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# THE NATURALIST

THE HISTORIC RIVERS CHAPTER OF VIRGINIA MASTER NATURALISTS

## The President's Message

*by Connie Reitz*

It's Springtime and things are happening. Our Citizen Science efforts are in full force. The many bluebird trails are being monitored each week with several reporting boxes with eggs and others with nestlings. At the end of the season data from all the trails are compiled and reported to the Virginia Bluebird Society. Feeder Watch might be ending but don't worry, HawkWatch continues. And it's time to monitor ospreys, prothonotary warblers, and purple martins. The data collected on the activity of these birds are reported to Osprey Watch, Virginia Commonwealth University, and Martin Watch respectively.

The "Bat Team" has had a tremendous response to recruitment and training. During the summer teams go out weekly on different transects to monitor local bat activity. This data is reported to the North American Bat Monitoring Program.

And the butterflies are back in town. The volunteers who participate in wildlife mapping activities at the various sites report the finding of species and numbers to iNaturalist. Get your identification skills honed for the count to be done in our 15 mile wide butterfly circle area in July.



Volunteers participating in the turtle mortality monitoring project are going out twice each day to document turtle (live & dead) and snake sightings. This data is reported promptly after each survey to the NPS Resource Specialist and Seasonal Bio-technician at the Colonial National Historic Park. A report of 6 or more dead turtles in a day will trigger road closure to vehicles for at least a day, often more.

If you're more interested in volunteering with something which stays in one place for more than 2 seconds, you might want to volunteer with the invasive



*Connie Reitz and Rick Brown litter pickup at Powhatan Creek*

*Continued on next page...*



*Dean Shostak and Connie Reitz, working at Freedom Park planting buttonbushes*

plant removal, garden support & maintenance, or the local native plant sale activities.

Education and Outreach are finally getting opportunities to share information with the community after a 2 year hiatus. Butterfly walks, Spring Fest, and Earth Day celebration have provided our members with opportunities to interact with the public. BugFest is happening in May. Watch the Better Impact calendar and periodic emails for information about future events and plan to be a part of these.

Finally, it's almost time for the applications to be submitted for Cohort XVI acceptance. Do you know of someone in the community who would be a welcome addition to our membership? Make sure they are aware of the information on our website and the application time during the month of June.

Get outside and enjoy participating in one—or several—of the many activities the Chapter offers. Help take care of our community while having fun with friends.

Until next time,  
Connie Reitz

#### **Dates to remember:**

*May 4—HRC Board meeting, ZOOM, 6:30p*

*May 11—HRC Gen Meeting, ZOOM, 6:30p  
(guest speaker: Rick Reynolds of DWR Topic  
"Virginia Bats")*

*May 14—BugFest at Grafton Middle School  
Complex, 10a-2p*

*May 15—Spring Bird Count, all day*

# Purple Martins and Why Conservation of Bird Life is Important

by Cheryl Jacobson

HRC joined with the Williamsburg Bird Club and CVWO in efforts to support Purple Martins, as well as other species. In the past two years Purple Martin poles and gourds have been installed at five locations. They are York River State Park, New Quarter Park, Chickahominy River Front Park, Fords Colony, and VIMS. During this past month we have focused on preparing all five Purple Martin Colonies for the soon return of the Martins. Monitors have been trained for all the locations but you can still become involved as a monitor. Why is this work important?

*"Birds are important because they keep systems in balance: they pollinate plants, disperse seeds, scavenge carcasses and recycle nutrients back into the earth. But they also feed our spirits, marking for us the passage of the seasons, moving us to create art and poetry, inspiring us to flight and reminding us that we are not only on, but of, this earth."* — [Melanie Driscoll](#), Director of bird conservation for the Gulf of Mexico and the Mississippi Flyway

*"Healing the broken bond between our young and nature is in our self-interest, not only because aesthetics or justice demand it, but also because our mental, physical, and spiritual health depend upon it."* – **Last Child in the Woods** by Richard Louv

These two quotes beautifully express why we study birds and why we care about what is happening to them. The loss of any species is a great loss to all of us, so it behooves us to be active in knowing how our behaviors are impacting all species and in knowing what bird species especially need our help. If you were alive in 1970, (and if not you, your parents,) more



Purple Martin (*Progne subis*)

than one in four birds in the U.S. and Canada have disappeared within your lifetime which translates to a loss of 2.9 billion breeding adult birds.

According to [research published online in September by the journal Science](#), wild bird populations in the continental U.S. and Canada have declined by almost 30% since 1970.

These bird losses are a strong signal that our human-altered landscapes are losing their ability to support birdlife. We have all heard the phrase "a Canary in a coal mine" and it is very relevant today. It refers to something or someone who, due to sensitivity to his, her, or its surroundings, acts as an indicator and early warning of possible adverse conditions or danger. The reference is to the former practice of taking caged canaries into coal mines. The birds would die if methane gas became present and thereby alert miners to the danger.

*"These large species losses signal an urgent need...to avert continued biodiversity loss and potential collapse of the continental avifauna."*  
- from the 2019 Science article

As Rosenberg, the study's lead author, points out, even if 30% of North America's birds are lost, there

are still 70% left to spur a recovery if conservation measures can be implemented. But action must come soon.

Our group has continued to recruit other partners in addressing the urgent needs of Purple Martins. Purple Martin numbers declined by almost 1% per year between 1966 and 2015, resulting in a cumulative decline of 37%, largely due to habitat loss and competition of nonnative House Sparrows and European Starlings. This decline continues and without conservation this species may not be enjoyed by future generations. Traditionally, Purple Martins nested in natural cavities but now, especially in the East, they rely on humans. By providing Purple Martin housing, it is possible to ensure the future of Purple Martins.

#### HOW CAN WE ALL HELP CONSERVE OUR NATIVE BIRDLIFE?

1. *Join Purple Martin Societies etc. to support their efforts.*
2. *Restore habitat by planting native berry producing trees and plants.*
3. *Erect a gourd colony in a large open space and monitor. Uncap your chimney to assist chimney Swifts.*
4. *Control populations of browsing animals that destroy habitat.*
5. *Encourage homeowners to retain tree stumps with cavities for nesting birds.*
6. *Encourage homeowners to restrict pesticides which kill insects most birds and chicks feed on and herbicides which poison our waterways and kill fish.*

The answer to why is this important is because the 2.9 Billion missing birds are calling us to ACTION NOW.



Shan Gill setting up Purple Martin Project



Bill Vanzetta setting up Purple Martin Project



A Successful Housing of Purple Martins!

# A Weekend of Outreach for the Historic Rivers Chapter

by Janet Crowther

Here are some photos from the weekend of April 23-24's educational outreach events!



HRC team at Williamsburg Regional Library Spring Fest. April 24, 1-4pm. We focused on Amphibians and Reptiles. left to right: Dave Stansbury, Therese Stansbury, Brad Glasebrook, Janet Crowther



WRL Spring Fest. April 24  
left to right: Dave Standbury, Brad Glasebrook, Shirley Devan, Therese Stansbury



HRC team at York River State Park, Earth Day. April 23, 1-3pm. We focused on Birds and Pollinators.. left to right: Nancy Barnhart, Rick Brown, Jenny DeVasher, George Sallwasser, Roxann Machamer



WRL Spring Fest April 24.  
left to right: Therese Stansbury, Dave Stansbury, Brad Glasebrook

## Cohort XV, Part Four

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



**Therese Stansbury**

I joined Cohort XV because as a native Virginian I want to learn more about the natural habitats of eastern Virginia. I love to ride my bike and make art. I am a dependable team player who likes to dive in and get her hands dirty. My favorite thing so far in our

training has been the fossil dig.



**Jenny DeVasher**

I joined Cohort XV to learn more about the natural world I love, but also to give myself an enjoyable way to be active and meet people after my twin son and daughter left for college in the fall.

I love bird-watching and being near the water. I'm a former journalist and teacher, and work as a technical editor at NASA Langley Research Center. My favorite Basic Training experiences have been walking in the woods with people who appreciate all the treasures we encounter.



**Karen-Joyce Giese-Koch**

I joined Cohort XV after encouragement from Master Naturalists I met in the field conducting bird counts, and at local parks. After an upbringing with naturalists/environmentalist parents in Alabama, I spent most of my adult life in New Mexico and Indonesia where I studied nature, joined birders and

native plant enthusiasts, and followed geologists and volcanists up mountains. My specialty is interpretation/education, professionally as an English instructor and tour guide. My true love is reptiles and amphibians; that was my favorite class. My favorite field trip was to VIMS.

**Brad Glasebrook**

I joined VMN-HRC to gain information and have access to folks with similar interests. I took tennis lessons at age 50 and 18 years later it remains fun and outlet for my competitive nature. After retirement I miss teaching children. Favorite thing so far: the marsh walk at the YRSP field trip.

## Better Impact Tidbits

*Virginia Master Naturalists*

Are you achieving a volunteer service milestone soon but don't really want the pin? The VMN office is conducting an inventory of these pins in preparation for ordering more for Mid-year Recognitions! Did you know that you can opt out of receiving pins in Better Impact if you don't want them?

We have assumed that everyone does want them so the default setting is "Yes"!

But if you'd like to opt out, you can go to :

- **MyImpactPage.com**
- **Login**
- **click "My Profile"**
- **click "Additional Information"**
- **Update any items you haven't done recently and then...**
- **Click "VMN Recognition Item Preference" box. Be sure to update that if you want to change your preference.**

And be kind to Judy Jones, membership chair. Get your hours documented now!

## Continuing to be Covid Vigilant

*by Connie Reitz*

I know you are tired of hearing this but I need to say it again. Thank you to all of our members as we continue to be vigilant in preventing the spread of the Covid virus. Many of you are current with vaccine injections and boosters. Others have opted not to have the vaccine or are unable to receive the vaccine. But all of you have been great in trying to prevent the spread while volunteering and learning together.

Some of you have tested positive and promptly followed medical guidelines before interacting with the public. You have quickly let those who were exposed be aware, also. Others have been exposed have followed guidelines for testing and isolation. We as a Chapter are doing what we can to protect each other and our community.

Our meetings on Zoom are another way to help reduce unnecessary exposure, limit travel, and meet the request of speakers. Our HRC Board meetings in May and June as well as the May HRC general meeting will be on Zoom. The June 2022 HRC meeting may be an outside event. Stay alert for news of this meeting.

There will not be a HRC general meeting in July and August. Come back rejuvenated in September! The HRC Board will not meet in July but will meet in August.

Stay strong. Stay healthy. Stay happy.  
Connie Reitz HRC President

# John Clayton Chapter, VNPS 37th Annual Native Plant Sale! Saturday May 14, 2022 9am-3pm

Rain Date May  
15th

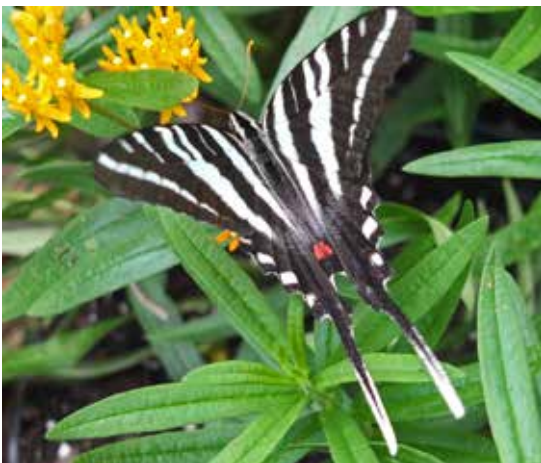
Held at:



**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!

The Historic Rivers Chapter is a not-for-profit 501(c)(3) organization.

A financial statement is available on request from the VA Office of Charitable and Regulatory Programs.

#### HRC-VMN Board of Directors

|   |                   |                               |
|---|-------------------|-------------------------------|
| Chapter Advisor                         | John Gresham      | VMN Appointed September 2018* |
| Chapter Advisor                         | Meagan Thomas     | VMN Appointed August 2020*    |
| <b>Officers/Executive Committee</b>     |                   |                               |
| President                               | Connie Reitz      | Elected March 2022            |
| Vice Pres./Programs                     | Shirley Devan     | Elected March 2022            |
| Secretary                               | Barbara Neis      | Elected March 2022            |
|   | Bob Thomas        | Elected March 2022            |
| Treasurer                               | Adrienne Frank    | Elected March 2022            |
| <b>Additional Board Members</b>         |                   |                               |
| Immediate Past President                | Rick Brown        | Effective March 2022          |
| Historian/Publicity/Media               | Deborah Humphries | Elected March 2022            |
| <b>Chairs of Standing Committees</b>    |                   |                               |
| Basic Training                          | Karen Hines       | Elected March 2020**          |
| Membership                              | Judy Jones        | Elected March 2022            |
| Volunteer Service Projects              | Jennifer Trevino  | Elected March 2022            |
| Continuing Education                    | Barbara Creel     | Elected March 2022            |
| Newsletter                              | Adam Ferguson     | Elected March 2021            |
| Education & Outreach                    | Janet Crowther    | Elected October 2021          |
|   | MJ O'Bryan        | Elected March 2022            |
| Hospitality                             | Jennifer Harrigan | Elected March 2022            |
| Field Trips                             | Sherry Brubaker   | Elected March 2022            |
| <b>At-Large Members</b>                 |                   |                               |
|   | Suzanne Stern     | Elected March 2021            |
|   | Nancy Barnhart    | Elected March 2022            |
|   | Shan Gill         | Elected March 2022            |
|   | Bill Harper       | Elected March 2022            |
| <b>Appointed Committees &amp; Teams</b> |                   |                               |
| Risk Management                         | Roger Gosden      | Appointed March 2019          |
|   | Patty Maloney     | Appointed March 2019          |
| Collections & Resources                 | Jennifer Trevino  | Appointed                     |
| Webmaster                               | Jeanette Navia    | Appointed                     |
| Williamsburg Landing Liaison            | Joe Beene         | Appointed                     |
| Basic Training                          | Linda Morse       | VMN approved 2019             |
| (W&M Coll of the Wild)                  |                   |                               |
| Better Impact Contact                   | Shirley Devan     | Appointed January 2021        |
| Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion          | Adrienne Frank    | Appointed October 2021        |

\* Ex-officio

\*\* Elected for a two (2) year term and serving one (1) additional year