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THE NATURALIST

THE HISTORIC RIVERS CHAPTER OF VIRGINIA MASTER NATURALISTS



The President's Message

By Adrienne Frank

In our day-to-day lives, we tend to get lost in details and not see the big picture. I believe it is critically important to be aware of what is around us and to consider how one aspect of life is affected by another.

Ecology from Greek means house or environment and, according to Wikipedia, is the study of complex relationships and interactions among organisms and their environment. Ecology addresses the full scale of life, from tiny bacteria to the entire planet.

When we are wildlife mapping, we tend to focus on identifying and counting animal species, primarily birds. There is no place to record plant life or the interactions between plants and animals. We need to be aware, observe, and describe rather than just identifying in order to gain a better understanding of our local environs.

We identify a beautiful bird, but what does that bird need to sustain life or raise a family? When we look at the bird, we should be seeing its surroundings and asking questions about the insects and plants, and the ecology.



*Adrienne Frank and Gary Driscoll in a temple in Belize, an eco-tour taken with other HRC master naturalists in March. See more photos on page 8.
Photo by Shirley Devan.*

This past Monday at York River State Park, the group observed two Osprey sitting on a platform with very few sticks and asked whether or not this year, they would raise chicks or abandon that nest and wondered why. We counted the Great Blue Herons in their heronry and wondered when chicks would hatch. We saw a Chickadee with a mouth full of soft material but did not see its nest. We saw the Mourning Dove sitting on a nest just like last Monday, but had no idea when the eggs would hatch.

Recently, Gary and I had the incredible opportunity to go on a week-long birding trip to Belize. We saw more than 260 bird species.

Continued on page 2

The President's Letter, continued...



A Boat-billed Heron, left, and American Pygmy Kingfisher, right. Both from the Belize Birding Trip. See story page 3. Photos by Nancy Barnhart.

Several days were spent along tropical river basin, and we observed numerous birds with very specific niches. For example, the Snail kites that eat apple snails, an American Pygmy Kingfisher eats tiny fish, and a Boat-billed Heron eats during the night. They all share the same tree and live from the bounty of the river. This was an incredible ecological system.

Yet one day, we visited Pine Savannah habitat. We got out of the boat and walked 20 feet and entered a completely different environment. The open grassland and groups of trees supported a completely different set of flora and fauna. There were parrots, flycatchers, raptors, and much more that we did not see on the river. The niches of butterflies, termites, and reptiles were totally different.

There is so much to learn! Everyday, I wish that I learned more from my mother who taught Ecology at a two-year college, just up the street from our house.

Check out Williamsburg's Next Door Neighbor's April issue to see HRC's president, Adrienne Frank, featured on page 12.

You might also enjoy the profile of Stewart Ware, one of our Basic Training instructors on page 30, and the profile of Jim Corliss, Historic Rivers Chapter member and Bird Walk Coordinator for the Bird Club, featured on page 8.

You can see the full PDF of the magazine online [here](#).



Contribute Your Stories and Photos to the HRC Newsletter!

The Naturalist is the monthly newsletter of the Historic Rivers Chapter of Virginia Master Naturalists. It is a membership benefit for current members of HRC.

Newsletter contributions are due by the 7th of the month for inclusion in the issue distributed to the HRC Google Group by the middle of the month.

Send your ready-to-publish photos, notices, stories, or reports to The Naturalist's newsletter editor, Lisa Reagan, at HRGenewsletter@gmail.com

Make sure your work is formatted and labeled properly. Lisa is happy to help you if you have questions!



BELIZE BIRDING TRIP

By Shirley Devan

Six members the Williamsburg Bird Club and Historic Rivers Chapter of VMN ventured to Belize the last week in March 2019 to find some new birds and experience Central America up close. Nancy Barnhart, Gary Driscole, Adrienne Frank, Jan Lockwood, Sue Mutell and I were three-quarters of the group of eight birders who arrived in Belize City early in the afternoon of March 23. We met the other two birders, Joan and Doug Clarke from Mississippi, at the Airport in Atlanta when Joan saw me leafing through the Central America Bird Field Guide. "Are you by any chance going to Belize?" "Why, yes!" The eight of us were fast friends before even leaving the US.

Continued on next page...



L to R: Gary Driscole, Shirley Devan, Doug Clarke (from MS), Dave Stejskal (our guide), Adrienne Frank, Nancy Barnhart, Joan Clarke, Sue Mutell, Jan Lockwood

Our field guide leader, Dave Stejskal, and Lamanai bird guide, Eduardo Ruano, met us with the van from Lamanai and immediately transported us to the Bat's Landing boat launch area on the New River for the hour-long boat ride to the New River Lagoon. This initial van ride of about an hour was a foretaste of a few bumpy rides to come.

We then boarded a speedy boat for the hour-long ride to the New River Lagoon. We stopped occasionally along the way to see wildlife, and at every turn, there was a new bird.

Lamanai Outpost Lodge sits on New River Lagoon in the north central part of Belize. Definitely a birding hot spot, this location is a three-time winner of the 24-hour H. Lee Jones Belize Birdathon with 208 species in 2017 and 224 species in 2015.

Eduardo Ruano, our local guide, was 29 years old and had started birding only 8 years ago. He is a fast learner! He was December 2018 eBirder of the Month. You can read a short profile here: <https://ebird.org/news/jorge-eduardo-ruano-december-2018-ebirder-of-the-month>

Dave Stejskal was our leader from Field Guides with 30 years' experience leading birding tours for Field Guides. He's spent quite a bit of time birding in Central and South America. Between Dave and Eduardo, we did not miss a bird!

Seventy-one bird species in an hour before breakfast March 27. Admittedly, some were heard by our expert leaders Dave and Eduardo, but all of us marveled at about 75 Orchard Orioles feeding and flitting around flowering Wormwood tree.

Our days at Lamanai started at 5:15 with coffee, tea, and muffins in the dim pre-dawn light of the dining area. We headed off at 5:30 for about two hours of dawn birding on foot before returning for a full breakfast about 7:30 or 8. Then off again – either on foot or via boat. After lunch we could rest or explore on our own before reconvening midafternoon (3 or 4 pm) for more birding – by foot or by boat. Then dinner at 6 and perhaps more birding after dinner on a walk around the property looking for treasures in the night. Then we fell into bed listening to the Yucatan Howler Monkeys and owls!

While at Lamanai, our destinations included Dawson Creek, Indian Creek, and Irish Creek that all feed into the lagoon as well as extensive trails around the Lamanai Mayan Ruin complex and Spanish and Indian Church areas. There was no shortage of trails to explore and we seldom visited the same spot twice unless we were heading to the other side of the area.

On our first night, we were serenaded and surprised at 1 am by the Yucatan Howler Monkeys. Their roars from the tree tops carry a good distance and they also served as an early wakeup call.



Snail Kite. By Shirley Devan.



*"Up there somewhere is a bird" at Lamanai Reserve.
Adrienne Frank on left, with the group on the trail.
Photo by Shirley Devan.*

Captions for photos on previous page:

Large photo: Trekking across the Pine Savannah.

Left to right, small photos: 1) Group prepares to board plane to fly to from Lamanai to Hidden Valley Reserve. 2) Welcome sign to Lamanai Mayan Ruins complex. 3) Black-headed Trogon. All photos by Shirley Devan.

A surprising highlight of our stay at Lamanai was the resident Barn Owl nesting in a cavity in the large Guanacaste Tree next to the boat dock only about 50 yards as the owl flies from our cabin. At dusk and dawn we could catch glimpses of the owlet in the upper branches and we quickly learned to recognize his calls for food. The owlet was hardly ever seen in the daytime, but we knew he was in a cavity on the opposite side of tree from our perspective on the shoreline. Several in our party could hear the owlet calling in the early morning hours, sometimes competing with the howler monkeys in the trees directly overhead.

Thank goodness most of our transportation around Lamanai was by boat and by foot. Traveling by van was “uncomfortable,” to be polite about it. All the roads around the Lodge were dirt rutted washboards. We took turns sitting in the back of van over the rear axle. We tried to keep folks with back, neck, and shoulder issues from sitting back there because the severe bumping and jostling left the rest of us with only headaches, not chiropractic problems. There was no remedy for these uncomfortable rides – that’s just the way the roads are.

But always, the birds were worth whatever it took to get to them. Highlights for Lamanai were:

Agami Heron, Boat-billed Heron, Least Bittern, Common Pauraque, Northern Potoo, Ruddy Crake, King Vulture, Snail Kite, White Hawk, Black-collared Hawk, three trogon species (Slaty-tailed, Black-headed, and Gartered), four Kingfisher species, including the American Pygmy Kingfisher, Keel-billed Toucan, Barred Antshrike, six Oriole species, and 17 familiar warbler species bulking up for the migration north. These included: Ovenbird, Northern Waterthrush, Blue-winged Warbler, Black-and-white Warbler, Prothonotary Warbler, Common Yellowthroat, American Redstart, Magnolia Warbler, Yellow-throated Warbler, and Northern Parula.

Dave submitted an eBird checklist for every location we visited over the week. At Lamanai he submitted 22 lists from March 23 until we left at mid-day March 27. Total number of species for our stay at Lamanai: 216. Dave was very gracious to “share” the list with those who wanted them.

One of the true adventures of the week was the short plane ride from the Lamanai airstrip to the Hidden Valley airstrip. Only 20 minutes across the mountains to Hidden Valley by plane, by van the trip would have been about half a day or more. Thankfully, we did not have to endure the rough Belize roads, but we did say a “Prayer for TropicAir” (thank Sue Mutell for that rhyme) as we boarded the 12 passenger plane for the short hop to Hidden Valley.



*Orange-breasted Falcon. Photo by Nancy Barnhart at 1000 Foot Falls on Hidden Valley Reserve.
Photo by Nancy Barnhart.*



Keel-billed Toucan. Photo by Shirley Devan.



*Mexican Fritillary at Hidden Valley Reserve.
Photo by Shirley Devan*



The group on the Pine Savanna trail. Photo by Adrienne Frank.

“The Peregrine Fund has monitored the falcon’s decline from illegal shooting for three decades and is instrumental in the captive breeding colony in Wyoming. Forty-six captive bred falcons have been released in Belize in the last decade.”

The plane ride was very smooth, much more comfortable than a van ride. However, from the Hidden Valley airstrip to the Inn was about 45 minutes in a van. The roads at Hidden Valley were no better than the roads at Lamanai. No water courses for boat transport at Hidden Valley. All trips off the hotel property required the van.

According to the web site, Hidden Valley Reserve and Inn is a private nature reserve of 7,200 acres in the Maya Mountains of Belize. They grow their own coffee, roast and grind it every day and serve it at each meal. We brought some back with us!

We arrived at the Inn about mid afternoon March 27. As soon as we exited the van, we heard the familiar “who-who-who-who” of the Ferruginous Pygmy Owl. We all knew immediately what it was because we had been listening to our leader Dave for four days imitate the call to draw in birds on the forest trails. We all looked at Dave, but Dave held his hands up and declared “Not me!” Low and behold, in the tree in the parking lot sat a real life Ferruginous Pygmy Owl, imitating Dave perfectly. Throughout our three-day visit we heard the owl almost continuously from various locations around the Inn.

The raptors were the highlights of this mountain location, and the Orange-breasted Falcon was THE target bird. We visited several overlooks including King Vulture Falls, Slate Creek Overlook, Bull’s Point, and Thousand Foot Falls. By mid-morning the thermals were full of soaring raptors – Turkey Vultures, Black Vultures, King Vultures. Then the Swallow-tailed Kites and Double-toothed Kite. The Black-and-white Hawk-Eagle and the White Hawk are stunning raptors. Our local guide Marvin found two White Hawks perched in the canyon with his scope. The Black-and-white Hawk-Eagle was a site to behold as it soared overhead. There was even a familiar Sharp-shinned Hawk.

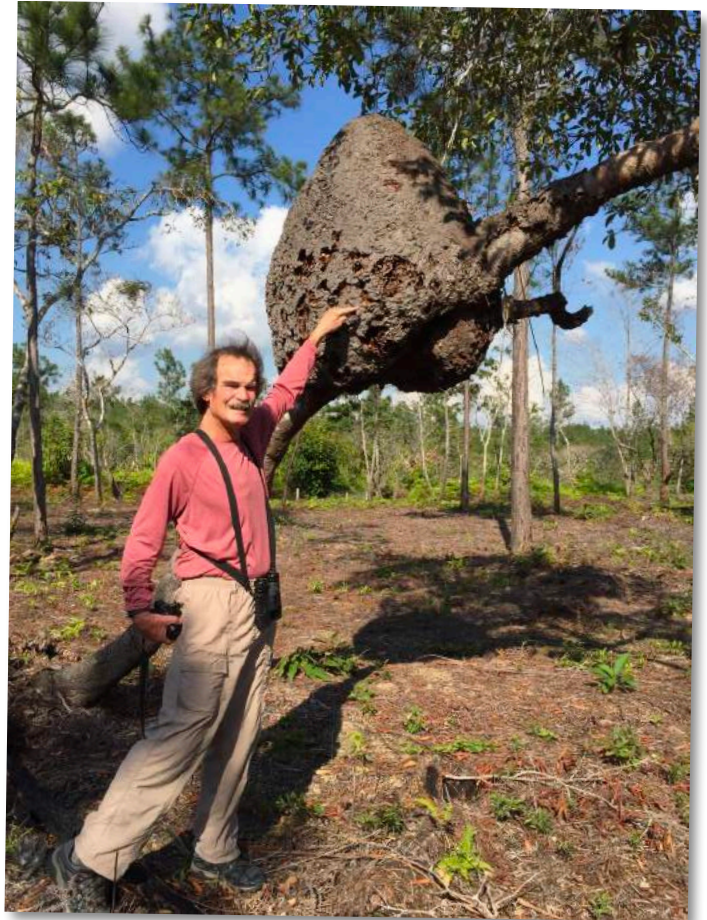
Marvin drove us to several known locations for the Orange-breasted Falcon. Guests at the Inn had recounted seeing one “just this morning at the usual spot.” Marvin and Dave had to work way too hard to find this rare falcon for us. There are only a few dozen pairs in Central America and nearly all nest in the Mayan Mountains where we were. The Mountain Pine Ridge is one of the few places in the world to see them. The Peregrine Fund has monitored the falcon’s decline from illegal shooting for three decades and is instrumental in the captive breeding colony in Wyoming. Forty-six captive bred falcons have been released in Belize in the last decade.

So ... the hunt was on during the last two days to find the Orange-breasted Falcon. Stakeouts at a couple locations yielded no falcons. Dave and Marvin scanned the deep canyons with their scopes searching for a perched falcon. Not until late afternoon of the final day did Dave's persistence pay off. Hardly 20 minutes out of the van and Dave called that he'd found it perched about halfway down the canyon near the Thousand Foot Falls. The bird was not close, but it counted just as if it was perched overhead! After enjoying scope views, it took a few minutes for us to find it with our binoculars. We tried for photos with our point-and-shoot cameras. Doug Clarke, the only participant with a long lens on a powerful Nikon, got some great shots. With the sighting of the Orange-breasted Falcon, the day and the birding were done. The sun set as we bounced back to the Inn for dinner. Dave gave a sigh of relief that we (actually he!) finally found the bird. The next day we left at 6:30 am for the three-hour trip, in the van, to the airport. Only the last half hour was on a paved road.

The tropics are famous for their hummingbirds and we observed 12 species, including our familiar Ruby-throated Hummingbird at Lamanai. Several Rufous-tailed Hummingbirds entertained us at Lamanai around the dining hall and teased us with up close views that challenged our cameras. At the Hidden Valley Reserve we visited a Butterfly House that also featured about a half dozen hummingbird feeders strung around a covered pavilion with benches where we enjoyed close views of eight species: White-necked Jacobin, Long-billed Hermit, Green-breasted Mango, Scaly-breasted Hummingbird, Wedge-tailed Sabrewing, Violet Sabrewing, White-bellied Emerald, Azure-crowned Emerald (also at the Inn property's feeders), and Rufous-tailed Hummingbird. We also saw a Cinnamon Hummingbird (spotted by Gary Driscole) on one of the outings at Lamanai.

Our Guide Dave submitted 14 checklists to eBird for the Hidden Valley area with a total of 142 species.

We were "wildlife mapping" after all so we eagerly tracked anything that moved. The only herps we encountered at Lamanai were a House Gecko, Cat-eyed Snake that a teen had captured, the Morelet's Crocodiles in the creeks and the Green Iguana that regularly sunned itself high in the branches of the Guanacaste Tree near the dock.



Gary Driscole with a HUGE termite nest which has been filled with acorns by Acorn Woodpeckers.

Photo by Adrienne Frank.



Basilisk. Photo by Shirley Devan.

At Hidden Valley, only the Striped Basilisk – a golden tan ground lizard on the sidewalk at the Inn – made the herp list.

With Adrienne and Gary on the trip, we knew we would find butterflies. But what were they? Many looked familiar! “If I was at home, I would say that was an azure ... or a fritillary ... or a hairstreak of some kind.” We took as many photos as we could and borrowed butterfly field guides from whoever would look us in the eye. We did find a Mexican Fritillary at one the falcon stakeout sites, and a Variegated Cracker at Lamanai. What looked similar to a Carolina Satyr in Virginia turned out to be a Carolina Satyr in Belize. One of the hairstreaks was a Ceranus Blue, like the ones seen in Florida. Plus the visit to the Butterfly House yielded good looks at about eight local species including the stunning Blue Morpho.

The question everyone has – how many birds did we observe? Per eBird and Dave Stejskal, 263 birds from 36 checklists over the full week.

People ask how many birds I saw. I don’t have a number. I have a hard time counting “my birds” because I can’t in good conscience “count” a bird that I glimpsed as it zoomed across the trail from one hiding place to another. And there were lots of those! And the leader counts the birds heard as well as seen. I did not hear birds unless they were close by, so I don’t count most of those either. I gave up a long time ago trying to keep a life list of birds seen outside the US. I just focus on enjoying the full experience, the local areas, and the exotic birds and other wildlife. And this trip was a gem. I think we all would recommend a trip to Belize for the birds and wildlife. I’ve posted some photos to Smugmug.

Feel free to browse more photos from the trip here:.

<https://shirleydevan.smugmug.com>



Variegated Cracker Butterfly at Lamanai. Photo by Shirley Devan.

Library books donated to James River Elementary School at conclusion of Nature Club from Historic Rivers Chapter



Left to Right: Karen Grass, Lisa Garriss, librarian Jonathan Nonnemacher and daughter, Pat Murphy, Sherry Brubaker, and Rick Brown.



Rick Brown talks to students in the Nature Club at James River Elementary School prior to planting Loblolly Pines.



Nature Club, James River Elementary School, planting Loblolly pine provided by Nature Conservancy through Rick Brown.

HISTORIC RIVERS BAT MONITORING PROJECT

Note: This is an article that was printed in local newspapers last summer, with the addition of 2018 data. Spring monitoring is underway.

In the coming months, you might notice some slower-than-usual vehicles creeping through the rural parts of James City, York, New Kent, and Surry counties, and the Jamestown section of the Colonial Parkway. If you look a little closer, you might notice a Bat Monitoring sign and a device emerging from the roof. The project is a new initiative of the Historic Rivers Chapter of the Virginia Master Naturalists.

The bat monitoring project officially launched on July 1, 2018. It's a terrific example of how citizen science contributes to the conservancy of wildlife. But why bats? Brenda Uekert and Wendy Nelson, co-leads of the project, explain that "bats play a vital role in the ecosystem by controlling the pest population, including insects that destroy crops and those pesky mosquitos!" The group is using rather sophisticated methods to document the local bat population over time. A specialized microphone is mounted on a pole that extends about two feet above the car roof. The microphone cable is connected to a laptop, which runs a program called SonoBat. The software converts bat calls, which cannot be heard by the human ear, into high resolution full-spectrum-spectrograms. When a bat is detected, the program will convert the call into a chirping noise, display the spectrogram, and identify the species. The most common species in this area is the red bat.

The bat population in North America has been in tremendous decline, due to white-nose syndrome. It's a disease that affects hibernating bats and is caused by a fungus. Essentially, the fungus makes the bats "awaken" more often during hibernation, using up important fat stores that they need to survive the winter. The team is documenting the extent and location of bats and is particularly interested in the presence of endangered and threatened bat species in this area, such as the Virginia big-eared bat.

Historic Rivers Bat Monitoring Project, 2018

Date: 3/18/2019

	Big Brown	Red	Hoary	Silver-haired	SE Myotis	Evening	Tri-Colored	Free-Tailed	
Colonial Parkway	65	201	0	8	0	31	31	18	354
Lightfoot	43	167	0	14	2	35	17	13	291
Little Creek	12	156	0	8	0	12	4	2	194
New Kent	10	89	1	4	2	13	9	3	131
Surry	15	243	0	3	0	31	16	3	311
Two Rivers	21	110	1	5	0	11	3	1	152
Yorktown	77	80	0	5	0	9	46	5	222
	243	1046	2	47	4	142	126	45	1655

Proportion by Transect

	Big Brown	Red	Hoary	Silver-haired	SE Myotis	Evening	Tri-Colored	Free-Tailed	
Colonial Parkway	18%	57%	0%	2%	0%	9%	9%	5%	100%
Lightfoot	15%	57%	0%	5%	1%	12%	6%	4%	100%
Little Creek	6%	80%	0%	4%	0%	6%	2%	1%	100%
New Kent	8%	68%	1%	3%	2%	10%	7%	2%	100%
Surry	5%	78%	0%	1%	0%	10%	5%	1%	100%
Two Rivers	14%	72%	1%	3%	0%	7%	2%	1%	100%
Yorktown	35%	36%	0%	2%	0%	4%	21%	2%	100%
	15%	63%	0%	3%	0%	9%	8%	3%	

	Big Brown	Red	Hoary	Silver-haired	SE Myotis	Evening	Tri-Colored	Free-Tailed	
June	15	92	0	3	0	19	31	29	189
July	168	504	2	10	1	69	79	11	844
August	48	348	0	21	3	43	33	7	503
September	12	51	0	2	0	11	9	0	85
October	8	94	0	12	0	6	1	1	122
	251	1089	2	48	4	148	153	48	1743

* Dataset includes some data not identified by transect; pool data and pre-project testing data

Proportion of Bat Species by Month

	Big Brown	Red	Hoary	Silver-haired	SE Myotis	Evening	Tri-Colored	Free-Tailed	
June	8%	49%	0%	2%	0%	10%	16%	15%	100%
July	20%	60%	0%	1%	0%	8%	9%	1%	100%
August	10%	69%	0%	4%	1%	9%	7%	1%	100%
September	14%	60%	0%	2%	0%	13%	11%	0%	100%
October	7%	77%	0%	10%	0%	5%	1%	1%	100%
	14%	62%	0%	3%	0%	8%	9%	3%	

There are plenty of logistics involved in monitoring bats. For one thing, the routes and locations selected for the monitoring project are not random. Instead, teams mapped out safe driving routes that correspond to 10 x 10 km transects that were provided by the North American Bat Monitoring Program (NABat), which is run out of the U.S. Department of the Interior.

The 2018 results are intriguing. For example, preliminary data show that the Colonial Parkway is especially rich in both number and species of bats. While the free-tailed bat is common on the parkway, the same species was a rarity in the New Kent transect. The group is excited by the ability to use data to scientifically determine geographic variations in bat populations over time.

Bat monitoring is seasonal – requiring temperatures above 50 degrees. The bat squad expects to end "bat season" in October. But as the project develops, the master naturalists anticipate seeking assistance from the community in identifying bat roosts and areas where bats congregate. Plus, the chapter plans to hold educational sessions for people to learn more about bats and conservation efforts.

For more information, contact

Dr. Brenda Uekert, docbku@cox.net

Wendy Nelson, vawendy@gmail.com

MMTHFFLL-O-CRAYFITH...

Barred Owls on Powhatan Creek feasting on crayfish and sharing some with nestlings.



Photos by Jim Easton



SPOTTED LANTERNFLY

UPDATE

By Rick Brown

At the monthly HRC general membership meeting in April, Adrienne asked me to give a brief overview of the Spotted Lanternfly invasive insect that has now been located in the area of Winchester, Virginia. To the right of this article are three brief links: one from the VA Tech Extension Service, and the other two from Pennsylvania, where this pest got its first foothold in the US, that give more detail. There is a concerted effort by the Commonwealth of Virginia to try to contain and eliminate this problem.

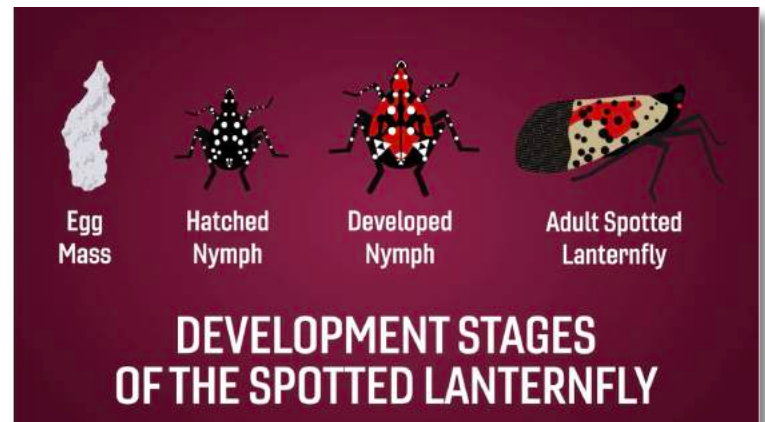
Shirley Devan has created a project [C3j] for our chapter to use to monitor potential locations in our area to determine if, and when, this insect moves here. So far it has only been found in the Winchester area. **This project involves locating its host, trees-of-Heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*) that are at least 5" in diameter at breast height, to place sticky bands that would trap the insect as it returns to the host tree to feed, molt and lay eggs. Ideally, these trees should be located near heavily travelled roads, railways or in locations where commercial vehicles, moving in interstate commerce, load or unload cargo.**

The resource links to the right explain the threat much better than I can. If you are interested in helping with this project, please let me know if you have a sizable tree(s) that you could check on a weekly basis to report any activity (we hope there is none). Multiple location scattered throughout this region are better than several trees in the same location. I have the banding equipment and can provide guidance on reporting through an app that can be downloaded on your phone. The target time to have the bands in place is between May 1st and 15th when the nymphs are moving. We have a few people who have indicated an interest in helping already.

If you are really interested in this insect I have much larger training links provided by VA Tech that I can forward to you to give an even more detailed presentation. Either way simply contact me by e-mail if you would like to get involved this season.

Thanks for your help.

Contact Rick about this project at ricklin46@cox.net



Watch Virginia Tech's video on the Spotted Lanternfly in Virginia here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N-xUNpA3DF4>

- Stomp it
- Squash it
- Scrape it
- Squish it
- Smash it
- Swat it
- Slap it
- Smack it
- Strike it
- **REPORT IT**

Help us slow the spread of spotted lanternfly!

ext.vt/spotted-lanternfly



Virginia Cooperative Extension
Virginia Tech • Virginia State University

Spotted Lanternfly Resources

VA Tech Extension Service

<https://ext.vt.edu/agriculture/commercial-horticulture/spotted-lanternfly.html>

Pennsylvania Extension: Spotted Lanternfly Management for Homeowners

<https://extension.psu.edu/spotted-lanternfly-management-for-homeowners>

About the Spotted Lanternfly

https://www.dontmovefirewood.org/pest_pathogen/spotted-lanternfly-html/

Countywide Spring CleanUp!



Shoreline clean up at Chickahominy Riverfront Park in a kayak at low tide on April 8, 2019. The three collected one bag, mostly fishing line, with a total of 7.5 volunteer hours. Left to right: Judy Kinshaw-Ellis, Cecille and Bruce Glendenning

Photo by Inge Curtis.



At Warhill, left to right: Roxanne Machamer, Shirley Devan, Thad Hecht, Adrienne Frank, Judy Jones, Nancy Gore. Not pictured: Rose Ryan. 3 bags for a total of 13 volunteer hours. Photo by Shirley Devan (camera timer).



Les Lawrence and Karen Grass, who cleaned up the Croaker Commuter Parking Lot on April 12, yielding four bags of trash over 1.5 hours. Total hours = 3 (2 people x 1.5 hr total). Photo by Shirley Devan.



Warhill cleanup. Left to right: Adrienne Frank, Nancy Gore, Roxanne Machamer, Thad Hecht. Photo by Shirley Devan.



Powhatan Creek Trail Clean Up. Front row: Ginny Broome, Seig Kopinitz, Alice Kopinitz, Ginny Carey. Back Row: Les Lawrence, Karen Grass, Patty Maloney. Not pictured: Connie Reitz who took the photo. Yield seven bags for a total of 16 volunteers hours.

TREE HUGGERS GO BIG

By Judy Jones

On Saturday, April 6th, several members of our Big Tree Project joined up with Sara Lewis and Molly O'Liddy, as well as many community members, to review how to measure big trees.

Molly, a ranger, had all the tools and all the knowledge, but showing up to join us was a surprise to all – Will McElfresh (far right in the photo).

Will was the individual who began the Big Tree Project in Virginia in the early 1960's and shared with us much of the history of the program. He worked for the Extension Service through Virginia Tech and began this project as a youth program. It has grown and blossomed over the years and we at Historic Rivers Chapter are proud to be a part of it.

Photos by a "visitor from Massachusettes who was passing by..."



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Congratulations Cohort XIII Graduates!

By Maude Ann Wilson

On Wednesday, March 13, our Historic Rivers Chapter of VMN met at the James City County Library to hold our special March meeting. After hearing our guest speaker, Dr. Derek Loftis, speak about sea level rise, coastal flood protection, and the King Tide, we had our election of new officers and then we celebrated **GRADUATION** for our 18 new Cohort XIII members.

These are the new members who worked so hard and accomplished so much:

Greg Carpenter, Joyce Carpenter, Heather Power, Lisa Garris, Rob Garris, John Enright, Lizzy Green, Pat Murphy, Jim Easton, Meghan Lamoreaux, Ann Jo Cosgrove, Roxanne Machamer, Carol Parfet, Stephen Parfet, Tory Gussman, Frank Smith, Lark Smith, and Mike Whitfield.

In addition to all the requirements that Cohort XIII successfully completed, they also did something else amazing....during their training months, the combined volunteer hours that they managed to accumulate were 711 hours of volunteer service and 173 hours of continuing education. What a valuable contribution they have already made to our chapter!! We gratefully thank each of them for their deep caring and wonderful volunteering.

David Lunt, Co-chair of the Cohort XIII training team, congratulated the newest members and announced that they were indeed "a special group of people – citizen scientists and volunteer educators!" He thanked all members of Cohort XIII and their families, all of the presenters, Sharon Plocher for her activities poster masterpieces, and all of the Basic Training Committee.

David also shared Cohort XIII's unique hand sign and said that they had learned over 170 objectives by listening and watching over 1,500 slides! David ended by saying that Cohort XIII's learning will never end as they continue to participate in chapter projects.

Following David Lunt's presentation, the entire training team of David Lunt (co-chair), Janet Harper (co-chair), Renee Dallman, Rick Brown, Jennifer Trevino, Barb Neis, Karen Grass, Shirley Devan, and Maud Ann Wilson, presented certificates and gift bags to each new member. NUMEROUS congratulatory pictures were snapped by George Reiske, photographer extraordinaire.

Nine Cohort XIII members were further congratulated for earning their **CERTIFICATION** by accumulating at least 8 hours of Continuing Education and 40 Volunteer Hours in addition to all the requirements of Basic Training. They are **Ann Jo Cosgrove, John Enright, Lisa Garris, Rob Garris, Tory Gussman, Roxanne Machamer, Pat Murphy, Lark Smith, and Mike Whitfield.**

After chapter milestones, including Les Lawrence receiving his 5,000 volunteer hours recognition by Renee Dallman, everyone was invited to a spirited and delicious reception organized and led by our dedicated social chairman Randi Heise.

BIG CONGRATULATIONS go to our newest Cohort XIII HRC-VMN members. We wish them many hours of volunteering and new friendships! We know that we are very lucky to have them join our Historic Rivers Chapter!

BLUEBIRD MONITORING REPORT

The first HRC Bluebird Trails Monitoring Summary for the 2019 season is below:

Although many of us have commented about the bluebirds being off to a slow start this season, you may be pleasantly surprised when you compare this year's stats with those of 2018 and 2017:

- As of 4-8-2019 - 24 active EABL nests with 74 eggs and 1 active CACH nest with 5 eggs
- As of 4-6-2018 - 8 active EABL nests with 19 eggs and 2 active CACH nests with 8 eggs
- As of 4-3-2017 - 7 active EABL nests with 31 eggs

First egg dates also show similarities:

- 2019 - 3/25 at the Chick and the Marina (EABL)
- 2018 - 3/24 at the Chick (EABL) and Freedom Park (CACH)
- 2017 - 3/19 at Ford's Colony (EABL)

We have added one new trail to our list this year, Veteran's Park, the site of Kidsburg Playground, and formerly Mid-County Park. Veterans is a small trail of five boxes, led by Thad Hecht. To date no unusual species are reported to be nesting on our trails this year.

Thank you all for your diligence, careful monitoring/reporting and good cheer. THIS IS A GREAT START TO THE YEAR. 🍀

Best Bluebirds,
Jan and Lois



This female was banded by Heather Kenny as part of her research and was at box 12 on the Chickahominy Riverfront Park on Sunday April 14. Photo by Judy Jones.



First hummingbird of the season.
Photo by Inge Curtis.



First Eastern Tiger Swallowtail of the season.
Photo by Mary Haines