

# The Naturalist

September 2025 Newsletter | Volume 21, Number 09  
Historic Rivers Chapter of Virginia Master Naturalists

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**Feature Photo:** Powdered ruffle lichen (*Parmotrema hypotropum*) at Jamestown Island, on 09/23/25 by **Martha Moss**.

## A Message from the President

by Janet Harper

Special thanks to Dean for hosting both the September board and general meetings in my absence. I feel like I've been in and out of town the last couple of months. We had a lovely trip to Germany and France with beautiful scenery but not enough wildlife. We had 2 extra days in Paris due to a canceled flight back. I should be home for a while except for an occasional weekend trip.

Ron Hunt will be doing an updated inventory of our CAR (Collection and Resources) materials soon. Items in the CAR (housed at Extra Space Storage, 451 Merrimac Trail) are used for outreach activities as well as other chapter projects. Several members have items at home that belong to HRC such as the basic training computer and projector, bat computers, "Naturalists at Work" signs, and perhaps other equipment used for special projects. If you have any of these, please let Ron know so he can include them on our inventory list. We'd like to keep track of where they are in case these items are needed by someone else.

We'll be starting work on the annual report soon. A committee has been formed and several folks have been contacted to write up summaries of projects. Later this fall, we'll form a nominating committee to look at which board positions need to be filled in

March 2026. I'll reach out to those who have completed 2 years in their role to see if they'd like to do a 3<sup>rd</sup> year. After that we'll know which positions will be open in March. We'll need a new president, a secretary, and a 'member at large' for sure. **I would love to have input from the chapter for people you think would be good in a specific role. Do you know someone who might like to be on the board?** If you would like to be considered for a particular position, or you would like to nominate someone, please email me with your nominee's name.

I would like to remind everyone about the **importance of documenting your hours when doing our projects.** Even if you don't care about receiving recognitions and bling, it's still an important aspect of your role as a VMN volunteer.

**This is from the Volunteer Policy Handbook:** Documenting all time spent acting in the VMN volunteer role is part of the Standards of Conduct for all volunteers. Accurate reports of volunteer efforts are important for many reasons, such as:

- They provide documentation of what activities were done when and by whom for risk management purposes.

- They assist the state sponsoring agencies and local partners in getting much needed federal/state monies, grants, or other funding to support their natural resource programs.
- They help the state sponsoring agencies and local partners evaluate their investment in the VMN Program, and thereby continue to support the program.
- They may be used for in-kind match for external grants.
- They provide documentation used for chapter and statewide awards.
- They ensure our program's compliance with civil rights requirements.
- They make it possible for the VMN State Office to create accurate annual infographics for each chapter.

So please document all your hours as you do them and don't wait until weeks later to do so. It's much easier to remember the exact times and activities if you document them right away. That said, thank you for all you do for HRC!

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## On the Calendar

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

Ongoing	Oct 7-24	Invasives Mapping with JCC Parks   Signup Genius in Janet's Oct 4 email
Wednesday	Oct 8	HRC General Meeting/Projects Fair 6-7:45pm at JCC Library ( <i>in-person only</i> )
Thursday	Oct 16	CE Partnerships for Conservation Success 6:30pm   <a href="#">Wild Virginia Webinar</a>
Saturday	Oct 18	HRC Annual Picnic 8:30am-Sunset at Sargent Home, Toano   RSVP potluck
Monday	Oct 22	CE Ecology & Restoration of Urban Forests 12pm   <a href="#">VMN Webinar</a>
Saturday	Oct 25	CE Bird Walk 8-10am at New Quarter Park   Binoculars available for use
Saturday	Oct 25	WRL Fall Plant Share 1:00-3:30pm at Stryker Center
Wednesday	Oct 29	CE <a href="#">67th Conservation Forum</a> in Portsmouth with Garden Club of Virginia

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

## VMN State Conference Reflections: September 5-7

by Various Historic Rivers Chapter Attendees



**Pictured above: Members having fun at the river themed photo station at the VMN Annual Conference.**

Photos courtesy of Ginny Broome. (Left) Judy Kinshaw Ellis and Valerie Shostak. (Right) Dean Shostak, Alice Kopinitz, Jeantte Navia, Seig Kopinitz, Lisa Nickels, and Ginny Broome.

The annual Virginia Master Naturalists Statewide Conference and Volunteer Training was held September 5-7 in Richmond, Virginia. Volunteers from chapters across the state met to share ideas and engage in various continuing education opportunities from classroom sessions to field trips in the surrounding areas. Below you'll find glimpses into the three-day event from Historic Rivers Chapter members in attendance.



### Elk Encounter by Ginny Broome

Photo of elk from the Pre-conference Field Trip "Wapiti Elk Herd—James Bellwood Legacy" at the Defense Supply Center Richmond, a Department of Defense Installation. The installation is home to a herd of over twenty Wapiti Elk (*Cervus canadensis nelsoni*). The land and elk, progenitors of the current herd, were sold to the U.S. Army in 1941 by agriculturalist James Bellwood.



## HRC Display on Brickyard wins VMN Director's Choice Award by Judy Kinshaw-Ellis

Each chapter was asked to highlight its most impactful project from the last 20 years and present it to attendees at a Share Fair. The Brickyard Landing Riparian Buffer Demonstration Garden display designed by HRC member **Judy Kinshaw-Ellis (shown above with Linda Hughes and a guest visitor)** was selected as the VMN Director's Choice out of the 14 projects that were featured. Michelle Prsyby, VMN State Director, had input from leaders from Virginia Tech and Virginia Cooperative Extension while making the decision. The Brickyard project display featured a slide show, photo book, and a project board showing the work from when it was an empty field to how it looks today. The presentation also included a timeline showing when major plantings occurred and how the project was funded and a plant list of what has been installed.

## Visit to the Rice Center by Alice & Seig Kopinitz



Early in our chapter's history, we had several activities with Ann Wright at the Rice Center. This was a new facility - one building complete with a LEED rating for high performance energy use. One event that stood out in my memory was an overnight program complete with black widow spiders, watching dragonflies hatch in the pools and many critters attracted to the black lights. We were curious about what had changed since then; so, decided to sign up for the "Introduction to the VCU Rice Rivers Center + Oyster Restoration on the Half Shell" class which was an afternoon field trip from Richmond to the Rice Center. Part one of the

trip was a lecture/PowerPoint in one of their new (earth friendly) buildings. We learned about the history of the Rice Center as well as the native Americans who lived on the land. Rice Center works in cooperation with a number of partners, who share in scientific research to improve natural Virginia. Part two was sharing by members of the Riverine VMN Chapter about **recycling oyster shells (image above)** and their work at the Rice Center. And then the RAIN came, and we scurried to the bus for our return to the conference center. The Rice Center has certainly changed and expanded. The buildings (buildings - plural) were shiny and new. We did see our "old" building which used to be new. And now, there is also dorm facility for people to stay - not sleeping bags or sleep in your car (like we did). Yes, we were delighted to see how this facility has expanded and grown.



## Turtle Trapping and Field Introduction to Fungi & Lichens by Jeanette Navia

In the session, "Turtle Trapping and Relocation Projects Start with Handling Turtles," Todd Rimkus from Marymount University showed us how to trap and handle turtles safely. Among other things, he said to always wear gloves as "all turtles carry salmonella." Photo is of Lisa Nickel (left) handling a Pond Slider safely.

Rain did not deter Kevin Howe from leading a short walk at Pocahontas State Park. He pointed out about two dozen types of fungi or lichens in a walk in the woods. Photos are of a very large Berkeley's Polypore (center), an edible fungus similar to Chicken-of-the-Woods, and a bright blue Cobalt Fungus (right).

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## Group Effort at Oyster Shell Drop-off Site by Gail Peterson

On September 8<sup>th</sup> volunteers involved in collecting used oyster shells from local restaurants for the Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) met at the James City County Recycling Center. After a quick meet and greet with Ryan Westpfahl, the leader of the CBF Shell Recycling Program, we loaded the CBF trailer (pictured below) with oyster shells collected locally in less than a month from local participating restaurants. The shells will be cleaned and cured in the sun for up to 6 months, then used to create oyster reefs in the Chesapeake Bay or mixed with spat to create oyster gardens.

Most folks work on a schedule for their pickups with their individually assigned restaurants. Many help each other out, by filling in as needed when someone cannot make their pickup. I have been picking up shells from local restaurants for 8 months, while Thad Hecht has been doing this for 10 years! This was my first chance to participate in the group pickup. **This wonderful group is pictured below:** Thad Hecht (HRC), Jerry Petro, Carol Ely (HRC project lead), Ryan (CBF), Helmut Walter (VMN), and Ron Hunt (HRC).



## Basic Training Cohort XIX in September by Basic Training Team

Basic Training co-chairs Donna Benson and Bill Weldon, along with committee members Janie Moyers, Dan Foster, Jennifer Smith, and Claire White kickstarted the first month of basic training for the new cohort with four events. The team has implemented some new ideas and is relying on careful planning of past committees for the approximately 6-month training session. All six committee members are serving as mentors to 2-3 trainees each. New to the class schedule was “Local Habitats” as the introductory class rather than towards the end of training and moving botany up in the schedule. New field day activities included an insect walk at York River State Park after the herpetology field day, and visiting Waller Mill Park for nature apps and binocular basics after macroinvertebrate sampling.

Our 19th cohort consists of 15 trainees with a wide range of interests and backgrounds. All have completed required Better Impact training modules and are able to volunteer in chapter projects while in training. Be sure to say hi and introduce yourself if you see them in the field or at the next chapter meeting.

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**Pictured below:** Trainees and their mentors at the basic training informational meeting.

Mentee group 1: Caitlyn Verlik, Claire White (mentor), Cheryl Lynch, and Kyle Morford

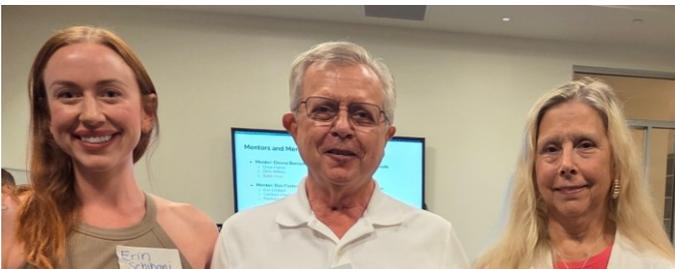
Mentee group 2: Katherine Wilkins, Janie Moyers (mentor), Steve Day, Tom Mierle.

Mentee group 3: Jennfer Smith (mentor), Hope Cook, and Andrea Case.

Mentee group 4: Donna Benson (mentor), Chloe Harne, Rose Robin, and Chris Wilkins.

Mentee group 5: Erin Schibani, Dan Foster (mentor), and Pat Lytton.

Mentee group 6: Ajit Joshi, Bill Weldon (mentor), and Kevin Pettit-Pokora.



## Cohort XIX Training September Snapshots

**Pictured left to right:** (1) Snapping turtle observations with instructor Meagan Thomas at York River State Park. (2-3) A break in the rain allowed the team to leave the shelter and walk to the stream at Warhill Tract to sample for macroinvertebrates. (4) Insect walk at YRSP. (5) Plant observation activities during botany class.



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## Youth Nature Camp Scholarship Opportunity

Nature Camp, located in Vesuvius Virginia in the George Washington National Forest has, for many, many years, offered opportunities for nature-loving students to learn about our Virginia environment and strategies for protecting it. The camp is a two-week, co-educational, academic camp that emphasizes education in natural history and environmental studies. It is intended for those seeking a science/nature experience. Campers attend class daily, maintain a notebook, complete written projects, and participate in outdoor activities.

This fall, during the month of October, we are accepting applications for scholarships for the Summer 2026 sessions. These scholarships, valued at over \$1000 each, offer unique and exciting environmental opportunities for students in James City County, upper York County, and Williamsburg. If you know of students, presently in grades 5-12, who love nature and would enjoy a two-week session at Nature Camp, please encourage them to go to [historicrivers.org/nancy-norton-nature-camp-scholarship/](https://historicrivers.org/nancy-norton-nature-camp-scholarship/) to download the application, and get it in the mail before October 31<sup>st</sup>.

# Milestones Celebrated at the September General Meeting

The Historic Rivers Chapter celebrated First-time Certification and Service Hour Milestones at the September 8th General Meeting at the James City County Library. Nine of the 15 members of Basic Training Cohort XIII were recognized for **First-time Certification** as a Virginia Master Naturalist: 40 hours of volunteer service and 8 hours of continuing education beyond their basic training hours. **Eighteen HRC members** were also recognized for Service Milestones (250, 500, 100, and 2500 hours).



“The VMN State Office issues special milestone pins (picture left) for volunteers who complete who complete 250, 500, 1000, and 2500 hours of service. At 250 hours, the first milestone, you receive a silver VMN base pin along with a rocker that says ‘250 hours’. For subsequent milestones, the rocker is changed out to the new hours total, but you keep the same original base pin... Volunteers who achieve 5,000 hours of service become part of the **VMN Golden Circle**, which comes with additional recognitions ([virginiamasternaturalist.org/current-volunteers/policies-and-procedures/](http://virginiamasternaturalist.org/current-volunteers/policies-and-procedures/)).”



**(Above) First-time Certifications (Cohort XVIII):** Jennifer Smith, Anne Annala, Karen Creef, Dan Foster, Liz George, and Dorothy Geyer. Missing from photo: Joanne Benecki and Donna Dodenhoff.



**(Above Left) 250 Hours:** Ron Hunt, Dan Foster, and Bill Weldon. Missing from photo: Eric Beckhusen, Janie Moyers, Kim Owens, and Gail Peterson. **(Above Right) 500 Hours:** Cheryl Roettger, Leisa Clark, and Therese Stansbury. Missing from photo: Martha Moss.



**(Left) 1,000 Hours:** Tracy Matthew Melton (Cohort XVI). Missing from photo: Donna Benson (XVI), Rich Decker (IX), Carol Ely (XI), Joanne Sheffield (VI), and Claire White (XII). **2,500 Hours:** Jeanette Navia (Cohort III).



**Pictured top left:** Marie and Cynthia at the HRC information table before Doug Tallamy's talk at Jamestown High School. Photo by Linda Hughes.

## Building Community Connections and Sharing Our Perspectives as Master Naturalists by Cynthia Ferentinos and Marie Robertson, HRC Education & Outreach Co-chairs

September proved to be a very productive month for HRC education and outreach! During four events, 16 HRC volunteers participated directly in education and outreach events and shared information about the Virginia Master Naturalists program and our chapter's projects, provided suggestions regarding ways to help migrating birds, advised on how to plant for pollinators and taught BugFest attendees about different types of moths. Four additional volunteers (Valerie Shostak, Liz George, Julie Peet and Alice Kopnitz) provided support from behind the scenes by preparing craft materials for BugFest. Thank you to everyone who pitched

in to help meet the multiple requests for Master Naturalists to present on these topics!

*Through these events, we reached a combined total of 435 adults and children across a broad audience: public school and homeschooling families, adults of all ages and children, and those who were already fans of native plants to those who were just learning.*

### Here are brief summaries of September's education and outreach events.

**September 6:** The Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation invited us to participate in the Kickoff Day for Homeschooling Week at the American Revolution Museum in Yorktown. We had an information table and support from Jeff Honig (not pictured), **Jamie Serafin, Deena Obrokta, and Mike Whitfield (pictured right)**. We led families through the Bird Migration Challenge to better understand the many hazards faced by migrating birds, such as destruction of habitat, roaming cats, flying into windows and artificial lights at night and how we can do our part to remedy these (e.g., by planting more native plants, keeping cats indoors, closing curtains and adjusting outdoor lighting). Although the challenges faced by migrating birds are serious, teaching these lessons through a fun and interactive activity helped the kids better understand and empathize with the plight of migrating birds.

**September 11:** The Williamsburg Garden Club invited us to have an information table during the hour prior to the entertaining and enlightening presentation by Doug Tallamy on how to "Invite Nature Back Into Your Yard." Although many of the 700 people in attendance hurried down the hall to the auditorium to find a seat, approximately one-third stopped to talk with us on their way in or as they filed out. We had some great conversations about the VMN program and our chapter (with several who are interested in next year's Basic Training class), landscaping with native plants, which native plants will do well under difficult circumstances, etc.



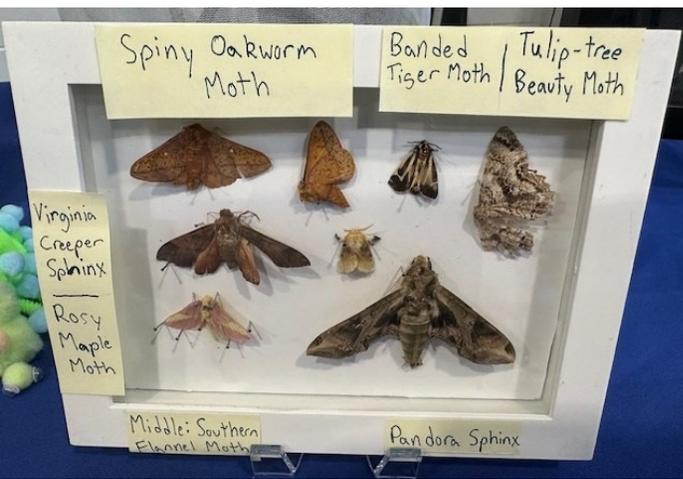


**September 18:** In her presentation on Gardening for Pollinators at the James City County Library (pictured left), Adrienne Frank provided a very engaging presentation on all of the beneficial (and beautiful) pollinators that you can attract to your yard, simply by providing the right plants. Photos of the lush gardens that she and her husband Gary have created provide evidence that “if you build it, they will come” given the butterflies, moths, bees, wasps, et cetera that are in residence.

**September 27:** The chapter continued a fun tradition this year by participating in BugFest (various photos below) at Grafton Middle School. Cohort 18 member Jennifer Smith (center in the bottom right photo) contributed her beautifully displayed moth specimens, which were the inspiration for our moth theme. She put together facts about our four silk moth species (Cecropia moth, Luna moth, Polyphemus moth, and Io moth), and shared information about the lifecycle of these large silk moths. Jennifer also created and drew four different moth designs for the craft. Many thanks to Jeanette Navia, Julie Peet, Janet Harper and Deena Obrokta for helping children assemble them. Jeff Honig, Michael Smith, Martha Moss, Stephanie Schmuck and Mike Whitfield rounded out our volunteer group for the event.

*It was a busy month, but we enjoyed meeting a lot of people who wanted to learn more about nature! Thanks again to everyone who joined us at one of these events!*





**Pictured above: More BugFest photos:** (Left) Moth specimens from Jennifer Smith. (Right) Children's craft helpers Deena Obrokta and Janet Harper.

## Wildlife Transporter: Day in the Life by Linda Hughes



**Photo above:** Staff at Wildlife Center of Virginia moving an injured osprey in a crate from parking lot into their Waynesboro facility.

I believe there are few VMN volunteer activities that are as gratifying, and yet so heartbreaking, then serving as a **Wildlife Transporter**. Earlier in September, I logged a full day of HRC volunteer hours and put 300-miles on my car on an emergency transport mission. Julie Wobig of Eastern Virginia Wildlife Rescue, a well-known and well-loved bird rescuer and rehabilitator, called me

the night before seeking a transporter to pick up two badly injured ospreys (*Pandion haliaetus*) from her and take them to the Wildlife Center of Virginia (WCV) in Waynesboro for emergency care, 150 miles away. My day was open, so I agreed.

When I arrived at Julie's at daybreak, one of the ospreys, a male juvenile, had succumbed to its injuries. But the feisty adult female was ready to go. I had always assumed that human interaction is the cause of most of the wildlife emergencies one encounters. However, each of these had been in a territorial dispute (at separate locations). Apparently, ospreys fight fiercely, and sometimes to the death, defending their nests and territory from intruders like other ospreys or even bald eagles.

Conservation of these beautiful birds of prey is a priority in our area. Organizations like Eastern Virginia Wildlife Rescue and the Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) have ongoing efforts to rescue injured ospreys and even provide nesting platforms in various locations in our local waters. Why? Ospreys are top predators that feed almost exclusively on live fish. They serve as a "sentinel species." Canaries in the coal mine. Their health & reproductive success reflect the overall health of the water and fish populations in the rivers, bays & estuaries where they hunt.

While osprey populations are thriving in areas like Northern Virginia, research from [The Center for Conservation Biology](#) and CBF indicates a severe population decline on the seaside of the Delmarva Peninsula due to prey availability issues. Recent surveys by the College of William and Mary's Center for Conservation Biology and the U.S. Geological Survey found evidence of osprey chicks starving in nests. In some areas, many nests are failing completely and producing fewer than the 1.15 chicks per nest needed to sustain the population. The primary driver of the population collapse is believed to be a lack of available fish, especially Atlantic menhaden, which is a key food source for ospreys in the southern Chesapeake Bay.

The osprey status in the Tidewater area, however, varies by region based on the availability of a healthy food supply, the research said. Peninsula and Northern Neck ospreys have shown a "major deficit" in reproductive rates. As well, breeding pairs in the Mobjack Bay area have seen catastrophic nesting failures. So, efforts like the ones made by Julie and the WCV underscore that even one osprey can make a difference in a population recovery.

After I left the osprey with the amazing team at the WCV, Julie called to say a Good Samaritan had found three wee Carolina Wrens (*Thryothorus ludovicianus*) in South Richmond. I picked up the Wrens a from a very caring young man and drove the chirping fluff balls back to Julie's for care. Incidentally, rescuing and transporting can be very stressful for wild creatures so the radio must be kept off and talking must be kept to a minimum if traveling with a companion. For the driver, though, absolute quiet can make a long drive tedious or at best provide an opportunity for reflection.

A few days after my transport mission, I called Julie to check on the status of the birds. Sadly, Julie told me two of the wrens died within an hour of my dropping them off. One is fighting for its life. All three were nestlings and were starving, she said. I guess momma didn't make it back to the nest for who knows how long. But Julie reported: "This little survivor now has eyes open and is preening and standing on side of nest." Two weeks later, Julie

said the wren (pictured below) was successfully released!



On the osprey, Julie said, she's doing OK: "On intake she was mostly covered in wounds and bruises. Dr Liv (Olivia Galeuzzi) spent a while suturing as many wounds as she could." Julie reported Dr. Galeuzzi's comments: "Overall, this bird is very bright! She's not eating yet, so we're gavaging and tempting her with lots of options," and "Her prognosis is still poor to grave - there's just so many wounds that she still has a high risk of infection or abscess, even on antibiotics and topical treatments." (Gavaging is supportive feeding.)

But to Julie and her network of angels, every animal, reptile and amphibian deserve a chance to live. From spirited ospreys to majestic eagles and even common songbirds reflect the compassionate and dedicated nature of their work. Eastern Virginia Wildlife Rescue is comprised of a network of individuals & organizations in southeast Virginia that assist orphaned and injured creatures. Most transport jobs are less than 30 minutes away. So, a transporter, more often than not, will travel to Newport News, Mechanicsville or the Middle Neck area.

If you're interested in transporting here's an application with the Wildlife Center of Virginia: [wildlifecenter.org/support/volunteer-opportunities/transport-and-rescue-volunteer-application](https://wildlifecenter.org/support/volunteer-opportunities/transport-and-rescue-volunteer-application)

Here are the Guidelines and Policies for Registered Transporters: [wildlifecenter.org/sites/default/files/documents/Guidelines%20and%20Policies%20for%20Volunteer%20Transporters%202023\\_0.pdf](https://wildlifecenter.org/sites/default/files/documents/Guidelines%20and%20Policies%20for%20Volunteer%20Transporters%202023_0.pdf)

# Brickyard Landing Sees Progress

by Judy Kinshaw-Ellis

It is difficult to visualize how a project will develop when you are staring at a grassy field with a few big ruts, and looking at Brickyard Landing Park today, it is hard to believe that the first plants went in less than two years ago. Some of the trees and shrubs installed during that first brick-filled planting, like Wax Myrtle and River Birch, have doubled in size. Nearly all of those first trees have made it through these first two years.

Most of the perennials from the spring plantings of 2024 have already bloomed, but there are a couple of plants that are beautiful in the fall. The Wrinkle-leaf Goldenrod (*Solidaga rugosa*), which was a victim of the vandalism in May 2024, is putting on a great show now. It is also a wonderful native plant that stays less than three feet tall and can tolerate some shade. The grasses, Pink Muhly (*Muhlenbergia capillaris*) and Little Bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*), look beautiful as they are going to seed. Take a drive out to the park if you want to get a look at these gorgeous fall plants.

The other big changes at the park are the edging of beds and installation of two more benches. County parks staff trenched around all of the beds and along walkways. During a county workday, county employees and volunteers mulched the edges. This gives a much more finished look to the pathways and beds until the walkways are completed. The edging should make it easier to mow and should decrease weed competition in the beds.

Co-leads, Donna Benson and Judy Kinshaw-Ellis have each donated a bench to the park. Park staff installed the new benches in September. There is room for a number of additional benches if you want to donate one. You can also add a plaque to the bench. Contact Donna or Judy for information.

*Our volunteers do a great job improving this park every day that they work. If you have been wanting to come out, we would love to see you. Mondays and Thursdays from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m.*

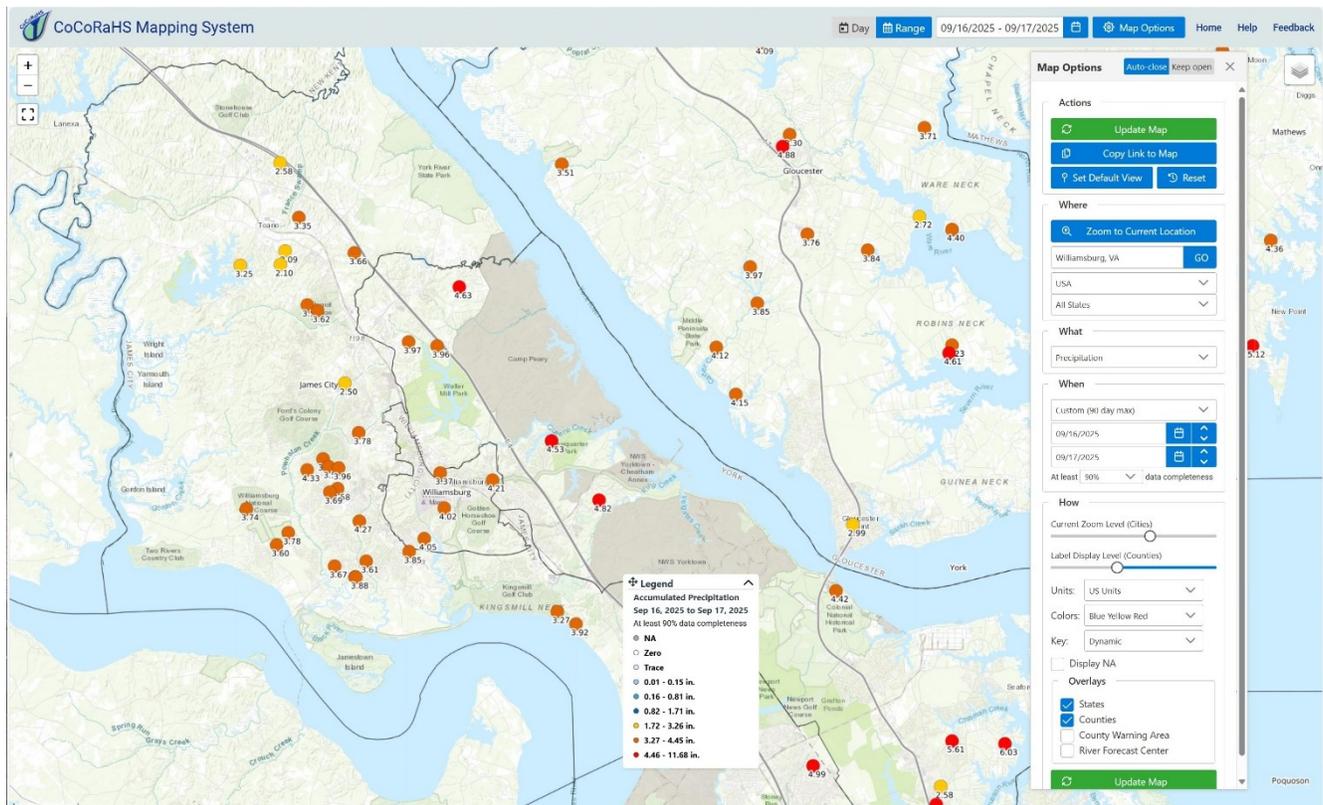


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**Photos by Ginny Broome: (Top)** The garden now has three beautiful six-foot benches that were donated. The last two benches were donated by co-leads Donna Benson and Judy Kinshaw-Ellis. **(Bottom)** Karen Creef is a regular at Brickyard Landing. She is standing in what will eventually be the path that crosses the entire width of the garden.

# CoCoRaHS Volunteers Compare Rain Totals for September 16-17

by Claire White



Gathering precipitation data for the Community Collaborative Rain, Hail & Snow Network (CoCoRaHS) is an ongoing project of the Historic Rivers Chapter (HRC) of Virginia Master Naturalists. In 2025, 29 HRC members reported volunteer hours for this project. A rainy week in mid-September led to several participants sharing their high rainfall accumulation from **September 16 and 17** via the chapter Listserv. Totals reached as high as 6.03 inches in York County, between 2 and 4 inches in James City County, and up to 4.05 inches in the City of Williamsburg. This data is publicly available on [maps.cocorahs.org](https://maps.cocorahs.org) and viewable in the graphic above.

“CoCoRaHS (pronounced KO-ko-rozz) is a grassroots volunteer network of backyard weather observers of all ages and backgrounds working together to measure and map precipitation (rain, hail and snow) in their local communities. By using low-cost measurement tools, stressing training and education, and utilizing an interactive Web-site, our aim is to provide the highest quality data for natural resource, education and research applications. The only requirements to join are an enthusiasm for watching and reporting weather conditions and a desire to learn more about how weather can affect and impact our lives. Our Web page provides the ability for our observers to see their observations mapped out in "real time", as well as providing a wealth of information for our data users ([cocorahs.org](https://cocorahs.org)).”

If you're interested in joining this daily project learn more on the About Us page of the CoCoRaHS website, on the Better Impact activity listing, or come out to the Projects Fair at our General Meeting on October 8<sup>th</sup> and ask project champion Dean Shostak about it. You'll need to purchase an approved rain gauge (costs range from \$42 to \$69) and the ability to install the gauge in the most ideal conditions for your location. The CoCoRaHS training slides will indicate the distance from objects, between trees, and height above ground, as well as how to accurately read and record your measurement. Measurements at 7am are preferred, but observations between 4:30-9:30am are okay.

# Diamondback Terrapins at Windsor Castle Park by Donna Benson



Our *Diamondback Dash* team pictured left — Marie Robertson, Donna Benson, and Lisa Cumming — paddled our way through another successful terrapin monitoring season! What started in 2023 as a project led by Meagan Thomas (HRC Advisor with the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources) has turned into a real adventure on the Pagan River near Smithfield, Virginia starting at the Windsor Castle Park kayak launch.

This year’s headcounts tell the story:

Northern Diamond-backed Terrapins ( <i>Malaclemys terrapin terrapin</i> ) spotted		
May 19: 180 terrapins	July 18: 169 terrapins	September 28: 96 terrapins



Along the way we navigated missed ferries, endured steaming hot days, and even managed a sinking kayak or two. But every challenge was worth it for the chance to see these amazing turtles and contribute data that could make a difference for their future in Virginia.

The season even wrapped with a little magic: on the ferry ride back from Surry, we caught sight of the sailing ship *Godspeed* under full sail— the perfect ending to a memorable adventure.

## HRC Annual Picnic Tentative Schedule: Saturday, October 18

It begins with the bird walk at 8:30 am and ends with a wonderful crab fest and potluck cookout. In between, feel free to look over the swap table, join a scheduled activity, or roam the beautiful private riverfront property in Toano. See emails from [jjones184@cox.net](mailto:jjones184@cox.net) for address and **RSVP by Oct 13 for dinner preferences**. Come and go as you please. Families welcome. Bring your own lunch and chair, though some seating is provided.



- 8:30am Bird Walk with Shirley Devan
- 9:30am Potluck Breakfast
- 10:30am Owl Pellet Dissection
- 10:30am Bike Ride with Karen Hines and Bill Grass (bring your own bike)
- 12:00pm Lunch. Bring your own.
- 1:00pm Plant, Fungi and Butterfly Walk with Adrienne Frank and Gary Driscoll
- 1:00pm Tables arrive for crab feast. Volunteer help needed.
- 2:30pm Scavenger Hunt with Hospitality Chairs Alice Kopenitz and Judy Jones
- 4:30pm Nancy Norton Spirit Award given for outstanding service to the HRC chapter
- 5:00pm Dinner. Hotdogs, hamburgers, crabs, salads, sides, and desserts.
- 6:30pm Clean Up/Homeward Bound. Put crab tables back on Ted’s truck.

Optional kayaking in the morning along the Chickahominy River

Swap table all day: Bring or take any nature related items including gear, books, décor, and apparel

# Shorter Shares from HRC Members and Beyond



## 09/11: Doug Tallamy Talk —by Linda Hughes

A number of HRC members were seen at the Williamsburg Garden Club's event: Invite Nature Back Into Your Yard - a Special Evening with Doug Tallamy held at Jamestown High School Thursday, September 11. Tallamy is a renowned American entomologist, ecologist, conservationist and author. He is a professor in the Department of Entomology and Wildlife Ecology at the University of Delaware. He is the co-founder of the Homegrown National Park Initiative ([homegrownnationalpark.com](http://homegrownnationalpark.com)).



## 09/19 Litter Pickup at Powhatan Creek Park

Powhatan Creek Park and Blueway off Jamestown Road was cleaned by a crew of four HRC members on Friday, September 19<sup>th</sup>. **Pictured above:** (1) Thad Hecht, Frank, Smith and Lisa Cumming. (2) Frank, Thad and Cheryl Roetger are on the dock working to get fishing line out of a bush.



## Upcoming VNPS Article by Adrienne Frank

Sixteen members of the Virginia Native Plant Society (VNPS) from across the state met at Dragon Tooth Trailhead in Jefferson National Forest, on September 20<sup>th</sup> for a four-hour walk. This “Special Biological Area” contains a montane forest ecosystem with unique plants like the **Buffalo-nut (*Pyrularia pubera*)**, pictured above, a hemiparasitic shrub that attaches to the roots of trees to extract water and nutrients. Adrienne's article will come out soon. In the meantime learn more about the local VNPS chapter at [vnps.org/johnclayton/](http://vnps.org/johnclayton/)



## 09/29: Baby Turtle —by Judy Kinshaw-Ellis

We had visitors at Brickyard Landing Park and one of them spotted this baby turtle, perhaps a Red-eared Slider in the grass. It is exciting to see the results of our habitat building.



## 09/27: Ice Cream Social: A Sweet Success Despite the Rain! —by Judy Jones

Despite the soggy skies, our Ice Cream Social was a delightful success! We welcomed 47 guests who braved the weather with umbrellas in hand and smiles on their faces. The rain couldn't dampen the joy of gathering with friends, sharing stories, and indulging in the sweet taste of Bruster's Ice Cream.

A special highlight came thanks to Donna, Janie, Dan and Claire, who thoughtfully arranged for Cohort 19 to join us after their field day. Their energy and enthusiasm were contagious, and it was a true pleasure to meet each of them. The mingling of seasoned members and fresh faces made for a heartwarming afternoon full of laughter, connection, and community spirit.

**Pictured: (Top)** Alice Kopinitz (Cohort 1) and Gail Peterson (Cohort 18) scooping ice cream. **(Bottom)** Janie Moyers (mentor) and Cohort 19 trainees.

## DOF Acorn Collection

It is time to collect acorns and other native tree nuts as a part of the **Department of Forestry fall nut collection**. Desired species include White Oak, Black Oak, Black Walnuts, and Chestnut Oaks. Daniel Brooks, HRC advisor, has offered to deliver nuts brought to the Oct 8 chapter meeting to the New Kent Forestry Center. Paper bags or boxes of nuts sorted by species are accepted. No plastic! Write species name, collection location and date on the bag. Adding a small twig with an attached leaf is helpful. Log your time collecting acorns under "Flora > Acorn and Seed Collecting" in Better Impact.

2025	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1	2	3	4
	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
	26	27	28	29	30	31	

## Catch the King Tide: October 10-12

A King Tide is the highest predicted astronomical tide of the year; usually greater than 3.5 feet above MLLW (the average level of the lowest tide for each day computed over a 19-year period). Circles on the October calendar above indicate phases of the moon (full, lunar perigee, and new respectively), while the crown symbols from October 10-12 represent "Catch the King," an annual King Tide Flood Mapping Event.

If you're interested in learning more about the "Catch the King," an approved HRC volunteer activity, which utilizes GPS flood data collected via the free smart phone app "Sea Level Rise" visit the Better Impact online opportunity listing or go to [wetlandswatch.org/catchtheking](http://wetlandswatch.org/catchtheking). Additional information about the project and the 2025 Virginia Tidal Flooding Calendar pictured can be found at [vims.edu/people/loftis\\_jd/CatchtheKing/2025/](http://vims.edu/people/loftis_jd/CatchtheKing/2025/).

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](http://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](mailto: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).



*Tiny frog siting at Warhill Tract during Basic Training event on 9/27. Species verification still needed.*

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Roger Gosden  
Patty Maloney

### Better Impact Contact

Judy Jones

### Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion (DEI)

Adrienne Frank

### Webmaster

Jeanette Navia

## Chapter Advisors

Meagan Thomas, Virginia  
Department of Wildlife Resources

Daniel Brooks, Virginia Department  
of Forestry