

The Naturalist

HRC-VMN Newsletter | Volume 22, Number 04, April 30, 2026
Historic Rivers Chapter of Virginia Master Naturalists

Page | 1



In This Issue:

- (1-2) **President's Message:** Earth Day
 - (2) **On the Calendar:** Field Trip, Ice Cream Social
 - (3) **Engaging with W&M Students** by T. Melton
 - (3) **Tree Planting at Turkey Island** by G. Peterson
 - (4) **HRC Field Trip Recap: Vernal Pools**
 - (5) **Brickyard Landing from Air** by J. Kinshaw-Ellis
 - (6-7) **Natural Playground Grand Opening and Native Plant Garden at Library** by C. Ferentinos
 - (8) **Submissions for Photo Exhibit** by T. Sargent
 - (9) **Loss of Clyde Marseteller** by Shirley Devan
 - (9) **Breeding Bird Monitor Training** by D. Geyer
 - (10) **Happy Thoughts from Seattle** by T. Melton
 - (11-13) **Shorter Shares from HRC Members and Partners:** Outreach, HRC Infographic, Butterfly Counts, #WOW Litter, City Nature Challenge
 - (14) **End Notes:** VMN, Contacts, Board Members
-

Feature Photo: Pawpaw (*Asimina triloba*) flowers, April 4, 2026, at New Quarter Park by Claire White. Learn more about this tree at dendro.cnre.vt.edu

A Message from the President

by Tracy Matthew Melton

In April, we celebrate Earth Day. Americans organized the first Earth Day in 1970. Accelerating human impacts on the planet were obvious and troubling. Rachel Carson's landmark *Silent Spring* (1962) had made plain the damage of industrial toxins not even visible to humans and the other animals suffering from them.

Road construction plowed through natural spaces. Mushrooming numbers of automobiles and trucks polluted the air and scarred the landscape with oily pollution, trash, and junkyards. In January 1969, a massive oil spill off Santa Barbara polluted the California coast and killed marine and coastal wildlife at scale. That June, the Cuyahoga River caught fire in Cleveland. The image of a burning river was too profoundly biblical to ignore.

Perhaps the most encompassing expression of the felt concern of this moment was the Santa Barbara Declaration of Environmental Rights, published on the one-year anniversary of the oil spill. It asserted, "All people have the right to an environment capable of sustaining life and promoting happiness." It decried that we had "littered the land"; "encroached on our heritage of open space and wildland"; "reduced the soil to fruitless dust"; "contaminated the air"; "befouled the lakes and

rivers and oceans along with their shorelines”; “released deadly poisons into earth, air and water”; “exterminated entire species of birds and animals and brought others close to annihilation”; and “made much of the physical world ugly and loud, depriving man [people] of the beauty and quiet that feeds his [their] spirit.”

The declaration called for “an ecological consciousness” that people are members, not masters, of the natural world. It urged that we treat “our own backyards as if they were the world and the world as if it were our backyard.”

Appropriately, our chapter celebrated Earth Day by picking up litter and removing invasive plants from Charles Brown Park. We have picked up litter and

mapped and removed invasive plants in other locations around the region. We have worked hard to prepare for the native plant sale. We have learned about vernal pools. We have engaged in wildlife mapping and spring bird counts, learning by doing and creating data useful in protecting species threatened with annihilation. We have engaged with community members, including children enjoying the grand opening of the Natural Playground behind the James City County Library, a fine example of treating our backyard as the world and the world as our backyard. And much more.

Importantly, we have actively enjoyed the beauty and quiet that feeds our spirit. And now we have eleven more months to do the same, until the next Earth Day.

On the Calendar

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

Wednesday	May 13	HRC General Membership Meeting 6-7:45pm, James City County Library.
Saturday	May 16	CE: Gardening for Insects with Dr. Dash 10am JCC Rec Center
Saturday	May 16	College Creek Beach Litter Pickup, 6-7pm (starts 2 hours before sunset)
Sunday	May 17	HRC Field Trip to Chub Sandhill Natural Area Preserve See signup
Sunday	May 17	4-H Schoolyard Weekend Weeders, 1:30pm-3pm Waller Mill Elementary
Wednesday	May 20	CE: Know Your York Watershed Ep. 7 “Virginia Outdoors”, 12pm Zoom
Saturday	May 23	CE: Bird Walk 8-10am with Williamsburg Bird Club at New Quarter Park
Saturday	May 30	VIMS Marine Science Day, 10am-3pm Details at vims.edu/engage/msd/

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



HRC Members Ice Cream Social. *Join us for an afternoon of conversation and community – rain or shine!*

Location: Shelter 4, Waller Mill Park

When: Saturday, May 30th, 1:30 to 3:30 PM

We’ll have plenty of ice cream and all the toppings to sweeten the afternoon. Parking is free, and you’re welcome to bring your family and favorite beverages. Whether you stay for a quick scoop or linger for conversation, we’d love to see you there. Let’s gather, connect, and enjoy a sundae on Saturday!



Photo: Tracy Matthew Melton and student working in Crim Dell. Credit: by Dr. Dorothy Ibes

Engaging with W&M Environment & Sustainability Students

by Tracy Matthew Melton

On April 3rd, I had the opportunity to remove bamboo regrowth in Crim Dell on the campus of The College of William & Mary (W&M) with Dr. Dorothy Ibes' students. Dr. Ibes is an ecotherapist and teaches in W&M's Environment & Sustainability Program (ENSP). She is also the founding director of the Parks & Ecotherapy Research Lab (PERL). I met her at a W&M sustainability forum and again at an environmental tabling event on campus. Recently, I gave her a tour of the invasive removal work that the chapter has been doing in the College Woods adjacent to Berkeley Middle School.

Dr. Ibes invited me to remove invasive plants with her students as part of a service project day in which one of her classes was participating. I appreciated the opportunity to describe to 35 environmental students who Virginia Master Naturalists are and what we do. The class then broke into two groups. I took approximately twenty students around to the south side of the Crim Dell, just east of the iconic bridge, to cut down bamboo regrowth. The students were enthusiastic and hardworking. They asked insightful questions. I think they received a useful introduction to the Virginia Master Naturalist program and to removing invasive plants.

Tree Planting Project at Turkey Island by Gail Peterson

Friday, April 24th was a beautiful day for the tree planting project on Presquile National Wildlife Refuge, historically referred to as "Turkey Island." Eleven people plus our fearless leader Cyrus Brame, Wildlife Refuge Specialist, US Fish and Wildlife Service, made the trek out to the island. Getting to the island involved taking a ferry driven by Cyrus. Upon arriving the group was divided into 3 tasks: tree planting, handrail installation at the education center and invasive removal. I worked with four others planting wild cherry, oaks, maples and pawpaws (*Asimina triloba*) along the edge of a field.

Beautiful weather. About 3/4 of the helpers were from different Master Naturalist chapters. HRC members Therese and Dave Stansbury took on the task of planting several bald cypresses. We had a lot of fun while planting trees. A great day working with great people on very worthwhile projects.



Photo: (Left) Cyrus Brame, Wildlife Refuge Specialist. **(Right)** Eleven volunteers, including Dave and Therese Stansbury (far left) and Gail Peterson (center, black shirt). Photo courtesy Cyrus Brame.

HRC Field Trip Recap: Vernal pools in Charles City County

On Saturday, April 11th new field trip co-chairs Katherine Wilkins and Kevin Pettit-Pokora hosted their first Historic Rivers Chapter field trip. The half-day trip took place in Charles City County and focused on vernal pools, temporary, seasonal wetlands critical for the breeding and survival of several species like salamanders and frogs.

Susan Watson, Terrestrial Wildlife Information Biologist at the Department of Wildlife Resources (DWR) Region 1 Office, led the training-based field trip. The day began in DWR's conference room with a presentation about vernal pools, obligate species, aspects of the [Virginia Master Naturalists \(VMN\) Vernal Pools Cooperative of Virginia project](#), and other habitat and conservation aspects.

Afterwards the group caravanned to actual vernal pools on the eastern edge of nearby VCU Rice Rivers Center property. Susan and her colleagues were in the pools with nets and containers to capture larvae and egg masses to bring up close to everyone on land.

The next HRC field trip is scheduled for Sunday, May 17th to Chub Sandhill Natural Area Preserve in Sussex County. John Bunch, a VMN from the Southside Chapter, will lead the tour. Sign up for this 18-person tour using the link sent April 28th by Katherine Wilkins.



Photos (Top-Down): (1) Vernal pool visitors by Kevin Pettit-Pokora. (2-4) Erin Schibani and Cheryl Lynch take turns holding egg masses. Salamander in cup. Photos from Erin Schibani. (4-5) Anne Wright, VCU, and Jim Leech. Lisa Nickels is holding and photographing eggs in both photos. Photos by Ginny Broome.



Brickyard Landing Looks Great from the Air and from the Ground

by Judy Kinshaw-Ellis,
photos by George Reiske

In April, George Reiske, a Cohort 10 classmate, brought his drone out to Brickyard Landing and took photos while our volunteer crew worked. From above, it is exciting to see the park and the plants that have been installed starting in November 2023. Aerial shots give a better idea of the scope of this project and show the different areas including the food forest and meadow.

From the ground, the adage comes to life that perennials sleep the first season, creep the second season, and leap the third season. In this third season, we are seeing coneflowers, blue mist flowers, and grasses like Little Bluestem and Pink Muhly fill in the areas where they were planted. Trees that were planted in November 2023 and 2024 have grown considerably. Some seem to have doubled in size. Virginia Sweetspire have grown and are suckering, which is a good quality for plants that hold shorelines or other areas prone to erosion. We are also having very good luck with Ninebark shrubs, which were planted March 2025 as seedlings.

This season, we have seeded the Zinnia patch and Partridge Pea self-seeded. We plan to toss out a second round of Zinnia seeds once the first seeds germinate. We hope that will extend the blooming season a bit. While we try to plant almost exclusively James City County native plants at Brickyard, Zinnias fall into the “native someplace” category, and we have made an exception for them for two reasons. First, we needed something to fill a space while our native perennials got established, and second, they are fabulous nectar plants and draw in many pollinators.

In addition to the excitement of what is growing and multiplying, we always have challenges at the Brickyard. The current drought makes watering essential, and we do water by hand. This year, we have more volunteers, so watering is not quite the chore it has been in past years. As our native plant gardens get better established, the need to water will lessen. We also continue to weed and mulch.

It is fun to watch this garden grow and flourish. Even those of us who dreamed of what it would be have had moments of doubt, but the garden is beautiful. If you have not yet been out to Brickyard Landing Riparian Buffer Demonstration Garden, 990 Brickyard Road, Toano, join us on a Monday or Thursday from 9 am to 11 am and see what all the excitement is about.



Photo: (Above) This gives you a birds' eye view from the river. The meadow is at the top of the photo, and the beds are the mulched areas. It is hard to believe that in 2023 this was an empty field.

(Below) We hope that work this year will include more formal paths. Looking at the garden from above, you can imagine a big circle path around the edge. It will also include a path across the middle that will lead to paths through the wooded area.



Natural Playground Opening:

Learning about Wildlife by Cynthia Ferentinos,
photos by Marie Robertson

The grand opening of the James City County library's natural playground proved to be THE place to be on Saturday, April 25th with over 1,000 people attending. At the entrance to the playground, we welcomed lots of visitors to the Historic Rivers Chapter (HRC) information table to learn more about what Virginia Master Naturalists (VMN) do. The photos on the trifold display, educational brochures and touchable exhibit items sparked many interesting conversations. For example, the rubber black snake replica is a perennial favorite and provides an excellent opportunity to discuss beneficial snakes. The insects encased in acrylic piqued interest in upcoming educational programs. We also displayed a sample HRC-developed wildlife viewing backpack and its contents to let parents know that these can be checked out from the Williamsburg Regional Library or borrowed from local parks and elementary schools. Providing information and tools such as these can help families to continue exploring nature in their backyards or on future visits to the playground.

As part of the opening day festivities, over 225 children and some fun-loving adults enjoyed learning about a variety of creatures by completing the nature scavenger hunt that was developed by a team comprised of recent VMN basic training graduates from Cohort XIX. The scavenger hunt map and clues led participants to a variety of insects and spiders (bumblebee, Eastern tiger swallowtail butterfly, ladybug, wolf spider), reptiles and amphibians (Eastern box turtle, American toad), birds (Eastern bluebird) and mammals (bat, black bear, gray squirrel, red fox, river otter). Once they found a photo of each animal by following the map and the clues, one of our wonderful VMN volunteers stamped the corresponding space on the map with a colorful ink stamp of the animal.

Once they found all of the animals, participants could bring their map back to the HRC info table to pick up animal stickers and an evening primrose seedling. Receiving a free native plant and seeing the native plants growing around the natural playground sparked additional questions and enthusiasm about growing these at home. Fortunately, the John Clayton Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society hosted their annual native plant sale the following Saturday, so we notified them of this very timely opportunity to shop for native plants.

Learn more about the playground at <https://www.wrl.org/189/WRL-Playground>. If you're interested in volunteering at future outreach events at the playground contact Cynthia and Marie.

Photos: HRC volunteers in yellow vests stamp visitor scavenger hunt maps. Cohort XIX volunteers included Katherine Wilkins (above) and Chloe Harner (below).

Native Plant Demonstration Gardens Installed at the James City County Library (JCCL)

by Cynthia Ferentinos

A variety of native perennials, shrubs and trees provide excellent wildlife habitat around the James City County Library's new natural playground. Virginia master naturalists from our chapter have assisted the library by suggesting native plants that are most likely to thrive in the shady and sunny areas around the building. And on Saturday, April 4th, these plans became reality as a group of Virginia Master Naturalists from our chapter partnered with volunteers from the Williamsburg Regional Library's Seed Exchange to plant over 100 native perennials.

The native plant shade garden on the northern end of the library includes a variety of ferns, Eastern columbine, foam flower, Jacob's ladder, green and gold, rue anemone, dwarf crested iris, wild geranium, and woodland phlox, as well as the beautiful spring ephemeral-Virginia bluebells. The gardens beds along the sunnier eastern exposure feature several spicebushes, a sampling of milkweeds, wrinkle leaf goldenrod, cut leaf coneflower, golden Alexander, obedient plant and numerous asters and bee balms. Given nibble marks on the Joe Pye weed and the New York ironweed, it appears that deer and/or rabbits discovered these to be tasty so we moved them from the edge of the woods and are hoping for the best.

We also drafted content for a sign in the shade garden that provides an introduction to native plants: what they are and why they are beneficial. The sign highlights with photos some of the native plants that are present in the JCCL native plant gardens that bloom in early spring. We will periodically update these signs to reflect what is currently blooming and to share additional information. We hope that through the combination of native plants (with name labels to be added) and the educational sign that we will encourage greater familiarity with and interest in native plants in our community.

Many thanks to the HRC volunteers who have supported the JCCL natural playground projects by donating native plants, planting them, and developing educational programs focused on various nature-related topics as well as the scavenger hunt and the upcoming nature passport.

April 30, 2026



Photos: (Top) Cheryl Lynch, Andrea Case, and Erin Schibani take a break from planting to smile for the camera. (Bottom) More volunteers planting native plants on the grounds of the James City County Library.

Submission Window Open for HRC Photo Exhibit by Ted Sargent

Historic Rivers Chapter (HRC) members, you are invited to participate in this year's HRC Photo Display which will be featured in the Williamsburg Library theatre lobby from July 28 through August 24. This is NOT a contest but rather an exhibit – a celebration of our members' curiosity, creativity, and connection to the natural world. Our theme, "Through the Eyes of a Naturalist" reflects exactly what we hope to showcase, and we hope everyone will consider contributing.

Here are some details:

- Submission Window: April 21 – June 7
- The photos may be taken at any time – past or present. There is no date requirement for this event. However, the photo must have been taken in Virginia.
- Each member may submit as many photos as you like in each of the four areas.

This year's HRC "Through the Eyes of a Naturalist" photo categories are:

Waterfalls in Virginia (WIV): This category highlights some of the beautiful waterfalls found throughout our state. Any Virginia waterfall—large or small or even a dam—is welcome.

Endangered Species (ES): We encourage you to submit photos of some of Virginia's rarer species. A list of many of the endangered species found in Virginia was sent by Judy Jones on April 20th to help spark ideas.

Bees and Beekeeping (B&BK): This category welcomes—and truly hopes for—photos of our native bees. Our native bees—bumble bees, leafcutters, miners, sweat bees, carpenter bees, and many others—play an essential role in our ecosystems and often go unnoticed. This category also focuses on the remarkable work beekeepers are doing to support and increase bee populations. You may submit photos of bees, beekeepers, hives, equipment, or related scenes. This display is a great opportunity to help people see and appreciate all bees.

Beauty and the Beasts (B&TB): This is a unique paired photo category of bald eagles (beauty) and carrion eating birds (beasts). You will submit two images that will be mounted together in a single frame (both photos must be either horizontal or vertical. If you have a single photo showing an eagle on the ground dining alongside vultures, you may submit that as a standalone entry. Photos below of bald eagle on Jamestown Island and turkey vulture at Greensprings by HRC member Martha B. Moss, via [flickr.com/photos/marthabmoss](https://www.flickr.com/photos/marthabmoss).



Please label your files using this format:

- firstinitial.lastname_category_number
- Example: t.sargent_wiv_1

You must submit your photos BY MIDNIGHT ON JUNE 7TH, 2026 in either of the following ways: Email your images to Ted Sargent at wanted@aol.com or deliver a thumb drive to his home in Toano.

This is not a contest—our only selection

criterion is simple: Is the photo interesting? Our goal is to include as many members as possible and to showcase the wide range of perspectives within our chapter. If you have questions about categories, labeling, or the display process, please reach out. We can't wait to see the moments you've captured. Thank you for sharing your talents and your love of the natural world.

Loss of Clyde Marsteller, Cohort I by Shirley Devan

I am sad to share the news that our beloved friend and former Historic Rivers Chapter Virginia Master Naturalist Clyde Marsteller died April 27, 2026. Clyde was a member of Cohort I (along with me). Many long-time members will remember Clyde and his “zoo” — many of us helped him with his zoo presentations to school groups and children of all ages. Clyde was strong advocate for youth education and delivering the message of stewardship and conservation of our natural environment.

I’ve included a few photos of the many I have from his time working with our chapter. Here is a link to his obituary: <https://peninsulafuneralhome.com/obituary-v2/clyde-calvin-marsteller/>



Breeding Bird Monitoring Training in May by Dorothy Geyer

May and June is an opportunity to volunteer for the Colonial National Historical Park's Yorktown Battlefield Breeding Bird Monitoring. As a Bird Monitoring Volunteer, you will conduct point-counts at pre-selected sites within the park. The survey will be located at the Yorktown area of the park, including the fields and forests along the earthworks, tour roads and into the forest.

By volunteering, you can integrate your birding hobby with scientific research, be part of a monitoring program that helps manage our parks for the enjoyment of future generations and contribute to a multiple regional initiative that will increase our understanding of the status of bird populations in our national parks.

- **Methodology:** Point counts are the most common method, involving observers recording birds by sight or sound for a set period (often 10 minutes).
- **Target Species:** Breeding landbirds and, in certain regions, specific, high-priority, or rare species.
- **Standardization:** Protocols require consistent timing (early morning), specific dates, and consistent locations to compare data across years.
- **Data Collection:** Species, counts, time, weather conditions, and habitat information.

Local training dates will be Thursday May 14 and Saturday May 16, 9am-12 pm.

You must attend one of the trainings, before being put on a team to monitor breeding birds from May 30/31 through June. You and your team can pick the dates to go out that are convenient for you, if it fits within the monitoring time frame. This project is listed in Better Impact under “Birds: Yorktown Battlefield Breeding Bird CHNP.” Contact Dorothy Geyer if you’d like to join the training or have any questions.



Happy Thoughts on a Sunny Weekend in Seattle

by Tracy Matthew Melton

Lightning can strike the same place twice. A decade ago, my wife Pam and I were in Seattle for a training conference that she was attending. I worked in the mornings and explored the city in the afternoons. One day, I walked over to the University of Washington campus and happened to catch the mature Yoshino cherry (*Prunus x*

yedoensis) trees in full bloom amidst the majestic, Collegiate Gothic academic buildings on the UW Quad.

In mid-March, we were back in Seattle for a celebratory family event on the UW campus. The walking route from our hotel to the event happened to take us back across the nearly empty Quad early on a rainy Friday morning. Those same cherry trees were just reaching full bloom!

The following afternoon, I walked back over to spend some time enjoying the cherry trees. The sun had come out and so had the people. That empty, rainy Quad was now a sunny space filled with a crowd numbering in the thousands. Bicyclists, furies & cosplayers, college students, groups of friends, couples, families with small children & grandparents, and social media influencers creating content cheerfully sharing the same space. It was a spring festival celebrating trees. No music, no performances, no food, no drinking. Just thousands of smiling people gathered to enjoy the beauty of trees.

The festivities reminded me of Stephen Jay Gould's "Happy Thoughts on a Sunny Day in New York City," which opens his book of collected essays *Dinosaur in a Haystack* (1995). In the essay, Gould describes being in NYC during a solar eclipse. Suddenly, for a few minutes, this bustling, diverse metropolis collectively paused, as people in the crowded streets took a moment to feel the joy and the awe of this striking reminder that we are on this planet hurtling through space, bound to one moon and one sun. People shared their protective glasses and their makeshift observational implements. They celebrated the world together, with smiles on their faces.

I returned to the UW Quad on Sunday afternoon, another sunny one, with a similar sea of smiling human faces. I spent more time looking at the individual trees. They are now ninety years old and nearing the end of their expected lifespans. A few have already been removed. Many branches are moss covered, and numerous small ferns grow on them. Small cherry blossoms pop out among the branch-grown greenery. It is a gift and joy to see such a rich little world existing on the branch of a tree.



These cherry trees, like that solar eclipse darkening NYC, are an ephemeral reminder that nature has an overwhelming capacity to inspire and awe. These feelings create opportunity for people to embrace nature anew and want to protect nature & improve its condition.

Experiencing these trees makes me think about how we can engage with the public, to inspire them to feel the same joy and awe in the remarkable natural spaces in our own region. And to want to protect and improve them.

Shorter Shares from HRC Members and Beyond



Upcoming Weekend Outreach Opportunities

Below is the current list of some of the upcoming Education and Outreach volunteer opportunities. If you're interested in helping with any of these or have questions, email Marie Robertson and Cynthia Ferentinos, co-chairs pictured above.

- **Sat, May 9: Kids Lit Festival,** Williamsburg Library (Scotland St.)
- **Sat, June 13: Sail Yorktown Festival**
- **Sun, June 21: Pollinator Palooza,** Veterans Park (Ironbound Rd.)
- **Sat, June 27: STEAM Maker Festival,** Williamsburg Regional Library
- **Sun, June 28: Bats (for kids),** JCC Library natural playground (Croaker Rd.)
- **Sun, July 26: Spiders (for kids),** JCC Library natural playground (Croaker Rd.)

If you'd like to develop a program around another topic, for children or adults, please let us know. We're especially looking for programs for children at the James City County Library's new natural playground. If you have ideas, we can help you flesh it out, build in activities and provide materials from the Collections and Resources (CAR).

**2025
in Review**

**Virginia Master
Naturalists**
Historic Rivers Chapter

- 172** volunteers
- 22,376** service hours, valued at \$770,182
- 28** sites stewarded
- 28** scientific, monitoring, and inventory studies supported
- 5,103** contacts made through education & outreach
- 50** partnerships with local organizations

The Virginia Master Naturalist program is a statewide corps of trained volunteers providing education, science, and stewardship to benefit natural resource conservation in their communities.

2025 Project Highlight

Photo by Janet Harper

Historic Rivers Master Naturalist volunteers filled 50 wildlife viewing backpacks that were distributed at local schools, parks, and libraries to expand community access to free nature exploration activities.

State Sponsors

Virginia Cooperative Extension is a partnership of Virginia Tech, Virginia State University, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), and local governments, and is an equal opportunity employer. For the full non-discrimination statement, please visit ext.vt.edu/accessibility.

April 19-25: National Volunteer Week

In Celebration of National Volunteer Week, an infographic provided by the State Program Office celebrates the Historic Rivers Chapter's (HRC) volunteer contributions in 2025.

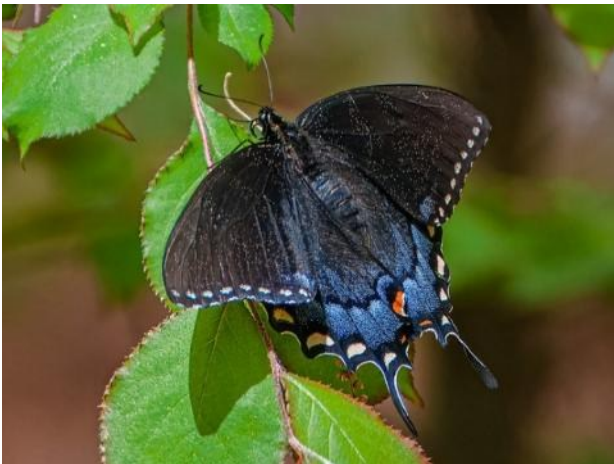
22,376 service hours were contributed by 172 HRC volunteers, with 5,103 contacts made with the public through education and outreach. 28 sites were stewarded; 28 scientific studies were supported; and there were 50 partnerships with local organizations. The 2025 project highlight included distribution of 50 wildlife viewing backpacks to local elementary schools and parks.

Know of someone interested in training to become a Historic Rivers Chapter volunteer? Applications are accepted in the month of June. Applicants are encouraged to apply early and use the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) found at historicrivers.org/become-a-virginia-master-naturalist/ to learn more about our program.



Wildlife Mapping at Jamestown Island—by Gail Peterson

On April 1st, ten Master Naturalists attended wildlife mapping on Jamestown Island. Some of those attendees are shown above on the foot bridge over the ‘Pitch and Tar Swamp’ with the fort in the background. “Fun day. Gorgeous weather. Fantastic array of species spotted.” The next monthly wildlife mapping on the island will occur on Wednesday, May 13th. Nancy Barnhardt will send more information via the Listserv as the date nears.



NABA Butterfly Count Volunteer Opportunities—by Adrienne Frank

The North American Butterfly Association (NABA) Coastal Region Butterfly Counts begin in May and run through September. Any Virginia based NABA butterfly count can be counted as volunteer hours for HRC Virginia Master Naturalists. No previous experience needed. Our local Williamsburg count is Saturday, August 8.

Photo of Eastern Tiger Swallowtail (*Papilio glaucus*), dark morph on April 5, 2026, by Martha Moss, via [flickr.com/photos/marthabmoss](https://www.flickr.com/photos/marthabmoss)

April 30, 2026

Tues, May 26: Northumberland-Lancaster Spring. Compiler: Jeff Wright, pec11908@mac.com

Tues, June 30: George Washington’s Birthplace Summer. Compiler: Jeff Wright, pec11908@mac.com

Sat, July 11: Great Dismal Swamp NWR, (Rain date: Saturday July 18). Compiler: Susan Stanley, susan_stanley@fws.gov

Sun, July 12: Chippokes Plantation State Park. Compiler: Joni Carlson, jonicarlson@yahoo.com

Sun, July 26: Delmarva Tip (Eastern Shore), Compiler: Brian Taber, taberzz@aol.com

Tues, July 28: Northumberland-Lancaster Summer. Compiler: Jeff Wright, pec11908@mac.com

Sat, August 8: Williamsburg Area. Compiler: Adrienne Frank, adrienne-gary@cox.net

Sat, August 22: Middle Peninsula. Compiler: Susan Crockett, scrocket@cox.net

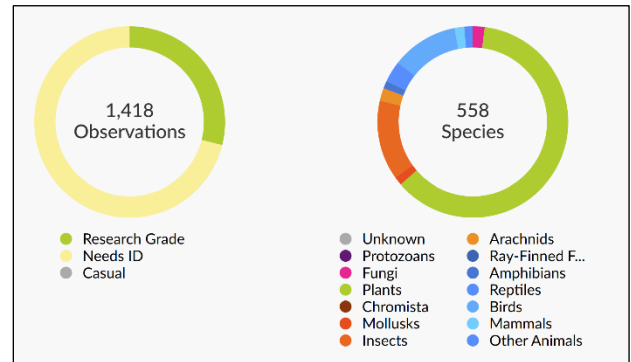
Tues, August 25: Dragon Run Butterfly Count. Compiler: Jeff Wright, pec11908@mac.com

Tues, Sept 22: George Washington’s Birthplace Fall. Compiler: Jeff Wright, pec11908@mac.com



The next Greenspring Saturday litter pickup is still to be determined (May 6 or 16th). Be on the lookout for an email from Suzanne.

Pictured: (Top) Anne Annala, Thad Hecht and Claire White, half of the College Creek litter crew for the day. **(Bottom)** Jamie Serafin, Donna Dodenhoff, Suzanne Stern, Bob Kaplan, and Gail Peterson at Greensprings. Jamie, Bob, and Gail attended both litter pickups!



#WOW Back-to-Back Litter Pickups—by Claire White and Suzanne Stern

On the morning of Saturday, April 18th chapter members supported two regular litter pickups: College Creek Beach and Greensprings Trail. Three members split their time between both pickups, starting as early as 7:30am at the beach, then heading to the 9am trail cleanup.

At Greensprings, Jamie Serafin literally found a message in a bottle—a prescription bottle. While at College Creek the usual beverage containers and fishing paraphernalia were found. Both teams were tasked with keeping a few litter items to help with future outreach projects that educate the public on the impact of litter on our habitat and wildlife.

The next 3rd Saturday litter pickup at College Creek will be an evening pickup. Join us at 6pm to pick litter for an hour as low tide arrives (6:14pm), and before the sun sets at 8pm. Log your volunteer time with #WOW, as this project is part of the “Wonderful Water” VMN 2026 service theme.

City Nature Challenge: Virginia Pinelands Bioblitz Recap—by Claire White

April 24-27, 2026, was the official “City Nature Challenge” observation period for the annual event where citizen scientists in cities across the world are encouraged to get outside and document wildlife via the iNaturalist app/website.

The Nature Conservancy of Virginia hosted the “Virginia Pinelands” region (including Williamsburg and James City County) as a part of the 2026 challenge. As shown in the image above, 1,418 observations were made and 558 species were documented in our region during the challenge window. HRC members Thad Hecht, Gail Peterson, and Claire White contributed to the project with observations at College Creek Beach on Friday, April 24th.

Learn more about this project and the continuing work of identifying photographed observations from the challenge at citynaturechallenge.org/ and inaturalist.org/projects/city-nature-challenge-2026-virginia-pinelands

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 is a partnership of Virginia Tech, Virginia State University, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), and local governments, and is an equal opportunity employer. For the full non-discrimination statement, please visit ext.vt.edu/accessibility.

Learn more about our chapter at historicroivers.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).



*Tiger Crane Fly
(genus *Nephrotoma*)
by Claire White, on
April 19, 2026.*

HRC Board Members

President

Tracy Matthew Melton

Past President

Janet Harper

Vice President/Programs Chair

Dean Shostak

Secretaries

Anne Annala
Linda Hughes

Treasurer

Marc Moyers

Membership

Barb Creel

Basic Training

Dan Foster
Bill Weldon

Volunteer Service Projects

Adrienne Frank

Continuing Education

Stephanie Schmuck

Education and Outreach

Cynthia Ferentinos
Marie Robertson

Newsletter Editor

Shirley Devan

Field Trips

Katherine Wilkins
Kevin Pettit-Pokora

Hospitality

Judy Jones
Alice Kopinitz

At-Large Members

Rick Brown
Jim Leech
Robin Rose
Ron Hunt

Appointed Committees & Teams

Risk Management Team

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