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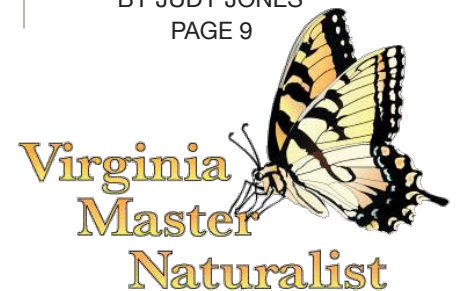
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THE NATURALIST

THE HISTORIC RIVERS CHAPTER OF VIRGINIA MASTER NATURALISTS



The President's Message

By Adrienne Frank

For about 40 years, my husband, Gary, and I have been participating in the Spring and Winter Williamsburg Area Bird Count with Brian Taber. For most of those years, we have taken the ferry across the James River to Hog Island. Each year, there is something new to see, and we typically see more than 80 bird species.

This year's Spring Count was on April 28. It was a long day, but luckily we were accompanied by friends - Ginny Broome and Lisa Nickel, from our chapter. We were delighted to find 86 bird species and four of those were not included on the Williamsburg Bird Club's list of frequent species: White Pelicans (21), Gadwall (2), a Black-neck Stilt, and a Sedge Wren (heard but not seen). We also recorded 19 species of butterflies, 2 snakes, a raccoon, deer, and flowering plants that we used an app (the INaturalist Seek app) to identify. It was great fun!

As you know, Hog Island is maintained by the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, primarily for duck hunting and fishing. In recent years, management consisted of planting corn in the fields, and we were not happy about the cultivated and non-rotated crops.



Gary Driscole, Adrienne Frank, Brian Taber (our leader), Ginny Broome, and Lisa Nickel. Our third year as a small group at Hog Island for the Williamsburg Area Bird Count.

We are still very concerned about the invasive Big Reed/Fragmites.

This Spring, we noticed a number of changes in the infrastructure of the roads and ponds. DGIF has placed new culverts and new flow mechanisms. They finally opened one dirt road that had been closed for years. These culverts help to maintain shallow ponds that birds can use. In the middle of the ponds, they formed little islands. We were delighted to see the birds using the islands, for example, the White Pelicans were crowding themselves on several islands, and Least Terns looked as though they were staking out territory, perhaps for nest building.

Continued on page 2

The President's Letter, continued...



Terns, plovers, and gulls have fewer places to nest in our region, due to loss of shorelines from building and sea level rise. Many nest on the rocks on the Hampton Roads Tunnel islands. In the near future, the State plans to construct new tunnels and the birds will lose their nesting spot. Seeing the possible nesting sites at Hog Island made us happy, because we know that a lot of birds will need to find new locations.

Here is a little background on Hog Island and DGIF management of wildlife areas. This is information that I found from the Internet:

From the 17th century practice by English settlers of allowing hogs to forage at the tip of a peninsula jutting into the lower James River came the name Hog Island. Today, this island is the largest of several tracts that make up the Hog Island Wildlife Management Area. Here, waterfowl are attracted, often by the thousands, to forage and rest on the tidal marshes, diked impoundments, and planted fields. There is also the opportunity to see eagles, an array of shorebirds, and even upland wildlife species on some parts of the area.

<https://www.dgif.virginia.gov/wma/hog-island/>

The purpose of wildlife management is to maintain populations of wild animals at levels consistent with the best interest of wildlife and the public. Disease, loss of habitat, improper hunting management, drought and invasive species are some of the reasons why numbers of animals can change. Here are examples of management practices:

Monitoring Wildlife Populations: Wildlife managers continuously monitor the birth rate and death rate of various species and the condition of their habitat. This provides the data needed to set hunting regulations and determine if other wildlife management practices are needed to conserve a wildlife species.

Habitat Improvement: As succession occurs, the change in habitat affects the type and number of wildlife the habitat can support. Wildlife managers may cut down or burn forested areas to promote new growth and slow down the process of succession. This practice enables them to increase the production of certain wildlife species.

Hunting Regulations: Hunting regulations protect habitats and preserve animal populations. Regulations include setting daily and seasonal time limits, bag limits, and legal methods for taking wildlife.

Continued on page 3

*All photos by
Lisa Nickel*



Hunting: Hunting is an effective wildlife management tool. Hunting practices help wildlife managers keep animal populations in balance with their habitat and provide funding for wildlife management.

Predator Control: Controlling predators enables wildlife populations to establish stable populations, particularly threatened or endangered species. Forms of predator control include predator hunting and trapping.

Artificial Stocking: Restocking of game animals has been successful in many parts of the nation. Trapping animals in areas where they are abundant and releasing them in other areas of suitable habitat is an example of restocking.

Controlling or Preventing the Spread of Disease: Disease can have a devastating effect on wildlife. Avian cholera, for example, poses a serious threat, especially to ducks and geese on crowded wintering grounds. Once cholera occurs, managers must work to prevent its spread by gathering and burning waterfowl carcasses daily.

Managers of public lands can no longer consider management for one or two species of waterfowl as adequate. Public interest and pressure are gradually shifting toward enhancement of more natural habitats and multi-species management. Habitat quality and vegetative diversity largely determine the number of species of wildlife that can occupy an area. Well-managed row crops often attract some species in great numbers, but relatively few different species are attracted to these monocultures. In contrast, moist-soil sites provide diverse habitats that continuously support a multitude of species of wildlife, including waterfowl. In some moist-soil units, over 80 percent more species are accommodated than on adjacent row crops. Herons, rails, prairie and marsh passerines and upland game birds and mammals that are rare or lacking on agricultural fields concentrate on moist-soil sites. https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/nrcs142p2_016986.pdf

It is wonderful to see that Hog Island doing some new management activities, since the cost of management is so high and state money is not always available. Virginia offers three types of licenses that give access to the public (Access, Fishing, and Hunting) and the fees contribute to supporting the Wildlife Management Areas. Since Gary and I are now Seniors, we were able to obtain a lifetime Fishing License for only \$20. You may want to do something similar.





OSPREY WATCH - HRC'S 7TH SEASON

PHOTOS BY CATHERINE FLANAGAN



*Caption: Top photo, Queen's Lake Marina Osprey Pair in Nest #676 for Osprey-Watch in New Quarter Park; male Osprey at Burwell's Bluff in Kingsmill; Mother and three chicks on James River, Kingsmill.
Story and more photos coming in the June HRC newsletter!*

HRC ADOPTS TWO COUNTY PARKS



By Connie Reitz

The Historic Rivers Chapter (HRC) of Virginia Master Naturalist (VMN) has adopted the James City County JCC) Marina Park. The Chapter has adopted Powhatan Creek Park on Jamestown Road, also.

Litter pickup at each park is done at least once a month. Virginia Master Naturalists are volunteer educators, citizen scientists, and stewards helping Virginia conserve and manage natural resources and public lands.

The James City County (JCC) Department of Parks and Recreation Adopt-a-Park program offers an opportunity of stewardship of the natural environment and our historic heritage by improving community appearance.



Pictured next to the Adopt-A-Park sign at the JCC Marina Park are HRC members (L-R): Judy Kinshaw-Ellis, Thad Hecht, and Patty Maloney.

Photo to the right: Alice and Seig Kopinitz working on the Spotted Lanterfly project on May 15, 2019. Photo is by Rick Brown. See our last newsletter issue for Rick's story on the invasive species project's strategy to stop the Spotted Lanternfly from spreading in Virginia.

April 2019 newsletter: <https://bit.ly/>



WALLER MILL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL'S BACKYARD BIRD HABITATS



In photo: Roger Searles, 5th Grade teacher at Waller Mill, Jan Lockwood, Lee Schuster, Pat Murphy, Patty Maloney. Not pictured Karen Grass.

By Jan Lockwood

Roger Searle's fifth grade class at Waller Mill Elementary School uses the Cornell Lab's "Bird Sleuth" program to study birds. They learn about birds and habitats generally from Bird Sleuth and a beginning field guide and how to use binoculars and field marks to identify them. Each student selects one particular bird to study and report on to the class, so they acquire a good deal of knowledge to draw on in the field.

The four of us go in on Tuesdays and take groups of students out into the school grounds for walks where they learn and practice their ID skills. It's amazing how much they've learned about significant features to look for to distinguish one bird from another and how to describe where they see a bird so others can see it, too. The school has put up feeders, there's an outdoor classroom in the woods, an osprey has built a nest on a Dominion power platform, and Lee installed a 6 box bluebird trail a few years ago, which the students have learned to monitor. That information is sent to the Virginia Bluebird Society. They've received a webcam from the VBS, which will be installed over the summer.

One child in each group records the birds they see and Mr. Searles enters the information into ebird. We've seen some breeding birds, too, e.g. a Fish Crow carrying nesting material, the Osprey carrying sticks to build the nest, and bluebird and house wren eggs.

The bluebird houses were installed in April 2015 with the help of a donation from the Williamsburg bird Club. Roger Searles has been participating in the Cornell program for at least 5 years.

In all, we've had fun and these students have been a delight to work with.



Patty Maloney, Jan Lockwood, and Pat Murphy were part of a project at Waller Mill that was presented at a York County School Board Meeting. (One of the parents shared these photos.)

GROVE COMMUNITY GARDEN DAYS!



Photo to the left: Dean Shostak working at the Grove Community Garden on Saturday, May 11.

Photos below: Claire White, Karen Grass (in one) and Lizzie Green.

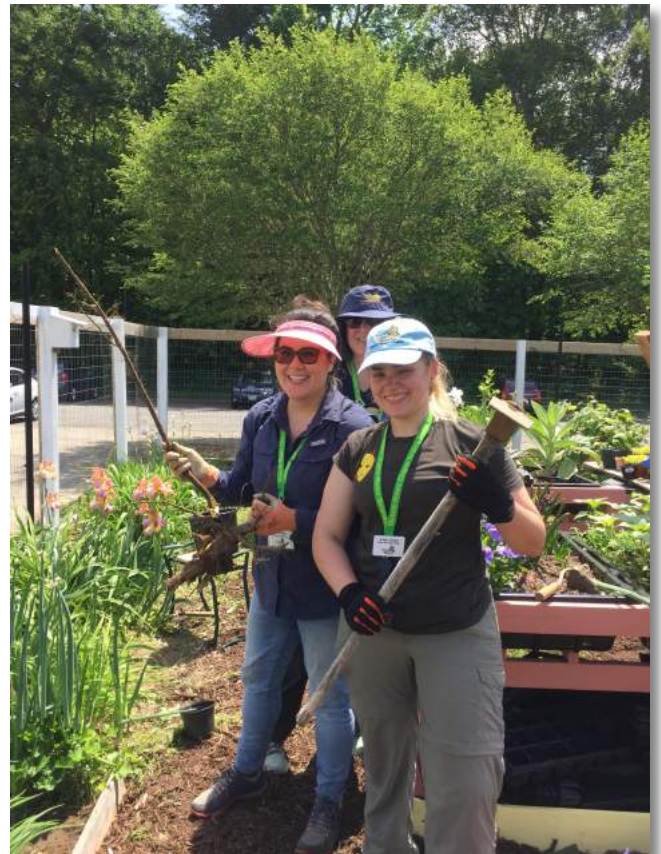
This program is part of the stewardship effort to "Keep James City County Beautiful". Pat Murphy says, "We also met John McGlennon from the James City County Board of Supervisors who is a professor at William & Mary. He was also there to help weed!"

There is another Grove Community Garden Day on Saturday, June 8th. Please make sure to wear a hat, bring water, gardening gloves, bug repellent. I'll be wearing long pants and long sleeves just as a precaution. Please also wear your VMN name tag lanyard so that Rob Till is aware of the support he has locally.

This is a Keep James City County Beautiful project coded under S2e.

Visit them on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/GroveCommunityGardens/>

Photos by Pat Murphy.



AS THE OPOSSUM WORLD TURNS...

Thanks to our members who helped fill in the blanks for the opossum drama Jim Easton captured for us. Yes, he also captured the Barred Owls eating crayfish in the last issue! Thank you, Jim!

"It's a D-A-T-E Harold! We don't need company. Capeesh!?!!"

— Maria Myers

Pic # 1 "Looks like a fight. I'm out of here."

Pic # 2 "Hey fellow, this is my turf!"

Pic # 3 "OMG, smell that breath!"

Pic # 4 "Phew. Hey fella, you need Listerine!"

— Clyde Marsteller

Great American Clean-Up!



Four HRC volunteers helped with James City County's *Great American Cleanup* kick-off event on May 4, 2019. One group was at Grove Community Garden Cleanup, Abram Frink Community Center on Pocahontas Trail in Williamsburg. See photo of Grove Community volunteer group.

Three additional volunteers — Jennifer Trevino, Barbara Neis, and Linda Morse — helped with the Lake Matoaka Cleanup on W&M's campus. These two cleanup/stewardship efforts are part of ongoing "Keep James City County Beautiful Project" — Project S2e.

Many thanks to the HRC members who took time out of their busy Saturday schedules to help keep our community clean.

Photo, left to right: Robin [last name not known — she's from the Grove Community], Claire White, Lizzy Green, Rob Till (Grove Community Garden), Pat Murphy, and Karen Grass.



NATURE CAMP SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS



Left to Right: Naomi Gesler, Maggie Dabney, Mia Gesler

By Judy Jones

Great news! Our three HRC VMN Nature Camp scholarship recipients have been selected. We have three girls this year, two of whom have never attended Nature Camp before. The three young ladies are Mia Gesler, Naomi Gesler (yes, they are sisters) and Maggie Dabney. Let me tell you a little about each girl:

Mia is our returning camper. She is a sixth grader attending Queens Lake Middle School. She hopes to study biology this summer and is very excited to attend again.

She writes, “Nature Camp feels like an extremely incredible opportunity for me. It is something I love and will treasure for my whole lifetime. I love animals, bugs and science. I also love being outside to experience more and to learn more about nature. I would love to expand my nature knowledge. Spending two weeks in the mountains was a dream I never thought could come true. But now I have a chance to have the thing come true once again.”

Naomi is Mia’s older sister. She is an eighth grader, also a Queens Lake Middle School. She loves astronomy and would love to study it this summer.

She writes, “Nature has always been a big part of my life. I love to walk in the forest or on the beach, thinking about a fox that may have chased a rabbit or a sandpiper that may have skipped among the waves, its tiny feet imprinting the sand before being washed away. Nature, with its chaotic beauty, fascinates me. I want to learn more of its secrets....and hope to be considered for a scholarship so I can immerse myself in the beauty of the Shenandoah Mountains and learn everything I possibly can.”

Maggie is a fifth grader at Matoaka and is excited about the opportunity to attend Nature Camp. She has two younger brothers and is described by her teacher as having a ‘strong curiosity about the natural world’.

Maggie writes, “I adore nature and learning more about it is a passion of mine. I believe that learning about the planet we live on is important to preserving it for future generations. I want to learn about helping to end pollution or learning how I can play a part in stopping global warming....I believe that doing what you love is important and I love learning about nature and the world around me.”

Our three Nature Camp scholarship recipients came to our general membership meeting in May so we could connect a name with each face. They will also attend our September meeting to report back on their experiences.

JAMES RIVER EXPEDITION SCHOLARSHIP

By Judy Jones

This year we have chosen Twajuon Palmer from Highland Springs High School for our Nancy Norton Scholarship. Twajuon is a member of the National Tech Honor Society, National Honor Society, the Highland Springs BETA Club, and Bethlehem Baptist Church.

In his free time, Twajuon volunteers at the Salvation Army, Richmond Friends of the Homeless, and Help Somebody Organization. Twajuon wrote in his application that this year has been stressful for him as he has moved locations quite a bit.

He writes, "I believe that the James River Expedition would help me be more self-sufficient and would help develop leadership skills that will be beneficial when I go off to college." I can't think of a more deserving candidate of this sponsorship.

I asked Twajuon to write a little bit about himself for us and he emailed this back:

I am a 17-year old senior at Highland Springs High School. I am also dually enrolled in Computer Aided Drafting at J. Sargeant Reynolds via our ACE Center partnership. I was born in Richmond, Virginia, but moved to Norfolk, Virginia, as a baby.

We returned to Richmond in 2012. I live with my younger sister, my mom and my older sister. I was diagnosed with Autism in 2007, so it is often difficult to participate in social circles.

As I prepare for graduation, college, and being essentially on my own for the first time in my life, I am taking the James River Expedition as an opportunity to do something I never had the courage to try before.

I spend a lot of time outdoors but have never ventured to the river in this capacity. I am taking a bold break from my usual routine. I believe that the James River Expedition will help me to be more self-sufficient and would help develop leadership, teamwork and survival skills that will be beneficial when I go off to college.

Nature is beautiful and calming. I often take walks across our Flood Walls and Brown's Island to admire the skyline and the landscape of Richmond. I find peace in being there.

I know that our HRC members will agree that Twajuon is definitely an incredibly deserving candidate of this scholarship.



"I spend a lot of time outdoors but have never ventured to the river in this capacity. I am taking a bold break from my usual routine. I believe that the James River Expedition will help me to be more self-sufficient and would help develop leadership, teamwork and survival skills that will be beneficial when I go off to college."

— Twajuon Palmer, Highland Springs High School

What does an oologist collect and study?

**Birds' eggs!
(the study is known as oology)**

(Thank you to Sherry Brubaker for the naturalist trivia!)

BLUEBIRD MONITORING REPORT

Hi Bluebirders,

The Summary Chart of activity on the HRC-VMN Trails for James City and York Counties as of May 20, 2019 is attached. The bluebirds have had an awesome month. A brief comparison with last year's trail activity as of May 25, 2018 follows.

2019 "other species" include Carolina Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, Tree Swallow, Carolina Wren, and House Wren. The Brown-headed Nuthatch has not attempted to nest this year - yet.

There is little difference in bluebird activity between 2019 and 2018, but nesting seems to be moving at a faster pace in 2019. Twice the number of fledges have been recorded to date than were recorded at this time last year and a few bluebirds have begun second nests.

You will note that "casualties" listings - dead adults and chicks, missing eggs, and eggs that failed to hatch - are growing. However, they are variably recorded on different trails so the figures may not paint a true picture. Incidents of predation by Rat Snake and Raccoon have been reported. House Sparrows have been active competing for nestboxes by attacking both adults and chicks and destroying/removing eggs on the Veterans Park, Poquoson Learning Garden, James City County Marina, and Grafton-Bethel trails. Fortunately they seem to be slowing down. Kudos to the trail monitors for their persistence in removing the HOSP nests and eggs.

We look forward to a successful completion of the first nesting. Not that the bluebirds rest and relax! Please try and clean out the boxes asap after fledging to allow for a second nesting. Those moms are fast and will build a second nest on top of the first, which can place the nest very close to the entrance.

You may have seen Heather Kenny and her assistants out monitoring the boxes, recording and setting up sound "treatments". It will be exciting to learn what she is discovering about how the birds respond to the sounds around them. I'm also interested to know how the banded adults are moving between boxes.

THANK YOU, THANK YOU for the countless hours you devote to monitoring and caring for these birds. It's a privilege to work with you.

Jan and Lois



Photo by Judy Jones

	May 20, 2019	May 25, 2018
# Nestboxes	320	313
Bluebird Eggs	98	103
Bluebird Chicks	241	314
Bluebird Fledges	238	104
Bluebird Total Activity	577	521
Other Eggs	60	81
Other Chicks	66	45
Other Fledges	31	17
Other Species Total Activity	157	143

GRAFTON PONDS FIELD TRIP



By Dean Shostack and Ginny Broome
Field Trip Coordinators

On April 20th we went to Grafton Ponds on a three hour herps walk. Our leader, Erin Chapman, taught us all about our native amphibians and reptiles.

On April 24th we had a field trip paddling down Dragon Run. A great time was had by all. Thank you Friends of Dragon Run for an unforgettable experience. Photos provided by several members who participated on the trips.

Next Field Trip was May 14, a Dragon Run Paddle.
See the photos from that trip on the following page.

More trips to be announced soon!



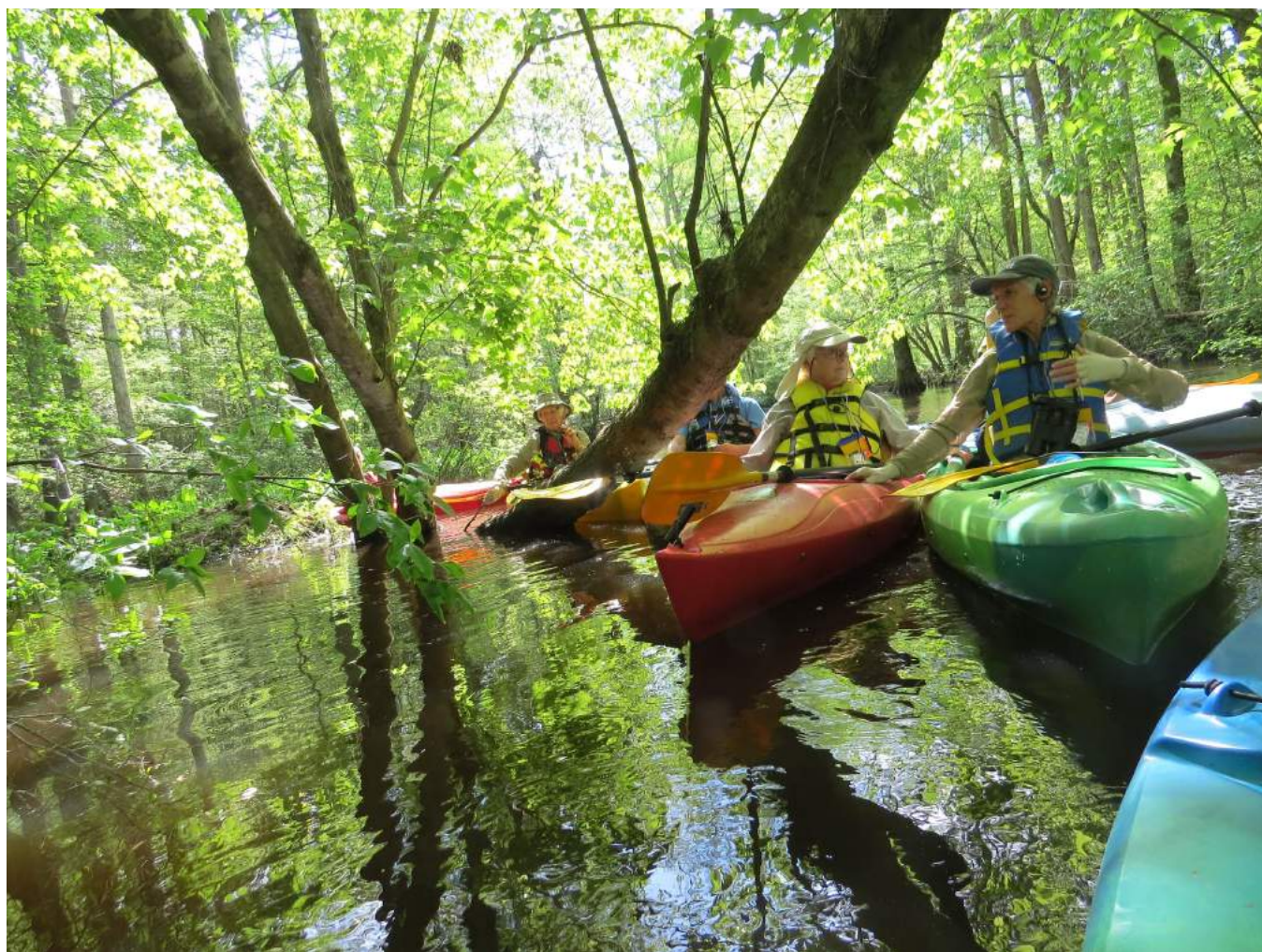
THE NATURALIST

Thanks for helping save a Dragon! 4/24/19



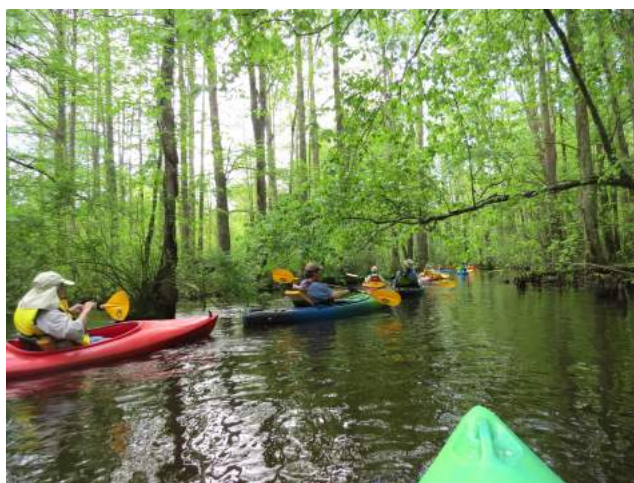


FRIENDS OF DRAGON RUN



DRAGON RUN PADDLE PARADE

PHOTOS BY PATTY MALONEY





Untamed: Check Out the Wildlife Center of Virginia's New Video Series

Starting May 2 and running for 13 weeks, *Untamed* looks at the wild and often perilous world of wildlife, as seen through the eyes of the patients of the Wildlife Center of Virginia. These episodes offer an unprecedented look at the work of the Wildlife Center and each has a unique focus – there are episodes on the Center's work with Bald Eagles, opossums, snakes, owls, and more.

The episodes air each Thursday at 8:00 p.m. on local PBS affiliate WVPT, and at 9:00 p.m. on WCVE (Richmond) and WHTJ (Charlottesville). Each episode will also stream live on the Center's Facebook page and WVPT's YouTube channel at 9:00 p.m. Eastern. You can also see the first episode on Black Bears here: <https://www.wildlifecenter.org/episode-one-bears>.

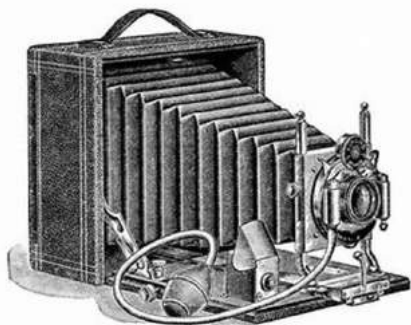
This online compendium offers a library of materials that support each episode of *Untamed*, including patient stories and videos, additional learning resources, and worksheets and activities for students who are watching *Untamed* as a part of classroom learning on biology, natural history, and the environment.

Each episode's companion guide will be posted the Friday morning after the episode airs.

The Wildlife Center of Virginia is an internationally acclaimed teaching and research hospital for wildlife and conservation medicine, located in Waynesboro, Virginia. Since its founding in 1982, the Center has cared for more than 70,000 wild animals – representing 200 species of birds, mammals, reptiles, and amphibians. Center staff are available to respond to a wide variety of questions concerning wildlife, human-wildlife interactions, and environmental issues. The Center also has a collection of digital images of past and current patients.

To contact the Wildlife Center: The Center's front-desk is staffed seven days a week, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Eastern. Call the Center at 540.942.9453, or email wildlife@wildlifecenter.org.





Just a reminder that the deadline for photo submission to our HRC photo contest is coming up soon — **Midnight on May 31st**. You can find all the procedures for our HRC VMN photo contest in our yahoo group postings. I would urge you to consider sending in some photos...it's always remarkable to see just how talented we are as a chapter as well as how unique is our viewpoint!

Entries may be submitted three ways: by email to wanted@aol.com, by snail mail to Ted Sargent, 6575 Menzels Road, Toano, VA 23168, or by getting a flash drive to Ted by the deadline.

Virginia Master Naturalist



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 HRCnewsletter@gmail.com

Make sure your work is formatted and labeled properly. Please make sure your copy is error-free. Lisa is happy to help you if you have questions!

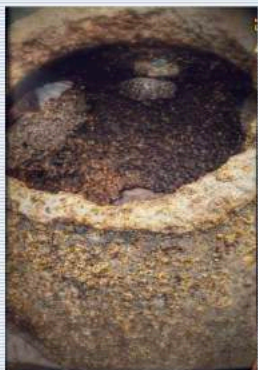


Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) Virginia Oyster Restoration Center

SPRING 2019

What are Reef Balls?

Reef balls are concrete structures used to restore critical oyster habitat. Oyster larvae attach to their surface turning them into "instant oyster reefs". The oysters filter and clean the water while the reef balls provide habitat for many other Bay species.



This reef ball was seeded with thousands of tiny oysters before being deployed in the Lafayette River last summer.

~**~**~Hello Oyster Team~**~**~

**It's been 3 years too long,
let's build reefballs!**

June 17 @ 8:30 am~1:00 pm
June 18 @ 9:00am~11:00 am

On 6/17, we will assemble 25 reef ball molds and fill them with concrete —these days will be slightly longer. On 6/18 we will break down the molds and put everything away.



Wear clothes you REALLY don't care about (you will get covered in cement), closed toed shoes are also required.

Bring a reusable water bottle and coffee mug. We will help fill it and provide snacks!

Due to the nature of this work, volunteers should be at least 16 years old and all volunteers under 18 must be accompanied by an adult.

For more information, please contact Heather Lockwood at 908-391-8782 or hlockwood@cbf.org
Visit our website at cbf.org

HRC MEMBERSHIP MEETING PLACE CHANGE



Dear HRC Members:

We will have a change in time and place for our General Meetings, starting next month. Due to renovations at the Kitinger Room at the Upper County Library, we will be unable to meet there for several months. We may not be able to use that room until February of 2020. The Williamsburg Library has offered the Stryker Center to us at a reduced cost, which is terrific. We will meet at the Stryker Center from May until December and perhaps through January 2020.

Because the room is being used until 6 pm, we will need to begin our meetings at 6:30 pm. This will give the other group a chance to leave and for us time to set up.

Here are the dates for General Meetings until the end of 2019. I have also posted these dates on the Vol. Management System calendar. Hope to see you all there.

Adrienne Frank
HRC President

Note: Parking is available across the street at the two-level Parking Garage - 415 North Boundary Street.

- June 12 - 6:30 pm, General Meeting at Stryker Center – 412 North Boundary Street, Williamsburg, Room 127
- July - No General Meeting
- August - No General Meeting
- September 11 - 6:30 pm, General Meeting at Stryker Center – 412 North Boundary Street, Williamsburg, Room 127
- October 9 - 6:30 pm, General Meeting at Stryker Center – 412 North Boundary Street, Williamsburg, Room 127
- November 13 - 6:30 pm, General Meeting at Stryker Center – 412 North Boundary Street, Williamsburg, Room 127
- December 11 – Holiday Party – Legacy Hall, New Town Avenue

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