

# The NATURALIST

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

http://historicrivers.org

#### A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

Volume 6 No. 9 September 2012

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#### **MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT**

Greetings, Historic Rivers Chapter:

Welcome, Cohort VII! The basic training class is now full with 25 wonderful folks registered for our 2012 session. Our newest members include: Richard Batten, Cathleen Campbell, Dee Davis, Bill Davis, William Collins, Sharon Falconer, Bruce Glendening, Deane Gordon, Ann Gray, Mark Guillotte, Gwen Harris, Walt Harris, Joanie Haury, Robert Isdell, Lucy Manning, Katherine Lane McCann, Linda Morse, Samuel Morse, David Murphy, George Sallwasser, Joanne Sheffield, John Shoosmith, Jessica Spickler, Claire Stephens, and Mary Turnbull.

September is upon us and so are many of our "back to school" learning opportunities. In addition to the advanced training options on the calendar, September brings the startup of our Chapter's basic training, the 2012 Virginia Master Naturalist Volunteer Conference, and our Chapter's fall picnic and day-long field activities.

- Cohort VII's basic training classes officially begin on Tuesday, September 4. If you want a "refresher" on a particular subject or if you just want to socialize with our newest members, please don't hesitate to join them for a class or two or three. Check our website calendar to find out the upcoming basic training schedule and topics. Many thanks for the outstanding work done by our Basic Training Team: Jennifer Trevino (Co-Chair), Sharon Plocher (Co-Chair), Shirley Devan, Tom Dougherty, Cheryl Jacobson and Susan Powell.

- The 2012 Virginia Master Naturalist Statewide Volunteer Conference is scheduled for the weekend of 7-9 September. This 4<sup>th</sup> annual conference will have activities centered around the Martinsville area and include visits to the Virginia Museum of Natural History and Fairy Stone State Park. Those members registered will have the opportunity to share ideas and learn from other Master Naturalists; attend advanced training classes; and explore new environments, flora and fauna in this area of the State.

- The Historic Rivers Chapter Fall Picnic is scheduled for Saturday, September 22 at Fort Pocohontas. (About 2 miles from Sherwood Forest Plantation on Route 5 in Charles City County) This day-long event will include an early morning bird walk, tree and plant identification, canoeing, kayaking, swimming, fishing, evening frog walks, owl prowls, and bonfire/stargazing. The food, including steamed crabs, steamed oysters and potluck dishes, will be served from 5 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. Please plan to be there and participate in any and/ or all of these wonderful activities. The official invitation and details will be sent out later this month. Many thanks to Ted Sargent and Janet Curtis for organizing this awesome event!

Hope to see you all this month in the classroom, at the Conference, and/or at the picnic,

Patty Maloney

President, Historic Rivers Chapter

Notes from the Board

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

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#### **BLUEBIRD BULLETIN**

August 31, 2012

The bluebirds have flown, the nest boxes are empty and cleaned, and the monitoring teams have 787 reasons to celebrate. That is the preliminary total of fledges on the Chapter's seven bluebird trails this 2012 nesting season!

Trail	<u># Box-</u>	Eastern	<u>Carolina</u>	<u>Tufted</u>	<u>Carolina</u>
	es	<u>Bluebird</u>	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	124	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	0	0	17
York River State Park Entrance Road	35	85	18	0	10
TOTALS	191	678	69	13	27
GRAND TOTAL OF 787 CHICKS FLEDGED					

#### Preliminary Total of Fledges from the Seven (7) HRC-VMN Bluebird Trails in 2012

A total of 382 chicks fledged from the Five (5) HRC trails in 2011:

319 Bluebirds, 25 Chickadees, 18 Tufted Titmice, 4 Wrens, and 16 Unidentified Others

However, it should be noted that in 2012 the 2 new trails fledged 189 chicks and the remaining 5 trails fledged 598 chicks, a truer comparison with the 382 chicks fledged in 2011.

The individual trail summaries will be completed shortly and the information reported to the Virginia Bluebird Society. At that time we expect that we will find some additional fledges and we will be able to calculate the percentage of fledges against the number of eggs laid, which is an indicator of overall success, effects of predation, etc.

A further statistic which shows how important this project has been to the 45 Chapter monitors involved and the contribution made to citizen science is seen in the 1,323 volunteer hours logged on the HRC-VMN trails in 2012. (553 hours were recorded in 2011 but again that was on 2 fewer trails.) It has been a tremendously rewarding experience for all of us.

We firmly believe that much of the increase seen in the 2012 figures reflects the care and commitment of our monitors who checked the boxes and turned in their reports in such a consistent manner. They are much appreciated and congratulated.

Jan Lockwood



CONGRATULATIONS TO JAN LOCKWOOD AND LOIS ULLMAN, OUR CHAPTER BLUEBIRD LEADERS!

And, a hearty thanks to all 45 of our Chapter monitors, some of whom were able to gather at NQP on 30 August for a Bluebird Season Finale!

Junior monitors who also participated during the season are Sarah and Helen Schmuck. Photos submitted by Shirley Devan.



#### HRC at 4-H CAMP

July 24th and 26th found Historic Rivers Chapter members at the Jamestown 4-H Camp to lead two groups of 9 to 13 year-old campers in learning about water quality. Our team leader was Patty Maloney assisted by Larry and Patty Riddick.

To begin the first half of the class period, we met the campers at a stream which runs through the property where we would test the waters by dipping for benthic macro invertebrates. Patty Maloney began each class talking about the Chesapeake Bay Watershed and explaining how what we do locally in our streams and rivers affects the Chesapeake Bay. The campers, and we leaders, were equipped with dip nets and given how-to instructions on dipping by Larry. The kids really took to this, sloshing around in the creek, dipping out critters and leaves, and even by one young camper's totally losing a shoe which was never to be seen again.

Wet, and covered in mud, the second half of the class was conducted in the lab where each camper got to dig through trays of muck to find and identify macro invertebrates. They used magnifying glasses and charts provided. Our finds were impressive: crayfish, scuds, beetles, midges, gilled snails, lunged snails, clams, giant water bugs, water scorpions, water striders, water boatman and a dragonfly!

A great time was had by all and our stream was considered of good water quality.

This was the second year Historic Rivers Chapter was asked to participate in the camp, and we look forward to returning again next year.



#### COHORT VII - Basic Training 2012-2013

The HRC Basic Training Committee is hard at work this summer making preparations for the upcoming 2012-2013 Cohort VII Basic Training session. There will be a Cohort VII Informational Meeting on August 14<sup>th</sup> at the Williamsburg Library, for the purpose of acquainting new Cohort VII members with the Virginia Master Naturalist Program, and more specifically, with our own Historic Rivers Chapter. The first Basic Training class session begins September 4, 2012.

Here is the HRC-VMN Basic Training Calendar for 2012-2013:

### HISTORIC RIVERS CHAPTER

#### VIRGINIA MASTER NATURALIST PROGRAM

#### COHORT VII

#### 2012-2013 BASIC TRAINING CALENDAR

08/14/2012	Tuesday	6:30-8:30	Informational Meeting for Cohort VII - Williamsburg Library			
09/04/2012	Tuesday	6:00-9:00	Intro. to HRC-VMN; Meet the Board; Nature Of Naming			
09/18/2012	Tuesday	6:00-9:00	Risk Management; Biology/Evolution Basics			
09/29/2012	Saturday	2:00-6:00	Citizen Science; Scientific and Field Methods; Potluck – York River State Park			
10/02/2012	Tuesday	6:00-9:00	Habitats			
10/13/2012	Saturday	9:00-3:00	Field Trip – Wetlands Ecology at York River State Park			
10/16/2012	Tuesday	6:00-9:00	Plant Biology			
10/30/2012	Tuesday	6:00-9:00	Dendrology			
11/13/2012	Tuesday	6:00-9:00	Geology			
11/27/2012	Tuesday	6:00-9:00	Entomology			
12/08/2012	Saturday	9:00-3:00	Geology Field Trip at various sites			
12/11/2012	Tuesday	6:00-9:00	Indigenous Cultures			
01/08/2013	Tuesday	6:00-9:00	Climate/Weather			
01/12/2013	Saturday	9:00-3:00	Field Trip – Forest Conservation & Management; Nature Hike; New Kent Forestry Center			
01/22/2013	Tuesday	6:00-9:00	Herpetology			
01/26/2013	Saturday	9:00-1:00	Field Trip/Class – Macro invertebrates; Winter Trees - at Freedom Park			
02/05/2013	Tuesday	6:00-9:00	Ornithology			
02/19/2013	Tuesday	6:00-9:00	Ecology Concepts			
02/23/2013	Saturday	9:00-4:00	Mammalogy (9-12); lunch; Ichthyology (1-4) – at VLM			
03/05/2013	Tuesday	6:00-9:00	Butterflies			
03/13/2013	Wednesday	6:00-9:00	Cohort VII Graduation; HRC General Mtg./Elections			
Continued on next page						

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#### Other:

By January 31, 2013:
Naturalist Biography Due
By February 28, 2013:
Field Trip with WBC or HRBC: 2 hours
Field Trip with VA Native Plant Society: 2 hours
Attend minimum of one VIMS After Hour Lecture: 1 hour

We're looking forward to a terrific 2012-2013 Basic Training session!

Basic Training Committee:

Jennifer Trevino, Sharon Plocher, Shirley Devan, Susan Powell, Cheryl Jacobson, Tom Dougherty

(Dates/times subject to change)

Wildlife Mapping on The Green Springs Trail

Summer 2012

By Linda and Jeff Miller, Cohort IV

"Jeff and I have been Wildlife Mapping on the Green Springs Trail for three years and this summer has been one of the best."



"We have two osprey nests on the trail. While we were on the observation bridge, one of the parents came in with a fish and in moments there were three ospreys on the nest. The parent made three passes before it landed only to drop the fish! If you look real close you will see Peter the Perch taking a dive."



"As of today August 18<sup>th</sup>, the nests are still up with one osprey on the nest at all times. Here is Otto osprey on my favorite barren tree with lunch. By the look on his face, I would say that he doesn't want to share with us."



"We have only seen one fawn this year and here is a photo from the other day."



"If you have been on the trail, you will see herons too. The Great Blue is a year round resident, the Green Heron shows up late spring and the Great Egrets come after they leave their roost and stay a week or two. This year was the first year to see a Little Blue Heron. Today he was at the front of the pond, the closest he has been to the bridge. After taking about 15 minutes, we walked away only to hear the "cry" of the green heron. (As you know when you hear a heron, you will instinctively feel like you are in the movie Jurassic Park. The Great Blue can make you jump out of your skin.) So I doubled back and took this wonderful photo. Not sure, but they might be best friends."

"We would like to share one more moment from summer. This photo was taken off the bridge down from the High School. Not sure but something "ruffled her feathers."



### CoCoRaHS

Citizen Science Project C4c



CoCoRaHS is one of our most popular citizen science projects. This is especially true when we have exciting weather, as we have this year. CoCoRaHS stands for Community Collaborative Rain, Hail, and Snow Network. It started in Colorado in 1998 and now is in all fifty states and Canada. The Historic Rivers Chapter made it an official project (code C4c) in 2010 and we have over 20 members participating in it. We all use the same rain gauges, and log our data in at 7AM each morning, or as close to that time that we can do. There is an online training presentation that takes an hour or so to do, and then you are ready to go. Go to www.cocorahs.org.

The National Science Foundation, and the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration are the major sponsors CoCoRaHS. The data is essential in understanding the true precipitation patterns in the U.S. Meteorologists, farmers, emergency planners, hydrologists, teachers, students, and many more use this data. The website is not just where you log your data, but also a source of weather related information. There are articles, email notifications, webinars, and even other opportunities to report more detailed weather observations.

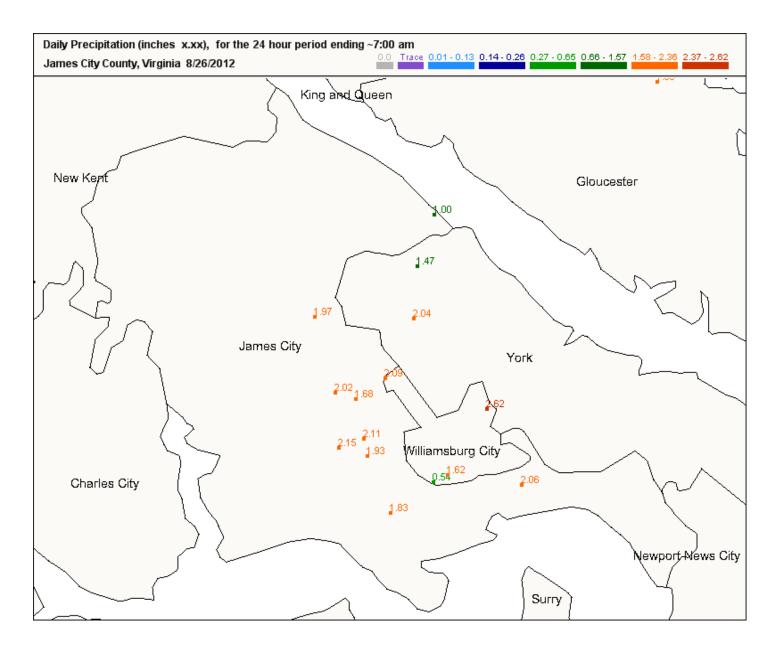
It's actually fun to see who got dumped on in an overnight storm, or who was left high and dry, even within our area. See the map that shows the great variation in precipitation with this weekend's unusual storm. We have had a lot of fun with this project. I have been able to get a good group discount on the rain gauges in the past. I will probably take orders again for another round sometime this fall. CoCoRaHS does not expect their volunteers to do it 365 days, but as often as you can. It is a fun, easy way to get some volunteer hours, and keep track of the weather. All you need is a rain gauge, internet access, and some open sky in your yard to catch your daily precipitation data. Oh, and an alarm clock to get you out there at 7:00 AM. Feel free to contact me if you have questions.

Dean Shostak









Photos included in this article were taken in the yards of Dean Shostak, Kathi Mestayer, Nancy Barnhart, Patty Maloney, and Nancy Norton and published with their permission.

Map above comes from the CoCoRaHS website.

#### **Monarch Initiative: Informational Session**

Submitted by Barb Dunbar

VCE-York/Poquoson's Youth Environmental Programs committee is developing a focused plan to encourage outdoor education (reconnecting children with nature) at local elementary schools throughout York County and Poquoson, with the monarch as our muse. Our **Monarch Initiative** would provide schoolteachers with a timeline, materials, and guidance to build or expand wildlife habitat, geared especially to monarchs, on school grounds. If fully funded, the project would provide schools with lesson plans, field kits, and a mentor to help teachers gain confidence using their new or improved schoolyard habitats for hands-on outdoor education.

Committee leaders have submitted funding requests to three agencies. Even more crucial than obtaining funding is recruiting a large base of Master Gardeners and Virginia Master Naturalists who would work as a team to develop and carry out the mission.

We are hosting an introductory session from 10am to 2pm on Wednesday, 12 Sept 2012, at Charles Brown Park. Dan Nortman, Extension Agent and entomologist, is the guest speaker and will share information about monarchs and other insects likely to visit these schoolyard habitats. Attending the session does not mandate further participation in the Monarch Initiative. We do need a great deal of help across a number of areas, and we invite you pack a bag lunch, carpool with a friend, and join us that day! RSVPs are encouraged, but walk-ins are also welcome.

Volunteer opportunities include:

logo design bookkeeping (filled) topic research letter-writing website design and maintenance online bulletin board administration social network administration PowerPoint slideshow creation outreach partners (MGs & VMNs) guest presenters for school groups photography deal finders publicity organization of materials ordered for schools lesson plan customization editing/proofreading curriculum guide assembly workshop moderation (2 formal workshops) assistance with site preparations assistance on planting days monarch butterfly tagging (Fall 2013) supply of monarch caterpillars (Fall 2013)

Continued from prior page.....

These tasks require differing levels of time commitment and expertise. Most simply require enthusiasm, availability, and a commitment to youth outdoor education. While much of the work would take place at individual schools, some mini-projects would be scheduled at the Extension Office or Charles Brown Park, and other tasks could be tackled from home.

Anyone who volunteers to help with the Monarch Initiative is welcome at our monthly meetings where we will monitor progress and share ideas and experiences through the culmination of the project in September 2013. We hope you will sign up to help this project soar!

If you have any questions or comments about the Monarch Initiative, please contact: Barbara Dunbar: twotac@cox.net, 880-8875 Jody Turner: jodybynature@gmail.com, 218-1458



#### SAVE THIS DATE!

#### SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 22ND

#### HRC FALL PICNIC

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS:

7:00-9:00 A.M. BIRD WATCHING

9:00-10:00 A.M. BREAKFAST FOR BIRDERS

10:00-11:00 A.M. NAP TIME OR WANDER AROUND

11:00 A.M. - 12:30 P.M. TREE AND PLANT IDENTIFICATION

(SHERWOOD FOREST PLANTATION)

1:00 P.M. LUNCH (BYO)

2:00-5:00 P.M. MOTORBOAT CRUISES, CANOEING,

KAYAKING, SWIMMING, FISHING ON THE JAMES RIVER

5:00-6:30 P.M. STEAMED CRABS AND OYSTER DINNER

7:00 P.M. CLEAN UP

8:00 P.M. FROG WALK

9:00 P.M. OWL PROWL

**10:00 P.M. BONFIRE OR STARGAZING** 



STAY TUNED......MORE TO FOLLOW.....

## **2012** Prothonotary Warbler Nest Box Season at Northwest River Park

By Shirley Devan

Who would volunteer for a Master Naturalist project like this?

Volunteers have to load and unload a 100-pound scanoe (a cross between a skiff and a canoe ) from the top of a car – twice each visit.

Volunteers have to load and unload two marine batteries, each weighing about 50 pounds.

Paddle the scance when the batteries die or the electric motor dies and when it's too shallow to use the motor.

Fight off wasps and spiders and biting flies.

Be perpetually alert for snakes, including venomous ones, in the water and vegetation.

Believe it or not, eager Master Naturalists and Bird Club members volunteered for the Prothonotary Warbler Monitoring Project at Northwest River in Chesapeake for the April – July 2012 nesting season. Inge Curtis, Cheryl Jacobson, Jan Lockwood, Sharon Plocher, Jennifer Trevino and Dave Youker took turns helping me motor around the Northwest River checking nest boxes and making sure the scanoe did not tip over. The scanoe could only hold three people and sometimes the quarters were tight because of equipment and supplies we carried.



For the second year in a row, I worked with Stephen Living, Wildlife Biologist with Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, to monitor and band Prothonotary Warbler adults and nestlings at Northwest River Park in Chesapeake, VA. This year we checked 98 nest boxes installed on pipes in the water about 10 -15 feet from the shores of this bald cypress-lined freshwater river that flows into the Albemarle Sound in NC.

This citizen science project is supervised by Dr. Bob Reilly, Master Bander and Vice President of CVWO and Professor, VCU Center for Environmental Studies. Bob supervises two sites in the Richmond area – Dutch Gap and White Bank – in addition to the Chesapeake site. Steve Living and I are subpermittee banders operating under Bob Reilly's banding license.

In 2012, the number of nestlings banded was 162. In 2011, the number of nestlings banded was 133.

Prothonotary Warblers continue to show high site fidelity to the boxes on the Northwest River. We can tell the birds are returning when we capture adults that were banded previous years. Notable recaptures in 2012:

The very first Prothonotary Warbler (an adult female) banded at Northwest River Park in 2009 was captured in May 2012. She has made at least four successful round trips to her wintering grounds in Central or South America since she was first banded.

A nestling banded in 2009 at box 36 was captured twice this year – a female with two clutches at box 37.

Two other birds banded in 2009 were also captured in 2012.

Four females originally banded in 2010 were captured in 2012 – very close to the location of their original banding.

And what may be the latest nesting record for Prothonotary Warblers in Virginia, a remarkably late nesting pair produced three eggs that yielded 2 nestlings banded July 31, 2012 – the last of 2012.

Here's what volunteer Cheryl Jacobson said about the project: "I LOVED this project...I would have gone every week if there had been the opportunity. I loved being on the river, yes, even when it was raining! The warblers are beautiful and sharing it with friends was great. I look forward to doing it again next year."

From volunteer Sharon Plocher: "It always put a huge smile on my face to open a PROW box and find baby birds ready to be banded."



Kathi Mestayer shares that she has Sassafras babies up for adoption to good homes. Above is the Sassafras tree with fruit in her backyard.



"Although we have several sassafras trees in the yard, we never noticed any fruit until this year (not that we were looking, mind you). Well, here they are." Photos by Kathi.

Dear Abby,

I'm hoping you can give me some advice and guidance on how to handle my obsession (at least I think it's an obsession). I'll let you decide…

I think I may have gone overboard with my recycle bins here at the house. I have SIX recycle containers: 1. bag for copy paper, notes and junk mail by my computer desk 2. bag for kitchen paper and junk mail in laundry area 3. bin for kitchen/food plastics (recycle code 1 and 2) plus glass 4. bin in garage for newspapers, cardboard, large plastics (code 1 and 2) 5. bin in garage for plastics coded 3 - 6 6. bin in garage for plastics 1 & 2 without necks (local recycling rejects)

Also, sometimes I find myself picking out tissues and other recyclable items from waste paper baskets around the house as I prepare to take out the trash.

Should I be concerned about this obsession? Do you know any counselors who specialize in this behavioral problem?

PS. There may be a ray of hope. I only take the 3-6 recyclables to the Colonial Williamsburg Recycle Center about once a month, even though they sometimes overflow the bins.

signed: Recycled

#### Ponder this:

Recently, on my Page-a-Day trivia calendar, the question was: What do you call a group of kangaroos? Now we lived in Australia for 3 years and I was pretty sure that for once I knew the answer--a mob is what you call a group of kangaroos. I confidently turned the page over and the answer given was "troop". "Nunh uh" said I and thus began my journey of great websites that have very creative names for groups of critters including people. At least one of the sites gave mob and troop for the kangaroos. Now I want to know how to join the creative critter naming group. A dazzle of zebras?!

As shared by Sherry Brubaker



Photos from the Eastern Shore Butterfly Count on 29 July.

Shown above (left to right): Les Lawrence, Hart Haynes, Brian Taber of the Coastal Virginia Wildlife Observatory, Cheryl Jacobson, Shirley Devan and Susie Engle.



Butterfly photos by Hart Haynes. Enjoy many more photos on Historic Rivers website: http://www.historicrivers.org

#### Advanced Training - September 2 to October 5, 2012

Please go to the Historic Rivers website for more detail.

[AT] HRBC Bird Walk - September 2, 2012 from 7:00 -10:00 am at Newport News City Park

<u>CLASS: Intro to HRC-VMN; Meet the Board; Nature of Naming</u> - **September 4, 2012** from 6:00- 9:00 pm at JCC Human Services Building, 5249 Olde Towne Rd., Williamsburg

[AT] VA MN Conference - September 7-9, 2012 at SW Piedmont area, Martinsville, VA

[AT] Gloucester Quail Workshop - September 7, 2012 from 8:30 am to 4:00 pm at Brent & Becky's Bulbs, 7900 Daffodil Lane, 23061

[AT] WBC Bird Walk at New Quarter Park - September 8, 2012 from 8:00- 0:00 am at New Quarter Park, 1000 Lakeshead Dr., Williamsburg

[AT] Monarch Initiative: Informational Session - September 12, 2012 from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm at Charles Brown Park, off of Rt 238 in Lackey, VA

[AT] Monthly meeting - September 12, 2012 from 6:00-9:00 pm at JCC Human Services Bldg., 5249 Olde Towne Rd., Williamsburg

[AT] VSO Fall Field Trip to Chincoteague. - September 13, 2012 all day at Chincoteague, VA/MD Shore

[AT] VA Native Plant Society Annual Meeting - September 14, 2012 from 4:00 pm to 9:00 pm at Wyndam VA Crossings Hotel, Glen Allen/Richmond, VA

[AT] VA Native Plant Society Annual Meeting - September 15, 2012 from 7:30 am to 9:00 pm at Wyndham VA Crossings Hotel, Glen Allen/Richmond, VA

[AT] HRBC Bird Walk - September 16, 2012 from 7:00-10:00 am at Newport News City Park

**CLASS: Risk Management; Biology/Evolution Basics** - **September 18, 2012** from 6:00 pm to 9:00 pm at JCC Human Services Center, 5249 Olde Towne Rd., Williamsburg

[AT] WBC Field Trip to Craney Island - September 23 2012 from 7:00 am to 1:30 pm at WBC Field Trip

**CLASS: Citizen Science; Scientific and Field Methods; Potluck** - **September 29, 2012** from 2:00 pm to 6:00 pm at York River State Park, 5526 River View Rd., Williamsburg

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

Adrienne Frank and Gary Driscole Advanced Training Co-Chairs