



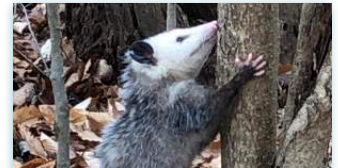
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THE NATURALIST

THE HISTORIC RIVERS CHAPTER OF VIRGINIA MASTER NATURALISTS



The President's Message

By Adrienne Frank

It is difficult for me to believe that it has been almost two years since I was elected as HRC President. What a thrill to be asked and to serve such a wonderful chapter. In April 2018, the HRC Board set goals and generated tasks/activities to achieve those goals, and it is almost time for the Board to set goals for another two-year period.

In preparation for goal planning, I reviewed our goal charts to measure our successes and was extremely impressed by the chapter's accomplishments. It's amazing how far we have come in such a short time. I am very proud of the work of Board Members, the Basic Training Committee, and many others who volunteered their time to do administrative tasks.

Several of our chapter goals were recommended by the State Office, and we were asked to report successes each year in the annual report. I reviewed our HRC Annual Reports and Board minutes, and found a lot of evidence of our chapter's accomplishments.

On the following page is a summary of our successes. They may be other achievements that I have not listed, if so, please let me know.



December's Capital trail milepost 6-7 cleanup crew. Pictured, left to right, are Mary Jo Davis-Headley, Rick Brown, Shirley Devan, Jeanette Navia, Judy Jones, Babs Giffin, Keith Navia and Suzanne Stern.

The HRC board will begin to generate ideas for new goals and objectives. If you have any ideas, concerns, or wording ideas, please don't hesitate to join in on the discussion. You could attend the Board meeting, submit written ideas, or just let one of our board members know your thoughts.

Yours,
Adrienne

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The President's Letter, continued...

Goal Successes 2018-2020

- Goal Retention: Retain active membership by offering leadership, choice, and engaging activities
 - Used project champions who sent out reminders and encouraged participation
 - Offered a number of new projects of varied interest in the last 2 years
 - Celebrated successes by highlighting projects at General Meetings and in the newsletter
 - Offered a wide array of field trips and varied times, including weekends
 - Provided written information on our webpage for BT applicants to improve the fit; offered orientation night including information about what to expect in class and the VMN expectations for volunteering
 - New cohort members participated in a number of Volunteer Service projects (not all chapters do this)
 - Contacted YRSP about a class/chapter project but supervision was not available due to personnel shortages there.

March General Meeting Date

March 11, 2020

7 p.m.

**Williamsburg Regional Library
Auditorium**

**Martin Gallivan will be the
Cohort 14 graduation speaker!
He'll be talking about
Werowocomoco.**

Goal Stewardship: Continue to promote activities that help to protect/restore wildlife habitat, control invasive species improve water quality, etc.

Increase stewardship hours and chapter member participation

- Renamed some projects or parts of projects as stewardship hours
- Offered stewardship projects, especially by continued partnering with JCC Beautification –
 - Annual Spring Clean Ups
 - Wildflower planting – Freedom Park, Warhill, Chickahominy River Park
 - Adopt a Spot – Powhatan Creek Park, Marina Park, Capitol Trail (new champions)
- Offered trail maintenance and walks weekends (i.e., Bassett Trace)
- CAR requested project boxes from service projects to be used during outreach activities
- Basic Training offered information and encouraged stewardship
- Informally – More members pick up trash while out in the field.

Goal Diversity: To reach out to diverse audiences (i.e., diverse race, ethnicity, age, and interest) to increase member diversity and to educate the community about our mission

- Conducted new program Nature at James River School in the Grove neighborhood
- Expanded school programs in York County
- Continued partnerships with JCC Parks and Recreation and New Quarter Park
- Conducted Butterfly Festival – 1000s participants and offered speakers
- Offered more Butterfly presentations, offered family-oriented programs through JCC Parks and Rec, especially Freedom Park
- Basic Training established relationship with the Community Chapel with free space
- Offered Youth scholarships to families in need, including a youth with a disability
- Established process/procedures for Basic Training scholarship and gave our first financial scholarship
- Linda Morse established a Master Naturalist BT program for freshman at William and Mary for this coming fall semester.

PROPOSED SLATE OF OFFICERS MARCH 2020

The nominating committee has completed their task and the following folks are proposed for election to the Board in March of 2020 at our general membership meeting.

Officers/Executive Committee

President --	Rick Brown	(2-year term)
Vice-President --	Linda Morse	(3 rd year)
Recording Secretary --	Mona Overturf Judy Jones	(2-year term) (1-year term)
Treasurer --	Glenda White	(2-year term)

Members of Board

Immediate Past President --	Adrienne Frank	(2-year term)
Membership --	Shirley Devan	(2-year term)
Basic Training --	Karen Hines Karen Grass	(2-year term) (2 nd year)
Volunteer Service Projects --	Shan Gill	(2-year term)
Continuing Education --	Connie Reitz	(2-year term)
Newsletter --	Lisa Reagan	(2 nd year)
Education and Outreach --	Babs Giffin Lark Smith Frank Smith	(2-year term) (2 nd year) (2 nd year)
Field Trips --	Dean Shostak Ginny Broome	(2 nd year) (2 nd year) (
Historian/Publicity --	Dan Arbegast	(2-year term)
Hospitality --	Valerie Shostak Brynn Ullrich Cindy Baker	(2-year term) (2-year term) (2 nd year)
Members at Large --	Bob Thomas Barbara Neis Jennifer Trevino	(2-year term) (2-year term) (2-year term)

Non-Voting/Not Term Limited

Board Liaison to Williamsburg Landing -- Joe Beene (Appointed March 2020)

Webmistress -- Jeanette Navia (Appointed 2011)

Facebook Sonny Bowers (Appointed 2016)

Risk Management Team Roger Gosden (Appointed 3/2019)
Patty Maloney (Appointed 3/ 2019)

Collections and Resources Comm. Jennifer Trevino Chair (Appointed 2017)

Historic Rivers Chapter Virginia Master Naturalists Current Board of Directors

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

Historian and Publicity, Keith Navia

Host Chair, Cindy Baker

Newsletter Chair, Lisa Reagan

Field Trips (co-chairs), Dean Shostak,
Ginny Broome

Members-at-Large, Glenda White, Joe Beene

Past President, Judy Jones

Liaison to the State, Susan Powell

Risk Management Team, Roger Gosden,
Patty Maloney



**Want to learn more about
our Bat Project?
Training sessions begin
March 24 and 26 at
Billsburg Brewery at 6 p.m.
You must register:
<https://bit.ly/2HQquQM>**

**Contact Barbara Neis
b.neis15@gmail.com or Bill
Harper wharpva@gmail.com**

Barbara Neis and Bill Harper (this year's coordinators for the HRC Bat Squad) are looking for any and all chapter members who would be interested in participating in our Mobile Acoustic Bat Monitoring project. Because bat activity in our area is seasonal and somewhat temperature dependent (bats here like evening temperatures to be 50F or better to fly), we conduct our mobile transect runs from late March to mid-October.

Our Bat Squad members consist of a Transect Captain and at least one trained Observer along with one to two additional riders for the six active transects that we currently monitor. Transect runs generally begin 30 to 45 minutes after sunset and involve a very slow drive at 20 MPH or less along a predetermined 25Km route one day every other week. Through the use of a sophisticated microphone attached to a laptop containing special bat echolocation analyzing software, we are able to monitor bat activity by species and location.

Want to learn more about our Bat Project? Training sessions begin March 24 and 26 from 6 to 9 p.m. at Billsburg Brewery. You must register for the class at <https://bit.ly/2HQquQM>.

Finally, we are a "Collection Project" within I-Naturalist. If you are interested in seeing some of our mobile transect summaries and bat echolocation wave forms, you can search for Historic Rivers VMN Bat Squad on the I-Naturalist web site.

Interested or want more information? Contact Barbara Neis b.neis15@gmail.com or Bill Harper wharpva@gmail.com



AWARE Presentation

For those of you who missed it, here are a few photos of the AWARE presentation at the Williamsburg Bird Club/HRC Meeting on February 19, 2020 at Andrews Hall, College of William & Mary.

As you may know, one of our chapter members, Deb Woodward, is now accepting animals that need rehabilitation. Deb, Colleen Harlow, and Josie Shostak (Dean, Valerie's daughter) brought animals with them and told us about their program.

AWARE (Alliance of Wild Animal Rehabilitators Educators) is a non-profit organization in Virginia. Colleen is Deb's mentor and she talked about her experiences and the mission of the organization. Deb talked about certification and new home facility. Josie regularly volunteers with Deb. Their Animal Ambassadors included a Barred Owl, Eastern Screech-Owl, American Kestrel, Mallard Duck, Red-shouldered Hawk, and Opossum.



Deb Woodward handling a kestrel.



***Colleen with
Red-shouldered Hawk
addressing the audience***



Josie with Eastern Screech owl



Josie with an Opossum



Colleen with a Pileated Woodpecker



Deb with a Barred Owl

Virginia Breeding Bird Atlas

An HRC Chapter Project - From Our 2019 Annual Report

(Read the report on the HRC website: www.HistoricRivers.org under the Volunteer Management System's Document Section)

- Project Name: **Virginia Breeding Bird Atlas (VABBA2)** - Prepared by Cheryl J. Jacobson
- The Type of Project: Citizen Science - [C2aa] Virginia Breeding Bird Atlas
- Total number of hours contributed in 2019 - 369
- The number of Chapter Members (and others, if there are any) involved in the project. 13
- List of any of the 7 VMN sponsoring agencies involved in the project (if any).
 - Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries



A Description of the Project:

Background/History/Importance to Conservation - The second Virginia Breeding Bird Atlas (VABBA2) is a five-year survey of all bird species that breed within the state borders. The first Breeding Bird Atlas took place from 1984-1989. Nearly 30 years have passed since the first data was collected and many environmental changes have occurred across the landscape of Virginia.

Climate change, urbanization, and energy development are rapidly altering the conditions that birds and other wildlife encounter. The data collected now will be compared with the first Atlas dataset to identify changes in breeding bird distributions across the state. By overlaying the distribution data with land-use data, it will be possible to better understand how different species of birds have responded to the changes in Virginia. This highlights the importance of the second VA BBA as a resource to be used in developing avian conservation and management strategies.



In the U.S., 40 species of common birds are in steep decline and 17 of these have been found to breed in Virginia. However, too little is known about their current status in the state. Data generated by the Atlas will help clarify how these and all other bird species are using Virginia's landscapes and the status of their populations in the face of many environmental changes.

Volunteers - The core belief of the VABBA2 is that *nature and its preservation are the province of all people*. At the local level, Historic Rivers Chapter of VMN and the Williamsburg Bird Club have worked closely in implementing this project. It is founded on the understanding that citizen science is a powerful tool for generating ecological data to inform conservation and management policies. The VABBA2 is primarily a **citizen science project** driven by volunteer data collection in partnership with the Virginia Society of Ornithology (VSO) and Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (VDGIF). It is the largest bird monitoring effort in Virginia to date.

Local volunteers collect information on the species and number of birds they observe and evidence of breeding behavior. The Atlas uses a series of breeding codes to describe different types of breeding behavior that one might observe in the field and then report their observations directly to the project through the [VABBA2 eBird portal](#).

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Since this is a State wide project, there are participants throughout the state. During the first Atlas in the 1980s, over 450 people volunteered and currently over 1000 individuals have volunteered. Locally, there are approximately 20 HRC VMN members involved, many who are also members of Williamsburg Bird Club. There are approximately 10 WBC members involved who are not members of HRC. Of course, commitment and time investment varied greatly with some just minimally involved while others committing significant time to the project. For example, during the breeding season, one volunteer invested 15-20 hours per week.



Training - In year one and each year after, an important aspect to success has been training. Every year, new volunteers were recruited from both HRC and the Williamsburg Bird Club. VMNs who have an interest in birds and nature, but perhaps not yet expert birders, were encouraged to use this project as an opportunity to learn about birds and become involved with this critically important conservation effort. More experienced birders were urged to become involved to learn a different style of birding while performing a critical conservation function. All were urged to download and practice using eBird in advance of the training.

Virginia Breeding Bird Atlas Training - Each year Ashley Peele (Project Coordinator who is based at the Conservation Management Institute at Virginia Tech) and Dave Youker (a member of VMN, WBC, and VSO) helped with classroom training. As interest increased more volunteers attended training, with 21 in attendance in 2018, 14 of whom were HRC VMNs. Extensive volunteer recruitment was done each spring prior to the training session. Fun ways of learning were used to explore knowledge and skill, including working in mini teams and conducting a first Saturday walk/survey in a close priority block. One example was a local field trip was in Block Brandon SE, just across the Chickahominy Bridge. It was led by Matt Anthony, a William and Mary graduate student.

The Atlas project lends itself well to new and learning birders, because of the nature of field observations. When the goal is to collect behavioral observations, birders must slow their pace. This style of birding helps identify of a given bird and its unique behavioral characteristics.

The Handbook created by the Atlas Coordinator was indispensable for training new volunteers. Breeding behaviors and the use of breeding codes to describe these behaviors is probably the most unique, interesting, and important aspect of a Breeding Bird Atlas project. The Atlas handbook provides detailed descriptions of each breeding code, but sometimes it is still a little difficult to know when and how to apply them. That is why teaming with a seasoned volunteer is so important.

Teaming - This project lends itself naturally to team work. During the first VA BBA in the mid-1980s, project leaders needed a clean way to spread volunteer effort EVENLY across the state. The best way to achieve this was through an even distribution of blocks rooted in an established mapping system like the USGS Quads. Each quad in Virginia was split into six equal blocks and given a two-letter directional name. Evenly spread priority blocks were established throughout the State. The WBC was assigned 18 Priority blocks to complete. An experienced volunteer team lead was asked to sign up for one or more blocks and to develop a team to assist in the completion of the field work. To complete a block required 20 hours of observation covering all the habitat types in the block. Also, two nocturnal visits were required. Our blocks covered the distance from south of Richmond to the North Carolina State Line. Each team met many local people who clearly love the birds and were excited to allow us the opportunity to explore on their property.

Educating locals about the status of birds in Virginia is an important function of the project. To add to the fun, cafes, wineries, plantations, berry patches and local hot spots were explored. Teams often left with produce from a garden local residents shared with pride. One local farmer near Emporia invited a team of four (three HRC members) to return in the evening and told them exactly where they could find Chuck-Will's-Widow and Whip-Poor-Will on his property.

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Teaching New Birders - One of the most rewarding aspects of the project has been working with less experienced birders. For example, on one field trip a newer birder saw a Prothonotary Warbler for the first time and was “thrilled”. This brilliant yellow bird was carrying nesting material.

The following is a summary of what the experience was like for one newer Master Naturalist:

My wife and I were introduced to the VABA project at a half-day seminar presented by Ashley Peele, Atlas Coordinator, at Freedom Park in Williamsburg, Virginia, in the spring of 2018. We were intrigued by this, to us, new style of birding—not just seeing how many birds one could spot in a given day and amount of time, but birding with a purpose, namely, determining which birds are currently breeding in a specific area. We saw that such an activity would require patience, diligent observation, and a knowledge of the land in which the survey would be conducted.

Our first expedition was in July 2018. We accompanied Cheryl Jacobson, our friend and mentor, as she surveyed her block around Brandon in Prince George County. We slowly and deliberately drove along country roads, listening and observing birds to see if we could find evidence of breeding behavior. We learned a lot as we watched Cheryl at work. She wasn't at all in a hurry, just carefully monitoring bird behavior. We also had a special treat in that we got to explore the grounds of a James River plantation with the permission of the property manager. (Photo - Frank & Lark Smith at the James River Plantation.)

Then in March 2019, we began to explore the block that we'd volunteered to cover, Disputanta East, in Prince George County. It was a bit early to catch any breeding behavior, but we did see, thanks to Cheryl's eagle eye, a Northern Harrier, a first for my wife and me.

In May, we returned to our block and knew just where to start our observations. Cheryl has already submitted reports on the birds we saw and for which we confirmed breeding activity. But I want to say how much we learned as we watched her in action. We made two more trips to Disputanta East, seeing different birds each time. For us, I think the most exciting find was the Prothonotary Warbler—a small but beautiful bird!

Project Successes - Just a few exciting species confirmations included:

Mississippi Kites confirmed breeding by Richmond and Virginia Beach area this species was not present in VA, during the first Atlas project.

Magnolia Warbler confirmed as a breeding species for the first time in Virginia Breeding Bird Atlas history by the SW regional coordinator.

Chuck-Will's-Widow breeding in Isle of Wight county – the one and only breeding confirmation of this species from the first Atlas occurred on the Eastern Shore.

Bobolink, Double-crested Cormorant, Brown Pelican, and **Hooded Mergansers** have been confirmed in more Atlas blocks now than in the first Atlas.

Why give time to this project? Nothing is more rewarding than to see bright eggs in a carefully crafted nest or see a newly hatched baby bird with parent birds diligently bringing food.



FUN FIELD NOTES!



“Look what Judy Jones and I saw while doing trail maintenance at Bassett Trace on February 1!” - Glenda White



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 end of the month.

Send your ready-to-publish photos, notices, stories, or reports to The Naturalist's newsletter editor, Lisa Reagan, at HRCenewsletter@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!