about Water Bugs.

The Zoo visited the NN Green Expo on Saturday September 22. I thought about you good folks on the James all day. Since the Zoo was set up as a static display there was no Zoo Cru. I had 262 people stop by. That morning as I was getting ready to leave to help set up I spied Miss Terry my lady Box Turtle trundling along in the back yard. I picked her up and took her along. The little ham stole the show. She loves people and especially loves to have her head and neck rubbed. 107 kids (and some adults) were happy to accommodate her.

For those of you who are not familiar with the Zoo's static display it is laid out in four sections. The first section includes:

Live Decomposers: Roly Polies, Millipedes, Slugs, Snails, Worms and Betsy Beetles (they "talk").

Second section:

Live Predators: Wire worm (grub of Eyed Click Beetle) ,Black Widow Spider, Wolf Spider, Centipede, Lead Back Salamander, Toad, frog.

Preserved Specimens: Snake eggs, Juvenile Black Racer, Ringneck Snake, Skink and a Fence Lizard

Third section:

This consists of selected mounted insects that I call the "Good, The Bad and the Ugly".

Fourth section:

Made up of our State Symbols: Sprig of Flowering Dogwood (artificial), Cardinal (artificial), Oyster Shell, Jefferson Scallop, Tiger Swallowtail, Box Turtle shell, pictures of our State Mammal (American Fox Hound), Fresh Water Fish (Brook Trout) and Salt Water Fish (Stripe Bass).

In the five years the Zoo has been in existence it has visited with 8,412 children and adults. We are looking forward to a new school year and working with our Two Chapters."

"Ramblin Clyde"



Photos from Wikipedia

October 2012

<u>THE 4TH ANNUAL VIRGINIA MASTER NATURALIST CONFERENCE</u> was held at the Virginia Museum of Natural History in Martinsville, VA, September 7-9th.



Susan Powell and Larry Riddick taught a Wildlife Mapping Class at the Conference.

As stated by one Conference attendee, Jan Lockwood, "The most impressive session I attended was Wildlife Mapping. Susan and Larry were excellent - thorough, informative, well paced, well organized, great slides and handouts. All right, I may be prejudiced, but only a very little!"



Photo above by Tom Bond Photo at left by Patty Riddick



Chapter members say "Goodbye" and wish "Good Luck" to our VMN State Coordinator, Michelle Prysby.

Front Row: Felice Bond, Dean Shostak, Patty Maloney.

Back Row: Les Lawrence, Jan Lockwood, Michelle Prysby, Larry Riddick, Patty Riddick, Barbara Boyer, Christina Woodson and Cheryl Jacobson.

Photo by Tom Bond was taken at Fairy Stone State Park during the VMN Annual Conference.

# FINAL 2012 BLUEBIRD BULLETIN

#### September 24, 2012

#### **Total Fledges from the Seven (7) HRC-VMN Bluebird Trails and the Deer Run Golf Course Trail in Newport News Park**

Throughout the nesting season we reported the numbers of birds fledged on the 7 trails monitored by HRC-VMN Chapter members. Trail leaders have since completed their individual trail reports. As expected, some additional bluebird fledges were recorded, which increased the total number of Eastern Bluebirds fledged from 678 to 686.

We recently received noteworthy data from the Deer Run Golf Course trail in Newport News Park that was not previously reported. This data adds greatly to our knowledge about bluebird nesting success in our area. Deer Run is monitored by Dave Youker, a member of the Historic Rivers Chapter and the Hampton Roads Bird Club, with the assistance of Libby Carmines, a fellow member of the Hampton Roads Bird Club. The 107 nest boxes at Deer Run fledged 468 Bluebirds and 39 Carolina Chickadees, which brings the total number of Eastern Bluebirds fledged on area trails to an astounding 1,154.

Trail	<u># Box-</u>	Eastern	Carolina	Tufted	Carolina
	es	Bluebird	Chickadee	<u>Titmouse</u>	Wren
Ford's Colony	34	99	12	13	0
Freedom Park (new in 2012)	19	51	14	0	0
Kiskiack Golf Course (new in 2012)	19	132	0	0	0
New Quarter Park	19	96	10	0	0
Newport News Park	39	147	15	0	0
York River State Park Meh-Te-Kos	25	76	23	0	0
York River State Park Entrance Road	35	85	18	0	10
TOTALS from 7 HRC Trails	191	686	92	13	10
Deer Run G C Newport News Park	107	468	39	0	0
TOTALS from all 8 Trails	298	1,154	131	13	10
GRAND TOTAL OF 1,308 CHICKS					

In August we acknowledged that it was difficult to compare 2012 results with 2011 results, since only 5 bluebird trails reported in 2011. However, the growing number of nest boxes monitored and reported (143 more in 2012) and the involvement of 46 HRC members in the project show how significant it is to our Chapter.

The bluebird monitoring project has made an important contribution to citizen science. In achieving this result, we recognize and appreciate the diligence and commitment of our trail leaders and monitors throughout the season, as well as the valuable guidance and support we received from the Virginia Bluebird Society.

Jan Lockwood and Lois Ullman

#### Oh Nooooooo! A(nother) Tick!

By Kathi Mestayer

We had a rather interesting discussion at the last Board Meeting, in which Susan Powell gave me goose bumps talking about the fall being tick season. Again. It brought to mind a visit to York River State Park, in which Mac and I went running back to the car in a panic, with hundreds of tiny, tiny ticks on our legs. They were so small, Mac couldn't even see them, and I still claim they were single-cell organisms with legs. One tick climbed up one of Mac's leg hairs for the view. I am not making this up. We went home and washed with permethrin the shower (our poison of choice).

After the Board meeting, I remembered a recent show on NPR in which I heard a tick expert from a tick research and outreach program at the University of Long Island (not far from Lyme, CT, I'm sure), in which he went into some detail about how the best way to rid your clothes of any ticks that may still be on them after a hike is to **put your clothes in the dryer**. Not the washer (at first, anyway). Turns out, the ticks are extremely vulnerable to dry heat.

The site says that 15 minutes on high heat will crisp them up nicely (add maybe 5 minutes if you use an electric dryer instead of gas), and that washing, even in hot water, does NOT kill them! You can, of course, wash them after you're done killing the ticks in the dryer.

Other suggestions include:

- spray the **inside and outside** of your clothing.
- remove ticks with duct tape
- check below the belt while sitting on the toilet
- So, here's the web site, with a short discussion of their "ticksmart tips" to help keep us tick-free this fall.

http://www.tickencounter.org/ticksmart/tips

Let's go out and enjoy the fall without picking up free riding ticks!



### HRCVMN

Basic Training Calendar October/November/December, 2012

Tuesday, October 2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday, October 13<sup>th</sup> Tuesday, October 16<sup>th</sup> Tuesday, October 30<sup>th</sup> Tuesday, November 13<sup>th</sup> Tuesday, November 27<sup>th</sup> Saturday, December 8<sup>th</sup> Tuesday, December 11<sup>th</sup> 

 Habitats
 6:00 pm.-9:00 pm.

 Field Trip-Wetlands
 9:00 am.-3:00 pm.

 Plant Biology
 6:00 pm.-9:00 pm.

 Dendrology
 6:00 pm.-9:00 pm.

 Geology
 6:00 pm.-9:00 pm.

 Field Trip -Geology
 9:00 am.-3:00 pm.

 Indigenous Cultures
 6:00 pm.-9:00 pm.

Human Services Bldg.
York River State Park
Human Services Bldg.
Human Services Bldg.
Human Services Bldg.
Various Sites
Human Services Bldg.



Notes from VMN State Conference, September 7 - 9.

By Shirley Devan with photos by Shirley Devan and Felice Bond

"Herp Blitz at Turkeycock WMA"

Four of those five words scream out to Master Naturalists: herp, blitz, Turkeycock, WMA (Wildlife Management Area).

Who wouldn't want to spend a day "looking under every rock and rotten log to find the different species of reptiles and amphibians that live in Turkeycock Wildlife Management Area"? (Description from VMN State Conference web site.)

Turkeycock Mountain WMA lies along the ridge of Turkeycock Mountain northwest of Martinsville, site of the VMN State Conference. Here, the mountain's ridge also forms the boundary between Franklin and Henry Counties. Elevations range from 1,100 to over 1,700 feet. (Info from VA DGIF web site.) Flatlanders from the Coastal Plain – beware!

Then there are the notes on what to wear: "Wear comfortable hiking shoes, long pants, long sleeves and insect repellant, as we will be hiking through the woods and not on any established trails. Be prepared for uneven terrain, crossing small creeks, and generally being out in the woods away from facilities."

This describes a Master Naturalist's dream day outdoors. And so it was. And only \$5.00 in addition to the regular conference registration. What a bargain!

Seven HRC members signed on for this Friday pre-conference adventure, and we were not disappointed! Instead of "crossing small creeks," we were <u>walking</u> in small creeks often with water to mid-calf, turning over rocks and logs searching for frogs and salamanders. Up on dry land we kept our eyes wide open to spot lizards, turtles, and snakes. Only about half the group wore rubber boots. The others sacrificed hiking boots and old shoes.

Continued from prior page.....

Our intrepid leader for the day was Jason Gibson, "biology teacher at Galileo Magnet High School in Danville, VA. He has been teaching biology for 18 years and has been an active member of the Virginia Herpetological Society for about 15 years."

Jason wanted all the team members to be well equipped for whatever we might find. He gave each of us a small dip net, a clear plastic bag for temporarily holding specimens for examination, and a "stump ripper." The stump ripper also served as a snake hook (!), and a walking stick. Plus all of us had backpacks with field guides and water and most of us had binoculars and cameras strung around our necks.

Jason told us birders right off that we probably would not use the binoculars because we would be looking down at the ground rather than up in the sky. Birders among us stubbornly dragged along binocs anyway. I eventually packed mine away in my backpack.

The first finds were squashed salamanders in the road. Jason easily identified a freshly killed red-spotted newt. But then he identified a long dead, barely there newt in the road. Mmmmm...we were in the presence of a master! Every find counted – dead or alive.

Each of us was thrilled to spot a frog or salamander or lizard. Then the fun began: getting the critter into the plastic bag for Jason's examination for disease or malformation. A few got away (imagine that!).

We detoured back to the cars for lunch and some of us off-loaded heavier items from our backpacks – field guides (who needs one with Jason leading the way?) and binoculars. I took only my camera and water for the afternoon trek.

As soon as we reached the pond after lunch, Jason calls out "Where are the birders with the binoculars?" Wha...... Luckily Cheryl Jacobson had ignored Jason's advice and still had her binocs. So Cheryl was charged with scanning the pond to find painted turtles sunning on the logs.

By 3:00 pm we were exhausted and ready to pack it in. Jason tallied the day's finds: 12 species and 52 animals.

Salamanders – (three species):

1. Red-spotted Newts, which became so numerous that Jason stopped collecting them and just made tick marks in his notebook.

- 2. Three-lined salamanders
- 3. Seal salamanders
- Frogs (three species):
- 1. Pickerel Frog
- 2. Spring Peeper (heard)
- 3. Cricket Frog (heard)

Lizards (three species):

- 1. Six-lined Racerunner a county record! Jason was very excited.
- 2. Five-lined Skink
- 3. Fence Lizard
- Turtles (two species):
- 1. Boxed Turtle
- 2. Painted Turtle

<u>Snakes</u> only one species: Ring-necked Snake (small one that escaped Felice's best efforts to dig out of the mud). We all were convinced that if we had brought along someone who was afraid of snakes we would have found many, many more. Instead, all of us were eagerly looking for snakes and for the chance to use our snake hooks.

The county record for the Six-lined Racerunner, "a find for science," will be published in the Virginia Herpetological Society's journal, *Catesbeiana*.

HRC members who enjoyed the day (in the photo, left to right): Patty Maloney, Dean Shostak, Jason Gibson, leader, Felice Bond, Shirley Devan, Cheryl Jacobson next to Jeanette Navia, and Jan Lockwood.



"Cheryl counting lines on a box turtle scute to estimate how old he is (approx. 15 yrs.)," as shared by Felice Bond.

Photo by Felice Bond



Per Shirley Devan, "Dean Shostak sporting all the appropriate attire."

Photo by Shirley Devan



Six-lined Racerunner, a Henry County record holder!

Cnemidophorus sexlineatus sexlineatus

Photo by Felice Bond

#### <u>A Perfect Day for a Picnic</u>

It was a perfect day to picnic at Ft. Pocahontas along the James River. Our host was Mr. Harrison Tyler, the grandson of our country's tenth president, John Tyler. Mr. Tyler joined us at the waterfront to enjoy some steamed crabs and oysters. Our thanks go out to Ted Sargent for putting this gathering together. Ted worked tirelessly in cleaning up the grounds before and after the picnic, by planning a great day of neat activities, and for us crab lovers, by cooking those wonderful crabs. Thank you also to his assistant cooks, to those who helped with cleanup, and to those who brought all the wonderful dishes to share under the auspices of our Host Janet Curtis.

The day began early with birding followed by the birders' breakfast. During the day there was swimming by some of our younger guests. Felice Bond went fishing while some folks tried out the kayak. Teta Kain led a fun and interesting walk to find butterflies during which we found all manner of plants and bugs as well. In the evening Felice Bond took a few of us out to find critters in the ponds and pools on the property. It was an utterly fantastic day as you'll see in these pictures.

Fortunately, we all left just as a storm was blowing up causing Ted a major cleanup effort he next day on the Sherwood Forest Plantation grounds.

Thanks to all for a glorious day!

Patty Riddick

Photos on pages 17-20 taken by Felice Bond



Ft. Pocahontas on the grounds of Sherwood Forest Plantation

Photo by Patty Riddick



Tom Bond and Teta Kain





The Early Bird Group (above)

Les Lawrence, Patty Maloney and Ted Sargent (below)





Mr. Harrison Tyler, our host for the day, with Tim and Ted. (left to right)





### Advanced Training - October through December 2012

- [AT] Celebrate Sea Turtles workshop at VA Aquarium October 1, 2012 from 8:30 am to 5:00 pm at VA Aquarium
- [AT] CLASS: Habitats October 2, 2012 from 6:00 pm to 9:00 pm at JCC Human Services Center, 5249 Olde Towne Rd., Williamsburg
- [AT] 20th Annual Eastern Shore Birding and Wildlife Festival October 5, 2012 all day at Cape Charles, VA
- [AT] JCC NPS Plant Walk October 6, 2012 from 1:00 pm to 3:00 pm at Little Creek Reservoir, off of Old Forge Rd, near Toano
- [AT] HRBC Bird Walk October 7, 2012 from 7:00 am to 10:00 am at Newport News City Park

[AT] Natural Areas Conference in Norfolk - October 9, 2012 all day at Norfolk, VA

- [AT] Monthly meeting October 10, 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 October 13, 2012 from 8:00 am to 10:00 am at New Quarter Park, 1000 Lakeshead Dr., Williamsburg
- Field Trip: Wetlands Ecology October 13, 2012 from 9:00 am to 3:00 pm at York River State Park, 5526 Riverview Road, Williamsburg
- CLASS: Plant Biology October 16, 2012 from 6:00 pm to 9:00 pm at JCC Human Services Center, 5249 Olde Towne Rd., Williamsburg
- [AT] WBC Field Trip October 20, 2012 from 7:00 am to 1:30 pm at WBC Field Trip
- [AT] HRBC Bird Walk October 21, 2012 from 7:00 am to 10:00 am at Newport News City Park
- [AT] DCR 2012 Environmental Education Conference October 25, 2012 all day at Hungry Mother State Park, south central VA
- [AT] The secret social lives of shrimp: cooperation and homeland defense on the reef October 25, 2012 from 7:00 pm to 9:00 pm at VIMS McHugh Auditorium, Watermen's Hall
- CLASS: Dendrology October 30, 2012 from 6:00 pm to 9:00 pm at JCC Human Services Center, 5249 Olde Towne Rd., Williamsburg
- [AT] HRBC Bird Walk November 4, 2012 from 7:00 am to 10:00 am at Newport News City Park

Continued on next page..

### Advanced Training - October through December 2012

- [AT] WBC Bird Walk at New Quarter Park November 10, 2012 from 8:00 am to 10:00 am at New Quarter Park, 1000 Lakeshead Dr., Williamsburg
- CLASS: Geology November 13, 2012 from 6:00 pm to 9:00 pm at JCC Human Services Center, 5249 Olde Towne Rd., Williamsburg
- [AT] Monthly meeting November 14, 2012 from 6:00 pm to 9:00 pm at JCC Human Services Bldg., 5249 Olde Towne Rd., Williamsburg
- [AT] WBC Field Trip November 17, 2012 from 7:00 am to 1:30 pm at WBC Field Trip
- [AT] HRBC Bird Walk November 18, 2012 from 7:00 am to 10:00 am at Newport News City Park
- CLASS: Entomology November 27, 2012 from 6:00 pm to 9:00 pm at JCC Human Services Center, 5249 Olde Towne Rd., Williamsburg
- [AT] HRBC Bird Walk December 2, 2012 from 7:00 am to 10:00 am at Newport News City Park
- [AT] WBC Bird Walk at New Quarter Park December 8, 2012 from 8:00 am to 10:00 am at New Quarter Park, 1000 Lakeshead Dr., Williamsburg
- Field Trip: Geology December 8, 2012 from 9:00 am to 3:00 pm at Various places

Please go to the Historic Rivers website for more detail.

Adrienne Frank and Gary Driscole Advanced Training Co-Chairs