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# THE NATURALIST

THE HISTORIC RIVERS CHAPTER OF VIRGINIA MASTER NATURALISTS

## The President's Message

*by Rick Brown*

When the time comes for the March President's Message, we will have elected a new president as well as having elected several members to various positions on our Board. So this is the last time that I will be sharing one of these messages with you.

Looking back, I am very thankful that I was asked to serve in the position of president of this Chapter for the past 2 years. I have really enjoyed it. The time has passed quickly and it is an understatement to say that we have had some unexpected issues that made for an interesting couple of years.

In early 2020 Shirley Devan and I were at the Bassett Trace Trail when she asked if I would be willing to serve as Chapter president. I was completely surprised because I had only been a member for a couple of years. I was honored, but felt totally unprepared for whatever it was a president had to do. I knew from my experience as a Board member that the organization functioned pretty smoothly, but I did not have a good handle on why.

Once I had accepted, my guiding principle was basically Hippocratic – "first do no harm." Shirley is

a very convincing nominator. She offered to help me in any way she could, recognizing I was bound to need help, from time to time.

I was a history major in college, so the first thing I did was to start reading the old newsletters, minutes of meetings, and annual reports to get a feel for the organizational backstory that was unfamiliar to me. Here is a sampling of what I learned about who we are:

Shirley Devan, as a charter member of Cohort I, was the editor of the first 2007 newsletter

There were 8 other presidents before me

The Big Tree/Remarkable Tree project was one of the first volunteer projects

Clyde Marsteller started the "Zoo in My Luggage" talks in 2008

Volunteers actually once logged their time on paper timesheets

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Ted Sargent hosted the first picnic in 2008

In 2011 the Chapter completed the Kiosk Project at Freedom Park

Geoff Giles suggested the Chapter create the first bluebird trail at Freedom Park in 2012

The Nancy Norton Scholarship Fund established in 2012 was named for one of our most active and beloved members

Jesse Nelson was our first scholarship grantee

In 2015 members actually participated in a prehistoric Mastodon dig

In 2014 the Bluebird trail at Bethel Elementary was dedicated to that school's principal, Dr. Karen Grass

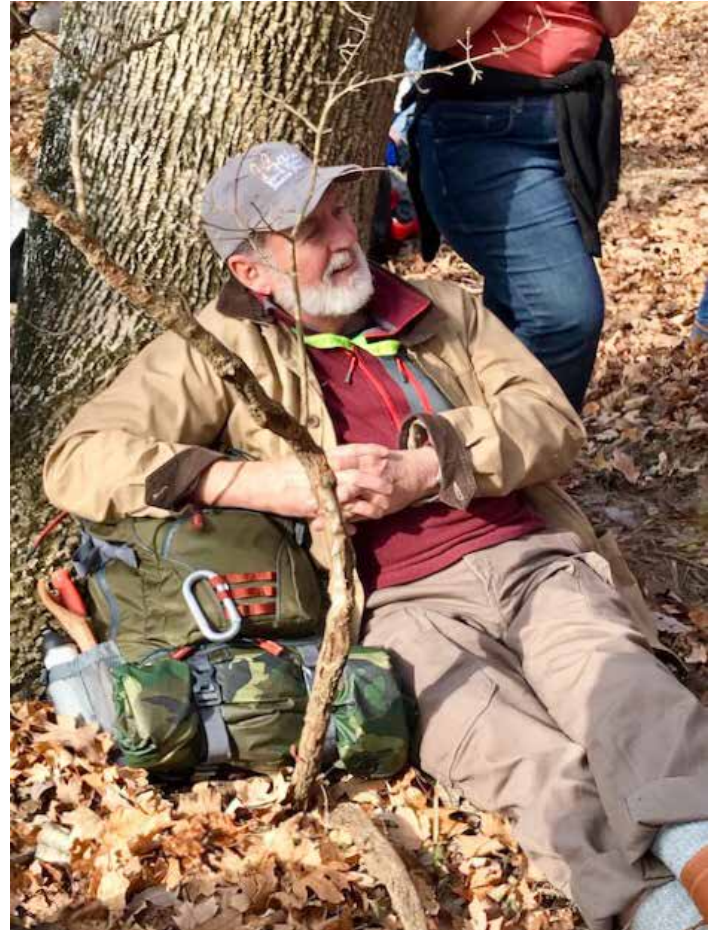
In 2012 when Patty Maloney was the Chapter president, we logged a total of 5,821 hours volunteer time

In 2014 Adrienne Frank and Gary Driscoll organized the first Butterfly Count

Judy Jones had already amassed 250 volunteer hours when she graduated from Basic Training in 2014

Depending on your Cohort, you may know some of those things because you were there. But for me, all of those examples were prologue. To understand "why", you must first learn "how." If you are as new as I am or newer, take it on faith that there is so much history built into the things we do routinely, that it would take hours and reams to explain adequately.

I mention these examples not just to show how our Chapter has evolved over the years, but also to demonstrate the tremendous amount of preparation it took to get us to where we are today. The consistent thread, visible through all of these efforts, was the



Ricklin Brown

ability of our members, old and new, to stimulate curiosity and interest for projects that attract others to volunteer. It is important that we understand and respect the good work of all those who have done the heavy lifting to bring us to where we are today. My thanks to all of you who have volunteered to serve in various jobs over the years. We have a greater depth of understanding and knowledge because of your efforts.

Connie Reitz and I got together recently to talk about the anticipated transition. She asked me what were the best and the worst parts of the job of president? For me, the most enjoyable parts involved interacting with others on the Board, members who do their jobs and work to make things better and more interesting so that our Chapter can continue to thrive. There were so many members serving on our board and leading our projects that to single anyone out for

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praise would diminish the significant contributions of others. The worst part of this job has to have been receiving the message notifying me of the loss of another one of our fellow members. Too many of our members have passed away the past two years.

Covid certainly changed the paradigm for volunteering and holding meetings. I would like to think that, as a group we saw the challenges and made changes to allow us to weather the restrictions imposed by a pandemic. We certainly tried. Now I look forward to a new president leading our Chapter in the years ahead and I make the same pledge to her that Shirley made to me – I will be available to help anytime in any way that I can when needed.

Take care of each other and Godspeed in the years ahead.

-Rick





## Cohort XV, Part Two

*This is Part Two of an ongoing series of introductions to the Historic Rivers Chapter's newest group of Master Naturalist Trainees: Cohort XV!*



### Deborah Jenne Humphries

I grew up in the Bronx, NY, and have lived in Europe and Scandinavia, the Northeast, deep South, mid-west and the southwest parts of the U.S and have moved "back to" Virginia 4 times. Spending summers growing up in northern Wisconsin, I

learned that we are a part of nature, not the masters of it; we do not own this living world. I held that knowledge close to my heart until I finally found this opportunity to explore all that it entails and how to help others understand ways to live by it.

I am an artist-photographer-collector-genealogist and researcher all in one. My career is in graphic design. Our geology field trip was the WOW moment for me. Wildlife mapping and tree measuring are my favorite projects (so far). I love birding and butterflies combined with photographic documentation.



### Jen Harrigan

I joined the Master Naturalist Program to learn more about trees, plants and animals as well as to meet other people that have similar interests. I camped in the Everglades for a month during my freshman year in college to study insects. I most enjoyed

the Plant ID walk at Freedom Park. This is where I discovered my obsession with fern identification!



### Michael Smith

Having just retired after spending a career in business, raising a family, and making ends meet, I felt a strong desire to learn about the natural world

in which we live. My mother-in-law and I have the same birthday, August 16th!



### Mary Jo (MJ) O'Bryan

I've always been an active volunteer, and when I retired early, a neighbor suggested the Master Naturalist Program.

I love music (my husband, Larry has a DJ hustle), nature (especially birds and butterflies), hiking, crafting,

English Springer Spaniels, dressing up/costume parties, cooking vegan, and biking on the land and water. One thing I'm especially good at is networking, organizing social events, and fundraising.

I recently started an HRC approved project with the help of my mentor, Janet Harper, to do outreach with the Tabb and York Libraries.

My most favorite thing so far has been the Geology class and fossil hunting. At 6'2" tall, I'm easy to spot so next time you see me out and about, come say hello!

## Glenda White (1951-2022) A Friend's Remembrance

by Rick Brown

I first met Glenda during orientation for Cohort XII, in 2017. She was friendly, the kind of person you feel you have known immediately upon meeting them. We sat together in class. We studied for the final exam together. We disagreed about the answer to one question. Of course she got it right, I got it wrong. We often showed up at the same meetings and activities. We were comfortable in each other's presence without saying so. We began monitoring bluebirds together on two trails each season. I kept a folding step stool in my car because Glenda was not tall enough to see into many of the bluebird boxes. We enjoyed watching the changing life cycles of the bluebird families.

We began measuring and nominating trees for the Virginia Big Tree Registry. Glenda took over the lead from Connie. Last summer Glenda was excited when she identified a new tree that had not been previously listed. It was a small loquat, *Eriobotya japonica*, on North Boundary Street in a little park called "Adam's Garden" situated on the W&M campus. Glenda said she had passed that tree every day on the way to her office when she was Budget Director, but had never paid attention to it until she began measuring trees. Although many trees were suggested to us to measure, that one was "Glenda's tree."

By coincidence, the day we went to measure it, a W&M grounds crew showed up to cut it down. Glenda made them call their supervisor, whom she knew personally, and when that man arrived, she talked him out of removing it, telling him she predicted it would be a new State Champion. She was right and that tree is now in the [Virginia record book](#) for everyone to admire, thanks to Glenda.



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In March 2020, Glenda was elected our Chapter Treasurer and immediately set out to improve things by suggesting that we should study the advantages to be gained by becoming a 501(c)(3) non-profit. She found a consultant who gave her expert advice. She spent a lot of time learning and studying tax codes and non-profit structures so that she could be prepared to respond to the questions people on the Board would ask. She was very thorough and organized in her approach and, when it came time for the Board to consider the proposal, it passed unanimously.

Following the completion of over a year's work on the formation of our new status, I saw Glenda get angry for the first and only time. It was the week before she went into the hospital. Some overzealous clerk in the York County tax office had notified her that, because she was the Chapter Treasurer and lived in York County, HRC would be required to pay property taxes on her cell phone and computer because she was using those items to transact Chapter business from "an office" located in the county. Glenda patiently tried to explain the governing laws to the clerk but, to no avail. She finally decided she would tell the people in the tax office that when she had to tend to the Chapter's business it would be done henceforth at a table in the library across the county line in Williamsburg. She was finally able to talk to a supervisor who agreed with Glenda and corrected the problem. And that's the way she approached everything. She was thorough and prepared and she knew when she was right.

If you go to the Virginia Big Tree website you will see photos of all the champion trees our team has measured over the past 2 years. Most of them include a picture of Glenda standing beside each tree. It is not because Glenda was vain and wanted to be in all the pictures. It is rather because she was five feet tall and provided the perfect reference point for

measuring the height of a tree. We used to smile over the fact that, when measuring any tree, the appropriate unit of measurement should be called the "Glenda." Displaying her usual grace, Glenda humored us and played along.

So, when you pass by a small loquat in Adam's Garden at the corner of Richmond Road and North Boundary Street, stop and admire it and know that that tree is actually 6.3 Glendas tall.

I miss her so very much. We all do.



## Cohort XV's Basic Training Field Trip to Bassett Trace Trail

*Photo by Rick Brown*

Some of the members of Cohort XV at their Field Training at Bassett Trace Nature Trail on February 12th, 2022.



# John Clayton Chapter, VNPS

## 37th Annual Native Plant Sale!

### Saturday May 14, 2022

### 9am-3pm

Rain Date May  
15th

Held at:



**Williamsburg Botanical Garden**  
**5537 Centerville Rd Williamsburg 23188**



With cooperation from the Williamsburg Botanical Garden and James City County Parks



**VIRGINIA NATIVE  
PLANT SOCIETY**

The John Clayton Chapter offers

- Experts to help you select plants and answer your questions
- Printed information and resources on native plant gardening
- A wide array of native plants suited to our region, the Coastal Plain of Virginia
- Plants that attract beneficial pollinating insects, use less water, and no fertilizer



JCC/VNPS is a nonprofit charitable organization dedicated to education and the proliferation of native species. Proceeds fund a variety of research projects and nature camp scholarships.



*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:

[HRCnewsletter@gmail.com](mailto:HRCnewsletter@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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