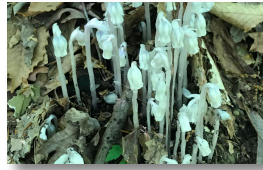
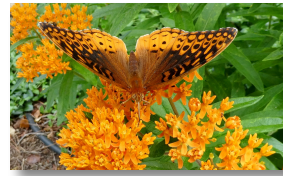




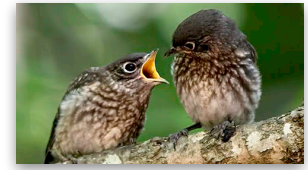
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THE NATURALIST

THE HISTORIC RIVERS CHAPTER OF VIRGINIA MASTER NATURALISTS



The President's Message

By Rick Brown

Lisa efficiently operates this newsletter on a deadline every month, which I invariably miss. This portion is titled "The President's Message" which assumes every month I have news to report or topics to discuss. With quarantining and distancing, there is little to write about the Chapter's activities. Our projects are suspended. We find our once full calendars, now suddenly empty and we are each left to individually fill in our days as best we can, taking care not to infect each other. And yet, in small ways, our Chapter pushes forward.

I have been reading mysteries or thrillers and watching more movies on my iPad than I had in past months. I have become fascinated with the PBS *Nature* series with the animal spy-cam videos. My wife Sarah the smart one in this house, has joined an online reading group that is reading *War and Peace*. They read several pages every day and have an online discussion led by an academic expert. She also writes-every day. Each of us have our own ways of coping. We turn to familiar pastimes, exchange emails or texts with friends,



The HRC Board of Directors meeting through Zoom on May 6, 2020.

Facetime with family, watch favorite movies, and re-read favorite books. I keep a list of quotes that I can turn to when I need some bucking up. So, this month, I decided to share some of the words that I have turned to over the past two months. Here is a sampling, very randomly selected. There may or may not be a "message" here.

"I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to

Continued on page 2

The President's Letter, continued...

teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived." - Henry David Thoreau

"There's more than one answer to these questions pointing me in a crooked line. And the less I seek my source for some definitive; closer I am to fine." - The Indigo Girls

"No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main; if a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less, as well as if a promontory were, as well as if a manor of thy friend's or of thine own were; any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind, and therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee." - John Donne

"But Mouse, you are not alone,
In proving foresight may be vain:
The best laid schemes of mice and men
Go often askew,
And leaves us nothing but grief and pain,
For promised joy!" - Robert Burns

"Eventually, all things merge into one, and a river runs through it. The river was cut by the world's great flood and runs over rocks from the basement of time. On some of the rocks are timeless raindrops. Under the rocks are the words, and some of the words are theirs.
I am haunted by waters." - Norman Maclean

"I am a part of all that I have met... Tho' much is taken' much abides; and tho' we are not now that strength which in old days moved earth and heaven, that which we are, we are; one equal temper of heroic hearts, made weak by time and fate, but strong in will to strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield." - Alfred, Lord Tennyson

"If you avoid the killer diseases and keep the degenerative ones under control with sensible diet and exercise and whatever chemotherapy you need to stay in balance, you can live nearly forever." - Wallace Stegner

"I'm not the smartest fellow in the world, but I can sure pick smart colleagues." - Franklin D. Roosevelt

"There is a pleasure in the pathless woods,
There is a rapture on the lonely shore,
There is society, where none intrudes,
By the deep sea, and music in its roar:
I love not man the less, but Nature more" - Lord Byron

"Last year we said, 'Things can't go on like this', and they didn't, they got worse." - Will Rogers

"In every walk with nature one receives far more than he seeks." - John Muir

"Lawyers are like other people--fools on the average; but it is easier for an ass to succeed in that trade than any other." - Mark Twain

Send me your own favorite quotes if you'd care to share. Stay healthy and take care of each other.

Rick



The National Parks' New Social Distancing Posters Are Hilarious (and Perfect). See the full collection [here](#).

HRC MEETINGS

Board Meeting - June 3 at 6:30 pm

Chapter Meeting - June 10 at 6:30 pm

All meetings are through Zoom.

Meeting Recording from MAY 13, 2020
can be accessed by clicking [HERE](#).

Access Password: 7w&%61NH



Photo collage and photos by Jim Easton

PROTHONOTARY WARBLER PROJECT REPORT

By Shirley Devan

Master Naturalist and CVWO Volunteer Jim Easton is again monitoring the seven Prothonotary Warbler boxes along the Powhatan Creek Trail in James City County, often with help from CVWO President Brian Taber. This is an approved Historic Rivers Chapter Project in partnership with Coastal Virginia Wildlife Observatory. It is the only Prothonotary Warbler monitoring project underway this spring. Efforts at other trails have been curtailed because of social distancing.

This collage shows the nesting cycle of the Prothonotary Warbler. The first clutch usually has five eggs and the nestlings hatch after 14 days of incubation by the female. Mom and dad are critical in keeping the nestlings fed. If something happens to one of the adults, it is unlikely that all nestlings will fledge. Incredibly, the nestlings fledge in just 10-11 days. Mom and dad escort them into the woods and continue to feed them for several weeks as they learn to forage for themselves.

FINDING FERNS



By Adrienne Frank

Walking in the woods is such a pleasure during the spring. Just as some of the flowering plants appear, so do the ferns. In the winter, we only see Christmas Fern, and in the spring, it is such a pleasure to see the variety of emerging fern species.

You can identify the **Christmas Fern** easily because it is still green at Christmastime and it has stocking shape bottom leaves. If you look at the leaves at the bottom of a frond, you can see the extra lobe that looks like the toes of a stocking or Santa's Boot.

In the past few weeks, Gary and I have been walking around the loop at Warhill Sports Complex and found fern fiddleheads unfurling and fruiting bodies appearing. With the new growth, the ferns were gorgeous and fun to identify.

Two of the largest ferns in our area are the Cinnamon and Royal Ferns. The **Cinnamon Fern** is a favorite, because in spring, its spore-bearing fronds are cinnamon in color and grow to about 4 feet tall. It likes the moist, boggy areas and those abound at Warhill. The **Royal Fern** is often shrub like and sometimes 5-6 feet tall. It likes wet sites, too. It has broad fronds with well-separated leaflets. We often see this along the banks of the Dragon Run.

Continued on next page...

**Cinnamon Fern on the left.
Royal Fern on the right.**



Christmas Fern – Stocking feet



Rattlesnake Fern is one local species that sends up fertile fronds in the spring. The end of the fertile blade has yellowish-green bead-like capsules that look like a rattlesnake's tail. Two other similar looking species of Grape Fern, send up their fertile fronds in the fall. These species grow to about 10-12 inches and the soft looking leaflets are triangular in shape.

The **Sensitive Fern** has large leaves with wavy and tiny saw-toothed edges. It is sometimes confused with **Netted Chain Fern** but these leaves are more rounded and the margins smooth. With the Netted Chain Fern, you can see a tiny chain-like pattern in the leaves.



Rattlesnake Fern earlier in the spring



Sensitive Fern



Netted Chain Fern



Up Close View

Continued on next page...

Southern Lady Fern has lacy fronds that are tapered at both ends, with the bottom two leaflets sticking out like dainty shoes. When mature, the stem is dark red and it grows up to 2 feet in height. The **New York Fern** is tapered at both the top and bottom of the frond, like New York City, it burns the candle at both ends. It often has a green stem and the leaflets keep getting smaller as it reaches the ground.



New York Fern



Southern Lady Fern

Bracken Fern tolerates the sun and you can find it in large groups on the side of the road or path. It sends up a stem about 2-3 feet tall and the leaves appear to stretch out on top. People eat the fiddleheads, but the mature plants is toxic.

These are the most frequent ferns in the Warhill woods. I hope these helpful hints will get you started identifying ferns in the woods near you. Happy fern hunting.



Bracken Fern

INDIAN PIPES

THE GHOSTS OF THE FOREST



By James Webb

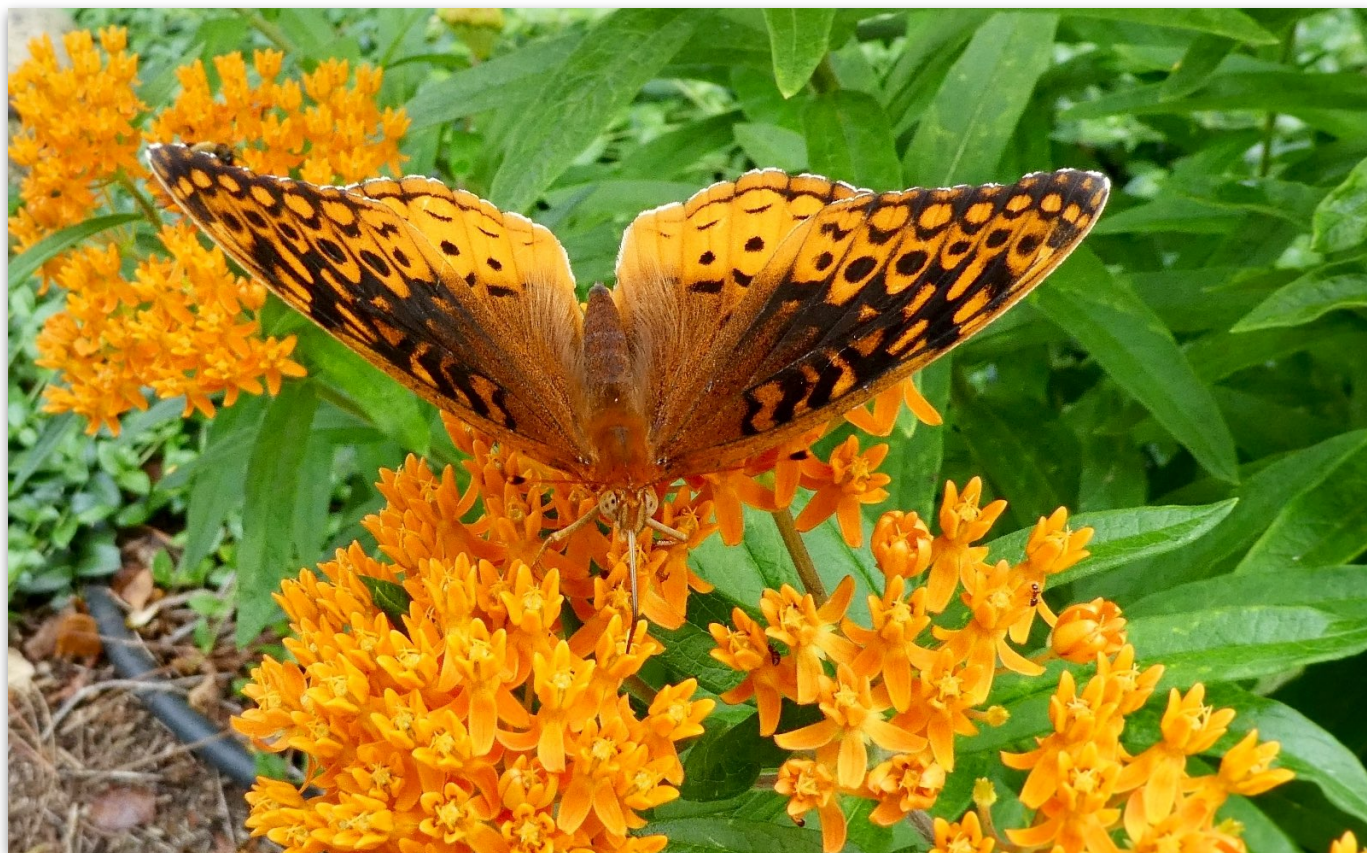
It is always interesting to stumble across something unique (or different) while hiking the trails around Williamsburg and James City County. Recently, while hiking the Bassett Trace trail, a cluster of Indian Pipes (*Monotropa uniflora*) were blooming along the side of the trail. Indian Pipes are usually found in moist shady areas in a dense forest. Indian Pipes are also known as the Ghost Pipe with an interesting Indian folklore story (but that is another story to be told later).



Indian Pipes on the Bassett Trace Trail, by James Webb

The Indian Pipe is a member of the Monotropaceae family and only produces one bloom (flower) per stem. What makes the Indian Pipes unique is that this plant is usually all white during its early bloom. It does not contain any green leaves to photosynthesize like other plants found in nature.

So how does it grow if it does not have green leaves? The answer lies below our feet. The Indian Pipe gets its nutrients from the tree roots nearby. As trees firmly spread its roots in the soil, it establishes a relationship with the mycorrhizal fungus in the soil. According to Tom Volk (University of Wisconsin-La Crosse and botit.botany.wisc.edu), the roots from the Indian Pipe “fools” the mycorrhizal fungus into thinking that the roots of the Indian Pipe is a fungus. Thus, gaining its nutrients from the nearby tree via the mycorrhizal fungus. A clever ecological interaction that is occurring just below our feet.



Great Spangled Fritillary on butterfly weed, by Jim Easton

BUTTERFLIES MAKING THEIR APPEARANCE IN JUNE!

By Jim Easton

Ten species of butterflies make their first local appearance in June. Be on the lookout for:

Family Lycaenidae-Gossamer-winged Butterflies:

- Banded Hairstreak (*Satyrium calanus*)

Family Nymphalidae-Brush-footed Butterflies:

- Great Spangled Fritillary (*Speyeria cybele*)
- Common Wood-nymph (*Cercyonis pegala*)

Family Hesperiidae-Spread Wing Skippers:

- Hoary Edge (*Achalarus lyciades*)
 - Southern Cloudywing (*Thorybes bathyllus*)
- Sub-family Hesperiidae-Grass Skippers:
- Crossline Skipper (*Polites origenes*)
 - Southern Broken-dash (*Wallengrenia otho*)
 - Northern Broken-dash (*Wallengrenia egeremet*)
 - Rare Skipper (*Problema bulenta*)
 - Ocola Skipper (*Panoquina ocola*)



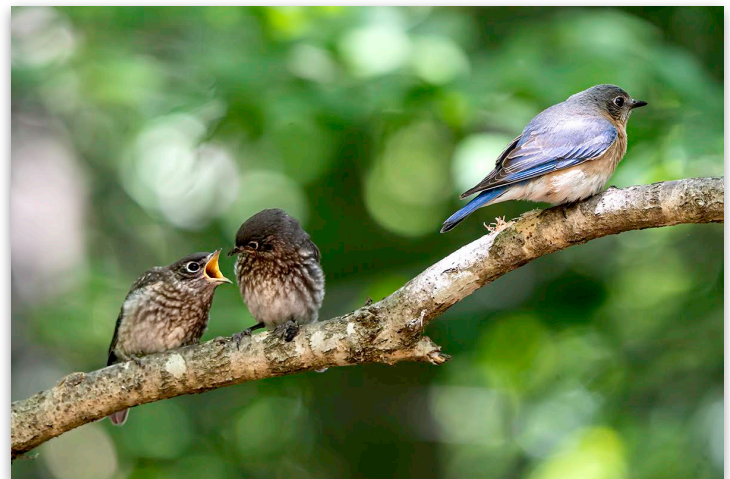
Ocola Skipper on Powhatan Creek Trail, by Jim Easton

SPRING BABIES!



Clockwise: Close-up of baby Bluebirds; full photo of baby Bluebirds and adult; more of baby Bluebirds; Chipping Sparrow baby and adult; Brown Thrasher adult and baby.

– Photos by Wendy Nelson



LITTER: NOT JUST UGLY

By Kathi Mestayer

Just a week or so before the Colonial Parkway closed down, we were going for a walk at one of the turnouts near Jamestowne Island (which was already closed to cars). Walking along the shore, dodging the greenbriar (it's native!), and marveling at the way that the trees adapt to living so close to the open water, we noticed a lot of....litter.

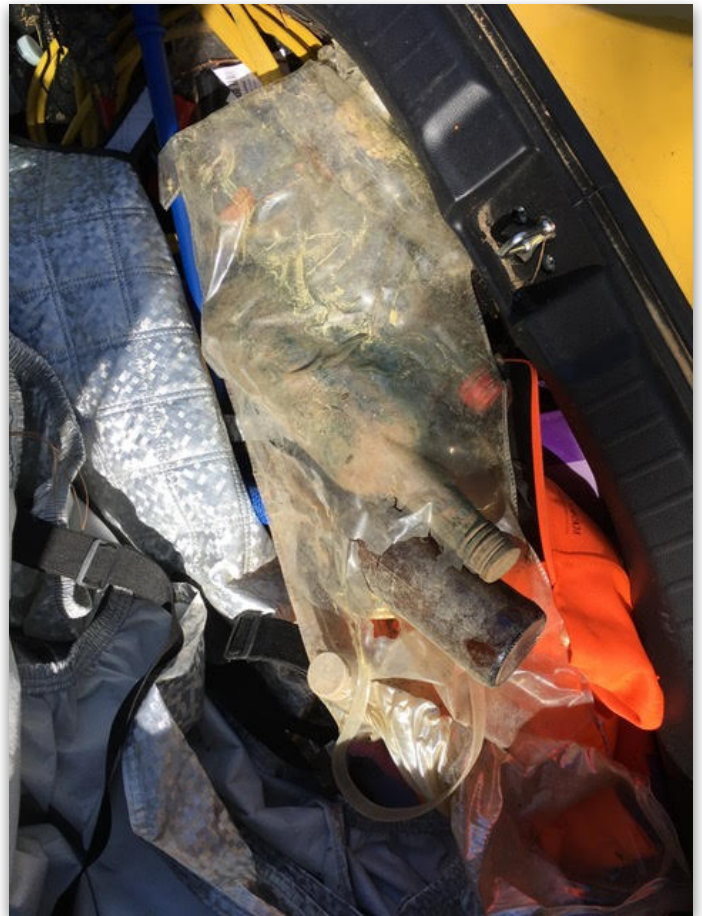
Bottles, cans, plastic bags....yuck! Here's what we picked up, and took away in the trunk, that day: see the photo on the right. We were lucky to find a plastic bag, so we had something to put all that stuff into.

It reminded me of an episode of a series that aired this past fall, called [Untamed](#), about the different kinds of wildlife that end up at the Wildlife Center of Virginia. The Center's staff takes in injured wildlife, rehabilitates it, and then, whenever possible, releases it back to its natural habitat. Sometimes, that's not possible (like a one-eyed owl), so those animals become the Center's "Ambassadors," which they take care of and occasionally use for educational purposes. Each episode is only half an hour, and includes an *amazing* amount of info (maybe it's the absence of commercials?)

My litter pick-up reminded me of the episode about [owls](#), [here](#). It's always touching to see the injured animals arrive, and be taken care of so gently and capably by the Center staff, and to hear the head vet talk about the species and what they do to fix the problem. This episode had a surprise ending, for me. The staff, owl on hand, talks about the kinds of injuries they see in wildlife, and says that the most-common cause is roadside collisions. He calls it the "message of the apple core.... no litter is safe litter." People often think that biodegradable litter is safe litter. But animals scavenge that litter, and get hit by vehicles. Often.

According to Ed Clarke, Director of the Center, when people toss an apple core out the car window, "What you don't stop to think about is that that little bit of human food waste can literally pull that entire food chain right to the edge of the pavement. Owls don't eat apple cores, but they do eat mice. And the mice are drawn to that food waste. An owl sitting in a tree along the mowed shoulder of a road...waits for that rodent to dart into the pavement, and will swoop down behind to grab him. But unfortunately, owls don't look both ways. And they're often hit by cars. And that's one of the most common injuries we see. Completely avoidable if people would just stop littering."

Wow. So litter is ugly, *and* dangerous. You will probably enjoy streaming some of the other episodes (the black bear and turtle ones are very interesting). Enjoy!



NEW Season of Untamed Started on May 21!

The Wildlife Center of Virginia and VPM has aired the first episode of their new series of twelve wildlife- and wildlife-rescue related videos, and the lineup looks pretty cool. An episode on people (and how we deal with wildlife in our yards), a whole episode on litter, and one focussed on wildlife rehab.

Per the website: The series will air on Thursday nights at 8:00 p.m. Eastern on VPM public television stations in Charlottesville, Harrisonburg, and Richmond. The new episodes will also be streamed via Facebook Live on [Wildlife Center of Virginia](#), [VPM](#), and [Science Matters](#) Facebook pages.

WILDFLOWER OF THE MONTH – MAY 2020

JOHN CLAYTON CHAPTER OF THE VIRGINIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY



Spiderwort (Tradescantia virginiana) taken by Jan Newton

By Helen Hamilton

A long-blooming native perennial like Spiderwort can fit into a lot of spaces in the home garden. Three-petaled flowers form a triangle – they are violet-blue with vivid yellow stamens growing in a 3' tall clump. Each flower is open for only a day, in the morning, but they bloom in succession from buds at the ends of stems, from April through July. The flower stems are surrounded by arching green leaves up to one foot long and one inch wide that are erect early in the season but are somewhat drooping in summer.

Spiderwort is not fussy about growing conditions – part shade, medium water, low maintenance – and tolerates clay soil, dry and wet soil. It would fit in a woodland or native garden, naturalized or as a border, along with other perennials that hide the sprawling leaves late in the season. The plant can self-seed and spread but dead-heading will prevent seed set. Spiderwort's blue-violet flowers are attractive with yellow flowers like Green and Gold (*Chrysogonum virginianum*) and Black-eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia hirta*). Bumblebees are the principal pollinators.

Two other species of *Tradescantia* grow in Virginia, differing in the appearance of the leaves and flowers. *T. ohiensis* grows in Virginia Beach and the western mountainous counties; *T. subaspera* has been located in the southwestern counties. *T. virginiana* grows west of Richmond and some southeastern counties.

The plant's genus name honors John Tradescant, gardener to Charles the First of England and a subscriber to the Virginia Company. John's son traveled to Virginia in the 1630s and sent spiderwort back to England where it became part of the English cottage gardens. It is called Spiderwort because the stems when cut secrete a sticky secretion that becomes threadlike and silky as it hardens, like a spider's web. "Wort" is an old English word for plant.

Hybrids are available in the nursery trade with red-purple, pink or white flowers.



A screenshot of the DGIF video of the Flyaway Team, including owner Rebecca Gibson.

BORDER COLLIES KEEP BIRDS AT BAY AT HRBT

A DGIF VIDEO ON YOUTUBE

The following link is to a DGIF article about changing the habitat on Ft. Wool to encourage Terns and Skimmers to nest there instead of the nearby Hampton Roads Bridge Tunnel. If you've driven through tunnel, I'm sure you've seen the carnage that occurs as birds fly too close to the road.

Several groups worked together to make this happen and cameras have been installed to observe the birds. Earlier work done to discourage nesting by the tunnel was discussed in a previous article on the DGIF site.

Read about the project [here](#).

— Janet Harper

I found the attached YouTube link on the VDOT website and thought it informative, innovative and funny as to how VDOT is now controlling nesting at the HRBT. Watch the video story [here](#).

— Bill Harper

FUN FIELD NOTES!



Enjoy the picture Shirley Devan has taken of my nest box. Male parent is busy attacking squirrels and red bellied woodpecker. My yard is very active right now. Lots of fun to watch the behavior of all the birds.

– Babs Giffin

Here are photos taken by Suzanne Stern on the Capital Bike Trail. This is the portion of the trail championed by Karen Grass.

– Rick Brown



Bluebirds in a tree cavity at York River State Park

– Judy Jones

MORE FUN FIELD NOTES

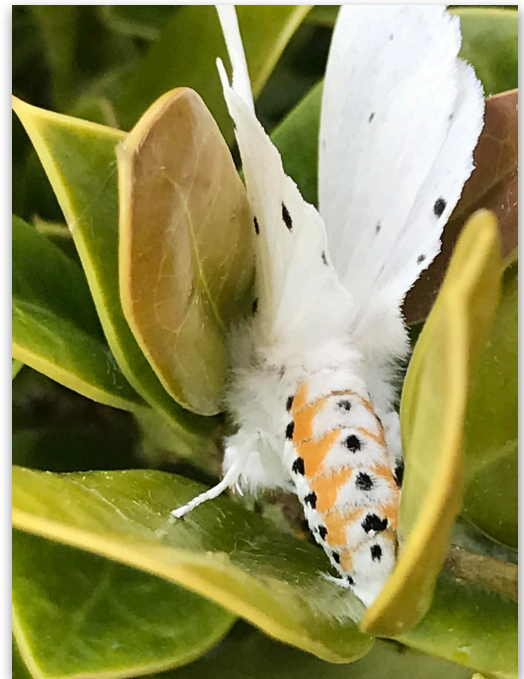


The blue blur zipping outside of our window at breakfast finally settled on the feeder for us to get a look at him: an Indigo Bunting, and the first one we've ever seen at this feeder in 18 years! (A Blue Grosbeak, very similar, sports a red shoulder patch.)

– Lisa Reagan

Virginia Tiger Moth

– James Webb



Here's a photo to make you smile! An Eastern Bluebird almost ready to fledge — from a box at the Williamsburg Botanical Garden April 28.

Caption perhaps? SHE: "Should I or shouldn't I?" ME: "Don't make me answer that question!"

– Shirley Devan



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!

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