

The Naturalist

November 2023 Newsletter | Volume 19, Number 11
Historic Rivers Chapter of Virginia Master Naturalists

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A Message from the President

by Connie Reitz

Just when you think the year is ending, activities are winding down, and the flora and fauna are preparing for a long winter's nap, the calendar gets filled. Below are a few things to note for the month of December.

VMN and chapter membership require a few things to complete to remain active.

- Payment of annual chapter dues.
- Complete annual re-enrollment.
- Enter at least 1 hour of volunteer service.
- You do NOT need to be certified or re-certified to remain a member.

Re-enrollment in Better Impact (BI) has started.

This is an annual requirement of all Virginia Cooperative Extension volunteer programs. Emails with details have been sent by the State. VMN. Judy with you. This is a yearly requirement to remain an active member of VMN and our chapter. Re-enrollment must be completed by January 31, 2024. You can get this checked off your list now.

Dues payments for 2024 are now being accepted. To remain an active member of HRC, dues must be paid by March 31, 2024. I hope each of you will submit this payment and possibly add a contribution to help with chapter activities.

Adrienne Frank has sent an email with a paper form if you want to mail your dues. She and the website manager, Jeanette Navia, have worked to facilitate online payments and donations using PayPal as well. Get this checked off your list now. (See how this pattern is repeating?)

Get your volunteer and continuing education hours entered in Better Impact (BI). Enter at least 1 hour to remain on the active membership list.

The HRC board will be finalizing and adopting a new budget for the 2024 fiscal year. One new and major expense to be incorporated in the 2024 budget is the cost of storage for the Collections and Resource (CAR) materials. Storage space is not overly abundant in the area and the cost would be over \$1500 a year.

The CAR Relocation ad hoc committee, led by Janet Harper, is looking for storage options. If you have suggestions for an appropriate storage space or can store the items yourself, please contact Janet before the end of 2023.

If the chapter must pay for storage, it will decrease funds available for activities.

The Nominating Committee is doing a great job and has only a few leadership positions to fill to complete the 2024 slate. If you would like to be more active with the board, contact Rick Brown. Find a friend and lead a committee together.

A team is working to get the 2023 annual report prepared for submission in January 2024. There is a very narrow window to get this report completed and it intersects with holidays, travel, and the usual daily life tasks. This group works diligently to prepare a report which reflects all the activities of our chapter and the active volunteers. Look forward to seeing this document in January and the compiled visual report from the VMN a month later.

Finally, I wish each of you a wonderful holiday season. Have safe travels. Spend time with a friend. Share a story from nature with a family member. Take a walk. Enjoy quiet and embrace the chaos. Finish this year with a happy smile and be prepared to start the new year with generosity. Be kind to each other.

Until next month and next year. Connie

On the Calendar

See Better Impact and HRC Google Group monthly Continuing education (CE) emails for more opportunities.

Monday	Dec 11	Wildlife Mapping 9am-12pm at York River State Park—Contact Adrienne F.
Tuesday	Dec 12	Wildlife Mapping 9am-12pm at New Quarter Park—Contact Jan Lockwood
Sunday	Dec 17	Christmas Bird Count—All day Contact Jim Corliss
Tuesday	Dec 19	CE Monarch Joint Venture 12-1pm EST—Register for webinar
Wednesday	Dec 20	Wildlife Mapping 8:45am-12:00pm at Jamestown Island--Contact Nancy B.
Saturday	Dec 23	CE Bird Walk 8:00-10:00am with Williamsburg Bird Club—Contact Scott H.
Thursday	Dec 28	Wildlife Mapping 9am-12pm at Greensprings Trail—Contact Keith Navia
Wednesday	Jan 3	HRC Board Meeting 6:30pm (Zoom)—Contact Connie Reitz to join.
Saturday	Jan 27	CE Winter Wildlife Festival 9 days in Virginia Beach—Register now.
Sunday	Feb 18	Jerre Johnson Memorial 3:00pm—Save the Date!



Nutria at Jamestown Beach

by Jim Easton

I saw a nutria (*Myocastor coypus*) at Jamestown Beach this morning [November 28, 2023]. I sent photos to Tim Christensen, biologist at Fort Eustis. He shared the sighting with the VA DWR nutria team. As you all likely know, nutrias are invasive and can be highly destructive. If you see nutria there (or anywhere) please let the DWR, or Tim know. Here are a few photos from this morning. I was fortunate to get some shots from the beach, and a few from the end of the pier of it swimming by. I ran faster than I have in years out of that pier!

The Chesapeake Bay Nutria Eradication Program (CBNEP) is a team of various organizations including the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources (DWR) that works to remove these invasives. To learn more and report your sighting at cbnep.org/report-a-nutria.



Field Trip to Urbanna: Sibyl Rose's Property

by Adrienne Frank

On November 6, York River State Park was closed for hunting, and several of us took a small field trip to Sibyl Rose's property. The property is on the road to Urbanna, VA and has approximately 400 acres with some interesting natural and man-made features.

We walked to a pond on the north side of the road, drove down the grass airstrip and old campground building, and walked down to a dock on Urbanna Creek.

Sibyl invited **Jen Sagan**, Oyster Restoration Specialist, from the Friends of the Rappahannock River to talk about the oyster restoration along the creek, some of which was under Sibyl's docks. We learned about the rising cost of shell, millions of baby oysters in spat, and grass planting.

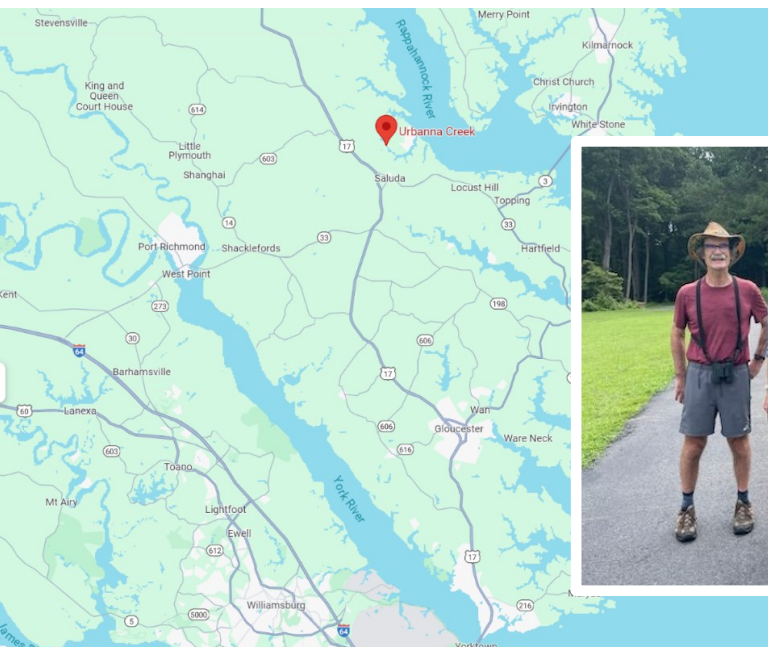
Sibyl told us stories about the place. The area was called Nimcock, an Indian name meaning "Indians who live in towns." According to the Internet, they lived in huts in fenced villages to thwart attack. We also learned about how Urbanna got its name. In 1704, it was named in honor of Queen Anne of England, roughly Anne's town. She also told us a few interesting stories about previous property owners.

The property was a campground and Sibyl is working hard to remove the remains (fencing, wires, equipment, and more). There is still an air strip, although not used often. Conservation easements placed on the property limit building and businesses. Sibyl is working hard to reduce the number of invasive species and to increase the diversity of native plants.

Sibyl would love for our Master Naturalist chapter members and others to come and use her property. It is a good place for kayaking, hiking, picnicking, and swimming in an Olympic-size pool.



Photos, top down: (1) Left to right: Sibyl Rose, Mike Smith, Jen Sagan, and Adrienne Frank on dock. Photo by Lisa Cumming. **(2)** Jen Sagan, Oyster Restoration Specialist, speaking to group. Photo by Adrienne Frank. **(3)** Master Naturalists on bridge. Photo by Lisa Cumming.



Photos (left to right): (1) Google Map with red pin at Urbanna Creek. Sibyl's property is a little over 40 miles from downtown Williamsburg. Screenshot by Claire White. **(2)** Left to right, Gary Driscoll, Tory Gussman, Sibyl Rose, and Adrienne Frank checking out the property a few months ago. **(3)** Airstrip and camp building. Photo by Mike Smith.

Audubon Christmas Bird Count by Jim Corliss

On Sunday, December 17 the Williamsburg Bird Club (WBC) will conduct our annual Christmas Bird Count (CBC) in the Williamsburg area. The National Audubon Society has administered the CBC for 124 years, and 2023 will mark the 47th year of conducting the count in Williamsburg. Our Williamsburg count area is defined by a circle that is 15 miles in diameter and centered at the Colonial Williamsburg Visitor Center.

This location is advantageous because the circle encompasses a wide variety of habitats and includes birding hot spots such as Jamestown Island, Hog Island, New Quarter Park, Cheatham Annex, and portions of Gloucester along the York River. The Christmas Bird Count is the longest running citizen science project in the United States. More information regarding its history and benefits to conservation are found on [Audubon.org](https://www.audubon.org).

The Christmas Bird Count is an important citizen science project that's fun to participate, and the CBC is also a **volunteer opportunity for those of us who are Virginia Master Naturalists**. Please consider participating this year—we especially need more feeder watchers to tally birds in neighborhood areas that aren't covered by the field teams. Participating as a feeder watcher follows a protocol very similar to Project FeederWatch administered by the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology. You can observe multiple times throughout the day and for as long as you like each time. Even just 30 minutes of data is valuable.

It's also possible to venture out beyond your backyard and tally birds around your neighborhood as long as we keep track of who is covering specific areas to avoid overlap. Your count results will be compiled with all of the data collected on the count day and submitted into the CBC database maintained by the National Audubon Society. We're hoping for a lot of participation this year, so please don't hesitate to contact me Jim Corliss with questions about how to be a part of this year's count!

Learn more about "[Christmas Bird Counts in Williamsburg, in Virginia, and Beyond](#)." and earn continuing education (CE) from Rexanne Bruno's WBC presentation on November 15, 2023.

Meet Our Nature Camp Kids, 2024

by Judy Jones

On November 11th, our Scholarship Committee met to choose our Nancy Norton Nature Camp scholarship kids for 2024. 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 will be proud of those who will represent us next summer.

Will Dabney is a 7th grader at James Blair Middle School. He has attended camp before and had incredible experiences. Will says he would like to have entomology as his major. He goes on to write, “Nature Camp is an amazing place, and each new year brings unique experiences, like last year when I got to eat a beetle.” His teacher tells us that “Will is an enthusiastic student who is determined in his pursuit of science and science education. He is a natural leader but follows well too. Nature Camp would be a special nudge to guide him and further foster his love of the natural world.”

Harlan Webster is a 6th grader at Queens Lake Middle School. He attended camp last year for the first time and says that “...attending Nature Camp was a life-changing experience. It was the first time in my life that people accepted me for who I am and how I think. I was in a group of like-minded kids who were just like me. Last year I studied meteorology, and I loved it. But this year I’d like to try herpetology which my parents are laughing about as before I went to Nature Camp, I thought snakes were scary. But camp has made me appreciate nature more, even snakes!”

Sammael Garcia, a 10th grader, will attend Nature Camp for the second time this year, but it is really just a time and a half as his first experience was cut short by Covid. He writes, “I would love to go again this year to get the full Nature Camp experience and to develop a more in-depth understanding of the natural world. In school, we typically learn about more extreme environments, such as the African savannah or Brazilian rainforests. These places are interesting, but I would like to know more about the nature that surrounds me. From my time in camp two years ago, I began to realize that knowing about the plants and animals around you gives you understanding and a sense of power.” His teacher comments that “Sammy is a curious leader who is constantly observing the world around him.”

Maggie Dabney, a 10th grader at Jamestown High School, will attend Nature Camp for the third time this year. She is hoping to study Human Geography or Meteorology. She writes, “I love how camp changes the way I think about the world and the lives within it. It has taught me to observe and notice the small things that surround me. I am hoping for a scholarship because it would enable me to have this experience again to learn even more about our fascinating world. I treasure this time because when I’m at camp I feel much more connected with the earth, the birds and fish, the sunsets...it all strengthens my connection with nature.” Her teacher shares that “Maggie takes advanced science classes and has a true passion for the natural world. She is respectful, patient, engaging, polite, and practices strong listening skills. She prioritizes her friends over herself and is a team leader.” Maggie will be attending thanks to the generosity of Nancy Norton’s children, Paul and Heather Norton.



Details on Dues, Donations, and Re-Enrollment

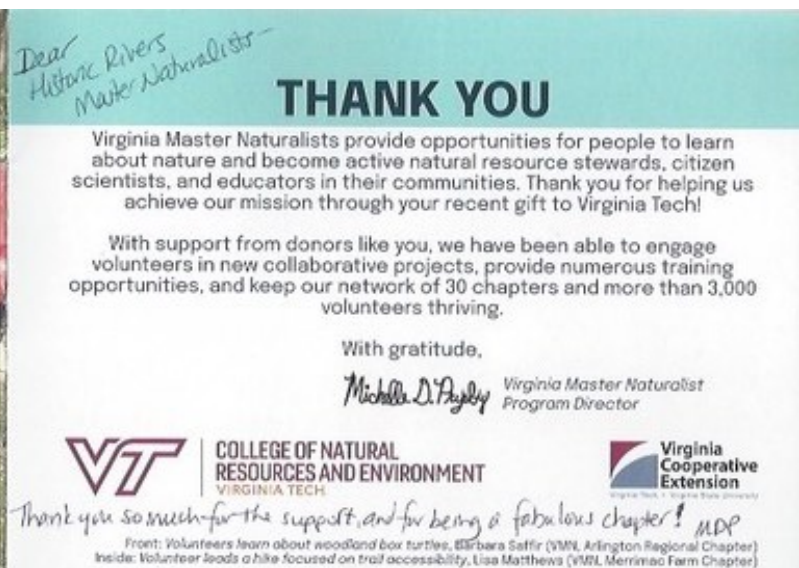
It's time to renew your HRC membership. Annual membership runs from January-December. Dues must be paid by March 31, 2024, but can be paid now. Paying dues enables you to remain active in projects, activities, and communications. Your additional donations are essential for the chapter to cover costs of projects, continuing education, the website, storage for our CAR resources, and much more. General membership dues for 2024 are \$25, with student dues at \$10. Cohort XVII should disregard paying dues until after basic training graduation.

If you wish to mail in your dues and donations, **please print the form**, and mail with your check to: HRC VMN P.O. Box 5026, Williamsburg, VA 23185. You may alternatively pay online with the PayPal option via the chapter website at historicrivers.org/membership-renewal/

Paying dues is not a requirement of Virginia Master Naturalist (VMN) membership or certification. The State VMN Office and the Virginia Cooperative Extension require that you update and re-enroll your membership on Better Impact each year, and if you are able complete your 40 hours for annual certification.

Donations can be directed to the HRC General Funds or Nancy Norton Youth Scholarships. Some members may be considering donating to our Historic Rivers Chapter VMN, since our chapter is a qualified, tax-exempt 501(c)3. HRC VMN can be found on the [IRS website](#), since completing a 990-N (e-Post card). Our federal identification number (EIN) is: 20-8300890. Our name is the Historic Rivers Chapter of the Virginia Master Naturalists, PO Box 5026, Williamsburg, Virginia, United States.

Re-enrollment is required annually by the State Program Office. To re-enroll on the [Better Impact volunteer management website](#), choose the "My Profile" dropdown menu and select "Additional Info." In the new window edit the "VMN Re-enrollment 2024 – for returning volunteers only" section and complete the five questions. Be sure to click "Save" at the top of the page. Detailed instructions have been sent to your email. Use this [link to watch a video of the process](#).



Pictured above: The card above was sent to our chapter from Michelle Prysby, VMN Program Director, after our chapter donated funds to the State Program Office with funds raised from a raffle, we hosted at the State Conference. She writes, "Thank you so much for the support and for being a fabulous chapter."



Brickyard Landing Riparian Buffer Planting Days

by Judy Kinshaw-Ellis,
Project Co-lead

Master Naturalists, Master Gardeners, and James City County Parks personnel came together the third week in November to plant ninety-five trees and woody shrubs at Brickyard Landing. Oh, what a feeling!

The first day of planting uncovered quite a surprise. While everyone expected to find some bricks in an old brickyard, the earlier plantings and the pilot holes did not unearth what was found about a foot deep: abundant bricks. The county came to the rescue with a backhoe, and the planting went a little better; however, it took an extra day to get all the plants in the ground.

Although a couple of volunteers joked about blocking emails and others said they did not



Photos (top left, clockwise): (1) How many people does it take to plant a Sweet Bay Magnolia? Only five if they are Master Naturalists. Left to right: Donna Benson, Jim Leech, Judy Kinshaw-Ellis, Kim Owens, Dave Watt. Part of the magnolia is visible on the right edge of the photo. At least six feet tall! Photo credit Shirley Devan. **(2)** Bricks removed prior to planting. Photo by Jim Leech. **(3)** Potted plants at waiting for holes to be dug. Photo by Judy Kinshaw-Ellis.

want to share their availability, people seemed to enjoy seeing the transformation of the empty field through their hard work. About 25 volunteers and parks employees worked throughout the week to get everything planted. Although Thanksgiving week brought much-needed rain, volunteers watered one day with help from parks employees who brought a tank of water. Volunteers also top dressed all of the plants with compost to get the area ready for the county to mulch.

Some of the showiest plants were Sweetbay Magnolia, River Birch, and a white variety of Beauty Berry. Volunteers planted Serviceberry and Sourwood trees, too, in addition to Sweetspire and Hydrangea. County grant funds paid for most of the trees and woody plants, but three Serviceberries were donated.

Although the concept for this project was a Master Gardener Water Steward project in the fall of 2022, it quickly morphed into something bigger, and Donna Benson joined as co-lead in April of 2023. The co-leads are certified Master Naturalists and Master Gardeners, and because the project will increase habitat at Brickyard Landing, it was a good fit for a VMN project.

This first phase of the riparian buffer demonstration garden has already caught the attention of one creek side homeowner who wants to incorporate some of the Brickyard plantings, which was the original purpose of the garden. Next spring, perennials and grasses will be added to the buffer garden, and next fall will see the planting of a native plant meadow. If you are out for a drive, be sure to stop by Brickyard Landing in Toano.

If you want to get involved in this exciting project, see the [Better Impact volunteer management opportunity listing](#), then contact Judy or Donna using the email and/or phone numbers listed.



Photos (top, clockwise): (1) Plants in the ground with “Trees Working!” sign. Photo by Judy Kinshaw-Ellis. **(2-3)** Co-leads Judy (overalls) and Donna (black coat) digging holes at Brickyard Landing. Photos by Shirley Devan.

Friends of Dragon Run presents Bald-Cypress Award to Adrienne Frank

by Connie Reitz



Photo above: Adrienne Frank with Bald-Cypress Award Plaque.
Photo by Jeff Wright, President of Friends of Dragon Run.

Adrienne Frank is a member and officer of the board for the Historic Rivers Chapter of the Virginia Master Naturalists (VMN). She is a member of the Golden Circle of VMN, having more than 5,000 volunteer hours with our organization. But Adrienne does so much more.

In November, **Friends of Dragon Run (FODR)** surprised Adrienne Frank by presenting her the Bald-Cypress Award during her weekly wildlife mapping. In FODR's more than 38-year history, only a few Bald Cypress awards have been given.

The Bald Cypress award is the highest level of recognition made by FODR. This award recognizes a

member's superior contributions to FODR and his or her achievements in protecting, preserving, and encouraging the wise use of Dragon Run and its watershed—the mission of FODR.

Adrienne has been a volunteer with FODR for more than 22 years. She has helped to fulfill the mission of this organization by doing conservation work, educating the community while leading paddle trips and hikes, and being a dedicated leader on the board.

We want to share in the celebration of this award presented to Adrienne. We know of her passion to protect our natural resources. Thank you for all you do! Congratulations, Adrienne!

Trails and Trash—Trail Maintenance with Friends of Dragon Run

Friends of Dragon Run (FODR) is a land trust that owns and provides stewardship for its properties along the Dragon Run (a Cypress-Tupelo swamp). Dragon Run borders Gloucester, King & Queen, Middlesex, and Essex County, and it empties into the Piankatank River. FODR offers a number of opportunities for stewardship and education. During paddle seasons (spring, summer, and fall), volunteer crew members help provide guided kayak trips. There are assigned property monitors, educational walks, workdays in the woods, bird box monitoring, and other ways that volunteers can earn volunteer hours.

For more information about Friends of Dragon Run, contact Adrienne Frank, project champion, using the listing **Trail Maintenance—Multiple Partners** in Better Impact.



BASSETT HALL BLK I MOVING CEDAR TREE 1933



Shurcliff's Gift to the Future: Eastern Red Cedar Behind Bassett Hall

by Rick Brown

A recent old photo that appeared on Facebook triggered a search through the Colonial Williamsburg Archives that led to the discovery of what may be the oldest living tree in this historic city. The photo, top left, shows a group of workers standing in a very deep hole with the caption "Moving Cedar Tree 1933". A comparison with that photo and an eastern redcedar (*Juniperus virginiana*) standing behind Bassett Hall at the Northern entrance to the Rockefeller Vista, led to the discovery that it is in fact the same tree.

As a CW Arboretum volunteer, I took the comparison photos to Laura Viancour, the CW former Landscape Director, who then made appointments for both of us to review archival material at the Rockefeller Library to determine if there was more information to be discovered about this tree. The meticulous early landscape records kept by Arthur A. Shurcliff, the first Landscape Architect employed by John D. Rockefeller, Jr. during the early restoration efforts, yielded a treasure trove of photographs and file memos exchanged between Shurcliff and Rockefeller documenting the extraordinary efforts that were made to save that particular tree.

Both Mr. and Mrs. Rockefeller were both keenly interested in the natural beauty of the woodlands area behind Bassett Hall. During their bi-annual trips to visit Williamsburg to observe the progress on the restoration efforts commissioned by Mr. Rockefeller they often walked the wooded trails laid behind

Bassett Hall and took guests on horseback and carriage rides in that area. Mr. Rockefeller commissioned Shurcliff to cut a vista on a southern axis from the tea house or "orangery" they had built for about a ½ mile distance into the woods. The problem was that a number of existing trees blocked the view from the house that needed to be removed. There was one tree however that Shurcliff decided to be worth preserving. So, on January 3, 1933, Mr. Shurcliff wrote to the Williamsburg Holding Company for authorization to move that particular tree:

"This [big cedar] tree could not be cut like the few other trees that stood in the way, because it is too large and attractive. I told you the cost of moving this tree would be \$75.00. The tree will be moved on this basis and will be in its new position within the time before the 25th."

Work began in earnest to hand dig around the roots of this large eastern redcedar in preparation for its transplanting to the new location. By January 27, 1933, the tree was in place at its present location at the northern terminus of the Rockefeller Vista, when backfilling was completed. This tree, although 90 years older, is now easily identified by comparing the photos taken in 1939 with today's photos taken from approximately the same location. **See photos to the right.**

Having verified the location and identity of the cedar next came the task of estimating the age of the tree without having to core or cut into it. By employing a commonly accepted method of estimation used by the International Society of Arboriculture and the Morton Arboretum an approximate age of a tree may be estimated by using the following formula:

$$165.6'' \text{ [circumference]} \div 3.1416 \text{ [pi]} = 52.71'' \text{ [diameter]} \\ \times 5 \text{ [growth factor]} = \mathbf{260 \text{ years}} \text{ (estimated age of tree).}$$

Using this method Shurcliff's cedar was thus determined to likely be the oldest tree known to exist in Colonial Williamsburg and therefore the only tree to survive to modern times from the colonial era. The hope is to hire a consulting dendrochronologist to do a core analysis of this tree to verify its exact age.

As we approach the 250th anniversary of our independence and the 100th birthday of Colonial Williamsburg's restoration it is significant to consider that there may be a living tree that witnessed the birth of a nation; a war for our independence; a civil war and continues to thrive right here in the world's largest living history museum. Arthur A. Shurcliff made a lasting gift to the future when he decided to transplant this "large and attractive" living witness to so much of our history. His vision surely confirms Rockefeller's admonition "that the future may learn from the past."

Rick Brown

CW Arboretum Volunteer, Tree Steward,

HRC Bassett Trace Nature Trail Project Champion

Thanks for the invaluable assistance of Donna Cooke, Corporate Archivist, and Marianne Martin, Visual Resources Collection Librarian, at the Colonial Williamsburg's Rockefeller Library, without whose help these materials would surely not have been found.

Historical photos are being used with permission from Visual Resources, John D. Rockefeller Jr. Library, The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation. Current photo by Rick Brown.



Shorter Shares from HRC Members and Partners

Long Term Volunteer Opportunity with CBF at Berret's Seafood, November 30th—from Julie Luecke, CBF



**CHESAPEAKE BAY
FOUNDATION**

Saving a National Treasure

I'm reaching out in hopes that someone can help with the Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) shell recycling program in Williamsburg. I'm looking for someone to pick up five-gallon buckets of recycled oyster shells once a week, preferably on a Wednesday morning. The location would be at Berret's Seafood (199 S Boundary St Williamsburg).

This volunteer position will require going to Berret's once a week to pick up the buckets (each can get up to about 30 pounds), load them into your vehicle, and take them to the most convenient **shell bin** to you. If you are interested in this opportunity, email me at Jluecke@cbf.org and I will provide more information! This project will earn you service hours in the **Fauna-Oyster Restoration-CBF** opportunity in Better Impact.

House Finch with Leucism,
November 29th—by Dave Watt

A couple weeks ago, I saw a white bird at my feeders, but I couldn't get my camera quickly enough. It came back at the beginning of this week and has been at my feeders almost every day. Finally, I was able to get a somewhat reasonable photo from my iPhone (photo right). Researching this, and in talking with Nancy Barnhardt and Jim Corliss, it appears it is a house finch that has leucism. One source estimates leucism or albinism occurs in one out of approximately 30,000 birds. FYI, albinism is a different condition and even more rare. It would be interesting to know exactly what species this is if anyone can ID it.



Wildlife Mapping at York River State Park, November 20th—by Tory Gussman

"We had a good crowd of enthusiastic naturalists participate this cool and blustery morning." Check out the [eBird checklist](#) to see 29 of the species recorded between 9-10:30am. **Pictured left to right:** Les Lawrence, Babs Giffin, Nancy Barnhart, Jan Lockwood, Joyce Lowry, Ginny Broome, Brad Glasebrook, and Adrienne Frank. **Not shown:** Shirley Devan, Gary Driscoll, and Tory Gussman. Later that morning Adrienne was presented the Bald-Cypress Award by Friends of Dragon Run.

What's the deal with rockfish? November 10th—by Robert Ambrose

“This is a great [short video](#) that our members should see, and it opens the door for future action on one's behalf.” The Chesapeake Bay Foundation recently shared that “juvenile striped bass (aka “rockfish” or “stripers”) numbers are at alarmingly low levels.” They have provided a video with “fisheries experts Chris Moore and Allison Colden to learn about this iconic fish, the challenges it faces, and what” the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission’s updated management plan means for rockfish.



Osprey Talk at General Meeting, November 8th—by Claire White

Michael Academia, pictured above, researcher at the Center for Conservation Biology at The College of William and Mary, presented “Osprey and Menhaden” during the final 2023 general meeting. Over 60 were in attendance, whether in person at the library or online via Zoom video conferencing software. His research on how food supplementation (Atlantic menhaden) increased reproductive performance of ospreys in the Lower Chesapeake Bay was of special interest to those who participate in the [OspreyWatch project](#). If you are interested in joining OspreyWatch, start learning more now, so you're ready to observe egg laying and incubation in early spring.

Golden Circle Newsletter Correction, November 7th—by Claire White

In the October HRC newsletter I indicated that Jennifer Trevino was the HRC's 10th addition to the [Golden Circle](#), Jennifer is one of ten active HRC Golden Circle members at present, but our 11th HRC member to join the Golden Circle. Rick Brown alerted me to the mistake. Susan Powell was the first person in our Chapter, and the state, to hit 5,000 hours. She was in Cohort 1 back in 2007 but is inactive at present.

Chestnut Film “Clear Day Thunder” Special Screening, November 5th—Shirley Devan

I watched [this video](#) this morning and loved it. Those of us who volunteered July 2018 at New Kent Forestry Center were doing exactly the same procedure described early in the film. I found these photos on my phone from July 20, 2018. Seems like yesterday. Pictured left to right: (photo 1) Randi Heise, Glenda White, Karen Grass, (photo 2) Les Lawrence, Lou Amato, Jean Miller, Claire White.



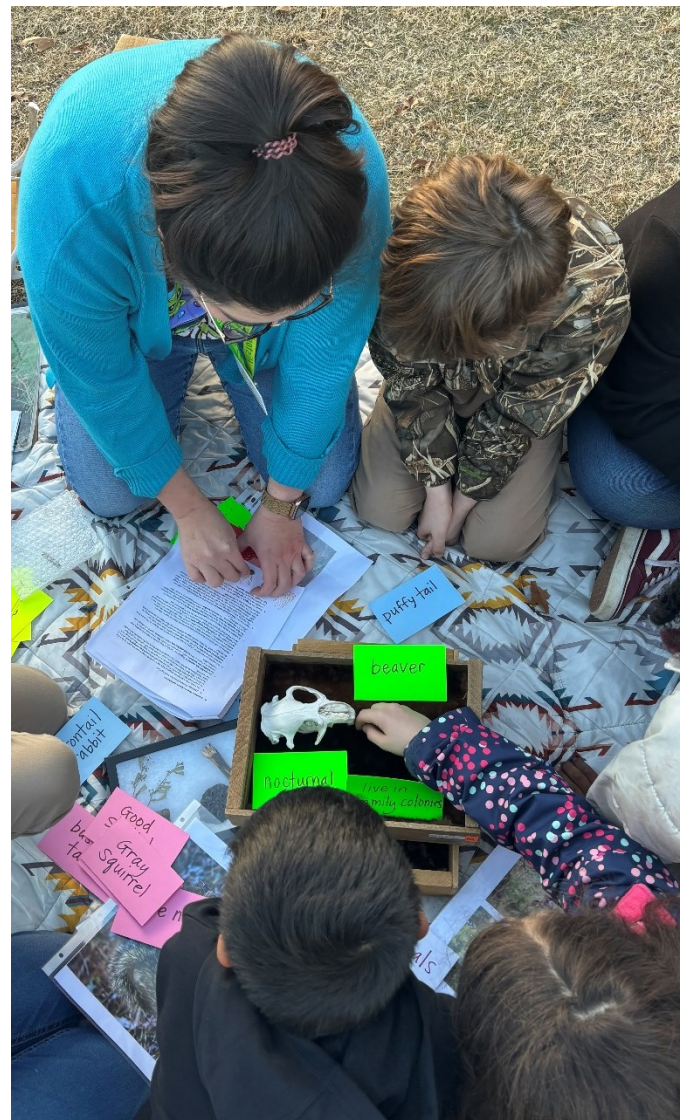
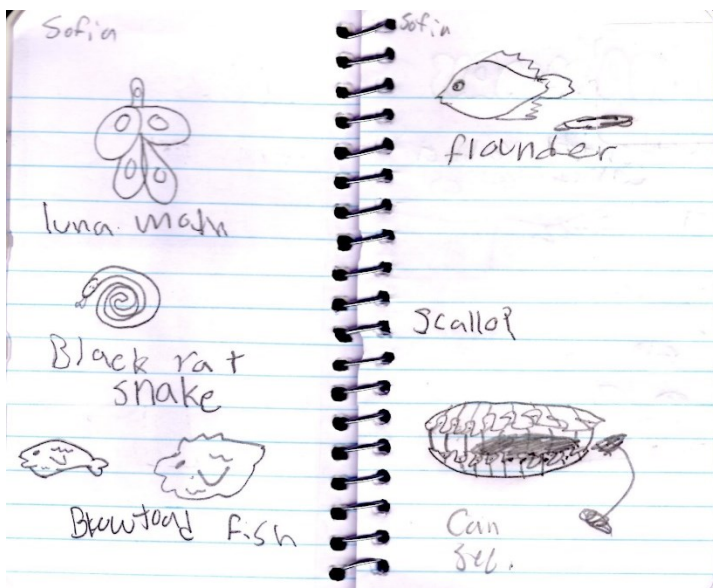
Animals Stations and Nature Journaling at JRES

by Claire White,
Photos by Julie Peet

On November 30th, the Nature Explorers afterschool club at James River Elementary School (JRES) explored different native animals through pictures, specimens, and other resources curated by three HRC club volunteers. Janet Harper led a station on birds, Jeff Honig, Fall club leader, led a station on a variety of animals from aquatic to insect, while Claire White focused on familiar mammals.

At the mammals' station students were able to touch a variety of "Kind Furs®" (reproduction furs), real skeletons (deer and beaver), examine scat, and feel a squirrel pelt with claws and fluffy tail attached. Resources were pulled from Collections and Resources (CAR), currently housed at Jennifer Trevino's house, and several additional images were supplemented by Marie Robertson, who retrieved the outstanding images from member and photographer [Martha Moss](#).

Oohs and ahhs were heard in response to the specimens, and kids had the opportunity to sketch what they saw and write key words, courtesy of pocket journals provided by Nature Explorers Club founder Pat Murphy. Basic Training Member Julie Peet helped transition 20 children through the three stations and captured a few pics of the mammal stations shown to the right. **Top right picture** is Claire with students and beaver skull. **Bottom right pic** is of squirrel specimen.



The **Virginia Master Naturalist** Program is a statewide corps of volunteers providing education, outreach, and service dedicated to the beneficial management of natural resources and natural areas within their communities. Interested Virginians become Master Naturalists through training and volunteer service. The program is jointly sponsored by seven state organizations and based in the Department of Forest Resources and Environmental Conservation within the College of Natural Resources and Environment at Virginia Tech.

Learn more about our chapter at historicrivers.org

The Naturalist is the monthly newsletter of the Historic River Chapter (HRC) of Virginia Master Naturalists. Other organizations may not publish material from the newsletter without express permission from the chapter. Newsletter contributions should be emailed to HRCeNewsletter@gmail.com by the end of the month. If you have a submission in the works, please notify the newsletter editor. Photos should include concise captions and credits to photographer(s).



Bonus Bug: Slug on decomposing tree trunk at New Quarter Park on November 22, 2023. Photo by Claire White. Learn more about land snails and slugs of the Mid-Atlantic at carnegiemn.org/science/mollusks/

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