

The Naturalist

August 2025 Newsletter | Volume 21, Number 08
Historic Rivers Chapter of Virginia Master Naturalists

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Feature Photo: Hackberry Emperor (*Asterocampa celtis*) spotted on a car roof by Linda Morse on 08/09/25 during the 12th Annual Williamsburg Butterfly Count. Photo by Jeanette Navia.

A Message from the President

by Janet Harper

The season is changing and monitoring of the bluebird trails is finished. While I'll miss counting eggs and chicks, I'm really looking forward to cooler temperatures and less humidity this fall. I'm hoping to do more wildlife mapping without worrying about the heat. Fall marks the start of other projects too, such as HRC Basic Training, the elementary school's Nature Explorers Clubs, and more community outreach events. Search the calendar on Better Impact if you're looking for something to do.

You'll need to sign up for Catch the King (tide) if you plan to do that between October 10-12. This is a fun, easy project that uses the SeaLevelRise app for mapping the tide line. They have set up a "wet run" mapping starting Sep 12 to get practice using the app before the real event. For more information and training, go to their website.

<https://www.wetlandswatch.org/catchtheking>

Speaking of projects, we could use more folks to join the Birdability project. This requires review of a training webinar and several forms and then requesting a site to evaluate. Tiffany Brown included a reminder in her August 4 email that there are 600+ sites across the state that they want reviewed. More info on the state website:

<https://www.virginiamasternaturalist.org/volunteer/virginia-bird-and-wildlife-trail/>

I'm very proud to note that we have lots of members receiving formal recognition in September. There are so many that I can't name them all here, but hopefully their names and photos will be in the next newsletter. In addition to the six folks from Cohort XVIII that were certified at graduation, three more have earned enough hours to become certified, making a total of nine from that cohort. They will all receive the more formal VMN certification certificate. Of the seven people receiving their 250-hour rockers, Gail Peterson and Dan Foster are recent graduates. That's a lot of hours in a short period of time. We also have 4 people being recognized for 500 volunteer hours, and 6 members for 1000 hours. And finally, Jeanette Navia is the big winner at 2500 hours!

Congratulations to you all and thank you for all your efforts on behalf of HRC! You are an awesome group! If you are receiving recognition, please try to attend the meeting so you can receive your bling and be congratulated by the group.

The board will start work on the Annual Report soon and will be reaching out to some of the project leaders for updates of their projects. We'll try to include some guidelines when we ask you to do the write up. Most projects don't need a lot of very specific details, especially if we've reported on them before. New projects may require more of an explanation to describe their goal, partners, and accomplishments.

I'll be travelling the first half of September so Dean Shostak will cover both the board and general meetings for me. Congratulations again to all the award recipients! See you all in October!

Janet



Pictured above: The "2024 in Review" Infographic for the HRC was released to chapter members at the beginning of August. The State Program office created a brief overview of our chapter's accomplishments in 2024, including statistics and highlighting some of our projects.

On the Calendar

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

Wednesday	Sept 10	HRC General Meeting 6-7:45pm at JCC Library
Saturday	Sept 20	CE Tidewater Garden in Winter 10-11:30am at JCC Rec Center Register
Tuesday	Sept 23	CE Spanish for Naturalists 7-8pm VMN CE Webinar Series Register
Saturday	Sept 27	HRC Ice Cream Social 1:30-3:30pm at Waller Mill Park, Shelter #4

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.

12th Annual Williamsburg Area Butterfly Count by Adrienne Frank



With 54 observers and 50 species, our butterfly count on August 9, 2025, was very good. We had more species of butterflies than last year, and we had three butterflies that have not been present for this count in the past. The weather was perfect, sunny and mid 80s for most of the day. Hearty observers started at about 9:00 am and a few remained counting until 5:30 pm. There were small groups that ventured out into 8 sectors within the 15-mile diameter circle. We had 54 observers. Fifty butterfly species were identified, and 1,733 individuals were counted. I am happy to say that this year, the species count was higher than the last 3 years. Since our first count in 2014, we have had a high of 53 to a low of 46 species.

- **This count was high in species, but low in individuals.** Some sectors did well while other areas had fewer butterflies than in the past. There were 19 of the 50 with only a few individuals.
- **New species:** Little Yellow, Great Purple Hairstreak and Little Wood Satyr. These never reported before butterflies were found in 3 different sectors during our count.
- **Only one:** There were a few species only seen once for this count: a Clouded Sulphur, Viceroy, Hackberry Emperor, and a Crossline Skipper.
- **Missed:** One species that we have had almost every other year but missed this year was the Cloudless Sulphur. Last year, we saw 74 of them.
- **Highest species count:** The most observed species was the Eastern Tiger Swallowtail (415 individuals). We had a new high count for Zebra Swallowtails (71). The previous high count was 52.
- **Lowest count:** The lowest ever count was for Black Swallowtails (7) and American Lady (3). We have had many others in previous years.
- **Caterpillars:** In addition to adult butterflies, we had reports of 30 Sleepy Orange caterpillars feeding on senna plants, and a few Monarch caterpillars on milkweed.

Each of the 8 sectors reported varied sightings. Here are some highlights:

- The **Gloucester sector**, in its 6th year, had 11 observers. Three Commas were observed in this sector and no other Anglewings were seen. This is a high count for Eastern Commas.
- **Williamsburg City (pictured right)** had 8 people observing the gardens of Colonial Williamsburg and a few other spots around town. The team had the highest number of individual butterflies for Fiery Skippers (78), Silver Spotted Skippers (72), Huron Sachem (38), Horace's Duskywing (27), and Cabbage White (6).



Photos: (Top left) Eastern Tiger Swallowtail, *Papilio glaucus*, female, by Jeanette Navia. **(Bottom right)** Williamsburg group: Bill Weldon, Linda Morse, Jennifer Smith, Melissa Schutt, Bruce Glendenning, Keith Navia, and Sherry Brubaker. Photo by Jeanette Navia.

- The **William and Mary Campus** had one person observing, and she had a new species for the count – a Great Purple Hairstreak. Quite a fabulous find!
- The **Lower York sector** surveyed New Quarter Park plus other nearby locations and had 7 observers. New Quarter Park's woods and proximity to Queen's Creek yielded some marsh butterflies not seen in other sectors: Delaware Skipper (5), Salt Marsh Skipper (2), and Aaron's (2). They observed one new species for the count – a Little Yellow.
- **Upper York County** team covered York River State Park and surrounding areas and had 5 observers. They had Little Wood Satyr (2), which has not been recorded in August in our region. They had the only Viceroy and Clouded Sulphur of any sector. They had the highest number of Orange Sulphur, Broad-winged Skipper and Clouded Skipper.
- **Freedom Park and the Warhill Tract** had a team of 7, with a new local guide and 4 participants who have never participated in our WABC prior to this one. They observed the most Monarchs and Dun Skippers.
- The **Centerville Corridor** had the highest numbers of Zebra Swallowtails (25), Sleepy Orange (55), and Eastern Tailed Blue (15). The seven-member team had 4 volunteers who were new to the count. They visited the Lavender Farm, Colonial Heritage, and other spots along the corridor.
- **Upper James City County (JCC) sector** had a number of private gardens and 8 observers. This sector had the highest number of Eastern Tiger Swallowtail (118), Pearl Crescent (16), Common Buckeye (26), and Carolina Satyr (20). They were very pleased to see the only Crossline and Northern Broken-dash skippers of the count.



Photos: (Top right) Linda Hughes, Judy Kinshaw-Ellis, Liz George, Bryan Barmore, and Sharon Burton counted at the Williamsburg Botanical Garden. **(Center right)** Upper JCC sector team: Emilia Godwin (VNPS), Gary Driscoll, Mac Mestayer, Kathi Mestayer, Brad Glasebrook, Tory Gussman, Adrienne Frank. Photographer: Barb Creel. **(Bottom right)** Lower York Group included Babs Giffin, Melissa Williams, Portia Belden, Sue Muttel, Dave Youker, and Ken Lorenzen. Photo by Gail Peterson.

The data and everyone's names are submitted to the North American Butterfly Association (NABA) website. Many thanks again to Coastal Virginia Wildlife Observatory and the Historic Rivers Chapter VMN for covering the \$3 fee for each of our observers. Many thanks go out to our state and local parks, counties, businesses, and private owners who helped to make the count a success. Thank you to those who have joined in, making great observations, and taking lots of photographs. What a team!

Please SAVE the DATE for next year, Saturday August 8, 2026.

Thank you notes from Nature Campers by Judy Jones

Fall brings to us one of HRC's most rewarding traditions: awarding scholarships for Nature Camp. Each scholarship—valued at approximately \$1,050—offers nature-loving students a chance to deepen their understanding of conservation and stewardship, empowering them to protect our community, our state, and our world.

This meaningful opportunity is made possible by generous donors like you. Thanks to your continued support, HRC proudly sends four, sometimes five, students to camp each year. We've partnered with four other organizations—the Williamsburg Bird Club, Green Spring Garden Club, Williamsburg Garden Club, and the John Clayton Native Plant Society—to create a unified application process. Students complete just one application and are considered by all five groups.

The application opens on our website October 1 and closes October 31. In early November, representatives from each of our organizations will meet to select the recipients. We especially encourage applications from underserved students, regardless of grade level—rising middle schoolers and high schoolers alike are welcome. While we prioritize students from our region, we've also supported campers from neighboring areas like Newport News and Gloucester. What matters most is their passion and commitment—not their zip code.

To show you the impact of your generosity, we're delighted to share thank-you notes from three of our four 2025 scholarship recipients. Their words reflect the joy, growth, and inspiration your support makes possible. This year we proudly sponsored four students for Nature Camp scholarships – Sadie Teer, Maggie Dabney, Asher Sohoni, and Luke Walls. Judging by their heartfelt reflections and the camp newsletter, it's clear the experience was truly meaningful for each of them. Following are the thank-you notes from three of the campers (Luke had to leave early for a theater production in which he was involved), and I'd love to share them with you.



Rising High School Senior Maggie Dabney writes:

Thank you so much for providing me with the ability to return to camp again this year. As I grow closer to my senior year (and the final year I'm eligible to attend camp), I appreciate each moment spent here so much more. This year my major was ornithology. I was so excited to take this class as recently, I have grown so interested in birds as well as wildlife photography. It is so much fun to combine the two and use the photography to learn more about Virginia's birds. Thank you again for enabling me to experience the magic of Nature Camp for another year.

Rising 7th grader Asher Sohoni writes:

This year at Nature Camp I decided to major in mycology. In this class, we did hands-on activities such as the inoculation of oak trees with shitake mushrooms and an ink-capture theanine (amino acid found in mushrooms) related to chromatography in which we capture the details of the silhouettes of objects. During my two weeks here, I spent so much time out in the woods and streams, and I learned the details of the relationships between organisms in these ecosystems. In limnology, at first, I did not believe fungi played a role in freshwater ecosystems, but in the class I learned that fungi decompose the leaves that are in water into proteins that are more usable for the other organisms. All in all, I gained a deeper understanding of nature here and a better understanding of the world. Thank you for providing me with this experience.

And rising college freshman Sadie Teer writes:

Thank you so much for giving me the opportunity to come back one last year to be here at Nature Camp. It's honestly hard to put into words how much camp means to me. I'm sure the leadership at Nature Camp has watched me grow up and discover myself and my love of nature these past eight years.

This year, I took a class called Human Footprints. It was fascinating, especially when we took a soil sample and discovered right here in camp the remains of an old charcoal hearth used years ago. We found the entire site and documented it for camp records. So, thank you so much for your generosity.

I head off to Roanoke College in the fall and although my major is not yet decided, I know it will have a

nature/biology/science theme because of the ecological foundation I received right here at Nature Camp. Thank you for impacting my life.

I think we can all agree—we chose wisely. The students we sponsored this summer were truly remarkable, and their gratitude speaks volumes. It's inspiring to see how these opportunities can spark growth and joy in young lives. Through our sponsorships, we're not just supporting students—we're empowering futures. Every contribution we make plants a seed of possibility, and the gratitude we've received reminds us that even small acts can grow into lasting change. I'm confident that our continued support will keep making a meaningful difference for students in the years ahead.

HRC Field Trip to Colonial Williamsburg by Brad Glasebrook



Rick Brown led a group of Historic Rivers Chapter members on a wonderful walk in part of Colonial Williamsburg to observe some spectacular trees on August 16. Huge specimens, some aged 250 to 300 years old. Rick leads various tree tours in Colonial Williamsburg throughout the year.

Pictured below: (back row, standing) Mike Whitfield, Donna Dodenhoff, Robert Ambrose, Keith Navia, Judy Jones, Babs Giffin, Bruce Glendenning, Rick Brown, Janet Curtis, Chris Curtis, Anne Annala, Melissa Schutt. **(front row, seated)** Portia Belden, Martha Moss, Liz George, Linda Morse, and Jeanette Navia.



Upcoming Education and Outreach Opportunities

by Cynthia Ferentinos and Marie Robertson, Co-Chairs

As summer is winding down, it's time to start planning for our fall events. Please join us to volunteer at these upcoming Education and Outreach events!



Saturday, September 27th, 10am-2pm, BugFest, Grafton Middle School (Yorktown, VA).

This fantastic event draws many people, including children, excited about 'bugs.' This year our HRC table will focus on **moths**, with a craft designed by HRC member Jennifer Smith. You do not have to be an expert on moths to help. We need volunteers who will speak with visitors about our VMN program and projects as well as volunteers who will help children with the craft. We will provide information for anyone who wants to help talk about moths and the moth specimens that we will have on display. 12 volunteers are needed for 2-hours shifts. This event is hosted by York County Mosquito Control.

Saturday, October 25th, 1:00-3:30 pm, Fall Plant Share/Exchange, Stryker Center (Williamsburg, VA), across from Williamsburg Library.

The **event** is from 1:00-3:30 pm, but we'll need *help in advance with plant donations* and during the event: staffing the information table, organizing plants and advising people regarding selecting plants for their conditions. This event is hosted by the Williamsburg Regional Library.



Sunday, December 7th at 5-7pm, 2025 Williamsburg Christmas Parade. This event is so large that a committee is needed to plan the decor. This is another great opportunity to introduce the public to the work done by Master Naturalists. This event is hosted by the Williamsburg Chamber of Commerce.



Please let us know which events that you're interested in supporting. If you can spare a little time or a lot, we'd really appreciate it if everyone would consider participating in some of these fun activities. If you have any questions or would like additional information contact

Marie at mschwiet@gmail.com for BugFest and Cynthia at chf2virginia@gmail.com for the Plant Exchange. *Also, if you have any seeds to donate to the WRL Seed Exchange, bring them to any HRC meeting or hospitality event. We'll soon start packaging native plant seeds again, so we'll have some to distribute at the Fall Plant Share/Exchange and through the WRL Seed Exchange.*



Dry Riverbeds Installed at Brickyard

by Judy Kinshaw-Ellis

Volunteers finished the last of three dry riverbed swales, which are considered BMPs (best management practices) for stormwater control, at Brickyard Landing Park this month. One large riverbed was planned but shifts in use of grant funding allowed the installation of two smaller swales. In addition to providing visual interest to a garden, the swales slow rainwater and hold it to allow time for it to soak into the ground. You can see in the photos that all three swales are holding water following recent rainstorms.

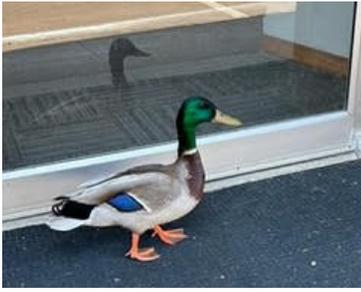
On your property, an appropriate location for a dry riverbed is where you are seeing erosion or where you see water standing after a rainstorm. At Brickyard, volunteers marked the spots after watching where rainwater was flowing after storms. We are hoping that the swales will stop mulch washout during storms and keep some stormwater from reaching the river.

Should you need a swale on your property, they are not difficult to build. Brickyard volunteers dug trenches three feet wide and 18 inches deep. They then lined the trenches with a geotextile fabric that is six feet wide. Small rocks lined the bottom of the trench, and larger river rocks covered those and filled the sides of the trench. Large rocks were placed to add interest. Step-by-step instructions are readily available online.

Join us for workdays Mondays and Thursdays, 8 a.m. to 10 a.m., 990 Brickyard Road, Toano.



Pictured left: (top) The largest and first of the dry riverbeds. Pictured left to right: Master Gardeners Steve Day, Anne Annala, Nina Acosta, and Project Co-lead, Donna Benson. **(bottom)** Swale at the base of the meadow.



A Naturalist on the Move by Mary Haines

This summer I had good intentions to be more involved with fellow Master Naturalists in Williamsburg, but it was not “in the cards.” I was on the move and unsure of what lay in store. It began in June with my annual visit home to Stevens Point, Wisconsin, while shopping on Clark Street, blocks from the Wisconsin River. I stopped at the sight of an unlikely visitor on the sidewalk: a **male Mallard** only feet ahead. I watched as he waddled up to a shop window, then back to the sidewalk until the next store front, where he approached another glass door. Likely searching his way back to the river, he reminded me how we humans look forward to returning home. He also confirmed how wildlife is ever-present in city, town, or country. One only needs to look around.

While in Stevens Point, I observed a White Heron along the riverfront where my sister lives, plus birds crowding her hopper feeder, among them the Rose-breasted Grosbeak and Baltimore Oriole, species I never observe in my yard or on wildlife mapping ventures. They reminded of the lost Mallard, who may have been searching for his female partner and her ducklings that entertained us daily as they scavenged for seeds beneath the feeder.

Back in Williamsburg, due to the demands of a manuscript deadline, I limited my “naturalist” activities to daily walks and watching both fledgling and juvenile Titmice, Cardinals, and House Finch in their awkward attempts to fly from the hopper feeder roof down to its ledges. When I changed my attention from birds and looked downward while walking, I discovered new species. One morning I stopped in shock at the sight of the invasive shrub Harlequin Glorybower (that requires serious effort to control) spotted only in our ravine, now growing happily on the roadside. To preserve my tranquility, I tried to ignore the significance of its spread. Another time, a small animal scurried across the road several yards ahead of me. As I hastened my steps, I saw the animal huddled motionless in the mulch. To my surprise, it was a **Gray Mouse**. Caught up in his “cuteness,” and not his reputation for also being invasive, I took its picture before it vanished. I blame my partiality toward mice on a poem I memorized in Children’s Literature, titled “I Think Mice are Rather Nice” by Rose Fyleman.

At the Norge Library, June’s Master Naturalist presentation on Atlantic Sturgeon transported me back to Wisconsin to Sturgeon Bay, where my husband Chuck and I love to stay when visiting Door County. Not unlike the Mallard, I seem to be looking for a connection to home. Aside from that June meeting, my naturalist activity was confined to our yard and neighborhood. One afternoon, checking on the health of plants purchased at the Native Plant Sale, I spied an attractive **green and yellow caterpillar munching a leaf on a Golden Ragwort, the host plant for the Black Swallowtail**, which may account for the butterflies’ rare appearance in our yard.

After a rainier-than-normal month this summer, several fascinating fungi species popped up overnight. The first, Reddening Lepiota, nestled in a bed of Stiltgrass (alas); and beside our lone White Oak, a distinctive White Chicken Mushroom the size of a luncheon plate — or larger. Looking downward presented another reward, my first identified **Fowler’s Toad** in camouflage among dried leaves. Several days later, in the process of repositioning a piece of driftwood (from the Wisconsin River, no less) in our front yard, I almost eliminated a

Fowler's Toad, perhaps the one I'd photographed. Frozen in place, it took coaxing with a leaf to move him off to safety. When we step outdoors to observe nature, we not only step into a world of beauty and surprise, we begin to assume responsibility for nature's creatures.

Come August we headed South to visit our daughter and family in Asheville, North Carolina, where I experienced more of nature's wonders. While walking along Bear Creek, I passed the usual, dense clump of plants. Some resembled hills; others, topiary. This time I used the Seek App, which identified them as **Porcelain Berry**, an invasive I'd only read about now reaching onto the sidewalk and brushing against me.

The most dramatic encounter occurred one morning as I rounded a bend in our daughter's street. In disbelief, I stopped in my tracks. About fifty feet ahead, crossing the street at a relaxed gait was a **Black Bear**. Never having seen one up close, I hastened my pace to get a better look. It may not have been the wisest decision, but I took several photos of the bear while he climbed a tree. Unaware of my presence, he soon continued on his path, slowly working his way up a stone staircase leading into a wooded area. Minutes later, down Bear Creek, I asked a workman if he'd seen the Black Bear. He laughed, then responded: "We become desensitized" to such sightings. It may have been a normal occurrence for Carolinians; but it certainly was an eye opener for me as I continued my walk along Bear Creek, aptly named I mused.

Back in Williamsburg, I concentrated on wildlife in our yard, reduced in scale compared to Black Bear, yet filled with discovery. Though I missed Wildlife Mappings and the group Butterfly Counts this summer, at every turn nature welcomed me. One day I chased the small **Summer Azure**, who settled on the brick path long enough for me to photograph. That brief moment with my eyes focused on the delicate butterfly was gift enough.



Interpretive Signs installed at Brickyard Gardens by Judy Kinshaw-Ellis



The Brickyard Landing Riparian Buffer Demonstration Gardens are growing and thriving, and this month, three beautiful interpretive signs were installed: Plant This Not That, Meadow Habitat, and Riparian Buffer. The signs, featuring photographs by HRC members Judy Jones, Jeanette Navia, and Judy Kinshaw-Ellis and local photographer Jim Easton, highlight meadow habitat, riparian buffers, and native plants. Photos include a range of flora and fauna.

Donna Benson and Judy compiled the information and wrote the text for the signs and Sarah O'Reilly, JCC Parks Operations Manager, did the design work. The signs are packed with information. Be sure to check out the clever use of bricks in the background of the sign! The work from the latest grant from Wetlands Watch is nearly complete.

Through the Eye of a Naturalist, 2025 Photos

“Master Naturalists have never seen an ugly thing in nature. These photographs offer proof. They grant the viewer a glimpse in a Naturalist’s inquiring mind.” The annual Historic Rivers Chapter “Through the Eye of a Naturalist” photography contest was on display at the Williamsburg Library’s Theatre Gallery from July 30-August 29. Members Ted Sargent and Judy Jones provide leadership for the annual event. This year’s photo categories were baby birds, baby fauna, swamp flora, trees in flower, and high/low tide. In case you missed it in person, the photos and their descriptions are here for your viewing pleasure.



Baby Birds, above, descriptions below in order left to right.

1. **The Leader of the Pack**, *Patty Maloney*.
Wood Ducks often cruise through the swamp along the Greensprings Interpretive Trail.
2. **Young Eastern Bluebird**, *Deborah Humphries*. Hard to say whether it’s happy or not but this newly fledged Eastern Bluebird finds a good spot to perch after leaving the nestbox.
3. **Wood Ducks—*Aix sponsa—Anatidae***, *Martha Moss*.
Wood Ducks nest in tree cavities or woodpecker holes. When ducklings are ready to leave the nest, they jump out courageously, sometimes from a great height.
4. **First Landing**, *Nancy Barnhardt*. My friend and I watched these newly fledged Eastern Phoebes for a long time. They went from being fed by parents to catching their own food in under two hours.
5. **A Pelican Chick**, *Judy Jones*. Although adult Brown Pelicans are, as their name implies brown, their chicks are white and very active.
6. **50 Years of Effective Preservation of an Endangered Species**, *Cheryl Jacobson*.
Red-cockaded Woodpecker chicks at Piney Grove Preserve near Wakefield, VA, are banded by a biologist from the Center for Conservation Biology at William and Mary.
7. **Mother and Baby Bluebirds**, *Shirley Devan*. “Don’t take that attitude with me, young lady!”



Baby Fauna, left, descriptions top-down.

1. 'I Think I Can'... Learning to Climb a Tree, *Cheryl Jacobson*.
A baby raccoon attempts its first tree climb.
2. A Mother's Love, *Judy Jones*.
A mama Red Fox gives her baby a good licking.
3. Spicebush Swallowtail Caterpillar, *Jeanette Navia*.
The larval stage of *Papilio trolius*, which will become a Spicebush Swallowtail Butterfly.
4. Time for Lunch, *Cheryl Jacobson*.
A young fawn obtains necessary nourishment.
5. A Piebald Fawn, *Judy Jones*. Although its mother was the traditional khaki brown color, this young fawn had very unique coloring. It was white where it should be brown, and brown where it should be white.
6. White-Tailed Deer—*Odocoileus virginianus*—Cervidae, *Martha Moss*. White-tailed juvenile deer, called fawns, can be recognized by their larger eyes and ears relative to their still developing head.

Trees in Flower, below, descriptions in order left to right.



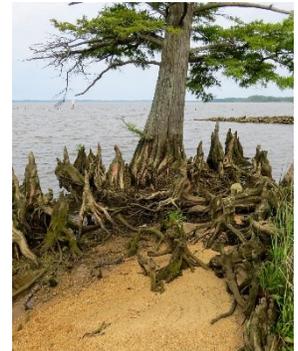
1. A Plum Tree in Flower, *Ann Jo Cosgrove*. Waiting for the plums....
2. Eastern Redbuds at The Church on The Main, *Jeanette Navia*.
Cercis canadensis in full bloom, late March, off Powhatan Creek Trail.
3. Coming in for a Landing, *Laura Grove*. A carpenter bee prepares to collect nectar and pollen from a redbud tree.
4. Pawpaw Blossom, *Laura Grove*. A pawpaw blooms in the woods along Penniman Road.
5. Southern Magnolia, *Magnolia grandiflora*, *Martha Moss*. Magnolias are members of the oldest group of plants, called basal angiosperms. They have been flowering for 95 million years, starting in the Cretaceous era.





Swamp Flora, above, descriptions left-right.

1. **Rainbow in the Water, *Judy Jones*.** In January of each year, it's the oily tannins in the water that create the rainbow in Greenspring Swamp.
2. **Fairy Place, *Linda S. Hughes*.** At water's edge on Greenspring Interpretive Trail, Common Haircap Moss (*Polytrichum*) commune with the Common Greenbrier (*Smilax rotundifolia*) in the background.
3. **The "Greening" of Greensprings, *Patty Maloney*.** Spring pops out with greenery in the swamp along the Greenspring Interpretive Trail.
4. **Swamp Rose Among Bald Cypress Knees, *Jeanette Navia*.** *Rosa Palustris* blooming among the knees of *Taxodium distichum* on Powhatan Creek.
5. **Elderberry Blossom, *Marie Robertson*.** (*Sambucus canadensis*) This shrub is used by native bees for nesting material and by pollinators for nectar. Also, the berries are eaten by many bird species and it is a host plant for numerous butterfly and moth species.
6. **Swamp Rose-Mallow, *Jeanette Navia*.** *Hibiscus moscheutos* growing adjacent to the Greensprings Interpretive Trail.



High and Low Tide, same day, same location, right—paired pictures, descriptions top-down.

1. **Now You See It... And Now You Don't, *Patty Maloney*.** The high and low tides cover and later reveal the cypress knees along the James River.
2. **Fishing at Low Tide, *Judy Jones*.** These young men seem to like fishing in low tide better than high.
3. **The Creek at the Chickahominy, *Judy Jones*.** The Chickahominy River's tides seem to change the landscape dramatically at the Riverfront Park.



Shorter Shares from HRC Members and Beyond



New Time! 1:30-3:30pm Ice Cream Social at Waller Mill Park, September 27

We've just received word from Waller Mill Park that they've transitioned to their fall schedule, which means our original reservation for Shelter #4 from 5:30–7:30 is no longer available. Not to worry—we've adjusted the time for our Ice Cream Social to 1:30–3:30 PM on Saturday, September 27th. The date remains the same—just a shift in timing!

Please come join us with your family and favorite beverages. We'll be serving Bruster's Ice Cream (delicious as ever!) with all sorts of toppings! So put this date on your calendar, gather your family together, and join us for ice cream, laughter, and nature-loving camaraderie.

Thanks so much for your flexibility and understanding! HRC hospitality

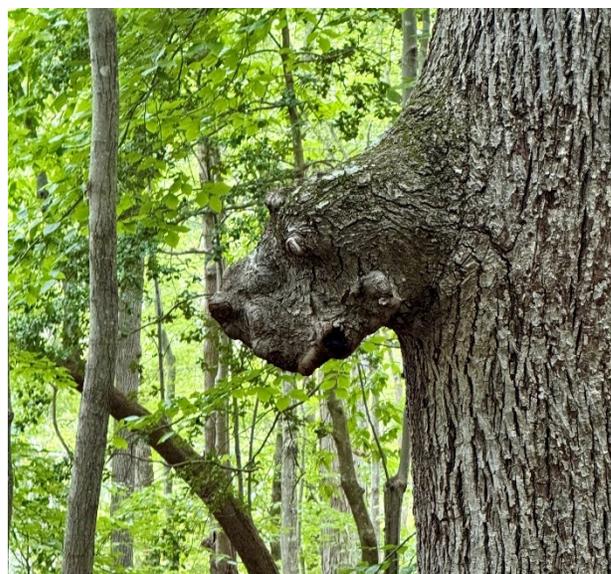


JCC BioBlitz in September

Visit [inaturalist.org/projects/parks-for-pollinators-2025-james-city-county](https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/parks-for-pollinators-2025-james-city-county) to learn more about this local citizen science project.

Soft Plastics Drive Update—by Karen Hines

HRC Members, plus some of their neighbors and extended families, have donated loads of plastic which have yielded 432 pounds of acceptable soft plastic as of August 28. That's a lot of recyclable plastic kept out of the landfill and headed for reuse! We have until early February to work toward the goal of 1,000 pounds. If you've got a good load to turn in, email ShortKarenHRC@gmail.com.



08/21 Bear Pareidolia —by Therese Stansbury

Dave and I had a breezy, yet humid, walk on the [Bassett Trace Nature] trail this morning. We encountered 5 adults and one very excited little girl who was “going to explore the forest.” I showed her my photo of the bear pareidolia and she became even more excited to go and find it with her family. I learned about pareidolia from Sherry Brubaker, aka Sherry Pareidolia, on multiple Master Naturalist wildlife mappings.

Pareidolia: the tendency to perceive a specific, often meaningful image in a random or ambiguous visual pattern. (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/pareidolia>)



08/11 Big Meadow, Skyline Drive—by Judy Zwelling

Beauty, butterflies and peace on Skyline Drive. While in the western part of the state this morning I took these photos near Big Meadow.

Tracking the Red Knots Update—by Mike Whitfield

Red Knots are federally threatened shorebirds that rely on the southeast US coast as a stopover during their migration up and down the eastern seaboard. There was a lot of activity from my share last month. One Red Knot flew thru Hurricane Erin, another was spotted on the ground on Wolf Island, Georgia!

Follow the link(s) to Seabrook Island Birders blog posts to view all the activity!

July 30, Update 1:
sibirders.com/red-knot-update/

August 16, Update 2:
sibirders.com/latest-update-red-knot-tracking/

August 19, Update 3: sibirders.com/update-3-red-knot-tracking-and-hurricane-erin/



Help with Pollinator Passport Challenge at Freedom Park—by Judy Kinshaw-Ellis

Freedom Park has a new program called the **Pollinator Passport Challenge**. Youth aged 5-12 will go to different stations to complete activities and learn about pollinators. We need volunteers!

Details: Freedom Park, Friday, October 3 from 5:30-7 p.m. Participants will learn all about the importance of pollinators! They will visit eight pollinator stations to learn about host plants, try snacks made possible by pollinators, create seed balls, dodge pesticides on the obstacle course and more! Once they visit all the stations, they will get their Pollinator Passport stamped!

If you are interested in helping, please contact me at kinshawellis@gmail.com or Sarah O'Reilly directly (Sarah.OReilly@jamescitycountyva.gov).



Save the Date! Annual Picnic on October 18

Fall is a wonderful time...full of seasonal changes. But one thing that remains constant is the annual HRC Fall Picnic! Once again, it will be held at the home of Ted and Judy Sargent in Toano. It begins with a bird walk at 8:30 am and ends with a mouth-watering crab feast and potluck cookout.

In between, feel free to look over the swap table or join the bike ride, the kayaking, the owl pellet dissection, the scavenger hunt, and a plant/mushroom/butterfly walk!

Come and go as you please. Bring your family and enjoy both the beautiful location and the opportunity to celebrate the joys of nature. Please mark down Saturday, October 18th on your calendar! We can't wait to see you there!

Pictured: (top left) Chickahominy River view from Sargent home during sunset.

(top right) College Creek Litter Pickup. Gail Peterson, Martha Moss, Jeanette Navia, and Alice Kopinitz emerge from the wooded area along the James River with a full bag of litter. **(bottom right)** The litter crew piles their bags next to the "No Parking" sign for NPS staff to pick up. Left to right: Dan Foster, Ginny Broome, Claire White (back), Alice Kopinitz (front), Anne Annala, Marie Robertson, Jeanette Navia, Gail Peterson, Liz George, Les Lawrence, Babs Giffin, Robert Ambrose, Martha Moss.



8/30 College Creek Beach Litter totals 96.4 pounds

On Saturday, August 30, thirteen Master Naturalists met at College Creek Beach, along the Colonial National Historic Parkway, to pick litter. The daily total of 96.4 pounds brought the yearly total to 449.1 pounds collected at this National Park Service site, popular amongst sunbathers and recreational fishermen.

Robert Ambrose and Claire White officially took over leadership of the project from Martha Moss and Marie Robertson in August. Future cleanups are Friday, September 26 and Monday, October 13 with Robert Ambrose at 9am. The November cleanup will be done by Cohort XIX on a Saturday as a part of their basic training.

No RSVP needed, show up dressed for the weather. Long pants highly recommended, sun protection, closed toe shoes, and your own gloves are a must. We will provide you with pickers, bags, and safety vests. Pickup usually lasts about an hour.

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.

Virginia Cooperative Extension programs and employment are open to all, regardless of age, color, disability, gender, gender identity, gender expression, national origin, political affiliation, race, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, veteran status, or any other basis protected by law. An equal opportunity/affirmative action employer. Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Virginia State University, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture cooperating.

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).



Great Purple Hairstreak (Atlides halesus) from 12th Annual Butterfly Count. Photo by Joni Carlson.

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