

The Naturalist

May 2025 Newsletter | Volume 21, Number 05
Historic Rivers Chapter of Virginia Master Naturalists

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Feature Photo: Mourning cloak butterfly (*Nymphalis antiopa*) at New Quarter Park, near Queens Creek on 05/18/25 by Claire White.

A Message from the President

by Janet Harper

Kudos to Judy Jones and Alice Kopinitz for hosting our first ever Cookies and Conversation event! About 20 people came to socialize and it was nice to see folks at a casual social gathering. The cookies and snacks were great too! Our next social event is the **Ice Cream Social** on June 25th at Waller Mill Park.

As I write this message, we've been back from our trip to England less than 48 hours and I've been trying to catch up on business. London was crazy crowded with thousands of tourists and bikes coming out of nowhere, so I was glad to get out of the city. We had a lovely trip driving around the beautiful countryside and staying at old inns. The old villages of stone and brick are so charming. They've all been so well preserved and are still lived in today. Our Apple maps took us down many narrow country lanes only wide enough for one car but unfortunately had two-way traffic. I was able to see a lot of vegetation up close as we pulled over into the bushes to let cars pass. Luckily Bill grew up in England and learned to drive there, so driving on the left side wasn't too bad. But there's nothing like travel to make you appreciate being home!

I missed my normal nature activities and working in my garden. I picked my second batch of lettuce

yesterday and my first tomato today! The plants are doing great, but so are the weeds. I'll be working on those for several days! I enjoyed getting back to the Bluebird trails. In addition to our regular Bluebird eggs and chicks, we had tiny Tree Swallow chicks in a highly feathered nest at the Yorktown Sports Complex yesterday, and tiny House Wren chicks deep down inside their nest at Grafton Bethel School today.

Birdability needs You! I'm sure you've all heard about the Birdability project some of us have been doing to evaluate parks and trails for their accessibility for people with disabilities. So far, Historic Rivers Chapter (HRC) only has 4 members trained to perform these evaluations, but others can join us to help with data collection and to learn more about the project. We have completed assessments of 5 sites so far, but there are many others to do as the Department of Wildlife Resources (DWR) wants to do ALL of the Virginia Wildlife and Birding Trail locations throughout the state. We have several more local sites to be evaluated. DWR is doing a "Relaunch" of the project to get more people involved and to share their updated protocols.

A recording of a webinar called *Birdability Project Re-launch and Kickoff Webinar- Together on the Trail: Accessible Birding and Birdability Map* with speaker Cat Fribley, the Executive Director of Birdability, is now available on the Virginia Master Naturalist [Continuing Education webpage](#). If you are interested in joining the HRC Birdability team, please watch the recording and reach out to me with any questions you might have.

Basic Training applications will be open by the time the newsletter is published. If you know of anyone who is interested, please remind them to apply early as we have more people "interested" than we have slots for. Applicants are accepted on a first come-first served basis, so early is better!

Backpack project update: So far, we have placed Wildlife Viewing Backpacks in 23 of the 26 locations. In addition to most elementary schools in Williamsburg-James City County and York County school divisions, you can find them at 4 James City County Parks, Waller Mill Park, New Quarter Park, York River State Park, Quarterpath Recreation Center, Williamsburg Regional Library, and the Bookmobile. If you visit any of these sites, be sure to ask about the packs or even check one out to explore the site!

On the Calendar

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

Sunday	June 15	HRC Photo Contest DEADLINE email Ted Sargent at want ted@aol.com
Monday	June 16	CE Beech Leaf Disease Survey Training 12-1pm, VMN Webinar Register
Wednesday	June 18	Greensprings Sign Unveiling 2pm at Trailhead Parking, 2751 John Tyler Hwy
Tuesday	June 24	Presquile Island Workday 9am-1pm with Fish & Wildlife Service Register
Tuesday	June 24	Butterfly Count at George Washington's Birthplace See Adrienne's email
Wednesday	June 25	HRC Ice Cream Social 5:30-7:30pm at Waller Mill Park Shelter #4
Friday	June 27	CE Behind the Scenes at VIMS 10-11:30am or 1-2:30pm Tours Register
Saturday	June 28	CE Bird Walk 8-10am at New Quarter Park, 1000 Lakeshead Drive
Saturday	June 28	Litter Pickup 9-10am at College Creek Beach, Colonial Parkway

Weekly Wildlife Mapping: Hope to see you at one of the upcoming events at York River State Park (every Monday), New Quarter Park (2nd and 4th Tuesdays), Greensprings Trail (2nd and 4th Thursdays), Jamestown Island (1st Wednesday), and Yorktown Battlefield (Last Sunday). Check email for any last-minute changes.

Macroinvertebrates at Nature Explorers

by Marie Robertson

April 15 was our last day of Nature Explorers Club at Clara Byrd Baker (CBB) and one to remember! HRC member Patty Maloney was our guest leader on the subject of benthic macroinvertebrates. She came early with her net to search the Powhatan Creek, and found dragonfly larvae, scuds, salamanders, baby crayfish and more (pictured top right in tray). Using the same water quality monitoring supplies that are used in Basic Training, the students tested water samples for dissolved oxygen, turbidity, and pH levels. They really enjoyed observing the benthic macroinvertebrates (pictured below) and were enthusiastic learners. Many thanks to Patty for sharing her knowledge and enthusiasm with the CBB students. Many thanks also to our HRC volunteers who helped every week to make this club a success: Robert Ambrose, Sherry Brubaker, Cynthia Ferentinos, Bob Kaplan and Jennifer Smith.



Contact Outreach and Education Chairs Cynthia Ferentinos and Marie Robertson if you are interested in helping with Nature Explorers at Clara Byrd Baker or James River (JRES) Elementary Schools in the fall. We need a new co-leader for JRES, as Pat Murphy, the leader since 2019, has moved to Virginia Beach. The Student Health Initiative Program (SHIP), which Nature Explorers is a part of, needs club leadership positions confirmed by August before students return for the new school year, even though fall clubs do not start until October. Please consider if you can commit and send questions to the Outreach Chairs this summer.



Outreach with the Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation

by Linda Hughes and Claire White



The Historic Rivers Chapter (HRC) of Virginia Master Naturalists participated in its first “Family Day” with the Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation (JYF) on Saturday, May 17. The theme for the day was “Farmers and Foragers” at the American Revolution Museum at Yorktown, one of two museums run by JYF.

Claire White (pictured top left with two curious high school visitors) and Linda Hughes (pictured top right with an assortment of plants) led the 10am-4pm tabling event with fellow HRC members Janet Harper and Donna Dodenhoff joining in for the afternoon shift. The volunteers educated more than 55 visitors on the roles of plants in daily life in the 1700s and highlighted a few other non-plant resources available in the area. The HRC tables displayed numerous live plants collected by Linda that the colonists would have foraged to supplement what they grew. We had a wide range of visitors from toddlers to teenagers to adults, from a wide range of places including the Hampton Roads area to folks from as far as Ohio and Texas.

Though 18th century colonists engaged in some trading with area Native Americans for food, they largely relied on cultivated crops. As the colony grew and established more sustainable farming practices, foraging became less of a primary food source, but it remained a practice for some colonists, especially those living in more remote areas or during periods of food scarcity. Interestingly, foraging was a crucial element of the Continental Army's logistics, particularly during winter encampments when supplies were limited. The Continental Army would often need to “acquire” local resources to feed its soldiers, and foraging was a key part of that process.

The next JYF Family Day the HRC will be participating in is themed “Citizen Science” on Saturday, July 12 at Jamestown Settlement. Volunteers are needed to teach families about nature identification apps (like [Seek by iNaturalist](#)) and conduct a scavenger hunt. Co-leads Cynthia Ferentinos and Marie Robertson are looking for a few additional volunteers to help with the scavenger hunt and answer questions at the HRC VMN information table. The setup will be in a covered/shaded area. Two shifts: 10am-1pm and 1pm-4pm.



What's Blooming at Brickyard Landing?

by Judy Kinshaw-Ellis

In just over a year, Brickyard Landing Park has been transformed into a lush garden from a grassy field. The majority of the perennials and grasses that were put in during 2024 are thriving. The blueberry shrubs planted last November are loaded with berries. Monarchs have found different patches of milkweed, and volunteers are on the watch for caterpillars. It is exciting watching everything grow and thrive.

The deer also found the garden and seem to enjoy Serviceberry, Ninebark, and Hydrangea. We are spraying repellent, but the rain has complicated keeping the repellent replenished. Much of the work at the park continues to be mulching and weeding. However, volunteers will plant four flats of common milkweed in early June. The summer also should bring installation of interpretive signs and benches. We also hope to finish the dry riverbeds and purchase gardening tools to complete the Wetlands Watch grant.

Workdays: Mondays and Thursdays from 8 a.m. to 10 a.m.



Pictured top-down: (1) **Butterfly Weed** is thriving in two different patches in the park. Common Milkweed and Swamp Milkweed grow in the park, too. (2) The **blueberries**, both Lowbush and Highbush, are loaded with berries. (3) **Volunteers** mulch and weed to keep the park looking gorgeous. (4) Many of the **hydrangeas** have struggled. What we did not lose, because they were not happy where they were planted, the deer have been eating.



Etsy Inspiration at Paspahugh Town by Linda Hughes

As with any project there are always challenges. This was a new one for Dan Foster and me. We teamed up in November to create a Demonstration Garden at Paspahugh Town in Jamestown Settlement. The garden depicts wild and cultivated plants pre-1607 and during the early colonial years that the Powhatan peoples used for food, medicine, ceremonial and utilitarian purposes. Since the project's start, we have nurtured dozens of existing native plants, transplanted many others, and even bought a few to round out the garden.

Currently there are approximately 50 *different* plants on site. We have mapped nearly all of them. To help Jamestown's historical interpreters, we're in the process of creating a "fact sheet" of the key plants and their uses. Additionally, we wanted to use plant identification markers to visually guide them, as well as help visitors. The "standard" metal or plastics ones simply would not do for an outdoor "Living History Museum" that's depicting indigenous woodland life as it was in the very early colonial years!

I discovered roughhewn stick plant markers on Etsy, an online marketplace for handmade and vintage goods. Bain Schultz, Jamestown Yorktown Foundation's landscape supervisor, approached one of her JYF team members to copycat the Etsy plant markers. Blain Rothenberger to the rescue! He has so far made us more than 30 plant ID stakes. We've already put several into the ground. Necessity is most definitely the mother of invention!

Pictured top down: (1) Paspahugh plant stake labeled "13 Spiderwort" in the ground. (2) Blain cutting plant stakes with a miter saw. (3) Linda hammering a stake in the ground.



VMN Conference Activities: September 5-7, 2025

Join chapters from across the state for the 2025 Virginia Master Naturalists (VMN) Statewide Conference and Training at the Westin from September 5-7, 2025, in Richmond, Virginia. Group room rates for the Westin hotel close August 14. Registration for conference sessions will start July 24 at 6pm, and close on August 18. The topics for the field trips and classroom sessions are listed below. See webpage for specific times, descriptions, instructors, and more at <http://www.virginiamasternaturalist.org/vmn-statewide-conference.html>

Fri, September 5 | Pre-conference Field Trips:

- *Friends of Dragon Run* Paddle/Hike
- *Wapiti Elk Herd*—A James Bellwood Legacy at the Defense Supply Center in Chesterfield
- *James River Riparian Stewards* at Maymont
- *Invasive Plant Removal, Native Habitat Restoration, Uncovering History Along the Appomattox River Trail*
- *Monarch Larva Monitoring Project* “How-Tos” at Pocahontas State Park

Sat, September 6 | AM Classroom Sessions:

- From Sewer to Park: *Transforming the James River*
- *Turtle Trapping and Relocation* Projects Start with Handling Turtles
- *Collection and Germination of Native Plant Seeds* from Local Populations
- A Search for Safe Passage: An Interdisciplinary Example for *Developing Older Youth Programs*
- *Camera Trapping* for Conservation Research and the Role of Community Collaboration in Studying *Virginia’s Gray Foxes*
- How to Make it Work—*VMN Collaborations*
- *Connecting Climate Action: Tools, Networks, and Practices*

Sat, September 6 | PM Classroom Sessions:

- *Nature Journaling* Workshop
- *James River Atlantic Sturgeon*, Fishing for Science
- *Data Processing* Training Session for the *Virginia Gray Fox Project*—Tagging Images in Wildlife Insights Artificial Intelligence Platform
- *Project Learning Tree’s The World Marketplace*
- *‘If it flies, band it!’ MAPS Banding* on the Coastal Plain

Sat, September 6 | PM Field Trips:

- Introduction to the *VCU Rice Rivers Center and Oyster Restoration* on the Half Shell
- *Guided Pawpaw Foraging* Hike at Powhatan State Park
- The Flora of Virginia: Building Blocks for *Plant Communities at James River Park* System, Pony Pasture
- *Using the Garden as Your Classroom* at Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden
- *The Geology of the Dinwiddie Terrane: The Petersburg Granite, reimaged* at Belle Isle Park

Sun, September 7 | AM Classroom Sessions:

- *Collection and Germination of Native Plant Seeds* from Local Populations (REPEAT)
- Restoration on the Half Shell: *Oyster Restoration* and Replenishment
- *Understanding Marine Debris: Sources and Solutions*

Sun, September 7 | AM Field Trips:

- *Intro to Restoration of the Longleaf Pine Ecosystem* at James River National Wildlife Refuge
- *Watershed Explorations: An Opportunity for Immersive Education and Interpretation* at Maymont
- *Rock Pools as a Model System* for Exploring Ecological Processes at James River Park System
- *Field Introduction to Fungi, Lichens & Slime Molds* at Pocahontas State Park
- *Master Naturalist Project Sampler at Pocahontas State Park*

Camp Skimino Pollinator Garden Established by Kim Owens



The Williamsburg Garden Club awarded a \$1,000 grant to the [Girl Scouts of the Colonial Coast Council](#). The purpose of the funding was to support educational initiatives and the creation of a pollinator garden at Camp Skimino Girl Scouts Camp for the Williamsburg group. Troop leader, Brian Dow, contacted the Historic Rivers Chapter (HRC) of the Virginia Master Naturalists for help, and last fall, Adrienne Frank and Marie Robertson met with him to



consider ideas for a garden. This spring, Kim Owens volunteered to facilitate the project, because of her background as a former Girl Scout and Camp Skimino attendee.

Brian and another parent of one of the Scouts met Kim in April to choose a garden location. The chosen location was in a highly visual spot and well-visited space where the girls could sit and enjoy nature, and it was also close to the water source. Kim then created a design plan and plant list. Brian and his daughter attended the May 3rd Annual Native Plant Sale of the [John Clayton Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society](#) armed with grant funds, a list of plants and a wagon. They were determined to secure the plants needed. Special thanks to Keith Navia for assisting them during the sale. The Girls Scouts acquired 65 native plants with inscribed labels.

Plenty of preparation took place, especially due to concerns about the possible extent of the work needed by the Scouts. However, on the day of the installation, they exceeded expectations. Nine Girl Scouts, two lead directors, five parents, and Kim helped to install the native plant garden. The Girl Scouts with their parents actively engaged in weeding, raking, spreading dirt, and planting. Kim spoke to the group about the importance of native plants and invasive plant species. She showed photos of the plants being added to the garden and talked about the insects and butterflies that rely on those plant species. There were many questions and good discussions.

The garden was decorated with a rock-lined pathway and other features. A bench was placed for relaxation, a wind chime for soothing sounds, gazing balls, a rock border, and large stones or boulders which the girls enjoyed arranging. The scouts had lots of fun planning the stone pathway - future landscape designers in the making. Recently a bridge was added, representing a new scout project called "Bridging," where girls advance to the next level. The newly planted garden now serves an additional function for the camp scouts.

Overall, it was a productive Girl Scout project, and time was well spent doing, learning, and enjoying. It was also a wonderful way for our chapter to engage with the community, especially its youth.

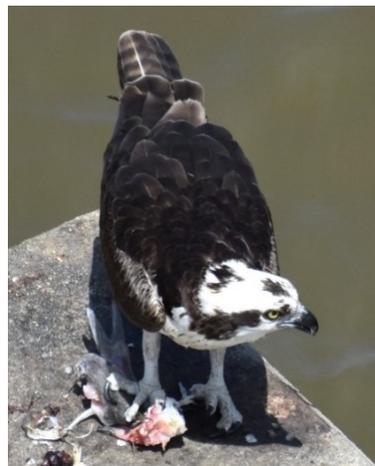
Ospreys on the Chickahominy by Jim Leech

If you have had any opportunity to visit the Chickahominy Riverfront Park in James City County, you probably know there are lots of Osprey in the area. One common location for nesting is on the mid-span structures of the bridge on Route 5. I had a chance to watch one of the nests earlier in May while taking my sister to various birding locations in the area. When we first looked over the edge onto the channel abutment we saw a female Osprey on her nest. She was soon joined by a male bearing a gift of a fresh fish (left photo). She traded places with the male and flew off (center photo). The three speckled eggs were visible as the male took over watch (right photo). The female flew off to enjoy her meal, which looked like a catfish (photo bottom left).



I revisited the area in late May and found both still at the nest with no chicks evident (photo bottom right). The female again was on the nest. I have since learned that the incubation period for Osprey is between 35 and 43 days. I'll have to plan another visit if I want to see the chicks.

Want to earn hours for watching local Osprey nests? Visit osprey-watch.org to learn about the global nest monitoring project, which features nests like the one Jim observed. This is an approved volunteer services project for the Historic Rivers Chapter.



HRC Publicity Suggestions, Guidelines, and Strategy

by Publicity Chair Laura Grove

Members, please send social media suggestions and posts for the [Historic Rivers Chapter Facebook page](#) to HRCpublicity@gmail.com. The following guidelines are a starting point and may change as time progresses.

Target audience: Nature-loving and nature-curious members of the public, including us!

Goals: Increase awareness of who we are and what we do, recruit volunteers, educate the public, announce public events.

Frequency: My current goal is to aim for one to two activity posts per week as well as any public events that are coming up. We want to post a variety of engaging content that the public is excited to see. With so many interesting projects, there is plenty to work with. I'm currently working on a content calendar, which will help to ensure that we post regular content about a variety of projects.

Notice: For public events, please try to send information at least a week in advance. It may take me a couple days to get to it, so more notice is better. For activities, please send advance notice, if possible, so that I can fit it into the content calendar. After the activity, send photos and follow-up stats/information as soon as you can.

Photo challenge: Have fun and engage your creative instincts! We've had great photos and let's

Photos by Martha Moss: (Top) Common milkweed flower (*Asclepias syriaca*) at Freedom Park, May 20. (Bottom) Eastern gray squirrel (*Sciurus carolinensis*) at Greensprings, May 30.

have some more. Try for things like interesting angles, action shots, humor, candid photos, eye-catching settings, and so on. If you have time, check out the photos in this article for inspiration: <https://news.wm.edu/2024/03/08/wm-experiential-courses-bring-biology-to-life-and-transform-the-student-experience/>. Let's continue to help the public see us having fun, experiencing the wonder of nature, and working to support the things we love.

Text: If you'd like to send text to go with your photos, please do so! Aim for clear, concise copy that captures the activity/event and engages the audience. Try to fit everything with a few sentences. In most cases, two paragraphs of two to three sentences will work, particularly if we want to add a little bit of background or educational information. Disclaimer: I may edit for brevity and impact.

I am happy to create text for posts! If you can, send me a brief overview of the project along with some interesting stats: How many people participated? How often do we perform these activities? How many species were sighted? How many pounds of trash were collected? Were there any particularly funny/interesting things that happened? Any uncommon species sighted? Things like that. I'll use that information to create concise, engaging text that helps the public understand who we are, what we do, and why we do it.

Excerpts from Bassett Trace Nature Trail Reports:

Notable Plants, May 2025 by Leisa Clark



Monday, May 5:

This is the time of year when the trails change on a daily basis. It's quite amazing how quickly everything is growing...

There are lots of flowers in bloom. Here are some of them: Bulbous buttercup, Chinese privet, tulip tree, black cherry tree, strawberry bush, jack-in-the-pulpit, mayapple, yellow wood sorrel, Japanese honeysuckle, oriental false hawksbeard, false Solomon's seal, Solomon's seal, azure bluet, blue star grass, yellow star grass, Philadelphia fleabane, deerberry, showy orchid (orchis), and American strawberry bush.

Fruits are developing on the following flora: black cherry, Eastern red cedar, muscadine grape, aniseroot, mock strawberry, black huckleberry, blueberry, mahonia, and wineberry.

Friday, May 16:

The trail looks great. All of the flora is growing rapidly. *Today I thought I'd mention the native vines.* If you stand near the Master Naturalist sign and walk around that area you'll be able to see yellow jessamine, crossvine, trumpet vine, Virginia creeper, muscadine grape, summer grape, common greenbrier, saw greenbrier, and poison ivy. Many of the mature vines reach the canopy so the flowers are not visible. However, there is evidence that the

vines are above us. Soon we'll see the flowers of the yellow jessamine on the floor of the trail.

The other highlight was at the dam. The grasses are interspersed with large swaths of foxglove beardtongue and clasping Venus's looking glass.

Wednesday, May 21:

The same flowers were in bloom as last week. New this week was Indian pipe. There are lots of berries on the deerberry (native) huckleberry (native), and wineberry (invasive) plants.

Thursday, May 29:

A number of plants are currently blooming and/or have fruit.

Native: white avens, Southern yellow wood-sorrel, foxglove beard-tongue, Carolina cranesbill, Virginia pepperweed, field pansy, horse-nettle, bedstraw, downy false foxglove.

Nonnative: purple beautyberry, Oriental false hawksbeard, multiflora rose (invasive).

Fruit on native plants: black cherry, black locust, hearts-a-bustin (strawberry bush), Solomon's seal, false Solomon's seal, deerberry, black huckleberry, blackberry.

Wineberry, an invasive bramble, also had fruit.

Additional Information from your Newsletter Editors and fellow Bassett Trace Trail Stewards:

We hope you head out on the trail. Along the way look for ground-level-cards that identify plants of interest (see photo above). Leisa changes these out continually through the season, as well as keeping fellow stewards updated through her trail reports. Check out *The Friends of Bassett Trace Nature Trail Plantsoon website* to learn more. Free weekly guided trail walks are available on Saturdays and Tuesdays starting at 9:30am. No reservation required and it qualifies for CE hours. #Tremendous20th

Shorter Shares from HRC Members and Beyond



May 2: VMN State Program Director visits Bassett Trace—by Rick Brown

Our Chapter was pleased to host **Michelle Prysby** (pictured center), the VMN Program Director, at Bassett Trace on Friday, May 2nd. She happened to be in town with some free time and asked for a tour. Janet Harper, Judy Jones, and I showed her our project and the resident rhodies cooperated by being in full bloom on the Vista. Judy of course took this photo to mark the occasion.

Learn more about the Rhododendron collection at <https://experience.plantsoon.com/explore/3wmd81r4xk>



May 6: Installation of Inge's Memorial Benches—by Shirley Devan

I visited Chickahominy Riverfront Park and saw the progress on the installation of the two benches in honor of HRC Member Inge Curtis who passed in September 2024. The concrete for the first bench (pictured above) must set for a couple of days before they can complete the installation. The area will be roped off until it is ready. As you can see, the view includes the bridge on the left.



May 17: Bird Monitoring Training—by Gail Peterson

This shot is from the training for the Yorktown Battlefield Breeding Bird Monitoring project with the National Park Service. Dorothy Geyer, Alice and Sieg Kopinitz are measuring off 50 Meters so we can get a feeling for what it looks like. Trained volunteers will conduct point-counts of all birds seen and heard within the point sites through the months of May and June.



May 17: HRC Hospitality

We had a wonderful time at the Chickahominy Riverfront Park when we held our Cookies & Conversation social hour on Saturday, May 17th. The twenty folks who attended chatted, ate some fruit, and downed Alice’s yummy homemade cookies with smiles on their faces. It was a breezy day so when it was suggested to walk over to see Inge’s benches, many meandered together. All in all, it was a fun experience.

Our next social event will be the Ice Cream Social on June 25th at Waller Mill Park shelter #4 from 5:30-7:30. We hope to see you there!



May 19: Ghost Trap, Diamondback Dash

On Monday, May 19th, Donna Benson, Lisa Cumming and Marie Robertson kayaked their loop for the **DWR Diamondback Dash project**. In addition to counting around 185 Diamondback Terrapin turtles, we also found a ghost trap (pictured above with Marie) in the Pagan River. We hauled it out of the river, took it to the bank, and in knee-high mud and muck, placed it high in

the grass to keep it from returning to the water. We also notified DWR with the GPS coordinates for the ghost trap so they can have someone remove it. We saw osprey, bald eagles, red-winged blackbirds, herons and egrets along our route. It was a great day to be out on the Pagan River.



May 19: Greensprings Interpretive Sign Delivered

On May 19th a few members of the chapter got a “sneak preview” of the interpretive sign they championed and developed over the last two years for Greenspring Interpretive Trail. **Deborah Humphries**, pictured above with the wrapped sign prior to installation, assembled the digital design, and was instrumental throughout the multiyear project.

Please consider coming out to the official sign unveiling with the **James City County Parks and Recreation** on **Wednesday, June 18th at 2pm**. Meet at the park’s trailhead, located at 3751 John Tyler Highway, Williamsburg, Virginia 23185, just past the Jamestown High School parking lot.



Cornwallis's Cave, Phase 1 Complete—by Jeff Honig

Phase 1 of removing invasive species from Cornwallis' Cave for the National Park Service is complete. The priority was to remove all invasives above the cave to allow contractors to survey the rock formation for integrity to prevent collapse. See the top picture on the left. The next priority was to remove the invasives that prevented a good view of the historic area. The center picture shows the current situation, while the bottom left picture shows the same location earlier in the year.



Next winter, phase 2 will attack the area between the cave and parking area as well as the northern cliff face. The head of the volunteer section expressed his appreciation for this activity.



May 26: Wildlife Mappers at YRSP—by Gail Peterson

On Memorial Day, May 26, Adrienne Frank, Babs Giffin, Ginny Broom, Tory Gussman, Gary Driscoll and Gail Peterson spent the morning Wildlife Mapping at York River State Park. 43 bird species and 119 individual birds were observed and recorded in [eBird](#) during the three-hour, 2-mile walk. In the picture above, three members of the team spent time identifying an insect in the tree branches.



CoCoRaHS: Condition/ Drought Monitoring

For those of you involved in the Community Collaborative Rain, Hail, & Snow Network (CoCoRaHS) project, Noah Newman from headquarters wants to let you know that in addition to rain gauge data “CoCoRaHS receives and provides to our data users – our **Condition Monitoring reports**. “Once per week is all we seek” is the ‘motto’ for this report, where volunteers are encouraged to observe and submit their overall conditions related to drought. It takes about 15 minutes, so four reports/month could count towards one more hour of Volunteer Service. If it’s done right, they observe and submit sometime over the weekend or Monday, and then the drought scientists use their information to help them draw the drought lines each week. We now include the ability to upload photos to help with the narrative.”

The Condition Monitoring webpage has a training guide (which counts towards CE credit) and a link to the Interactive map: <https://www.cocorahs.org/Content.aspx?page=condition>



Logo for You Orders

If you are interested in ordering apparel with an embroidered Historic Rivers Chapter logo before anticipated price increases (possibly double the cost) visit the *Logo for You* physical store front at 100 Stafford Court (near Penniman Road) or the HRC e-storefront at https://stores.inksoft.com/va_master_naturalists/shop/home



Pollinator Week 2025

“Pollinator Week 2025 is a celebration of the vital role that pollinators play in our ecosystems, economies, and agriculture. Under the inspiring theme "Pollinators Weave Connections," this year's event urges us to appreciate the essential role pollinators play in creating and expressing human culture, in all of its forms.”—pollinator.org

On Friday, June 20th the James City County Williamsburg Master Gardeners Association is hosting *Pollinator Palooza*” from 9-11am at Veterans Park (3793 Ironbound Road). Children’s activities will be featured at the event as a part of James City’s County’s *Longest Day of Play*.

Other Stories of Interest:

May 6: *2024 Sea level “report cards” map futures of U.S. coastal communities*, by John Wallace, Virginia Institute of Marine Science

May 8: *David Attenborough at 99: ‘I will not see how the story ends,’* The Sunday Times (UK)

May 9: *Riparian Buffers*, by Jim Wallace, Colonial Soil and Water Conservation District

May 12: *To Spray or Not to Spray? That’s the Aphids Questions*, by Stephen Living, Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources

May 15: *False Indigo-bush, Amorpha fruticosa*, by Betsy Washington, Virginia Native Plant Society

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 including the Virginia Cooperative Extension and is based in the Department of Forest Resources and Environmental Conservation within the College of Natural Resources and Environment at Virginia Tech.

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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).



#Tremendous20th

Please be sure to include #Tremendous20th in the Better Impact "Description" field for any volunteer service or continuing education hours that are tree-focused this year. A guided walk on Bassett Trace and the Beech Tree Webinar are both qualifying activities!

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