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THE NATURALIST

THE HISTORIC RIVERS CHAPTER OF VIRGINIA MASTER NATURALISTS

The President's Message

by Connie Reitz

A Message from the President

Summer is slowly passing by after days of heat and air that we could wear! Fortunately the photo exhibit at the Williamsburg Regional Library offered a great opportunity to enjoy the talents of many of our members. What a wonderful way to share, do outreach, and to educate. Thank you to all who make this yearly exhibit be successful.

We've had a break from HRC general meetings but these resumed September 14th at 6:30pm in the James City County Library Kitzinger Room. The speaker was Bill Dichtel, Master Gardener and Tree Steward. He presented a program on the two arboreta in the Williamsburg area—Colonial Williamsburg and Freedom Park/Williamsburg Botanical Garden.

Also, mark your calendar on October 22nd (rain date 23rd) for the HRC annual picnic at the home of Ted Sargent. Details and activities are being prepared by Jen Harrigan (Hospitality Chair) and her team. It will be great to be outside, seeing old friends, making new ones, learning something new,

and participating in different activities. Did I mention food? You know there will be lots of wonderful food to enjoy.

The education & outreach duo of Janet Crowther and MJ O'Bryan have been able to secure activities in the community where we can share information about master naturalists, our chapter, and a focus on a specific topic in nature. Be sure to sign up to help with these events and let others know who we are and what we do.

The Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion (DEI) committee has been very active during the summer. This committee is chaired by Adrienne Frank. One specific project of this group is "Birdability" for a trail in our area. Suzanne Stern and others have been working with Alister Perkinson (HRC member and JCC Parks Administrator) to begin to get the first park in our area to be accessible for members of our community with physical needs and limitations. This will be a long term project and will offer many opportunities for our chapter members to help in various ways. Read more at: <https://gis.audubon.org/birdability/>

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Virginia Master Naturalists, Historic Rivers Chapter, Cohort XVI

Judy Jones and I were invited by NASA Langley to attend the GLOBE Clouds Match to a Million Celebration on September 13, 2022. We are the 2 master naturalists who got to stand by physical posters and talk with attendees about our experiences observing clouds. We interacted with other citizen scientists, educators, and students. Various program managers and leaders at NASA were invited. Other people from the science teams who help match our citizen science data to corresponding satellite data were also in attendance. Neither of us had any idea this invitation would happen when the GLOBE Clouds activity was offered as an activity in January. This is exciting for us. See the following article for more!

September brings the exciting start for 16 trainees of Cohort XVI pictured above. Be sure to welcome them as they venture out on activities after completing risk management requirements.

And congratulations to the 13 new fully certified master naturalist members in our chapter who received their 40/8 pin in July. We had 2

members reach the 250 hour milestone, 6 with 500 hours, and 3 with 1000 hours. Nancy Barnhart and Adrienne Frank joined the Golden Circle club after achieving the 5000 hours milestone. Congratulations to all!

That's the news for now. Hope to see you an event as we join in volunteer and educational activities.

*Connie Reitz
HRC President*

Calendar

Oct 6	HRC Board meeting
Oct 12	HRC General meeting
Oct 22	HRC picnic
Oct 29	Yorktown Market Paws at the River

Cloud Observations Help NASA

Judy Jones & Connie Reitz

The Cloud Observer app is one tool that citizen scientists use to assist NASA in understanding the Earth's energy budget and its effects on the Earth's climate. This effort to measure and understand actually began in the early 1970s, and by the 1980's, NASA realized it needed to extend and improve the data collection. To accomplish this, the Earth's Radiant Energy System (CERES) family of instruments was developed and, in 1997, the first measurement was taken in Gloucester, VA. But at this point the measurements had to be compiled by hand, a very time-consuming project. The scientists realized this long-term project needed electronic documentation and so the Globe Observer app was developed.

The Globe Observer app can be used to make observations in four areas: clouds, mosquito habitat, land cover, and trees. Clouds are the area of focus at this point for the Historic Rivers Chapter and many of us were able to help with observations.

These optimal ground observations of the clouds are made within +/- 15 minutes of the satellite overpass times to ensure you are observing the same set of clouds from which the satellite is collecting data. An observation takes approximately 5 minutes and is usually done a couple of times a day. Within a day or two, an email is sent from NASA LaRC (Langley Research Center) verifying an observation with corresponding satellite data.

By January of 2022, the observations recorded by contributors were nearing ONE MILLION! The Virginia Master Naturalists around the commonwealth made frequent observations and were teamed together in a friendly competition with other schools, scouts, and individuals. The push was on to reach the 1,000,000 matching goal.

By early August the million marker was just

around the corner. NASA began to plan a GLOBE Clouds Match to a Million Celebration. VMN received an invitation to visit NASA LaRC along with other groups who were participating in the citizen scientist service project. And so, on September 13th, we headed to Reid Hall on the NASA campus to share our efforts and celebrate this huge accomplishment.



Left to right: Judy Jones; Jessica Taylor, NASA LaRC Globe Clouds principal investigator; Connie Reitz

As visitors for a day at NASA LaRC, we had official badges and met a wonderful group of CERES scientists and administrators. A poster had been made by NASA LaRC which highlighted the Master Naturalist contribution to the Clouds project, including VMN's nearly 1600 observations. Using this poster, we talked informally about our experiences using the app to the NASA scientists and Langley administrators who stopped by. We were honored that each NASA representative took the time to visit with us and truly wanted to learn about the Historic Rivers Chapter and Virginia Master Naturalists. We even talked with the director and the deputy director of the NASA LaRC (whose spouse is a Master Naturalist with the Peninsula Chapter!). They both explained to us that this celebration was a way to reach out to the students and youth of the nation—the future of science and research. We recognized NASA's level of commitment as we visited with school groups, girl scouts, educators, scientists, and students as young as 9. We learned how a woman with limited sight was able to enter her observations and spoke with a hearing-impaired college student who had completed

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some substantial research. Another e-learning team was connecting students from all over the world to the Million Celebration. Everyone was interested in sharing their knowledge and experiences as well as learning from each other.

This was a great opportunity for both of us—as Master Naturalists and as citizens—to really see how our observations are being used in the greater community and scientific world. The excitement and dedication shared by the staff of NASA Langley was inspiring. We felt proud to represent HRC and be a part of this celebration.

Hopefully QR codes and directions for using the Globe Observer app will be made available to share at our outreach activities. To see a quick look at the various locations where VMN members have posted observations, head to:

<https://www.globe.gov/web/va-master-naturalists>

We hope you will use the Globe Observer app to make citizen scientist contributions while earning volunteer hours. It's easy, it's educational, and it's making a difference – and isn't that what we're all about?



Clean Swell at Croaker Landing

by Judy Jones

Eleven members of the Historic Rivers Chapter of Virginia Master Naturalists worked together to rid Croaker Landing at York River State Park of any and all litter. On National Public Lands Day, the Chapter partnered with the staff at YRSP and the scouts of troop 414 to clean the beaches, trails, roads, and parking lot. With over 350 pieces of litter collected, the gang felt we had accomplished a good clean up effort.

Pictured (L-R) are HRC co-advisor John Gresham, Thad Hecht, Bob Kaplan, Frank Smith, Marc Moyers, Jen Harrigan, Cheryl Roettger, Connie Reitz, Susanne Stern, and Mary Haines. Not pictured is photographer Judy Jones.



A Great Bluebird Year

Judy Jones & Rick Brown

Our 2022 bluebird season has ended – and what a season it’s been! With 103 monitors over our 20 trails, we’ve checked on a wide variety of species, including our beloved bluebirds. Here’s a summary of the season and, hopefully, an incentive to join our trails and monitor with us next year.

In 2022, we monitored 330 boxes and over half our Chapter members volunteered to support at least one trail and many monitored several! A remarkable total of 1,172 hours were documented by volunteers on these trails, and we fledged 1,101 bluebird chicks – nearly one new bluebird for every volunteer hour! The chart below compares the fledges of our different species.

Our first bluebird egg was laid at JCC Marina on March 25th; our first hatch was April 8th at Freedom Park; our first fledge was at Freedom Park on April 21st; and our final fledge was on August 30th on the Colonial Parkway trail.

In this season, there was disappointment as well as success. While fledging a total of 1,269 baby birds, we also lost quite a few. We had 91 missing/

destroyed eggs, 97 missing chicks, 139 infertile eggs, and 65 chicks found dead in the nest.

Sadly, we also had a variety of predations – 20 snakes, 1 raccoon, 1 vandal, 11 insect infestations, 2 weather incidents, 9 House Sparrow attacks, 1 Tree Swallow attack, and 28 unknown reasons for bird deaths.



But despite these predations, it has been a wonderful bluebird season. Trail leaders and team members were creative in solving problems and their creativity and persistence allowed us to monitor both effectively and safely. A huge thank you to all the members who have volunteered over all the years to make this a fun learning activity!! And, with high hopes, we wait for volunteers to step up to help monitor our trails in 2023!

Bird Species	Eggs Laid	Eggs Hatched	Chicks Fledged
Eastern Bluebird	1454	1261	1101
Tree Swallow	68	58	51
Carolina Chickadee	67	60	53
House Wren	40	39	38
Tufted Titmouse	32	30	26
Total for this Season	1661	1448	1269

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

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!

HRC-VMN Board of Directors

Chapter Advisor	John Gresham	VMN Appointed September 2018*
Chapter Advisor	Meagan Thomas	VMN Appointed August 2020*
Officers/Executive Committee		
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
Additional Board Members		
Immediate Past President	Rick Brown	Effective March 2022
Historian/Publicity/Media	Deborah Humphries	Elected March 2022
Chairs of Standing Committees		
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
At-Large Members		
	Suzanne Stern	Elected March 2021
	Nancy Barnhart	Elected March 2022
	Shan Gill	Elected March 2022
	Bill Harper	Elected March 2022
Appointed Committees & Teams		
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