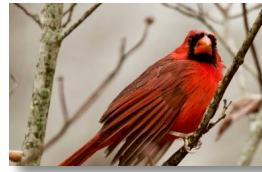




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THE NATURALIST

THE HISTORIC RIVERS CHAPTER OF VIRGINIA MASTER NATURALISTS



The President's Message

By Rick Brown

I am writing this, my first submission, as the new president of our organization. When Shirley met with me, what seems like several years ago now, to ask if I was willing to be president, she said that was the easiest job on the HRC board. She said that the hardest thing I had to do was write a message every month for the newsletter. I laughed and made some flippant remark, little realizing just how right Shirley would be.

Our chapter has recently lost two of its very vibrant members: Geoff Giles and Karen Grass. Although I certainly don't claim to be a birder, I joined the Bird Club because I like being around and listening to people who care so much about birds. So I met Geoff there before I knew he was a Master Naturalist. He was a regular attendee and as I listened to the remarks made by other members at his passing I realized how much his life touched the lives of others as a mentor and a friend. My limited contact with Geoff revealed a quiet, knowledgeable and very friendly person who was always willing to share his wealth of natural knowledge with anyone, anytime.



Jamestown Island Wildlife Mapping this March, photo by Nancy Barnhart.

I was with Karen on the Saturday just before her passing as she was doing what she truly loved, teaching. This time it was the last training class for "her Cohort". She had been involved in basic training for our chapter ever since her own graduation, but this was the first training effort she truly led. At 7:00 am, that morning despite knowing she would see me at 8:30, she wrote asking me to

Continued on page 2

The President's Letter, continued...

check the VMS to see how many of the trainees had met their hours for certification and the total volunteer hours for the cohort. She kept pushing them to finish the course in grand style. At the training session she told the group I teased her and called her the "Naturalist Mom". But she really was the Mom. I know for a fact that every morning Karen got out of bed and said to herself, "what can I do today to have fun, and who can I get to go with me?" That was verified by her husband Bill at our last meeting when he said Karen wasn't a "warm and fuzzy person". She would just grab you and drag you along. Karen wanted to learn and the way she did that was by teaching others.

Reflecting now on these two lives lived so well, we are presented with examples of people who sought to include all of us as members of their naturalist family. They did not hesitate to share what they knew with any of us. Recent events that may have "socially separated" us, have caused us to draw much closer in common spirit. Lately I have not felt very far away from any of you. And I find comfort as I read your responses to tragedies that rock our boat. As you turn to whatever form of mediation that brings you comfort; on a clear sunny day when you are walking through the woods stop to consider the time Geoff may have pointed out his favorite bird, or Karen may have ridden by on her bicycle, and consider their many contributions to the collective good in this world and know our overwhelming personal loss.

Over 50 years ago I served my limited time in the U.S. Army. It wasn't something that I was burning to do but I quickly learned I had to depend on others for my own survival and well-being. Soldiers would be taken from us without warning and we never saw them again. There was always a memorial for each and every one we lost so we could collectively remember, grieve and try to heal. The verse I vividly recall from those services seems equally appropriate now and I commend it to you:

*"They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old:
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning
We will remember them."
— Laurence Binyon*

Remember Geoff and Karen often and be glad in knowing that we were all fortunate to have been included in their family of friends for even the briefest of times. Now more than ever we need to take care of each other.

***"They shall grow not old, as
we that are left grow old:
Age shall not weary them,
nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun
and in the morning
We will remember them."
Laurence Binyon***

Passing the Torch

At our March General Meeting, the new HRC Board was elected, and I stepped down as President. I am handing over the position to Rick Brown, who I know will be a terrific leader. He has many skills and is highly motivated to support and build our chapter.

It has been an absolute pleasure having the opportunity to serve as President for the last two years. I was able to learn so much and to develop new relationships with many of you.

Working with the HRC Board has only increased my appreciation and respect for our membership. What a wonderful group of amazing people, so committed, hardworking, and gracious.

Since I will be staying on as Past President, I look forward to my new role, contributing in new ways, and having the camaraderie of board members.

Thank you so much for your support of me in the position. You made me feel welcomed and special.

Your new Past President,
Adrienne



MARCH 2020 GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING



Adrienne, Mary Haines, Pat Murphy



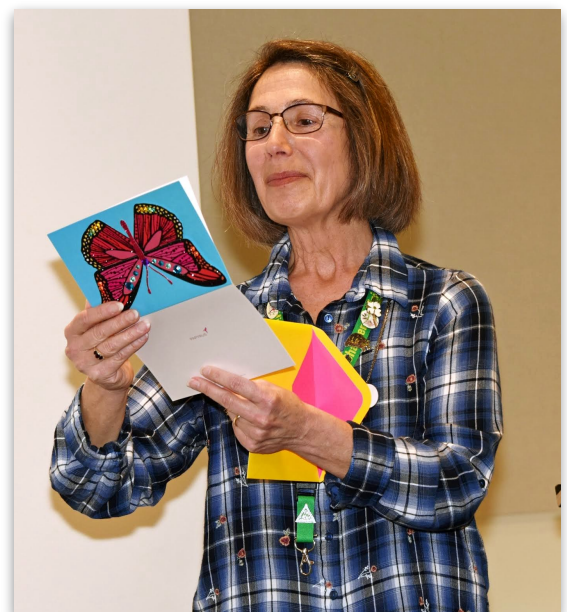
Thad Hecht, Keith Navia, Sherry Brubaker, and Adrienne



Bill Harper, Judy Tucker, Lisa Nickel, and Adrienne



Dan Arbegast presenting a check from Cohort XIV.



Adrienne receiving a card and gift from the HRC Board for her 2 years of service

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Members who achieved 250 hours of volunteer service included Mary Haines, Pat Murphy, and Wendy Nelson (absent)

500 hours included Lou Amato (absent), Bill Harper, Lisa Nickel, and Judy Tucker

1000 hours included Sherry Brubaker, Thad Hecht, Keith Navia, and Karen Grass (recently deceased)

Annual 40-hour pins were distributed at the meeting to those re-certifying for 2019. 104 members were certified for 2019.

Below find the list of new board members:

Officers/Executive Committee

President -- Rick Brown (2-year term)

Vice-President -- Linda Morse (3rd year)

Recording Secretary -- Mona Overturf (2-year term)
Judy Jones (1-year term)

Treasurer -- Glenda White (2-year term)

Members

Immediate Past President -- Adrienne Frank (2-year term)

Membership -- Shirley Devan (2-year term)

Basic Training -- Karen Hines (2-year term)
To be determined

Volunteer Service Projects -- Shan Gill (2-year term)

Continuing Education -- Connie Reitz (2-year term)

Newsletter -- Lisa Reagan (2nd year)

Education and Outreach -- Babs Giffin (2-year term)
Lark Smith (2nd year)
Frank Smith (2nd year)

Field Trips -- Dean Shostak (2nd year)
Ginny Broome (2nd year)

Historian/Publicity -- Dan Arbogast (2-year term)

Hospitality -- Valerie Shostak (2-year term)
Brynn Ullrich (2-year term)
Cindy Baker (2nd year)

Members at Large -- Bob Thomas (2-year term)
Barbara Neis (2-year term)
Jennifer Trevino (2-year term)

Non-Voting/Not Term Limited

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

Webmistress -- Jeanette Navia (Appointed 2011)

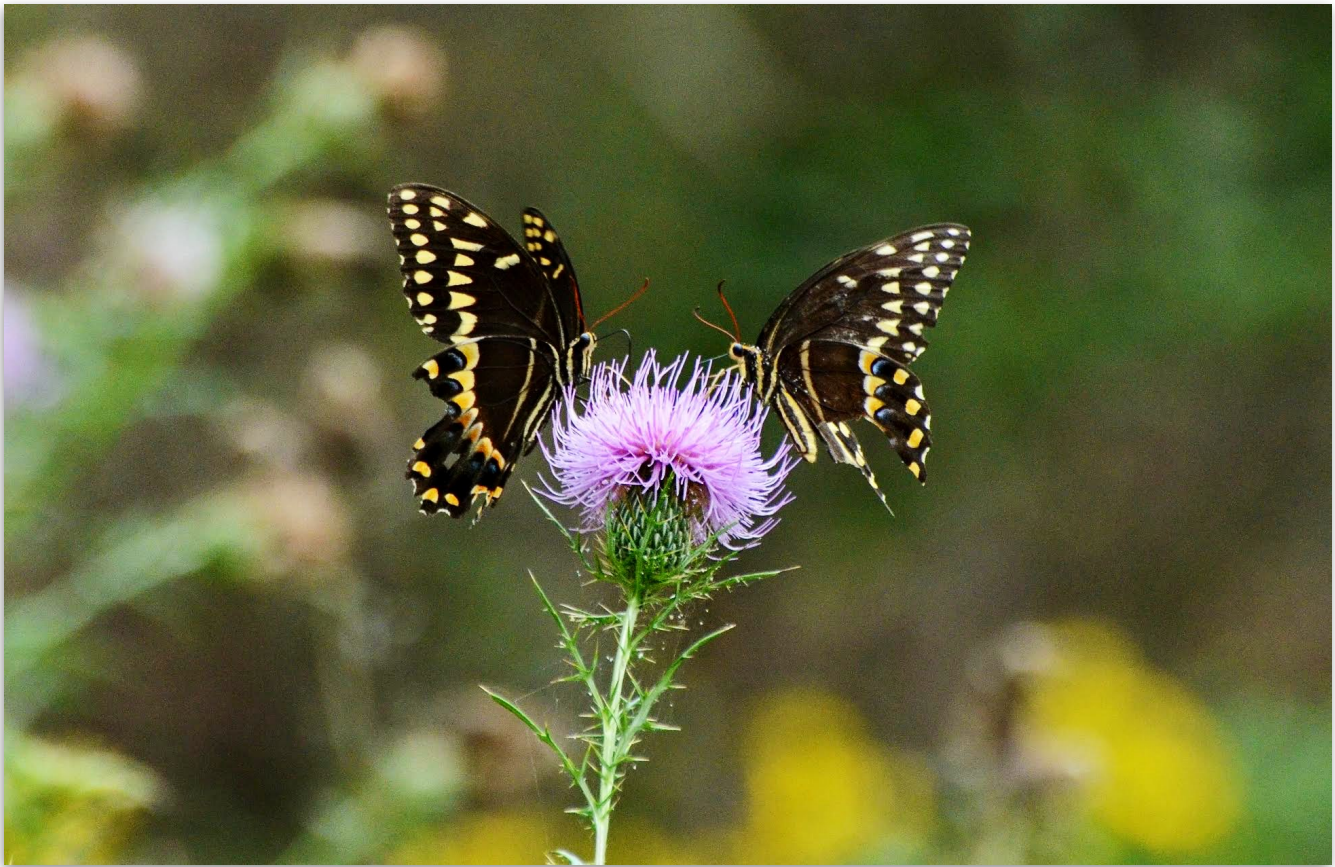
Facebook Sonny Bowers (Appointed 2016)

Risk Management Team Roger Gosden (Appointed March 2019)
Patty Maloney (Appointed March 2019)

Collections and Resources Committee Jennifer Trevino Chair (Appointed 2017)



Shirley Devan and Adrienne Frank at March's General Meeting. Shirley is the incoming membership coordinator, and Adrienne is the outgoing HRC president. Shirley presenting the gift from the executive board to Adrienne for two wonderful years of service as President of HRC. Photo by Rick Brown.



Palamedes Swallowtail (Papilio palamedes), photo by Jim Easton

COMING UP IN BUTTERFLIES FOR APRIL 2020

By Jim Easton

Butterfly-watching remains on the list of “safe activities” (as long as we maintain social distancing). Nineteen species of butterflies make their first local appearance in April. Be on the lookout for:

Family Papilionidea-Swallowtails:

- Palamedes Swallowtail (Papilio palamedes)

Family Pieridae-Whites and Sulphurs:

- Little Yellow (Pyrisitia lisa)

Family Lycaenidae-Gossamer-winged Butterflies:

- Harvester (Feniseca tarquinius)
- Great Purple Hairstreak (Atlides halesus)
- Brown Elfin (Callophrys augustinus)
- Eastern Pine Elfin (Callophrys niphon)
- Juniper Hairstreak (Callophrys gryneus)
- Red-banded Hairstreak (Calycopis cecrops)

Family Nymphalidae-Brush-footed Butterflies:

- Painted Lady (Vanessa cardui)
- Common Buckeye (Junonia coenia)
- Tawny Emperor (Asterocampa clyton)
- Carolina Satyr (Hermeuptychia sosybius)
- Monarch (Danaus plexippus)

Family Hesperiidae-Spread-wing Skippers:

- Silver-spotted Skipper (Epagyreus clarus)
- Horace’s Duskywing (Erynnis horatius)
- Common Sootywing (Pholisora catallus)

Sub-family Hesperiinae-Grass Skippers

- Fiery Skipper (Hylephila phyleus)
- Zabulon Skipper (Poanes zabulon)
- Pepper and Salt Skipper (Amblyscirtes hegon)

WILDFLOWER OF THE MONTH

GOLDEN RAGWORT, *PACKERA UREA*



**Golden Ragwort (*Packera aurea*)
taken by Helen Hamilton**

By Helen Hamilton

Golden Ragwort is a welcome sign of spring, covering swampy areas with bright yellow, from mid-March through early summer. The buds are purple, and open to display yellow disc and ray flowers, unusual for a member of the Aster Family -- the rays are often white. This native perennial grows 1-3 feet tall, with only a few deeply cut leaves on the stems. The leaves at the base of the plant are heart-shaped, in a large rosette. After the flowers fade, these leaves spread to form a nice groundcover which will persist over most of the winter.

Growing naturally in bogs, wet woods, floodplains and meadows in eastern North America, Golden Ragwort occurs in every county in Virginia. The plant thrives in full shade with acid, rich soil, in zones 3 to 9. Because it spreads easily by seed and underground roots, it can form large colonies and will grow under trees where nothing else thrives. In a woodland garden or a perennial border in the shade the masses of golden yellow look wonderful with Bluestar (*Amsonia tabernaemontana*) and Red Columbine (*Aquilegia canadensis*).

Small bees and flies that emerge early from winter homes are frequent visitors, feeding on nectar and carrying pollen to fertilize neighboring flowers. Among the insects, the green metallic sweat bee is more easily seen than the dull brown or black cuckoo bees and hoverflies. Deer avoid Golden Ragwort since the leaves contain toxic chemicals.

Two other species of this genus are common in the Coastal Plain. Woolly Ragwort (*P. tomentosa*) is a plant of the dunes, sandy clearings and roadsides and Small's Ragwort (*P. anonyma*) grows in dry fields, roadsides and disturbed habitats. There are differences in the stems and leaves of these 3 species, but where they grow is the best way to identify them.

Golden Ragwort is one of the herbs (ground and dissolved in alcohol) that are sold as Lydia Pinkham's Vegetable Compound, widely marketed as a cure for any "female complaint." A tea made from the root and leaves was used by American Indians, settlers and herbalists to treat delayed and irregular menses, leucorrhea and childbirth complications, leading to its alternate common name "squaw-weed."

"Ragwort" means a plant with ragged leaves, and "wort" is an Old "English word for "plant".

The best place to buy these plants are local native plant sales, since it is not usually seen in commercial nurseries. Online sites such as North Creek Nurseries sell flats of seedlings.

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

THE DAWN CHORUS -

REQUIEM FOR A BIRDER

By Roger Gosden

The last hour of the night seems darkest after tossing and turning to wake from strange dreams with a pounding heart. But there is a spell that can cast off the pall if we listen at an open window in the stillness of a spring morning.

The dawn chorus begins. Not only is there enchantment with the ancient symphony, but moments at peace with nature that help to face challenges of a new day.

The choir begins shortly before light in the east. A northern cardinal chants, wait, wait, wait ... chew, chew, chew, chew from a favorite perch in the holly tree. He is joined by the baroque melody of a brown thrasher in a tulip poplar. A Carolina wren poking in a woodpile scratches notes even higher than top E on a violin. They are accompanied by a wood thrush in the back forty playing the flute and a pileated woodpecker drumming a staccato percussion on a hollow tree. The soaring music fades the terrors of a retreating night.



Northern cardinal: courtesy of Inge Curtis

This was a time the birder loved most of all. He rose before dawn to listen to the choir outside and watch for them coming for refreshment to his feeder as the gloaming turned to daylight.

He was old enough to notice the chorus was less dazzling than in his youth, and each year fewer of these friends visited his garden. He nodded gravely at news we have three billion fewer birds in North America today than in 1970, including many common backyard species.

And now the birder has gone, too. “Nothing stays, all changes,” wrote Virginia Woolf. That is a fine maxim for evolution, and a fact we have to accept without consolation.

Spring has not become silent. There are still birds that sing the same songs and as soulfully as ever. But tunes played by fewer pipers or a lonely bugler at dawn are received by those who remember glorious concerts more as elegies now for those we loved and lost.

To Geoff Giles and his feathery friends: Requiem aeternam dona eis. 🎵

Read the tribute online here: <https://rogergosden.com/2020/02/28/the-dawn-chorus-requiem-for-a-birder/>

REMEMBERING KAREN GRASS



Karen Grass, 71, Territory of Hawaii – Williamsburg, VA

Karen Grass's life adventure was suddenly and unexpectedly cut short on Sunday, March 8. She leaves behind her husband (Bill), their 3 children (Trip, Kate, & Kristi), 3 grandchildren, 4 granddogs, and a multitude of others she loved. Her adventurous spirit became evident at an early age when she snuck out of her house at age 3 to ride her trike more than a mile to her father's job. That spirit never stopped and she managed to pedal over 10,000 miles with her husband down the Pacific Coast Highway from Canada to Mexico, on trails throughout the US, and through 14 European / Eastern European Countries. She made friends at every stop.

As much as Karen loved the life of post-retirement two-wheeled adventure, it took over 50 years in education before she got there. She taught almost every grade level before spending time at the state and county level, then back again to York County School District as the principal of Grafton Bethel Elementary School where she retired in 2014. In the six short years of retirement, Karen started fiddle lessons, rediscovered her love of knitting, and had recently started serving on the board of St. Vincent's Center for Children with Disabilities in Haiti.

When she wasn't cycling, giving Bill more house projects to work on, or visiting her children and grandchildren, Karen's biggest passion was her involvement with the Virginia Master Naturalists. After becoming a member of the Historic Rivers Chapter of the Virginia Master Naturalists, she quickly volunteered for the education committee, and found ways to work in the local schools where she shared her passion for nature. At the time of Karen's death, she was working to graduate the current cohort of the Virginia Master Naturalists.



Even in death, Karen continued to give selflessly as an organ donor and her family would encourage everyone to consider this option.

Due to the current health crisis and inadvisability of gatherings, there will be no memorial service for Karen. While living, Karen knew the love of those whose lives intersected with hers and her family holds that love and sympathy of everyone in their hearts. If you would like to honor Karen, a donation may be made to the Karen Grass Scholarship / Projects Fund of Historic Rivers Chapter Virginia Master Naturalists. Checks may be mailed to the Historic Rivers Chapter Virginia Master Naturalists, PO Box 5026, Williamsburg, VA 23188. Checks should be made payable to "Historic Rivers Chapter Virginia Master Naturalists" notated for "Karen Grass Fund". The generous contributions of those who were touched by Karen in so many ways will allow her passion for people, nature, and knowledge to continue shining its light in the years to come.

— Shared by Karen's family

Reflections from SHIP

By Pat Murphy

Last winter my Cohort XIII training mentor, Karen Grass, suggested that I bring a nature club to James River Elementary where I work part time as a reading tutor. In the spring of 2019, our Nature Explorers Club under the sponsorship of the PTA began. FUN!

Early in September of this school year, I followed up to again offer our club with the continued backing of Karen, Sherry Brubaker, and Rick Brown. I was told there would be no PTA clubs this year. Perhaps we could offer a SHIP (School Health Initiative Program) club through the district. We were too late to be confirmed for the fall SHIP clubs and I was reminded that JRE has a garden club anyway. “Hmmmph!” I exclaimed to Karen. “We are not a garden club!” I made some noise, volunteered in the garden club, and was given the opportunity to pursue a spring SHIP club slot if I could send a program summary to the district before Thanksgiving.

Our first club meeting was on February 24th. We did some cooperative play using hula hoops; talked about why we love nature; played a mystery bag game honing our descriptive language skills to figure out who matched whom with the same mystery item; made notices of where James River Elementary is relative to the James River; and did a general walkabout observing what is natural and human made at JRE. Karen shared her love of cycling as it allowed her to see all there was to see outdoors. The picture of her mystery bag match is in my mind’s eye as sometimes we forget to take that photo. She found her mystery match with Ruby who held up a big piece of lichen both ladies beaming smiles. I had a note-to-self moment. Make a lichen pin for Karen for the last day of SHIP. She would have enjoyed.

Our 2nd club meeting involved how and why we recycle and how and why nature recycles. We spent time sorting trash, sharing the different critters that are found below and in the leaf litter, and gently scraping the soil in search of those critters. As I sent out my plan for the session’s events, I asked for input on whether we should roll logs or not. My concern was for the salamanders that would have been uncovered prematurely. Karen texted a herpetology friend whose specialty is salamanders and reported back that we could roll logs as long as everything is put back the way it was found so as



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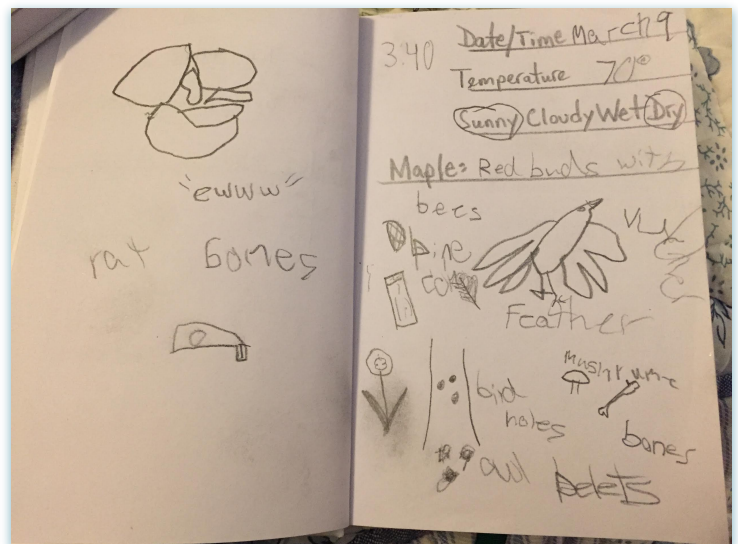
not to crush anything. Of course Karen had a herpetology friend who knew just how to counsel us:)

Our 3rd club meeting took place on Monday, March 9th, the day after Karen died. Dr. Grass as I loved to call her even though the title that she worked so hard to attain was not how she wanted to be addressed. “Just Karen” was her nom de pen for me. Dr. Grass would have loved our 3rd session! It was a bright, sunny, 70 degree day at James River Elementary. We were outside on a scavenger hunt looking for 8 evidences of wildlife in the woods. We looked at owl pellets, deer bones, poison ivy, and we even found the headwaters to Grices Run, the small trickling stream leading out to the James River. I had placed items to be found along our trail finishing off with 18 *Chesapecten jeffersonius* fossils down below the chute to our stream. I did my risk management the day before but our 18 explorers were so excited by the discovery of their state fossil that we had two end up with a large slathering of mud on their light colored clothing. Ooooooops! Karen would have laughed! Rick laughed! Sherry was doing a sweep for garbage with one very focused garbage picker so she smiled from a distance.

I saw our two mud victims in the hall on Wednesday. Khaniya and Ethan were both in very good spirits about the club. Khaniya told me all about walking to school that morning and noticing a thick poison ivy vine covered with trash! Energy and notices in nature. That’s what we want these kiddos to pass along to each other and to the adults in their lives.

SHIP clubs were cancelled on Thursday. School was cancelled on Friday. In the wake of this, there are club bird feeders to fill and 6 Longleaf pines to protect. Social distancing is the new catch phrase. Karen, how would you have responded to this? You, who always checked in with others, knowing just the right thing to ask or say or do. You will forever be in my mind’s eye smiling with a twinkle as you bond with a new nature explorer or put yourself through a hula-hoop in a circular bond with 18 3rd-5th graders.

Thank you for welcoming me to Virginia, to the chapter, and for always asking me how I’m doing. It was much too soon to lose you as a mentor, as a teammate, as a friend, but I know your spirit is ever-present and will continue to smile upon our successes and our Ooooooops!!!





Karen's Mile Pick-Up Crew

Greetings,

Karen would have been proud of the 18 of us who arrived at Chickahominy Riverfront Park in March to pick up litter/trash along the mile between markers 6 and 7.

Here are a couple of photos! Mike Whitfield took the photo of Alice Kopinitz, Les Lawrence, and Seig Kopinitz (left to right) at the mile 6 sign.



Bill Grass and daughter Kate helped out too!

The group photo in the parking lot shows us practicing “social distancing” before we set off on the trail.

We collected four big bags of trash (as far as I know).

Many thanks for everyone's help today! Being outside is wonderful way to ride out the pandemic.

Stay safe everyone and wash your hands often (better than hand sanitizer).

See you soon, I'm sure.

Shirley Devan

The Last Field Trip

These photos were shared by Karen Grass' daughter, Kate Grass, and are from Karen's phone. These were taken by Karen herself at the last class for Cohort XIV at the Bassett Trace Nature area in Colonial Williamsburg on the morning just before her untimely passing.

- Rick Brown



What To Do... What To Do...

Since HRC volunteers are discouraged from working “together” on projects or attending meetings/gatherings, you can earn some HRC hours on projects you can do alone and/or at home — and record in VMS.

With that in mind, Shan Gill and I have assembled a list of projects you can do “alone” with a note or two about each one.

A1c — Chapter newsletter — Lisa Reagan, HRC newsletter editor (hrcnewsletter@gmail.com), would LOVE a note from you about an observation or an adventure PLUS photos. You can prepare a couple of sentences for her (length is really not important!) and send along a photo — or not! Record your time to Project A1c — Chapter Newsletter

C1a1 — Wildlife Mapping “Backyard” — if you record birds and wildlife in your yard or neighborhood **and** enter your observations in eBird or iNaturalist, then you can record hours for Wildlife Mapping in your backyard.

eBird — easy to set up a free account: <https://ebird.org/home>

iNaturalist — easy to set up free account: <https://www.inaturalist.org>

C2K — Project FeederWatch. <https://feederwatch.org/join-or-renew/> The 2020 effort for this project ends April 3 so you can still enter your feeder station birds for a few weeks. After April 3, enter your observations in eBird!

C2m - Nature’s Notebook — USA National Phenology Network
https://www.usanpn.org/natures_notebook

C2u — Project Osprey Watch — Contact Cathy Flanagan, flanagan.catherine@gmail.com

C4a — Project Budburst. <http://www.budburst.org>

C4c — Community Collaborative Rain, Hail, and Snow Network (CoCoRaHS) — You need a special rain gauge for this project. But you can start any time.

S1e — Williamsburg Botanical Garden Support. Go any time to pull weeds!

S2e — Keep James City County Beautiful — “Team Up 2 Cleanup” — if you’re out meandering around, pick up some litter/trash and dispose of it in your home trash can. It all counts to keeping James City County Beautiful.

S4a — Bassett Trace Nature Trail Stewardship — Go anytime to clear litter and branches from the trail.

THEN REMEMBER TO RECORD YOUR HOURS!

Be safe...we’ll see each other soon I hope.

Shan Gill, Volunteer Service Projects Chair
and Shirley Devan, Membership Chair
Historic Rivers Chapter

FUN FIELD NOTES!

I threw out an old bouquet of cut roses into the backyard, in a bunch by our house. A couple hours later I noticed some animal or birds had intentionally lined up rose petals in a delicate pattern going down our back steps--only on one side-- and also on a stump nearby.

I was puzzled what could have done this. Then, this morning, I saw a squirrel take some remaining petals, ruffle them up with his mouth, and place them carefully on the other side of the steps! Then he went to the stump and ruffled up a couple more petals.

I enjoyed seeing this.

Stay healthy!
Judy Zwelling



Photo of a baby tortoise in her backyard, by Kathi Mestayer

FUN FIELD NOTES!



Here is a cell phone photo of the gang on March 8 at JCC Marina.

We have adopted this site through the Keep JCC Beautiful program but have intertwined the stewardship project with the bluebirding Citizen Science activity.

So, here you have eight folks (nine if you count me behind the camera) and our focus is dual – stewardship and citizen science. It's a nice way to blend the two and to make JCC Marina look even better.

From Left to right:

Front row—Christina Clarke, Sherry Brubaker, Connie Reitz

Back row – Thad Hecht, Cindy Baker, Jeanette Navia, Patty Maloney, Scott Hemler

— Judy Jones



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!