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THE NATURALIST

THE HISTORIC RIVERS CHAPTER OF VIRGINIA MASTER NATURALISTS

President's Message

by Rick Brown

Virginia
Master
Naturalist

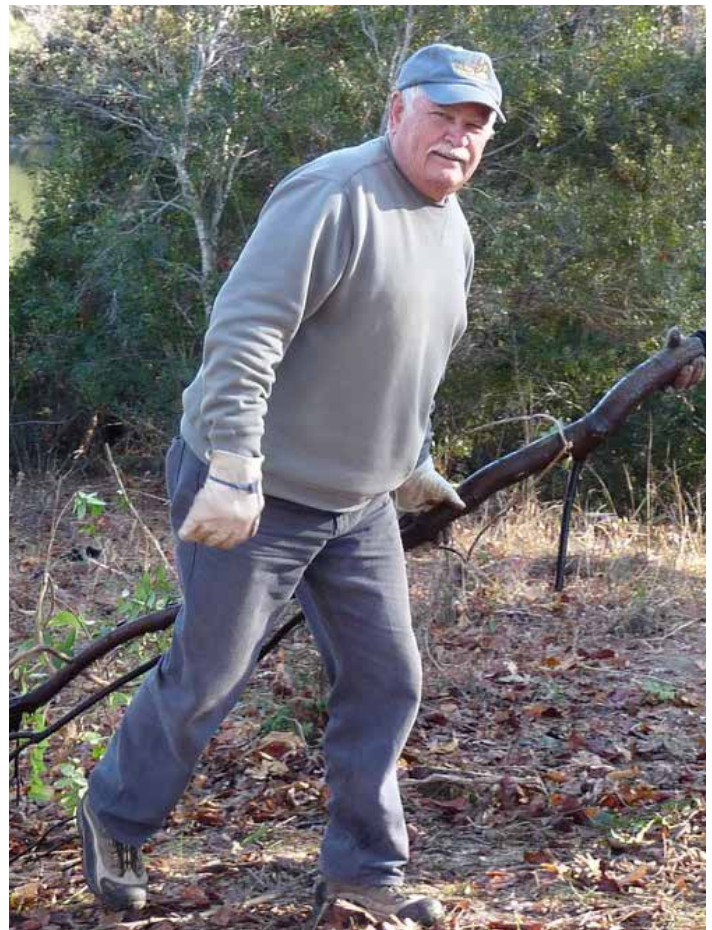


Les Lawrence Achieves 6,000 Volunteer Hours!

Recently the Virginia Master Naturalists created the Golden Circle for those who members who have achieved the remarkable goal of volunteering for 5,000 hours. Les Lawrence was one of our Chapter's charter members. I sent him a note of congratulations and said, "Now on to 6K". He wrote back and said he didn't think he would ever get there and was thinking of cutting back a little. I didn't believe him then because everywhere I go there was Les, and also at many other places that I didn't attend.

Well, last week he hit the new mark and becomes the third member of our Chapter to get there.

If you haven't met Les, you probably don't get out much. If you're new to the Chapter he will walk up and introduce himself and immediately become your friend. I first met Les when I was in Basic Training, on my first field trip. We all met in a parking lot somewhere and he came over and introduced himself and invited me to ride with him. We have been friends ever since. But, then Les has hundreds of friends. Les is one of those people that others just feel good being around.



*Les Lawrence at York River State Park Labyrinth, November 2011
Shirley Devan*

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When he's in the woods, he knows his stuff; everything that flies, crawls, hops or grows he can tell you a story about. Les earned 6,000 hours not because he had a goal. It just happened because he enjoys being around other people. And when others are around, Les is naturally willing to share what he knows.

I asked some of Les' other friends in the Chapter who have known him longer to also offer their observations:

Les Lawrence never met a stranger and very seldom met a project he did not like. He is always one of the first to volunteer for cleanup and trash pickup projects and does not retreat from projects requiring dirty hands and boots. The choice for the recipient of the Chapter's 2019 Nancy Norton Spirit Award was an easy one. Les Lawrence embodies the spirit of all that is good about the Historic Rivers Chapter. (Shirley Devan)

I was lucky enough to sit next to Les for Basic Training way back in Cohort IV. He made every class more fun with his humor and enthusiasm. Our chapter is great because of members like Les. (Dean Shostak)

In the last few years, Les has had a couple of health challenges, but did that stop him...NO! Almost every week, he comes out to do wildlife mapping at York River State Park. Some days he walks the whole route, while other days he leaves a bit early. We enjoy his company so much, he is a big part of the team, and is a great resource for trees, birds, and butterflies. He's often the first to offer an identification and sometimes the last to verify one. Prior to COVID, you could always count on Les for a big hug. Now, its just warm wishes and a big smile from behind the mask. I can't wait to get back to those needed hugs. (Adrienne Frank)

6,000 hours! What great news! He's such a jewel in our HRC crown! (Judy Jones)



*Les Lawrence with skunk skin at New Quarter Park, June 2017
Shirley Devan*



*Les Lawrence & Karen Grass ready for Warhill trash cleanup, April 2019
Shirley Devan*



*Les Lawrence at York River State Park, February 2014
Shirley Devan*

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My first contact with the Master Naturalist program was in the fall of 2010 at the HRC display at the Williamsburg Farmers Market. I was greeted by a very friendly, outgoing volunteer who enthusiastically explained the program and organization. It was Les Lawrence and he “had me at hello”. As a member of Cohort VI in 2011, I was eager to start participating in Volunteer Project activities as soon as we finished Risk Management. My first activity was at York River State Park collecting acorns under the guidance of Les Lawrence. A couple of days later I volunteered to build oyster reef balls at VIMS, and there was Les, who told me I would really love this project because I could swing a hammer as hard as I could (!). A few days later I helped at Wallerpalooza, an outreach event at Waller Mill Park, and there was Les teaching me about frogs and toads (“what’s the difference?”). Soon after I went to New Kent Forestry Center to measure trees, there was Les, then York River State Park Friday Follies, led by Les. You get the idea. Les is the quintessential Master Naturalist. He is involved, helpful, smart, well-informed, encouraging, funny, supportive, humble, and a great friend. It is an honor and a privilege to know and count as a friend and fellow Master Naturalist Les Lawrence. Congratulations on an outstanding achievement of 6000 volunteer hours Les. (Nancy Barnhart)

Les will tell you he’s not planning on getting to 7,000 hours, but don’t believe him. It is not in his nature to stay home when others are out and about. Count on Les to show up with a smile and a story. His license plate kind of says it all: “POP NAT”.

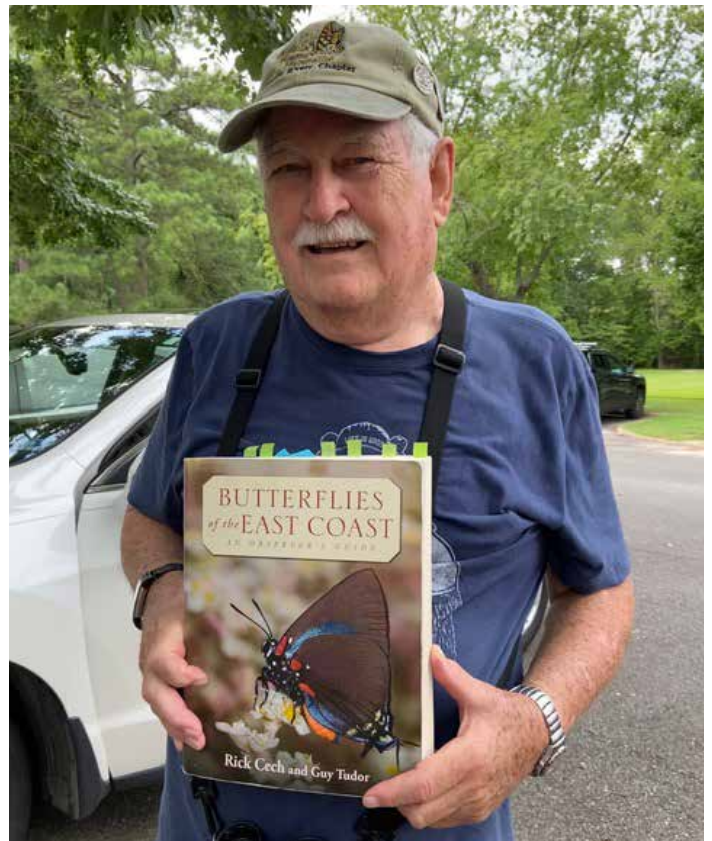
Congratulations, Les! As Glinda, says to Elphaba in the musical “Wicked”; “Like a seed dropped by a sky bird in a distant wood; who’s to say if we’ve been changed for the better? But because I knew you, because we knew you, we have been changed for good.”

Les, you really make being a Master Naturalist mean something. Thanks, now to 7K!

-Rick



*Les Lawrence accepts Nancy Norton Spirit Award, October 2019
Photographer Unknown*



*Les Lawrence at Williamsburg Area Butterfly Count, August 2020
Ginny Broome*

HRC Participates in JCC 43rd Annual Spring Cleanup

by Connie Reitz

Seven members of the Historic Rivers Chapter of the Virginia Master Naturalists participated in the 43rd annual JCC Countywide Spring Cleanup. The HRC team was responsible for litter pickup from the entrance to Lafayette High School on Longhill Road to the traffic circle at WISC on Warhill Trail.

Interesting finds during the pickup were: 3 car floor mats, one hubcap, a five hook fishing lure, a gold graduation tassel, a nice glass vase (alas, it was broken), and several parts and pieces of hair extensions. A total of 11 volunteer hours were contributed by these 7 members.

Historic Rivers Chapter team of 7. From L-R Rick Brown, Keith Navia, Jeanette Navia, Connie Reitz, Les Lawrence, Karen Hines, and Ginny Broome (photographer)



Photo: Ginny Broome

White Wagtail at Fort Monroe

by Carolyn Morgan, Caitlin Kufahl, and Sarah O'Reilly

During a visit to Fort Monroe in front of the old Chamberlin Hotel, a gray, white, and black bird flew in from the northwest landing on the rocks in front of the seawall. We noticed that the bird was nothing like many of the birds that we commonly see but we needed to make an ID.

The bird was black, grey and white. Chickadee...no. Some sort of nuthatch...no. Black and White Warbler...no again! Some quick photos, a trip to the Merlin App, and corroboration with more experienced birders and White Wagtail (*Motacilla alba*) was the ID.

A post to the VA Notable Bird Sightings and Discussion Facebook group confirmed our ID of a species never before recorded in Virginia nor the mid-Atlantic region!

Many determined this particular Wagtail to most likely have been blown in from Iceland or Greenland due to strong winds over the North Atlantic. It was determined that this bird is of the white-faced sub-species. Soon after, birding enthusiasts began making their way to Hampton to add this lifer to their list.

The Robin-sized Wagtail was hopping and foraging among the rocks for the duration of our visit. It was bobbing its long, charcoal tail up and down and was very social. The plumage was mostly grey with white on the outer wings with striking black cap, nape, breast, and throat that contrasted with a white belly. Pointed black bill with black eyes and legs.

Seeing a bird this rare was truly an amazing observation and one we will never forget!



White Wagtail (*Motacilla alba*) | Sarah O'Reilly

Earth Day Activity at Seaford Elementary School

By Deena Obrokta

To commemorate Earth Day, Girl Scout Troop 1346 joined Deena Obrokta (Cohort XII) at the Seaford Elementary Monarch Butterfly Garden for weeding, mulching and general clean up. Deena is the Schoolyard Outreach Partner for the school. This HRC project includes garden maintenance at the schools and indoor/outdoor education for the students.

Deena was joined by Janet Harper (Cohort X) and Thomas Pinelli (Master Gardener) for the event. Throughout the afternoon the scouts were educated about native plants and wildlife, and gained gardening skills. The Seaford Elementary garden is a Certified Wildlife Habitat and a Monarch Watch Waystation. It is home to a bluebird nest box with 5 eggs and a nest box with 6 Chickadee eggs. The water feature provides a habitat for a frog and multiple lizards. The scouts helped with the birdfeeders, insect hotel, Mason Bee houses and birdbaths.

The afternoon created some tired Girl Scouts and volunteers, but happily sustained our native plants and wildlife. For their volunteer work, the scouts were awarded the Girl Scout Earth Day badge. Additionally, Deena presented each volunteer with an Earth day bracelet and bookmark.



Janet Harper and Deena Obrokta



Girls for Girl Scout Troop 1346

It's Bluebirding Season 2021!

by *Connie Reitz & Judy Jones*

The Historic Rivers Chapter has over one hundred Chapter members monitoring bluebirds this season. We are supporting 20 bluebird trails, including our two new trails—Warhill and Griffin. Babs Giffin is the leader of the new trail at Warhill High School. This trail has five boxes located near the baseball field and encircling a pond. This was an existing trail but never monitored and all the boxes were in disrepair. Thanks to Babs, it's now up and running, with new 'digs' for our bluebird buddies. Our other new trail, with nine boxes, is also an updated and renewed trail, found on the William & Mary campus. Linda Morse is the leader of the Griffin Trail, which circles the Crim Dell area. Already, five members of W&M Cohort 1 have signed up to participate.

Because of the restrictions of COVID-19 virus, the 2020 bluebirding season was disrupted, our volunteers were disappointed, and many trails were unable to be monitored. Fortunately, this year we are able to monitor but, of course, there are a few restrictions -- small weekly teams, masks on, and no sharing of equipment on the trail. Also, the use of Google Sheets has allowed teams to share results quickly and everyone on the team has access to the trail information. Another plus is that team leaders have been very inventive with ways of covering the distances of different trails. Some carpooling by family teams or friend pods has been organized. Dividing trails into sections has helped reduced extended walking. Bicycles have become a great way to cover more boxes in less time. We are so grateful to all who worked so diligently to make this happen.

The big news is that the Ford's Colony trail, led by Sharon Plocher, has reported the FIRST bluebird eggs of the season, with the first egg laid on March 16th. It will be exciting to hear about the news of birds nesting on other trails. During the 2020 season, 753 bluebirds were documented as fledged and 33 chickadees. This is a great total since five trails did not monitor the boxes at all and monitoring on all trails

was halted during the early part of the season due to virus restrictions. We're excited to see what the 2021 season has to offer.

Finally, as the county co-coordinators for the bluebirding activity, we (Judy Jones and Connie Reitz) are working to replace Jan Lockwood and Lois Ullman, our trail coordinators for many years. However, like many HRC positions, we feel that this is a two-year commitment. As such, we will be leaving the coordinator positions after this season. To make the transition easier, we would like to mentor a new team to take on these responsibilities for the 2022-23 seasons. Hopefully, there is out there a new team of two (or more) who would 'shadow' us this season and be ready to jump in come 2022. So, find a friend and together take on this very seasonal activity. You'll have lots of support from the Historic Rivers Chapter to help you.



Photo: Sharon Plocher

Greensprings Interpretive Trail Cleanup

By Suzanne Stern

Below is a photo from our first official litter cleanup of the Greensprings Interpretive Trail. Pictured from left to right are Rick Brown, Jim Webb, myself, Jenny Kahn, and Les Lawrence. Also participating was Maddi Washburn. She insisted on being our photographer. Jenny, Maddi, and I are the leads on this project.



Photo: Maddi Washburn

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 at:

HRcenewsletter@gmail.com

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

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