

Historic Rivers Chapter - VMN
General Membership Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, June 10, 2015

The June General Membership Meeting of the Historic Rivers Chapter of the Virginia Master Naturalists was called to order by Vice-President Linda Morse at 6:00 p.m. in the Auditorium of the Human Services Building, 5249 Olde Town Road, Williamsburg, VA.

Linda introduced the speaker, Dr. Matthias Leu, Assistant Professor, William and Mary, and the Director of the ACER (Applied Conservation & Ecological Research) Lab. Dr. Leu is a conservation biologist particularly interested in the effects of human behavior on ecological processes.

Dr. Leu gave a presentation on "Deer Browsing Correlation with Songbird Community Change: Evidence from Surveys in Coastal Virginia and the Shenandoah Valley". He gave a brief history of white-tail deer, methods of survey, land classification and quantification, results, and a conclusion. He pointed out that the deer population has grown in the last few decades. Hunting has decreased in the study areas and deer have no predators. The browsing effects of this enlarged population are evident in changing bird communities. Deer are now considered "overabundant". When a species becomes "overabundant" it means they threaten human health and livelihood, they depress the density of other species, there are too many "for their own good", and/or their numbers are causing ecosystem dysfunction.

Following the main presentation Dr. Leu gave a brief update on his research on the Lonestar tick and the HME (Human monocytic ehrlichiosis) bacteria. He reported that in 2011 7.9% of sites tested positive for the HME bacteria. By 2013, 39% of sites tested positive. He made tick collection kits available for those interested in helping in the research.

Break for Refreshments

Membership - Mike Woodward

Mike announced that the following members of Cohort IX have achieved certification status: Brenda Uekert, Lisa Nickel, and Jeffrey Honig.

President's Report - Shirley Devan

Shirley announced three service project opportunities that are in need of volunteers. The first is a need for someone to shepherd our wildlife salvage and collection permits. Patty Riddick and Clyde Marsteller have been doing this job for a number of years. These permits need to be kept up to date and annual fees paid in a timely manner. Patty is willing to help make the transition to whoever would be willing to take over this position.

The second opportunity is a need for someone to take over the duties of storing and distributing Tool Box items. Felice Bond has done this job for a number of years. Along with the Tool Box committee Felice has organized the Tool Box and all of its items in a highly efficient and well documented system for ease of use. At this time the Tool Box needs a new home and a new volunteer to house and distribute the items as needed.

Finally, HRC will be participating in the youth Nature Camp at Freedom Park. We still need volunteers to assist with this camp. Alister Perkinson will be meeting with volunteers tomorrow.

Shirley asked Adrienne to update the HRC on upcoming butterfly counts. Sunday, July 5 there will be a count at Chippoke's State Park. Jamestown Island is included in this count.

On 7/21 there will be a count at the Dismal Swamp. 7/26 is the count on the Delmava Peninsula, and on 8/08 our own butterfly circle count will take place.

Also coming up will be National Moth Week from July 18-26. There will be an opportunity on Wednesday, 7/22 at New Quarter Park to view stations with black lights from 8:30-11:00 pm with Teta Kain.

Shirley reminded everyone that this is the last General Membership meeting until September 9, 2015.

Basic Training - Sharon Plocher, Jennifer Trevino

Sharon reported that the Basic Training committee has already started meeting. There are already 8 paid applicants (without any advertising). The application package is on the HRC website. This is a first-come, first-serve process. The committee anticipates a full class.

Shirley asked Deane Gordon to give an update on the milkweed collection project. Deane reported that he had sent out an email to the chapter about this project and that collection kits are available.

Continuing Education - Adrienne Frank and Gary Driscole

Gary and Adrienne reminded us to check the HRC website for continuing education opportunities and that Dr. Leu's presentation this evening counted as 1 hour for continuing education.

Gary also reminded us of the upcoming walk at Grafton Ponds, a native plant walk on Saturday and a program at VIMS on 6/25 on the filming of shipwrecks.

Field Trips - Sherry Brubaker

Sherry reported that the field trip to the VA Museum of Fine Arts was very successful and that the curator took personal interest in the VMN trip.

She asked about interest in a trip to the VA Living Museum to see the frog exhibit and pointed out that Larry and Patty Riddick are there as volunteers on Mondays and that we would get special attention from them if we went on a Monday.

Newsletter - Doug Dwoyer

Doug reported that he is working on the current newsletter.

Publicity and Outreach - Judy Jones

Judy reported that our scholarship recipient, Breanna Rowland, is first on the waiting list for Nature Camp.

Judy will be looking for volunteers to help at Estuaries Day at YRSP on 8/22 from 9:00-3:00. Setup will be from 8-9. The focus will be on estuaries and sea level rise.

Historian - Adrienne Frank for Cheryl Jacobson (not present)

Adrienne pointed out that we get frequent coverage from the many contributions of Helen Hamilton, Sara Lewis, and Bill Williams.

Past President - Patty Maloney

Patty reported on the upcoming VMN Regional Conference. It will be 8/30/2015 at the Wakefield 4H Center. Restricted registration starts on July 6 with full open registration beginning on 7/27/2015. There will be choices for morning and afternoon activities. Saturday 8/29/2015 an afternoon bioblitz will be conducted which will count as volunteer hours.

The HRC will need 3 volunteers. There will be space for 160 participants. 8 chapters will be participating.

Field Trips - Linda Morse

Linda is working on a field trip to Big Meadows on the Blue Ridge Parkway. There will be options for camping or staying in the lodge. This will be a one-night trip in September and will coincide with fall migration.

Other - Dean Shostak, update on Wildlife Camera project

Dean reported that this project is in its fourth month at YRSP and is going well. He could possibly do a program on it for one of our chapter meetings.

There was a drawing for door prizes and a reminder that some meetings will include raffles which will benefit the Nancy Norton Nature Camp.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:01 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy Barnhart, Co-recording Secretary