



**President's Message**  
Connie Reitz  
Page 1



**Schoolyard Outreach**  
Stephanie Schmuck  
Page 5



**Nature Camp Kids**  
Judy Jones  
Page 6



**2023 Recertification Pin**  
Deborah Humphries  
Page 9

# THE NATURALIST

THE HISTORIC RIVERS CHAPTER OF VIRGINIA MASTER NATURALISTS

## The President's Message

by Connie Reitz

A few reminders for Chapter members:

1. There will be NO HRC general meeting in December.
2. Re-enrollment on Better Impact is open from Dec 1, 2022 through January 31, 2023. **This is a mandate from the state VMN office. If a member does not complete this re-enrollment process, the member will be archived by VMN. (See Page 8).**
3. I have included a brief review of different happenings within our Chapter during the past year (see Page 3). It does not include the many hours by many board members—vice president, secretaries, treasurer, committee chairs, members at large, web master, and advisors. Also, the numerous hours each of you contribute to make our Chapter an outstanding group are not highlighted. I thank all of you for making this a wonderful group to work and play with as we improve our community and our world.

Congratulations to Deborah Humphries (Cohort XV) whose artwork was chosen for the 2023 VMN recertification pin (see Page 9)! Deborah's



drawing of the Virginia opossum (*Didelphidae virginiana*) was selected from many submissions entered. You will have a chance to see all the submissions in the Fall VMN newsletter.

Congratulations to Adrienne Frank who is the 2022 recipient of the Nancy Norton Spirit Award. Adrienne has contributed numerous volunteer hours for our chapter. She is currently treasurer and chair of the DEI committee. She has been a past president and coordinator of butterfly counts. And she is an active member and volunteer for several other organizations. Thank you, Adrienne, for sharing your time and talents with us. You make our Chapter better.

Thank you to Judy Jones who quickly and graciously filled in as speaker at the October meeting after the scheduled presenter had to cancel due to illness. The speaker's bureau of the HRC is working well. With the cooler temperatures being more consistent, the Bat team has concluded monitoring for the season. They shared their experiences and findings at the November HRC general meeting. This is one of the most unusual activities available for chapter members. I know you'll want to hear this presentation.

*Continued on next page...*

It's time to start your Project FeederWatch counts. You can get a couple of volunteer hours each week to help reach the goal for 2023 certification/recertification.

Would you like to help at schools in York County? Read the article by Stephanie Schmuck in this newsletter (see Page 5). She's given a history of past work in our schools and what can be done now. For more information contact [Stephanie](#) or [Jody Turner](#).

A focus of the HRC Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion (DEI) committee is working on a joint project with JCC Parks & Rec. The "Trailability" project—our name for this effort—will begin the initial efforts at Freedom Park and Greensprings Interpretive Trail. Our hope is to make several existing James City County hiking trails more accessible to all who are differently-abled, whether through sight, hearing or ambulation. There is much to be done and many small groups will help make this project become a success without the load being carried by a few members.

- First Step: read information presented [here](#).
- Become Involved by contacting Freedom Park—[Valerie Shostak](#) or text 757.880.6377
- Greensprings Interpretive Trail—[Suzanne Stern](#) or text 757.784.4748
- Walking the trail with the Birdability application with both JCC and VMN-HRC representatives (<https://www.birdability.org/access-considerations>)
- Complete & submit the [Birdability Site Review](#).

Volunteering is fun and it's always more fun to work together. Find a member with whom you'd like to know better and volunteer together. Ask your wildlife mapping friends, bluebird monitoring team, trail monitor member, or a fellow cohort member to volunteer with you. Together we are stronger and more productive.

Finally, the always exciting and well attended HRC Fall Picnic provided members an opportunity to participate in the many activities the Hospitality team planned throughout the day. Maybe you made a new friend or renewed an old friendship. We all thank Ted Sargent for sharing the venue with us. Thank you to the Hospitality Team. Great job!



*Ted Sargent Managing the Crab Table*



*Judy Kinshaw-Ellis and Judy Jones*

Until next month. Stay safe. Stay healthy. Stay happy.

-Connie

## Mark your calendars!

The 2023 VMN conference will be held *September 29 - October 1, 2023*, in Abingdon at the Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center. You can begin training for the Appalachian Trail, the Creeper Trail, the Barter Theatre, and so much more.

## 2022 in Review!

by Connie Reitz

### January

- 2021 HRC annual report filed early.
- Chapter meetings continued on Zoom.
- Speakers Bureau is used by local community groups.

### February

- Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion (DEI) ad hoc committee is created and chaired by Adrienne Frank.
- Wildlife Transportation activity was approved.
- Joint meeting with Williamsburg Bird Club.
- Unexpected death of Glenda White, HRC member & Treasurer.

### March

- First HRC meeting held in person since March 2021.
- Graduation of Cohort XV and W&M Cohort 2.
- Elections for HRC Board.

### April

- Spring Gathering to celebrate graduates of HRC and W&M Cohorts.
- Start of exploring the possibility of a Tree Steward class.
- Field trip to Walker Fishway with presentation by DWR staff.
- Education & Outreach.
- Earth Day celebration at YRSP.
- Spring Fest at Williamsburg Regional Library.

### May

- Education & Outreach—Bug Fest at Grafton Middle School.
- Interest expressed by 38 people for the Tree Steward class.

### June

- HRC general meeting held at YRSP.
- Bench honoring the memory of Page Hutchinson was placed at YRSP.

- Steering Committee is formed for Tree Steward class.
- Applications for Cohort XVI were received.
- DEI member Suzanne Stern leads efforts to explore potential Birdability trails at Freedom Park and Greensprings Interpretive Trail working jointly with JCC Parks & Rec.
- Education & Outreach.
- Speakers Bureau presenters participated in programs held at New Quarter Pare, York County Tabb Library, and Williamsburg Regional Library.
- HRC representatives attended “Environmental Expo” at ODU in a program to connect classroom teachers with community groups offering/ supporting outdoor learning.

### July

- No HRC board nor general meeting.
- Opening of HRC Photo Exhibit opens at the Williamsburg Regional Library Theater Gallery and goes thru August.

### August

- Participation in Williamsburg Farmers Market with banner to encourage community members to use free apps to ID & help wildlife More than 180 visitors to the display.
- Meet & Greet the members of Cohort XVI held.
- Soft plastic collection reaches goal for bench honoring the memory of Karen Grass. The bench is placed on Bassett Trace Trail.

### September

- Participation in Estuary Day at YRSP.
- Several members attended the state VMN conference in Virginia Beach.
- Basic Training for Cohort XVI and W&M Coll of the Wild class begins.
- HRC participates in NASA Langley Research Center celebrating observations recorded through Globe Observer Clouds app.
- Birdability efforts at Freedom Park and Greensprings Interpretive Trail continue to gain momentum and JCC Parks & Rec are working with us.

Continued on next page...

**October**

- *Participation in Paws at the River in Yorktown highlighting wildlife rescue resources with more than 250 visitors to the display.*
- *HRC Fall picnic at Ted Sargent's home.*
- *Adrienne Frank is named 2022 HRC Spirit Award recipient.*
- *VMN selects 2023 pin entry pf Virginia opossum by HRC Deborah Humphries.*
- *Applications for Nature Camp scholarships were received.*

**November**

- *Initial Birdability surveys of Freedom Park & Greensprings Interpretive Trail are completed and meetings with JCC Parks & Rec continue.*
- *Soft plastic collection reaches goal for bench honoring the memory of Glenda White. The bench will be placed on Bassett Trace Trail.*
- *Field trips to Macchicomico and Chippokes State Parks provide more CE opportunities for members.*

**December**

- *Applications for 2023 Trail Steward class will be available December 5th.*
- *Re-enrollment for VMN begins December 1st.*
- *HRC 2022 annual report efforts begin.*

## Members We Haven't Seen Recently, But Have Not Forgotten...

**Mary Turnbull** — is now residing at English Meadows Memory Care Facility as she and her family cope with her diagnosis of Alzheimer's Disease. Mary shared her talent and knowledge of plants with our Chapter quite often. Mary's family has asked for visits to be scheduled. Sara Lewis is happy to schedule a time for someone to join her for a visit with Mary or if anyone would like to go alone. Email [Sara Lewis](#) or call 757-784-0344.

**Clyde Marsteller**, Cohort I—has recently had some healthcare issues and not able to join in our activities. He is a master of storytelling. Send a card to:

*Clyde Marsteller  
46 Magna Charta Drive  
Newport News, VA 23608*

**Bob Thomas**, Cohort X, has recently had cardiac bypass surgery and will be remain in the hospital for a few more days. Bob has most recently volunteered on the HRC board as member at large and as co-secretary. If you wish to send a card:

*Bob Thomas  
801 York Warwick Drive  
Yorktown, VA 23692*

Maybe there are other members you haven't seen recently and wonder how they are. Give a call. Send an email. Write a note. You'll bring a smile to someone.



## 4-H Schoolyard Habitat Outreach

by *Stephanie Schmuck*

Historic Rivers Chapter has a program for members to participate in which has been active for almost 10 years. Barbara Dunbar (former master naturalist and master gardener) and Jody Turner started it as a joint project with master naturalists master gardeners. “Outreach Partners” was a great multi-organizational project under the Virginia Cooperative Extension-York/Poquoson and 4-H which includes both York County and Poquoson Schools. The program’s primary focus is getting students outside in the schoolyard for learning—particularly during school hours—in an effort to maximize the number of students with an opportunity to connect with nature. Volunteer times often happen after school and on weekends.

Patty Maloney, Deena Obrokta, Deb Woodward, Stephanie Schmuck, and the late great Page Hutchinson have all worked with the project, as well as other master naturalists from the VMN Historic Rivers & Peninsula chapters and York Master Gardeners. The success and value of the project was quickly recognized and soon duplicated in the Gloucester schools.

This activity started as the “Monarch Initiative” and used the monarch to inspire schools to install native habitat gardens at all the York and Poquoson elementary schools. Teachers were able to amend lesson plans to cover butterfly life cycles in the Fall. This presented the opportunity for volunteers to work with the teachers and students by sharing information about Monarch butterflies, migration, and tagging.

After native habitats were created the students were better able to understand the butterfly life cycle, host plants, migration, diseases, and parasitic wasps and flies. To actually see the egg, the caterpillar, the chrysalis, and the emergence of an adult butterfly drying its wings before being tagged, and then follow the travels on a map cannot be taught any better. This

is the importance of citizen science accompanied with joyful squeals of discovery.

The project expanded to some of the middle and high schools and included lesson plans and materials about frogs and birds. Bird houses were installed at some of the schools. These changes brought a name change to better reflect more than butterfly lessons. Under the umbrella of 4-H through the VCE office “Outreach Partners” became the “4-H Schoolyard Habitat Outreach.”

The activity includes trainings in Project Learning Tree, education on bluebird monitoring, using an Enviroscape to teach about pollution and runoff. The project has lesson plans, project ideas, and educational materials to help the Outreach Partners, many of whom have received volunteer awards from the schools for their work.

With the return of in-school classes this Fall, most schools are looking for more hands-on outdoor educational opportunities involving both short (30 minute lessons during school) and long (60 minute after school programs or clubs) lessons. The increased interest in Monarch butterflies and native plants makes our project uniquely suited to fill that need. Unfortunately we don’t have enough volunteers for all the schools and would love more master naturalists to help.

We love people who are enthusiastic about the natural environment. Help can be in the form of maintaining or improving existing gardens, providing lessons or after school programs for students on any nature-based topic, or simply being a master naturalist liaison to connect teachers with others who are willing to come into the schools to teach about nature.

We meet once a month, usually at the Tabb library, to share ideas, resources, and support. If you are interested in making a difference in a student’s understanding and appreciation of nature, this activity might be what you need. If you can offer some volunteer time, please contact [Stephanie](#).

## Meet Our Nature Camp Kids, 2023

*Judy Jones*

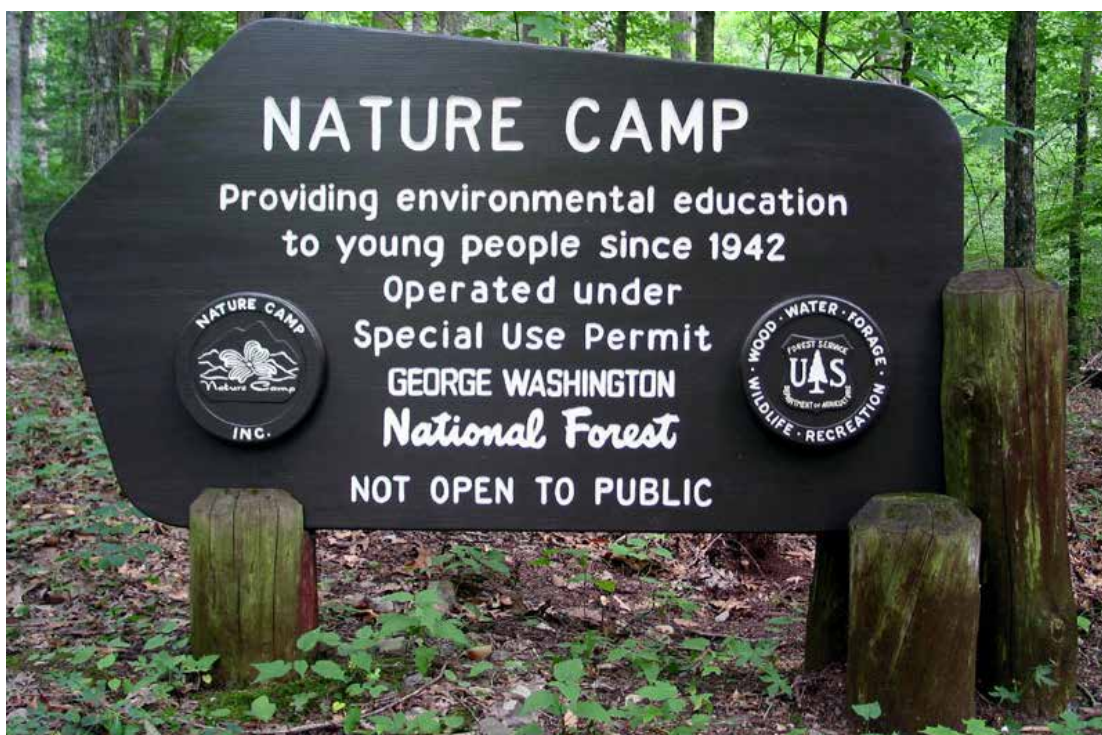
On November 11th, our Scholarship Committee met and chose our four Nature Camp kids for 2023. This year, we had a remarkable collection of very bright and involved individuals who applied so the selection process was challenging. But fortunately, Historic Rivers Chapter was able to offer scholarships to four incredible young nature lovers. I think you'll be very proud of those who will represent us next summer.

**Sadie Teer** is an 10th grader at Jamestown High School. She has attended camp before and had incredible experiences. Sadie says she'd like to have mycology as her major. She goes on to write, "Nature Camp is an amazing camp that I wish everyone could experience. It has been the highlight of my summers for the last five years and I'm grateful for the generosity of the Historic Rivers members who provide the scholarship,

without which I would not be able to attend. I have always cared for the environment, from science classes in school to highway litter clean-up." Her teacher tells us that "Sadie is able to gather, synthesize, and analyze information as she explores the environment. She is an energetic and enthusiastic learner, and she would be an amazing addition to Nature Camp."

**Caleigh McLaughlin** is an 8th grader at Toano Middle School. She has attended camp before, during the abbreviated session in 2021, as well as two full weeks last summer. She wants to study astronomy and writes, "Nature Camp has taught me to respect my surroundings and to be grateful for the beautiful, complex world I live in. I continue to do Boy Scouts which is similar to Nature Camp in that they teach loving/respecting nature. My favorite thing about Nature Camp is all the classes you take. For example, I had never heard of ornithology until last year and it's awesome. My new interest is that I want to learn more about astronomy. And thank you for the scholarship from the Master Naturalists

*Continued on next page...*



as it allows me to participate in Nature Camp without killing my parents' wallets." Her science teacher shared with us that "Caleigh has a passion for science and always works hard to blend her knowledge with new concepts presented. She asks insightful questions and is a natural leader. She inspires her peers to explore and learn with her and will be a great addition to Nature Camp."

**Luke Walls**, a 9th grader at Jamestown, will attend Nature Camp for the first time this year. He isn't sure what he might study, never having been before. He writes, "I am fascinated by the natural world and native plant and animal species. I have a constant hunger for more knowledge about the great outdoors. I believe Nature Camp will help me learn more about the environment and conservation with like-minded kids. I want to learn how I can help nature stay green and thriving." Luke's teacher adds, "He has participated in scouts, nature clubs, helping in community gardens, and volunteered this past summer landscaping in local parks with master gardeners. He always asks questions and participates in discussions. Nature Camp's focus on hands-on learning will be a great opportunity for him. I believe this program will enhance Luke's on-going quest for exploring and learning as well as make him more aware of the importance of our natural resources."

**Madeline Wells**, 10 years old, is a 5th grader at Waller Mill Elementary and will attend Nature Camp for the first time this year. She is also unsure as to what she might study, never having been before. Madeline writes, "I have always wanted to learn as much as I can about protecting animals and nature. I love to read about ecosystems and

nature, plants, bodies of water, and ecology. People say I'm the outdoorsy type, but I think I'm just energetic – but I listen too. The scholarship from the Master Naturalists will help me because I have a single mom who loves learning too, but she works really hard and to pay for camp would stress her out. In school, we are studying STEM challenges like water-filtering and building a tent out of only materials found in nature. I love life, nature, and cats. Most people like dogs but I love my cat, Gus!" Madeline's reference was from a friend of the family who writes, "Madeline is a very nature-driven young girl. She and her mom are situated where there is an abundance of wildlife and an endless amount of birdwatching. This child literally has a science book in her hands every time I see her, and seldom misses a sunset or an opportunity to stargaze through her telescope."

We hope that you've enjoyed this season as much as we have. With ospreys leaving us, the warblers migrating, and fall leaves beginning to fall, we are lucky to be able to continue to enjoy the beautiful and vivid bluebirds that will entertain us all winter long!

# Re-enroll Or Be Archived: It's New For 2023 And Beyond!

The re-enrollment process is now open and extends through January 31, 2023. If any member has difficulty with the re-enrollment process, please contact a HRC board member for assistance. We're ready to help. The following is an email from the state VMN office:

Hello! As we have previously announced in the VMN Bi-weekly emails, the VMN State Office is implementing an annual Re-enrollment process. All you need to do is take 5-10 minutes and follow the steps below on a laptop or mobile device.

If you do not have access to Better Impact and need a paper form, please call or email the VMN State Office at 540-231-0790 or [masternaturalist@vt.edu](mailto:masternaturalist@vt.edu) to request that one be mailed directly to you.

## Instructions for Re-enrolling in Better Impact:

1. *Login to Better Impact.*
2. *At your main MyImpact page, click on "My Profile".*
3. *From the drop-down menu, choose "Additional Info".*
4. *For those who are members of more than one Organization in Better Impact, chose your VMN chapter from the drop-down menu and tap or click "Select Organization".*
5. *Scroll down to the section labeled "VMN Re-enrollment 2023".*
6. *Review the instructions at the top of the section.*

*7. Answer all five questions truthfully. To see more information for any question (and to view the VMN Code of Conduct and/or the VMN Volunteer Agreement), click on the black and white "i" or Information Icon next to each question.*

*8. Once the questions have been answered, click "Save" at the top or bottom of the page. Your VMN Re-enrollment is complete.*

## Next Steps in the Re-enrollment Process:

- By the end of the Re-enrollment Period, the VMN State Office will confirm Re-enrollment status for volunteers who have completed the process and mark them as Re-enrolled in Better Impact. This will result in a badge showing up on your MyImpact page showing that you are Re-enrolled for 2023.
- If you have any problems completing the steps above, send an email to [masternaturalist@vt.edu](mailto:masternaturalist@vt.edu) describing the problem and a staff member from the VMN State Office will get back to you.

## What Happens if a VMN Volunteer does not Complete Re-enrollment?

If a VMN Volunteer does not complete their re-enrollment in Better Impact by the deadline of January 31, 2023, then they will be 'archived' in Better Impact. This means the individual is no longer enrolled in the VMN program, may not represent themselves as a VMN volunteer, and is no longer covered by the VCE liability insurance. The VMN State Office will inform any individuals if they have been archived.

If a VMN Volunteer has been archived for any reason, including not completing Re-enrollment, and they are interested in being reinstated in the VMN Program, they should contact the VMN State Office by email at [masternaturalist@vt.edu](mailto:masternaturalist@vt.edu) or by phone at 540-231-0790.



## 2023 Recertification Pin!

Congratulations to HRC Chapter member Deborah Humphries (COHORT XV) on the choice of her digital rendition of a Virginia Opossum for the 2023 VMN Recertification pin.

While Deborah has had a 35+ year career as a marketing graphic designer it is her fine-art work that has proven the most satisfying (aside from being a Master Naturalist of course). She is a photographer, an assemblage artist, a vintage collage-art artist, as well as a digital artist. The Opposum pin art is a digital creation using Photoshop from personal photos and photoshop painting tools.

Deborah's reasoning for choosing the Virginia Opossum was because it is one of the most unique and hardest working mammals in Virginia. They help

maintain a healthy eco-system by consuming up to 90% of the ticks trying to feed on them. Additionally they also catch and eat cockroaches, rats and mice. They eat snails and slugs and overripe fruit and berries in the garden. They are resistant to snake venom and actually prey on snakes including venomous species like copperheads and rattlesnakes, in addition to consuming dead animals of all types. All this and more as they are North America's only marsupial, so their cool factor is above and beyond other mammals. Much like master naturalists! Her facts came from [this National Wildlife Foundation article](#).

VMN received an exceptional array of artwork to be considered for the 2023 VMN Recertification Pin and they will be showing all the submissions in their fall newsletter later this month.



*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!

#### 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