



THE NATURALIST

The monthly newsletter of the Historic Rivers Chapter

<http://historicrivers.org>

A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

Volume 8 No. 2 February 2014



Greetings, Historic Rivers Chapter:

Hope you are enjoying our winter, and sometimes spring days, and are outside experiencing the wonders of the seasons! A few of our Chapter members who “migrated” here from California came to Virginia to experience the change in seasons. I don’t think they expected the seasons to change so quickly from one day to the next. The California 70 degree, no-rain days can get monotonous. Luckily, I was able to personally experience that California monotony for a few days last month along with thousands of migrating monarch butterflies. The monarch butterflies west of the Rockies winter in about 100 locations along the California coast from November to February. It was awesome to see thousands of monarchs clustering in the trees, and then swarming and floating magically in the warm sunshine. Definitely put the monarch migration on your “bucket list”!

Migrations are happening here in Virginia, too.

The Great Backyard Bird Count. Our year-round and our wintering migratory birds are ready to be counted on 14-17 Feb. You can participate in the Great Backyard Bird Count from your own backyard or you can join various groups counting the birds at local parks. Check our website for dates, times and places.

The HRC Board. Many, many thanks to the folks who are “migrating” off the board, and to those who agreed to fill the vacant positions for 2014/2015. Our official elections for these positions will be held at our March General Membership meeting on 12 Mar 2014.

The VMN Annual Conference. In September, VMNs throughout the state will be “migrating” to our area and the Virginia Living Museum for the conference. Please mark your calendars for 26-28 Sep for great advanced training as well as volunteer hosting opportunities.

Hope to see you out and about at our various activities and meetings this month,

Patty Maloney, President
Historic Rivers Chapter
Virginia Master Naturalist

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tor*



What does a raccoon look like when sleeping?

**This photo was taken this winter in Gary and
Adrienne's backyard about 20 feet from the ground.**

Notes from the Board

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

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Mark Your Calendar!

General Membership Meeting—Historic Rivers Chapter VMN

Wednesday—March 12 6:00-9:00 pm

Celebrate Cohort VIII's Graduation

AND

Hear Dr. Stewart Ware talk about John Smith's observations of plants as well as non-plant organisms



HIKE TO CELEBRATE MARTIN LUTHER KING DAY

Members of the HRC participated in a hike at York River State Park, on January 20, to commemorate Martin Luther King Day. The hike was led by Park Ranger John Gresham, who is also in the current training class to become a certified Master Naturalist. About 40 people, including 13 HRC members, hiked the Mattaponi and Beaver Pond Trails out to Fossil Beach, while listening to John tell about the significance of the YRSP area to local Indian tribes, notably Chief Powhatan's rule over some 23 different tribes; African-American slave escape routes and later their communities that sprang up in the area; and Norwegians and Poles that established in nearby Norge and the Port Richmond neighborhood of West Point. John also shared a bit of history about the Taskinas Plantation and the ever-popular Taskinas Creek trail.

A highlight of the day, especially for the younger hikers, was time spent at Fossil Beach. Before the hike, the children (and several older members) were given buckets for collecting fossils and later got to show off their many findings and hear an explanation about what they were.

HRC members also managed to do a bit of wildlife mapping while walking the trails. Since it was a windy day, birding wasn't all that great, but there were good numbers of ducks out on the York River, and we spotted evidence of coyote, deer, and raccoons.

Thanks to all who were able to participate in the hike and support our Chapter's YRSP sponsor.



HISTORIC RIVERS CHAPTER

Become a CoCoRaHS volunteer

“Because every drop counts”

Cheryl J. Jacobson



I really enjoy this volunteer Citizen Science Project. A bonus of this project is being able to run data reports for any time and any location in the United States. I recently ran this report for the total precipitation for 2013 for James City County. I am station number 18 so you see that in 2013 I had 62.54 inches of precipitation for the year. I reported on 333 days. On the days that I was away, when I returned I read my gauge and reported a multi day report of what I read. That gave another 5.23 inches with a total of 67.77 inches. I live in Kingsmill. The average yearly rainfall for James City County, according to the web site *VA James City Demographics* is 49.04 inches, so at my house I was **18.73 inches above average**. Of interest to me is that for some months, such as **September and November**, I was below average while in the month of July I was 7.11 inches above average.

23 Stations with 4724 Reports over 365 Days

Station Num-	Station Name	Daily Precip Sum	Multi-Day Precip	Total Precip	Daily Snow Sum	# of Reports
VA-JC-1	Williamsburg	58.64	1.22	59.86	4.2	360
VA-JC-3	W-burg 4.9	58.37		58.37	0.0	313
VA-JC-4	W-burg 3.4	4.78		4.78	0.0	21
VA-JC-7	W-burg 5.8	22.78		22.78	1.4	55
VA-JC-9	W-burg 5.8	3.13		3.13	0.0	4
VA-JC-10	W-burg 4.1	38.14	4.31	42.45	0.0	195
VA-JC-12	W-burg 2.2	32.08		32.08	0.0	117
VA-JC-13	W-burg 6.5	58.25	3.68	61.93	6.0	344
VA-JC-16	W-burg 3.2	62.03		62.03	1.5	351
VA-JC-17	W-burg 7.7 N	42.76	7.59	50.35	0.0	248
VA-JC-18	W-burg 2.7 SE	62.54	5.23	67.77	0.0	333
VA-JC-19	W-burg 3.2 NW	58.20		58.20	0.0	325
VA-JC-20	Williamsburg	50.82	5.48	56.30	0.0	297
VA-JC-21	Williamsburg	46.46	11.01	57.47	0.0	308
VA-JC-22	Williamsburg	12.21		12.21	0.0	58
VA-JC-23	Williamsburg	52.31	7.95	60.26	3.5	325
VA-JC-24	Williamsburg	35.39		35.39	2.0	178
VA-JC-25	Williamsburg	41.53		41.53	0.0	256
VA-JC-26	W-burg 3.1 SSE	29.09		29.09	0.0	93
VA-JC-27	Norge 0.6 SSE	18.04	18.15	36.19	0.0	55
VA-JC-28	W-burg 3.3	42.10		42.10	0.0	248
VA-JC-29	W-burg 3.2 SSE	27.28	0.00	27.28	0.0	138
VA-JC-31	W-burg 5.8	9.16		9.16	0.0	102



Get Geared Up For the Great Backyard Bird Count!

Bird watchers around the world needed to gather crucial data

New York, N.Y. and Ithaca, N.Y.—From Afghanistan to Zimbabwe, bird watchers from more than 100 countries are expected to participate in the 17th annual Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC), February 14–17, 2014. Anyone anywhere in the world can count birds for at least 15 minutes on one or more days of the count and enter their sightings at www.BirdCount.org. The information gathered by tens of thousands of volunteers helps track the health of bird populations at a scale that would not otherwise be possible. The GBBC is a joint project of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society with partner Bird Studies Canada.



“People who care about birds can change the world,” said Audubon chief scientist Gary Langham. “Technology has made it possible for people everywhere to unite around a shared love of birds and a commitment to protecting them.”

In North America, GBBC participants will add their data to help define the magnitude of a dramatic irruption of magnificent Snowy Owls. Bird watchers will also be on the lookout for the invasive Eurasian Collared-Dove to see if it has expanded its range again. GBBC observations may help show whether or not numbers of American Crows will continue to rebound after being hit hard by the West Nile virus and whether more insect-eating species are showing up in new areas, possibly because of changing climate.

Last year’s Great Backyard Bird Count shattered records after going global for the first time, thanks to integration with the eBird online checklist program launched in 2002 by the Cornell Lab and Audubon. Participants reported their bird sightings from all 7 continents, including 111 countries and independent territories. More than 34.5 million birds and 3,610 species were recorded—nearly one-third of the world’s total bird species documented in just four

days.

The Great Backyard Bird Count is a great way for people of all ages and backgrounds to connect with nature and make a difference for birds. It’s free and easy. To learn more about how to join the count visit www.birdcount.org and view the winning photos from the 2013 GBBC photo contest.

The Great Backyard Bird Count is made possible in part by sponsor Wild Birds Unlimited.

To celebrate the Great Backyard Bird Count.
Les Lawrence will lead a bird walk at York River State Park at 1 pm,
Saturday, Feb 15

This is co-sponsored by the Williamsburg Bird Club & the Historic Rivers
Chapter VMN

Please meet in front of the park office.
Note: there is a \$3 parking fee

NAME YOUR POISON

Saturday, February 15, 10:00 am in the Freedom Park Interpretive Center is the next program in the “Learn and Grow” Educational Series sponsored by the Williamsburg Botanical Garden. Learn about 13 very toxic plants, both natives and ornamentals. Some are commonly planted in gardens, some are deer resistant, and a few should never be in the home garden.

A presentation by Master Gardener Helen Hamilton. Contact Helen at [757 564 4494](tel:757-564-4494) or helen48@cox.net for information. The program is open to the public, with a requested donation of \$5.00.



One of the poisonous plants discussed is daffodil, photo by Helen Hamilton

One More Chance to Register for the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel by Boat Birding Trip

Williamsburg Bird Club is able to reschedule the recently cancelled CBBT birding by boat trip to the morning of Sunday, 16 February 2014! There are currently six spaces still available for anyone who would care to join us. (call to confirm space availability).

We will depart from Lynnhaven Inlet in Virginia Beach on Sunday, February 16, 2014 at 9:00 am and return to the dock at about 1 pm. Cost is \$30 per person. Your check is your reservation.

Please make checks (\$30.00 per person) payable to “Williamsburg Bird Club” and mail to Geoff Giles, PO Box 133, Lightfoot, VA 23090. Include your email address and phone # so we can get back to you to confirm departure location and contact you if plans change.

**For additional info contact Geoff at tylerandal2@aol.com Phone: [757-645-8716](tel:757-645-8716)
Hope to see you onboard!**



The Zoo is draped in black - a valued member of the Zoo animal staff has "passed on".

Mrs Mantis religiosa affectionately known to her friends and admirers as "Amen" was gathered in by Mother Nature. The Dowager outlived her contemporaries by many life times.

She was born M. religiosa to Mr & Mrs Mantis (Mr Mantis is rumored to have been a homicide victim) on April 12, 2013 in Newport News, Virginia. She was a beautiful Nymph full of life and always hungry.

She developed into a voluptuous young lady and met her husband to be in G3A in August. They were "married" at St George's after a whirlwind (but stealthy) engagement. Tragedy ensued as right after the nuptials as the new husband mysteriously disappeared. The young widow persevered and joined the Zoo in September when she was caught on the wall of St. George's Narthex on a Sunday and brought into the service. The Episcopal Youth group immediately named her "Amen".

Over the months Amen delighted the children of the Peninsula and rewarded the Zoo Keeper by laying two masses of eggs in her habituate . It is thought that her age at death of 10 months made her the longest living Mantis in Virginia's Entomology records.

We who knew her best extend our condolences to the family Mantis. Donations of crickets may be sent to the Zoo In My Shopping Bags care of the Historic Rivers Chapter of the Virginia Master Naturalists.

R.I. P. Amen

Ramblin' Clyde

Zoo Keeper



HISTORIC RIVERS CHAPTER

Wildflower of the Month – February 2014

John Clayton Chapter, Virginia Native Plant Society

BROOMSEDGE

Andropogon virginicus



Broomsedge adds color to the winter landscape with clumps of reddish-orange stems and leaves, striking when sunlight catches the white, fuzzy seedheads. In the spring this perennial grass forms a stiff clump of light green stems 3 feet tall. Tufts of paired flowers are held against the stem by leafy bracts, opening in late fall. Attached to each seed is a straight bristle surrounded by silvery hairs, allowing distribution by the wind. Splitbeard Bluestem, *A. ternarius*, is similar to a similar grass, but the flowers are obviously paired, each seed with a bent bristle, not straight.

This grass grows in open, sunny locations on dry soil, preferably loose, sandy, and moist sites such as abandoned fields, roadsides and clearings. While the primary native meadow grass in the northeast, the presence of Broomsedge often indicates poor soil, low in phosphorus, that has been overgrazed and nutrient-poor. Occurring in every county of Virginia, it is found throughout the eastern states, from Massachusetts to Ohio, Missouri and Kansas, south to Florida and Texas. Requiring low amounts of water, the grass can be used for residential landscaping and golf courses.

The Zabulon skipper is an eastern butterfly, which has been sighted in the Williamsburg area. Broomsedge is a nectar source and larval host for this butterfly and others. Small birds eat the seeds in winter when other food supplies are limited, and the grass provides cover for ground nesting birds such as quail and turkeys.

For more information about native plants visit www.claytonvnps.org.

By Helen Hamilton, past-president of the John Clayton Chapter, VNPS

Photo: Broomsedge (*Andropogon virginicus*) taken by Helen Hamilton

The Birding Cup – April 11 – 12, 2014

The annual Birding Cup event encourages people to go outdoors, breathe in fresh air, walk, look and listen throughout the Peninsula's wild and not so wild areas for as many different species of birds as possible within a 24 hour period.

When: April 11, 6:30pm - April 12, 6:30pm. Registration deadline: March 24 at 4:30pm. (Late registrations with no T-shirt accepted through April 10 at 4:30pm).

Categories: The Birding Cup or the Hawkeye Award. The Hawkeye award is for teams where the majority of birders have less than two years of birding experience.

How: Form a team of three to five people and choose your team name, team category and contribution goal. All contributions are tax deductible. Individuals that raise at least \$50 are eligible for raffled prizes. Prizes will be given to the teams that count the most species of birds within their category and the teams with the highest amount of contributions.

Register by March 24 to receive a free, custom designed T-shirt. All registered participants can enjoy a light buffet and awards presentation at the Museum at the event's conclusion.

Where: Teams may count in any or all of the following six areas: Newport News, York County, Hampton, Poquoson, Williamsburg and James City County.

This event is sponsored by the Virginia Living Museum. To register or for more information please go to this website:

<http://www.thevlm.org/special-events.aspx>

Successful Escape From Winter Weather!

By Nancy Barnhart

Talk about spur-of-the-moment! I opened my email in the middle of January and there was a flight itinerary for flights from Richmond to final destination San Juan, Puerto Rico for January 24-28! My husband Ken decided very spontaneously that we needed some warmth and sunshine so he planned a great getaway.

We stayed at a hotel on the Atlantic coast about 20 miles from San Juan and about 5 miles from the entrance to El Yunque Rain Forest, the only tropical Forest in the US Forest Service.

Weather was perfect and we had a great time hiking in the rain Forest and finding new birds and the ever present (if not hard to see) coqui, a tiny tree frog known as "the darling of Puerto Rico". Everywhere we went we heard the very persistent and clear "co KEE" of this little (1") creature.

We saw many many Bananaquits - the most abundant bird in Puerto Rico, another tiny creature at about 4", Red-legged thrushes, Pearly-eyed thrashers, Orange-fronted parakeets, and lots of others but our favorite was the Puerto Rican Tody, pictured below. A tiny and brightly colored bird it sits so still it took a while to pick it out even though it's voice was everywhere. We watched it suddenly fly out and pick what looked to be a spider off a leaf. It then flew to a branch where it did real battle with it's prey which looked to be about a third the length of the bird itself. The Tody thrashed it's head back and forth for what seemed like forever and then in one quick move popped the spider in and down for a big meal.



Everyone visiting El Yunque hopes to find the Puerto Rican Parrot, reportedly one of the 10 rarest birds in the world. While we weren't lucky enough to see one we were

encouraged to know they were there and that their numbers are starting to rebound.

Among other issues putting pressure on these birds is the increase in Africanized bees taking over nest cavities and infestation of young birds by botflies and soldier flies. Government aviaries are attempting to repopulate the species along with various attempts to reduce predation and habitat loss.

Maybe next year if Ken gets spontaneous again we'll get lucky and find one!

Photo by Michael Morel

Libby Mojica holding an Osprey that she has just banded.



Plan to attend the Williamsburg Bird Club's meeting Wednesday, February 19, 2014, to learn all about Osprey, one of the most visible raptors in our area from March – August. The program begins at 7:30 pm in Andrews Hall Room 101, on the W&M Campus.

Libby Mojica, a Research Biologist and Operations Manager at the Center for Conservation Biology, at W&M & VCU, will be the speaker. Libby has a B.S. in Biology from Trinity University, and a M.S. in Forestry and Natural Resources from the University of Georgia.

Libby's research at CCB focuses on the conservation and management of raptor populations in the Chesapeake Bay, Atlantic flyway, and beyond. She's currently conducting research projects on Bald Eagles, Golden Eagles, Peregrine Falcons, Ospreys, and Crowned Solitary Eagles. She also coordinates the OspreyWatch and Richmond Eagle Nest Camera programs. Libby helps plan and implement new tracking programs on raptors, shorebirds, & waterbirds.

Learn how you can be an "Osprey Watcher" and help Libby monitor the many Osprey nests in our area. "Osprey Watch" is an approved Volunteer Service Project — #C2u.

Download a parking pass at: <http://williamsburgbirdclub.org/index.php/parking-permit>

HISTORIC RIVERS CHAPTER

Advanced Training for February 2014

Lucy Manning, Advanced Training Chair (757-646-0877 lucymnng@gmail.com)

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

[\[AT\] WBC Bird Walk at New Quarter Park](#) – Feb 8, 8 -10 am at New Quarter Park, 1000 Lakeshead Dr., Williamsburg

[\[AT\] Nude Tree Talk and Walk](#) – Feb 8, from 10 - 3 pm at James City Rec Center + College Woods; William and Mary Hall, College of William and Mary

[\[AT\] Maymont Nature Center - Behind the Scenes Tour](#) – Feb 8, from 2 -5 pm at Maymont Nature Center, Richmond
(THIS TRIP IS FULL)

[\[AT\] Monthly meeting: Ecuadoran Herps!](#) – Feb 12, from 6-9 pm at JCC Human Services Bldg., 5249 Olde Towne Rd., Williamsburg

[\[AT\] Pruning Clinic](#) – Feb 13, from 1:00 - 3:00 pm at YRSP 5526 Riverview Road, Williamsburg

[\[AT\] HRBC Meeting: Breeding Bird Surveys in Virginia](#) – Feb 13, from 6:30- 9:00 pm at Sandy Bottom Nature Park, 1255 Big Bethel Road, Hampton, VA

[\[AT\] HRBC Field Trip](#) – Feb 15, 7:45 am to 2:15 pm at Fisherman's Island and Kiptopeke State Park

[\[AT\] Great Backyard Bird Count](#) - February 15, from 1:00 pm to 3:00 pm at YRSP

[\[AT\] HRBC Bird Walk](#) - February 16, from 7:00 am to 10:00 am at Newport News City Park

[\[AT\] Ecology Concepts](#) - February 18, from 6 - 9:00 pm at 5249 Olde Towne Road, Williamsburg

[\[AT\] WBC Monthly Meeting](#) – Feb 19, 7- 8 pm, College of William & Mary, Andrews Hall, Room 101

[\[AT\] WBC Bird Walk](#) – Feb 22, from 7-9:00 am at New Quarter Park, 1000 Lakeshead Dr., Wmsburg

[\[AT\] VMN Webinar Series: How to Navigate the Website](#) – Feb 24, from 12- 1:00 pm at Online