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THE NATURALIST

THE HISTORIC RIVERS CHAPTER OF VIRGINIA MASTER NATURALISTS



The President's Message

By Adrienne Frank

Wishing you a wonderful Holiday Season! May your holiday be filled with the wonders of the natural world. Be sure to get outdoors and take a moment to fill your senses with the sights and sounds of winter.

This month, you can participate in several HRC projects, in between Christmas shopping, preparation, and travel for some of us. There are Christmas and New Year's Bird Counts outdoors and the Feeder Watch indoors. There is wildlife mapping at multiple locations.

On January 1st, you can join Shirley for her annual Big Sit on the Greensprings Trail board walk from 1 to 3 p.m. In addition, for a little last-minute continuing education, there will be bird walk on the 28th at New Quarter Park.

Don't forget, in order to receive a new certification pin, you need 40 hours of volunteer service and eight hours of continuing education.



Festive photo of a Northern Cardinal feeding on American Holly berries. Photo by Jim Easton.

In the past year, we have accomplished a great deal. We are increasing our options for volunteer projects and continuing education. We had successes in working toward our chapter goals. We are becoming a valuable resource in our community and an inspiration for others who wish to become life learners and volunteers in nature. Here are a few accomplishments for 2019.

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The President's Letter, continued...

- 117 Certified VMNs and a total list of 180 active members. Plus 22 cohort 14 members enrolled in Basic Training.
- 16,000 hours of volunteer service recorded so far, with a chapter life-time number of over 136,000.
- Volunteer Projects – In our Annual Report to the state will be highlight a couple of projects that we haven't included in prior years: Bassett Trail, the Breeding Bird Atlas, and perhaps school projects.
- Continuing Education – In our Annual Report, we will highlight continuing education and social activities that we believe contribute to retention of our members (e.g., the Holiday Party, the Picnic, General Meetings, and Field Trips).
- Stewardship Goal - We continue to increase project opportunities that focus on stewardship (e.g., Capital Trail Adopt-a-Site). With James City County Beautification, we now have 3 wildflower sites: Freedom Park, Warhill Sports Complex, and Chickahominy River Front Park.
- Diversity Goal – For the first time this year, we offered a Basic Training scholarship. In addition, we offered student scholarships for summer camps to a diversity of students (e.g., for low income families or students with disabilities).
- William & Mary Master Naturalist Course – Consulting with Michelle Prysby, Linda Morse designed a Freshman class using our chapter's Basic Training content. Students will become HRC VMN members and add volunteer service hours to our chapter. Very exciting!



CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION
Saving a National Treasure

Grasses for the Masses Workshop

Saturday, February 8, 2020

2:00 PM - 4:00 PM

Williamsburg Regional Library

515 Scotland Street

Williamsburg, VA 23185

Join the Chesapeake Bay Foundation for our signature underwater grasses restoration program! Attend one of our eight workshops across Virginia. At the workshop, you'll learn how to plant and care for your underwater grasses and receive your underwater grasses growth kit and wild celery seed.

Registration deadline: February 6

Attendance is free, but kit rental is \$40.

Kits include two desk lamps, aquarium heater and pump, concrete mixing tub (3'x2'x1.5' approximately), growth pans, thermometer, and extension cord. Participants must provide their own light bulbs, construction-grade sand, and soil (backyard is fine). Kits must be monitored at least every three days, preferably every day.

More Information: <https://bit.ly/3718MVp>
Gabby Troutman at gtroutman@cbf.org or 804-258-1605

(This is a stewardship volunteer service project — Project S3c. Record your time to this project if you attend the workshop in February, and, of course as you grow your celery and help plant your grasses in the spring.)

New Christmas Bird Count!

The Middle Peninsula Audubon Christmas Bird Count is set for Sunday December 29, 2019, 8 am to 2 or 3 pm. This is a NEW count circle that includes parts of Gloucester, Middlesex, and King and Queen counties.

There are eight sectors and sector leaders have been assigned. Now they need people to help the sector leaders count birds on December 29. Sectors 1, 2, and 3 need more spotters. All levels of birders needed!!

This is an approved Historic Rivers Chapter project — "C2a Christmas Bird Count"

Please contact Susan Crockett at 804-693-6381 or email at scrocket@cox.net if you are available to help.





Cohort 13 - Mike Whitfield, Carol Parfet, Stephen Parfet; seated left to right, Roxanne Machamer, Ann Jo Cosgrove



Cohort 9 - Shan Gill, Christine Clarke, Ginny Broome, Lisa Nickel, Joe Beene; seated left to right, Maude Ann Wilson, Brenda Uekert



Cohort 14 - Susan Stern, Dan Arbegast, Valerie Shostak



Cohort 12 - Julia Thomas, Pam Schnabel, Rick Brown, Scott Hemler



Cohort 11 - Connie Reitz, Cindy Baker, Mary Haines, Judy Zwelling, Karen Grass, Cathy Flanagan

Our Holiday Gathering!

Photos of Cohorts by Connie Reitz

The Holiday Party had a great turnout on December 11. It was such a festive event. It was delightful to see so many people come out on a cold night, and I wish that I had the opportunity to talk to everyone.

The Holiday Party Team did a wonderful job of planning, setting up, compiling the raffles, and coordinating all of the activities. Thank you to the team for your facilitation, fun activities, and of course clean up.

Best wishes for a wonderful holiday. Take your time to breath and enjoy a little nature.

— Adrienne Frank
HRC President

THE NATURALIST



Cohort 10 - Bob Thomas, Barbara Neis, Renee Dallman, Bill Harper; seated left to right, Judy Kinshaw-Ellis, Janet Harper



Cohort 8 - Mike Woodward
and Judy Jones



Cohort 7 - Bruce Glendening
and Linda Morse



Cohort 6 - Nancy Barnhart, Deb Woodward,
Inge Curtis, Cheryl Jacobson, and seated,
Sherry Brubaker



Cohort 5 - Geoff Giles, Sharon Plocher, Rober Gosden



Cohort 4 - Les Lawrence, Dean Shostak,
Patty Maloney, Ted Sargent



Cohort 3 - Sara Lewis, Gary
Driscoll, Adrienne Frank



Cohort 2 - Kathy Mestayer



Cohort 1 - Shirley Devan

New Year's Day Boardwalk Show



Greetings,

Join me New Year's Day – Wednesday, January 1, 2020 – at the Greensprings Trail Boardwalk for the 15th Annual “New Year's Day Boardwalk Bird Show.”

We'll meet on the boardwalk on the "Main Loop" over the "Beaver Pond and Wetlands" from 1–3 pm (not the Virginia Capital Trail boardwalk.) See the map attached.

Park in the lot at the end of Eagle Way, beyond Jamestown High School on John Tyler Highway. The street address for your GPS is: 3751 John Tyler Highway, Williamsburg, VA 23185

Come as you are; bring visiting family, friends and children; come early, stay late or just drop by. Celebrate the New Year – and the arrival of the “twenties” – with a birding adventure close to home with birding friends. Remember, every bird is a year bird on New Year's Day! Hope to see you there.

Check out this link if you want to know more about the Greensprings Interpretive Trail:
<https://www.jamecitycountyva.gov/Facilities/Facility/Details/Greensprings-Interpretive-Trail-48>

Also above is a photo of “reflections” at last year's event.

Hope to see you there!

— Shirley Devan

HIGHLIGHTS FROM REGIONAL LEADERSHIP DAY

Sponsored by the VMN State Office on
Saturday, Nov. 23, 10:00 am - 4:00 pm, Jamestown 4-H Center

Southeast Region Chapters - Eastern Shore, Historic Rivers, Historic Southside, Northern Neck, Peninsula, Pocahontas, Riverine, Tidewater chapters.

HRC Participants: Judy Jones, Karen Grass, Sherry Brubaker, Roxanne Machamer, Rick Brown, Dean Shostak, and Adrienne Frank.



The VMN State Office staff (Michelle Prysby, Tiffany Brown, and Terri Keffert) provided information on several topics:

- State Update - Policy and Procedures, tidbits, and reminders
 - Policy Handbook – Revisions coming in January. Probably not too many changes and perhaps minor changes to our chapter handbook.
 - New Board Orientation – Reminder for new members to review State documents. Recommended reviewing the index and appendices during a Board meeting.
 - Risk Management – All MNs should review risk management every 2-3 years. Our chapter board should track and send out reminders to members. Michelle is updating the original work that was developed by Susan Powell and Jennifer Trevino. Michelle may send out a clarification on non-member participation in activities.
 - Reporting critical data (gender, ethnicity, and race) – All members should complete the Enrollment Agreement and data should be entered into a spreadsheet kept by each chapter. For the Annual report, this will not be attached to member names.
 - Donations – Our state VMN program has state sponsor agencies and formal agreements are renewed every 3 yrs. 2020 VMN Budget income is state agencies (60%), State Reserved (18%), donations and donation reserved funds (18%), and targeted grants.
 - Chapter Advisors – Turnover has been about 50% in 2 yrs. Co-advisors is a good strategy. Advisors are important and need to be engaged.
 - Virginia Volunteer Management System – No new system is planned with UC Davis. Some fixes and changes are being made in data fields. E.g., Active members can see their status, but not make changes to it, comment box is larger, Start Date is now Basic Training graduation date, Email Listserv will be for Active Members.
 - Mandatory Screening Procedures (see state website) – We need due diligence in determining if Basic Training candidates are appropriate for the MN program. Chapters should do reference checks and an interview of some kind. Background checks are not required, if a chapter wants to do them, it may be able to work with the local Extension agency at a cost per check. VMN Office is not currently able to do background checks.
 - Advocacy Training Program – The state office wants to offer a training on how to talk to decision makers (e.g., about controlling invasive species). It is intensive but great for learning useful communication strategies. A couple of members from each chapter could participate.
 - 2020 State Conference – September 11-13, in Virginia Beach near First Landing State Park. VA Beach and Southside chapters will help in planning.

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- Volunteer Recognition Items Procedures – When do chapters request and receive name tags, certificates, and pins?
 - The State Office gives chapters VMN Brochures (100 twice a year) if desired. They may come up with a bookmark and an Avery Business Card template that can be downloaded.
 - The State asked for feedback about milestones (currently rockers are for 250, 500, 1000, 1500, 5000) – Participants wanted every 1000 recognized. Our chapter can decide how to do recognitions (e.g., offer certificates, not use rockers, etc.).
 - Recertification pins – HRC provides the initial 40-hour pin (The state only offers a certificate template on the VMN website). After that the state gives out the laminated pins and will continue the contests. What pins would you like to see in the future?
- VMS Statuses – Updating chapter members status, in preparation for the Annual Report. Definitions:
 - ♣Trainee – New cohort
 - ♣Certified MN – Has 40 hours of volunteer service and 8 CE hours.
 - ♣VMN – Graduated from BT
 - ♣Active Members – Those with at least 1 hour of volunteer service
 - ♣Inactive – No hours in 2-3 years
- Inactive member names remain in our data but are not linked to our HRC email list serv.
- Documents of inactive members can be shredded after 5 years.
- The chapter can choose to retain members; the reasons can be stated in the comments section of the data base. For example, the member has a significant illness.
- The chapter can choose to help individuals submit hours and continuing education. For example, a member with a disability attends 6 General Meetings and obtains 6 hours of CE and 6 volunteer service.
- If no hours are submitted, they the person will move to Inactive status and can no longer use the name Master Naturalist. Once inactive, the person can request to be reinstated and submit hours. A lapsed member can re-enroll with no need to redo Basic Training
- Dues – The State VMN does not require dues, and so anyone with at least 1 hour of service is an active member.

Small group discussions – Volunteer Engagement and Retention strategies. Examples of discussion – Virginia Beach has monthly meeting like we do. They want to conduct more field trips. Eastern Shore – Provides mentors after graduation to promote engagement in volunteer projects. Riverine/Richmond – Provides 1 to 1 mentors for each of 28 new trainees. They have introductory field trips where trainees and mentors get to know each other. In the afternoon, about 10 different topic areas including 501 3c status, chapter dues, board recruitment and retention, and more.

HRC Received Certificate of Appreciation from City of Williamsburg



Pictured (l-r) Bill Brown, caretaker of Cedar Grove Cemetery, and Historic Rivers Chapter members Connie Reitz, David Lunt, Ginny Broome, Portia Belden, Jean Balutanski, and Nancy Greer.

By Connie Reitz

It began like any other Monday at 2pm at Cedar Grove Cemetery in Williamsburg. Several members of the Historic Rivers Chapter of Virginia Master Naturalist gathered to check seven Eastern Bluebird (EABL) boxes. The cemetery caretaker, Bill Brown, was there, greeted everyone, and asked us to come over to box #3. It is not unusual to see Bill and we know of his particular interest in this box. However, a pleasant surprise was in store for this group of monitors. Bill presented a certificate of appreciation from the City of Williamsburg to the group for work done maintaining bluebird boxes and recording the activities of our feathered friends at the cemetery. Within an hour of this presentation a photo and acknowledgement of this recognition was on the City of Williamsburg Facebook page.

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EABL boxes were scattered throughout the cemetery from a previous William & Mary project. The boxes had not been monitored nor maintained for several years. HRC members David Lunt and Portia Belden worked with Bill Brown, Cedar Grove Cemetery caretaker, to install six new boxes. One old box—named a “legacy” box—was rescued with plans to rebuild it and return it to use at Cedar Grove. In 2017 the Cedar Grove EABL trail became an official project of the Historic Rivers Chapter. Seven Chapter members monitored the trail the inaugural year and documented active nests by EABL and Carolina Chickadees (CACH) with 17 bluebirds and ten chickadees fledging the first year.

The “legacy” box was added to the trail the next year and nine Chapter members were monitors. All but one box was productive the second year. The bluebirds and chickadees were joined by a tufted titmouse (TUTI) family. During this second year 32 EABLs, five CACHs, and five TUTIs fledged.

This year has been a continuation of the progress from the first two years. Early in the season Bill brought another damaged “legacy” box to David asking if it could be restored and included on the trail. The box had been maintained for years by a close friend of Bill’s and he wanted this memory to be shared at the cemetery. This memory box became Box #3 on the trail and is located near the flag pole and Bill’s office/work building. Seeing this box filled with memories and sometimes bluebirds has brought a smile to his face every day.

The 2019 season has nine Chapter members as monitors. Jean Baluntanski, Portia Belden, Ginny Broome, Sherry Brubaker, Karen Grass, Nancy Greer, Barbara Neis, and Connie Reitz work with project leader David Lunt. Although two members are scheduled as leaders each week it is not unusual to have almost all of the team arrive for the weekly outing. To date, reporting information on the seven boxes on this trail has noted 31 EABL fledglings (with 4 nestlings still waiting to take the leap to the outside world), 4 CACH fledglings, and an exciting fledging of 4 Carolina Wrens. All seven of the boxes have been productive this season. Another “legacy” box was repaired and mounted mid-season bringing the total to eight boxes at the cemetery trail.

So, when you least expect it, someone is out there watching and appreciating the small things being done to care for our world. Someone is noticing what each of us is doing and slowly it becomes the norm. The rewards are smiles and sometimes a certificate. Thank you, Bill Brown and the City of Williamsburg. Members of the Historic Rivers Chapter will continue to work as citizen scientists, stewards, and educators to make our world a better place.



Your Volunteer and CE Hours...

Hi all,

Our officers have begun preparation of the Chapter's annual report required by the state coordinators' office for this year. We now need your help and input to get the most accurate set of total chapter volunteer hours possible.



Your volunteer efforts during 2019 are aggregated with everyone in the HRC, sent to Michele Prysby and then she adds them to every other chapters' numbers throughout the Commonwealth to determine the overall effectiveness of the VA Master Naturalist program. The data are also used by the state and federal sponsoring agencies to determine future funding levels that mean real dollars to fund a lot of the projects we enjoy.

On a personal basis, these numbers also determine who among our members have meet the requirements to be added to the list of our chapter's Certified Master Naturalists in 2020, by volunteering at least 40 hours and attending 8 hours of continuing education. They also determine whether you have met another Milestone in the volunteer hours levels.

Some of you volunteer for the pure joy of helping others, spending time with friends or protecting the environment. So pins, certificates and individual recognition are really not your thing. That's fine too, bling is not the goal. But we still need everyone who was active during this past year to enter your volunteer hours on or before midnight December 31, 2019. After that is too late.

I will gladly enter hours for anyone who has trouble, or is unable to do so. Just send me a request. A big thanks to all of you who take the time to regularly record your hours.

Please make a note on your calendar and make that your final natural priority for 2019. I guarantee it will make you feel warm inside.

Happy holidays everyone, and thanks a bunch.

Rick Brown - ricklin46@cox.net
Membership Chair
Historic Rivers Chapter

JAMESTOWN ISLAND FIELD NOTES



I took these on December 4 on Wildlife Mapping at Jamestown. There were fifteen folks and we had a great time.

We saw 41 species of birds, including this Eastern Screech Owl, and three species of mammal: white-tail deer, gray squirrels, and this cute little raccoon.

Our motto is “look in every cavity!”

Nancy Barnhart



Fun Field Notes



Native Birds in JCC Marina Garden This Year

Photos by Jim Easton

More Fun Field Notes



"Seen at the JCC Marina Garden in November... I spent some time watching this Cattail Toothpick Grasshopper, approaching (slowly), then reaching out and touching the Black Swallowtail caterpillar. The caterpillar successfully repelled the grasshopper... not sure what would have happened if it hadn't.

"First flies, then grasshoppers... these cats have a lot to be wary of!" — Jim Easton



Photos by Jim Easton

HRC MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS

Due to renovations at the Kitzinger Room at the Upper County Library, we will be meeting at the Stryker Center. Because the room is being used until 6 pm, we will need to begin our meetings at 6:30 pm.

Stryker Center, 412 N Boundary Street, Williamsburg

Below is date for the January 2020 General Meeting. Hope to see you there

Adrienne Frank
HRC President

- **January 8 - General Meeting** at Stryker Center, room 127 - Speaker is Stephen Kuehl, VIMS, Kepone in the James River



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 15th 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!

HISTORIC RIVERS CHAPTER BOARD

Chapter Advisor, John Gresham
President, Adrienne Frank
Vice-President, Linda Morse
Secretaries (co-chairs), Judy Jones, Connie Reitz
Treasurer, Barbara Neis
Volunteer Projects Chair, Shirley Devan
Basic Training (co-chairs), Janet Harper, Karen Grass
Membership Chair, Rick Brown
Continuing Ed Chair, Jennifer Trevino

Education and Outreach (co-chairs), Sherry Brubaker, Frank Smith, Lark Smith
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Members-at-Large, Glenda White, Joe Beene
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