

The Naturalist

September 2024 Newsletter | Volume 20, Number 9
Historic Rivers Chapter of Virginia Master Naturalists

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Feature Photo: Common persimmon (*Ebenaceae Diospyros virginiana*) ripe fruit on ground at Veterans Park, on 09/24/24 by Claire White.

A Message from the President

by Janet Harper

Hats off to Marie and Claire for their planning of the BugFest event. We had a massive display, much bigger than many other organizations! Everyone who came to our tables had a great time learning about cicadas, doing a cicada craft, looking at specimens, getting stickers, or having their picture taken in the fun photo booth complete with props. I'm not sure who had more fun, the visitors or us!

The Virginia Master Naturalist (VMN) conference weekend went well, although there weren't as many participants as with the in-person ones. For those of you that registered, the recordings should be available in a week or two. You'll see more about the conference in the rest of the newsletter.

Our annual picnic is coming up on October 26th. The committee is working hard to plan fun events. There will be bird and plant walks, a bluebird house construction activity, fish painting and the return of the trash-grabber relay. It promises to be a fun time for all, so please come and bring your friends and family. Please be sure to RSVP to Marie's email from Sep 23rd so the committee can get a good head count.

Members of the board are starting to work on the chapter's annual report. I have asked several

people to write about their projects for inclusion in the report, so thanks to all of you who were willing to do that! I look forward to reading about these great projects.

Judy Jones is heading our **nominating committee** this year and we are in the process of identifying which positions will need to turn over in March. The board positions come with an expectation of a 2-year commitment with a 3rd year optional if the person is willing to stay in that role. We have several positions that will need to be filled, and I would ask that each member consider volunteering for a board position. It really does take a village! In

the next several months, members of the committee will be identifying possible candidates, and the process will be an easier one if we already know who might be interested in a certain role.

Thanks to all of you who have donated books for our **library boxes**. We are seeing more activity with the boxes now as new and different books are present each time. MJ O'Bryan also suggested that we save those extra **calendars** that we all get in the mail this time of year to place in the boxes too. I've already received a "nature-related" one from BoysTown.

On the Calendar

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

Wednesday	Oct 9	HRC Hybrid General Meeting 6-7:45pm at JCC Library and Zoom CE Speaker Portion: Daniel Brooks, HRC Advisor, Department of Forestry
Weekend	Oct 17-20	Catch the King Tide. Approved HRC project. Register at vims.edu
Sunday	Oct 20	CE Bird Walk 7am with Hampton Roads Bird Club at Newport News Park

Saturday	Oct 26	Historic Rivers Annual Picnic Come and go event including bird and plant walks, food, and fun. Details in link from Hospitality email (9/23)
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Tuesday	Oct 29	SAVE THE DATE! <i>VMN Webinar</i> 12-1pm "Bird Feeding & Human Emotions"
Sunday	Dec 22	SAVE THE DATE! <i>Williamsburg Christmas Count</i> . Approved HRC project .

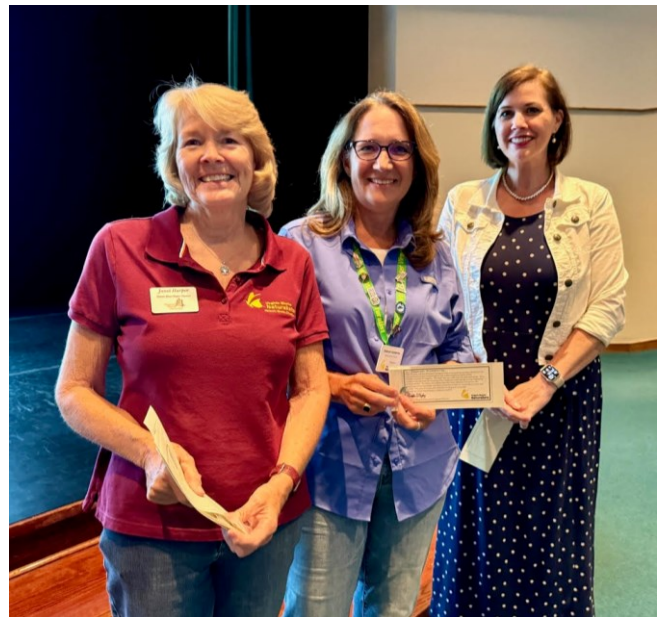
Member Recognitions during September General Meeting



Membership Chair Judy Jones and President Janet Harper had the privilege of announcing certification and milestone achievements completed over the summer at the September 11 general meeting. **All photos by Shirley Devan.**

Eight members reached full certification, 40 hours of volunteer service and 8 hours of continuing education in a year, beyond the basic training requirements. Cohort XVII members to gain full certification include Eric Beckhusen, James Bruce, Melinda Cousins, Michelle Gianvecchio, Connie Motley and Kim Owens. Cohort XVI members Ron Hunt and Kristie Hammond also gained full certification. **Pictured left:** Ron, Janet, Kristie, and Kim after certificates were given.

Volunteer hour milestones were achieved by 8 members. The 250-hour milestone was reached by Sarah Hodges (Cohort XVI) and Marc Moyers (transfer 2017). The 500-hour milestone was reached by three members: Tracy Melton (Cohort XVI), Donna Benson (XVI), and Suzanne Stern (XIV). The 1,000-hour milestone was reached by three members: Deborah Humphries (Cohort XV), Judy Kinshaw-Ellis (X), and Lisa Nickel (IX). Pictured below: Tracy and Janet (left image); Janet, Deborah, and Lisa (right image).



Annual Nancy Norton Youth Nature Camp Scholarships: Open October 1-31 and Summer 2024 Thank You's by Judy Jones



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. This fall, during the month of October, we are accepting applications for scholarships for the Summer 2025 sessions. These scholarships, valued at \$1000 each, offer unique and exciting environmental opportunities for students in James City County, upper York County, and Williamsburg.

Nature 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 will attend class daily, maintain a notebook, complete written projects, and participate in outdoor activities.

If you know of a student, presently in grades 5-12, who loves nature and would enjoy a two-week session at Nature Camp in the summer of 2025, please encourage them to go to our website historicrivers.org, download the application from the "Nature Camp Scholarships" webpage, and get it in the mail before October 31st.

Summer 2024 Nature Scholarship Thank Yous

It has been a joy to watch our five 2024 Nature Camp scholarship winners as they learned and explored during each of their two-week sessions in Vesuvius, VA. To show their gratitude, each of the five has sent thank you notes to our chapter. I'd like to share some parts of each with you now.



Maggie Dabney, now in 11th grade in James City County, has spent three summers at Nature Camp. She writes, “Thank you so much for providing a scholarship for me to return to Nature Camp. This place is so important to me and *I have learned so many new things, noticing small details, going on hikes, and being challenged by the instruction.* It has truly changed my life for the better.”

Sam Garcia, also presently an 11th grader in James City County, was so excited to return to Nature Camp as his first experience, in 2020, was cut short by Covid. So, finally able to have the full two weeks, he writes, “Thank you so much for the opportunity to be a part of Nature Camp this year. *I learned lots about our ecosystem and feel more connected to the world as a result.* Nature Camp is such a special place because we can really connect with each other and the natural world rather than hiding away into social media. I hope to return again and learn even more.”

Luke Walls, now in 10th grade in James City County, returned to Nature Camp for a second summer, and says, “Thank you so much for allowing me to go to Nature Camp. I truly had a wonderful experience while I was here. *I majored in Entomology* and I plan on bringing my new knowledge of pollinators and other beneficial insect species back to Williamsburg to help our gardens thrive!”

Harlan Webster, presently a 7th grader in upper York County, writes, “Thank you for the wonderful opportunity to go to Nature Camp. *I chose Nature Drawing as my major* and was so excited to learn about natural pigments. I think attending camp was a life-changing experience because, for the first time in my life, people accepted me for who I am and how I think. I am surrounded by a group of like-minded kids who are just like me. Camp has made me appreciate nature even more. I hope I can go again next year.”

Will Dabney, Maggie's younger brother, is now in 8th grade and writes, “Thank you for making my camp experience possible. I am truly happy that I was able to go this year and learn about conservation. When I first got to camp this year, I didn't know anything about the fish that inhabit Big Mary's Creek, but *after I picked limnology, my fish knowledge and curiosity just skyrocketed.* Again, I am so thankful for this opportunity you gave me.”

Photos from Williamsburg Botanical Garden on September 14 by Claire White: (1) Spicebush Swallowtail butterfly caterpillar (*Papilio troilus*), and (2) Sneezeweed in bloom (*Helenium virgicum*).

Cicada-Mania at BugFest 2024

by Marie Robertson and Claire White



Pictured above: HRC volunteers dressed up at the photo booth at the start of the day. Back row: Pat Murphy, Janet Harper, Jeff Honig, Mike Smith, Claire White. Front: Marie Robertson.

On Saturday, September 28th, Historic Rivers Chapter (HRC) members shared enthusiasm about cicadas at York County's 5th Annual BugFest at Grafton Middle School. Building on the unique experience of the Brood XIX periodical emergence in May, we decided to focus on cicadas at our Virginia Master Naturalist (VMN) booth. Visitors to our tables not only learned about the mission of the VMN and HRC specific projects, but also learned about the fascinating life cycle of cicadas.

There were four main zones to our display which spanned the length of four cafeteria tables. The first zone was the HRC display with images and handouts about our organization, including the Nancy Norton Nature Camp Scholarship, Speaker's Bureau, and our favorite nature apps. The second zone included a variety of cicada stickers from nymphs to adults for visitors to select from, four sound buttons they could press with recordings of cicada species found in Virginia, books to browse, a brood map, life cycle poster, and many cicada specimens.

Visitors were encouraged to pick up the displayed specimens and closely examine the differences between male and female cicadas, see the differences between retracted and expanded wings, as well as examine the exuviae, the cast-off exoskeletons of cicada nymphs. If the participants were adventurous, they could take an exoskeleton home. A few wore them as cicada necklaces with the exoskeletons mounted on red card stock.

The third and fourth zones of our displays allowed participants to create their own take-away memories. At the third zone, children created three-dimensional paper-craft cicadas. Enlarged prints of HRC member's cicada photography were on display for the participants to view while they colored as inspiration and further conversation pieces with volunteers. After coloring the body parts, HRC volunteers expertly attached the parts to a toilet paper roll, and participants were encouraged to visit the fourth zone, our photo booth. A green photo backdrop decorated with the word "CICADA" spelled out of golden exoskeletons caught everyone's attention. Both children and adults enjoyed choosing which cicada eyes to wear: the red of periodical species or the black of annual species. Participants could also put on cicada wings for the full effect or use the other cicada props. As the only cicada photo booth in the country, it was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity!

A few highlights visitors kept talking about included the creatively displayed cicada wings in the place of numbers on the face of a clock at the specimen table, the cicada call sound-buttons which kids could not resist pressing despite the cicada calls some would call akin to racket of a lawnmower, and the hundreds of spray-painted exoskeletons with their golden sheen that decorated the photo booth's CICADA sign. We counted 350 unique direct contacts at our tables, 100 crafts completed, and 160 cicada stickers passed out. The event organizers reported a total of 645 individuals in attendance at the four-hour event which included 44 stations.

As with almost any HRC project and activity, this year's BugFest success was a group effort. Thank you to our pre-event volunteers. Kudos to Sharon Plocher for collecting the hundreds of exoskeletons used for the cicada photo banner and as giveaways, to our many talented photographers for sending us their cicada pictures (Barb Creel, Lisa Cumming, Judy Jones, Wendy Nelson, MJ O'Bryan and Dave Watt), to all those who sent in toilet paper rolls for the craft, and to Alice Kopinitz for helping cut out craft pieces in advance. A big thanks to the VMN State Program office for providing some funds through their 2024 mini-grant to purchase materials for the event including stickers, enlargements, and some photo-booth prop supplies.

Another shout out goes to our day-of volunteers, who brought energy and enthusiasm to the tables during their shifts: Janet Harper, Jeff Honig, Ron Hunt, Pat Murphy, Deena Obrokta, Joanne Sheffield, Mike Smith, and Mike Whitfield. **If you are interested in being on the planning team or as a helper for BugFest 2025 please let us know soon.** It's a lot of fun and takes many skill sets, including researcher, creative, and communicators. We typically begin in the spring with discussion of ideas, then develop the craft and displays over the summer.



Photos above: (1) Volunteer Mike Smith behind the exoskeleton giveaway tray and cicada brood map. (2) Closeup of a few cicada specimens and lifecycle poster. (3) Volunteer Deena Obrokta in front of the sticker station organizer, four sound buttons, and cicada wing clock. (4) HRC trifold display. (5) Cicada craft completed by a rainbow inspired youth. (6) Joanne Sheffield and Mike Whitfield helping with carrying items at end of event.

Gearing Up for a Busy Fall at Brickyard Landing

by Judy Kinshaw-Ellis, Cohort X



Pictured: (Left) Yarrow and grasses like Pink Muhly and Purple Love Grass add texture to the garden in the fall. **(Right)** Little Bluestem is starting its fall color change.

Working at **Brickyard Landing Park** is both exciting and challenging. November and December will see the installation of the third and fourth phases of the riparian buffer demonstration garden, and we will need a large number of volunteers again to plant trees and shrubs and a smaller number of people to seed the meadow.

Phase Three involves planting 120 trees and woody shrubs. It will take place the week of November 11. We are hoping that the Veterans Day holiday may increase participation by people who normally work during the week. Many of the holes for larger trees were dug in the summer, which will make planting easier. The county will also be treating the area with herbicide to reduce the weed competition around the new trees and shrubs. We will send out a signup in early November, but please pencil in any time you can give us between November 11 and 15. Of course we will need people to dig and plant, but we will also need people to water, mulch, and help direct volunteers as they arrive.

Phase Four is meadow installation. The county grounds crew has applied the first round of herbicide to part of the meadow area. At least one more application will be required. Originally, we planned to buy a seed mix and spread it around the prepared area. After doing some research, we have decided to plant several species as plugs and also order seeds divided by species. With individual seed species, we can plant in groupings and waves. This type of planting will allow us to keep better track of germination rates, and it is supposed to be better for pollinators to have groupings of plants.

Other exciting things happening at the park include installation of interpretive signs and walkways. Three signs are planned: riparian buffers, meadow habitats, and native plants to replace non-natives and invasives. We are hoping that the signs will include photos from several VMN photographers. Walkways are also in the planning stages, and we hope that approvals will be completed soon so construction can start.

Our regular workdays are Mondays and Thursdays from 8 am to 11 am, and we encourage people to stay about two hours because this is difficult work. If you cannot help, please drive out and take a look. Our volunteers have made incredible progress on this project, and it is located at one of the most scenic spots in James City County: **990 Brickyard Road, Lanexa, VA 23089.**

Field Trip to Dragon Run Watershed by Claire White



A week of rain cancelled the original HRC field trip to the Dragon Run watershed on Tuesday, September 17th. Luckily the event was rescheduled for Sunday, September 22nd in conjunction with the **Friends of Dragon Run (FODR)** members hike. FODR is a non-profit that seeks to “preserve, protect, and encourage the wise use of Dragon Run and its watershed,” located on the Middle Peninsula across several Virginia counties. The group owns and manages more than 650 acres along the shorelines of the Dragon Run stream (dragonrun.org).

HRC and FODR board member Adrienne Frank graciously drove Les Lawrence, Brad Glasebrook, and me to the FODR meeting site in Essex County. Participants, including many from other Master Naturalist chapters, gathered during the cool morning before splitting into groups for separate hikes. Carol and Jack Kauffman, members of the FODR board, and Adrienne led the HRC hike through the woods along varied terrain. Woodlands and the cypress swamp were visible along the walk.

Fungi were abundant along the trails from the recent rains. Ferns, mosses, lichens, and a variety of plants, including non-photosynthetic ones were the main focus of our walk. Conversation was had about the differences between *Monotropa uniflora*, commonly known as Indian pipe or Ghost pipe, and *Hypopitys monotropa*, formerly *Monotropa hypopitys*, commonly known as pinesap or Dutchman’s pipe. Both species do not contain chlorophyll, form a symbiotic relationship with fungi to attain nutrients, are from the Ericaceae family, and found widespread across the state. The Ghost pipe tends to be white or a pale pink and has a single flower per stem. The pinesap is pale yellowish white to reddish, and the flowers are produced in clusters.

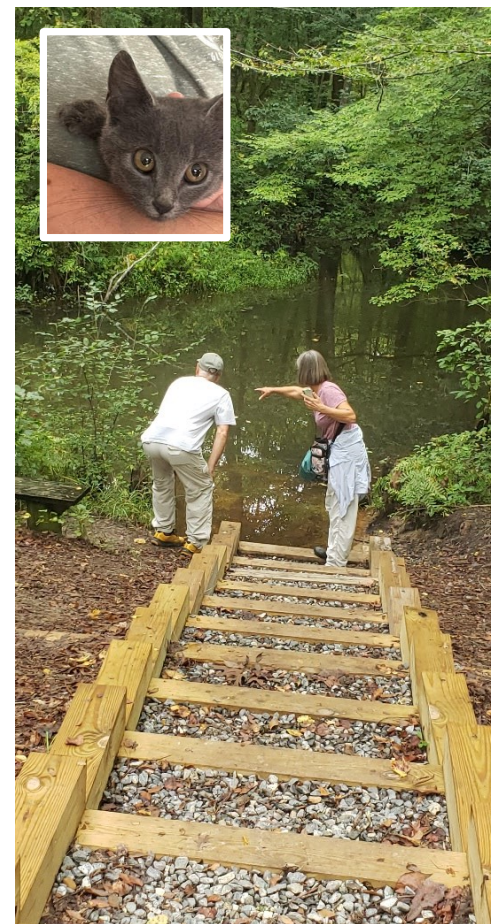
Photos: (1) FODR trail sign by Claire White. (2) Hiking group photo: Les Lawrence, Claire White, Brad Glasebrook, Adrienne Frank, and Carol Kauffman (FODR). Photo credit Jack Kauffman, FODR. (3) Ghost Pipe plant with pinkish hue. Photo credit Claire White. (4) Brad, HRC field trip organizer, photographing pinesap. Photo Credit Les Lawrence.

Many different species, beyond the stationary ones, were spotted including two of the domestic variety. A friendly speed-racing dog from a neighboring property greeted us many times along the hike and a young kitten was rescued during our post-hike lunch. The HRC group kickstarted the rescue after we heard a meowing across the water, coming from the Big Island Complex. Low and behold it was a gray kitten who mustered the courage to swim the Dragon to reach us, was hesitant to interact once she made her harrowing crossing, was fed snacks from our lunches, and eventually captured to be taken to the Humane Society by Carol and Jack. She was aptly nicknamed “Dragon” in a follow-up email.

I highly recommend learning more about the FODR. They often have guided paddles that fill up quickly. Carol mentioned the “Swamp Sightings” page on their website, which features the flora and fauna that can be found inhabiting the Dragon Run Watershed each month. Two species are highlighted monthly with photos and text by a FODR member or intern, and can be found at dragonrun.org/swamp-sightings.

Pictured below: Finds along the Dragon Run. Descriptions organized left to right, by columns.

(1) Purple blooms of **Downy Lobelia** (*Lobelia puberula*). (2) **Viscid Violet Cort mushroom** (*Cortinarius iodes*), (3) **Netted chainfern** (*Woodwardia/Lorinseria areolate*) leaflet with rough serrated edges, one of the key differences between its look alike sensitive fern. (3) **Crome Sphagnum Moss** (*Sphagnum squarrosum*), a spiky bog-moss with spreading “leaves.” (4) Stroboli, the spore producing cone, of **Running-cedar**, a fan clubmoss (*Diphasiastrum/Lycopodium digitatum*). (5-6) **Brad and Adrienne along the shoreline keeping an eye on “Dragon,” a kitten** who was later rescued, as she crossed the Dragon Run Stream. Inset is a picture of the gray kitten taken by the Kauffmans. All other photos by Claire White.



Basic Training Cohort XVIII in September

by Basic Training Committee

Sixteen new trainees started their coursework to become a Historic Rivers Chapter Virginia Master Naturalist on September 10, 2024. Four meetings took place over the course of the month: two classes at the Coleman Nursery space and two field days at local wildlife hotspots.



September training topics and activities included:

1. Biology Basics and Evolution
2. Nature of Naming: Scientific naming
3. Pollinators: Bees, Butterflies, and More
4. Binocular Basics
5. Native Plant Walk at Freedom Park
6. Practice using forestry dichotomous keys
7. Native Plants
8. Risk Management
9. Civil Rights Training
10. Better Impact Opportunities and Hours
11. Herpetology at York River State Park
12. Macroinvertebrates at Warhill Tract

Members of Cohort XVIII are pictured above.

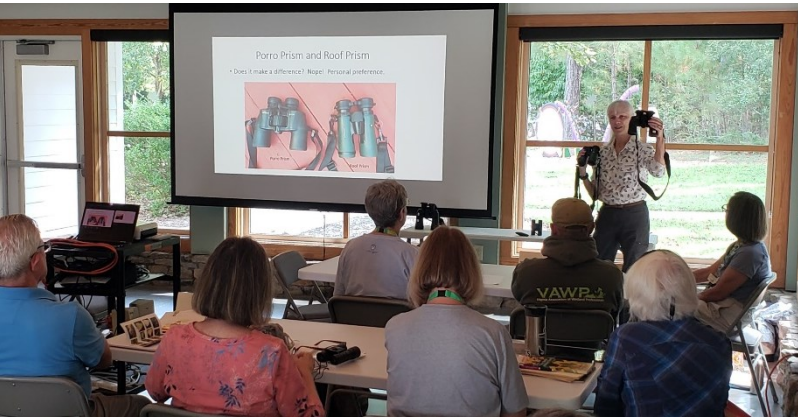
Banner holders: Janelle Anthony (green shirt), Gail Peterson, Liz George, Karen Creef, MJ Freeman (visor), and Amanda Sample. **Back row:** Jennifer Smith, Joanne Benecki, Cameron Garrett, Mitch Dannon, Dorothy Geyer, Jamie Serafin, Donna Dodenhoff, Anne Annala, Dan Foster, Laura Grove.

Committee Members (with Cohort included):

Co-chairs Tory Gussman (XIII) and Jim Leech (XVI); previous co-chairs Shirley Devan (I), Jennifer Trevino (V), and Barbara Neis (X); and mentors Eric Beckhusen (XVII), Garry Maynor (XVII), Donna Benson (XVI), Emily Argo (XV), Janie Moyers (transfer 2017), and Claire White (XII).



Pictured above: Class #1 snapshots. Left—Amanda, Anne, and Jamie holding items provided in their training bags. Right—Mitch, Jennifer, and Gail holding up artifacts from their evolution by natural selection activity.



Cohort XVIII Field Day Snapshots

(Clockwise) Pollinator search at Williamsburg Botanical Garden, water sampling at Warhill Tract, aquatic species exploration with Meagan Thomas at York River State Park, macroinvertebrates at Warhill, shortleaf pine (*Pinus echinata*) with Donna Ware at Freedom Park, and binoculars with Tory in Interpretive Center.



VMN Virtual Conference Weekend Snippets



Activity: Powhatan Litter Pickup—by Lisa Cumming

Pictured: Myself (photographer), Bob Kaplan, Jeanette Navia, Rick Brown, Judy Jones, and Frank Smith at the end of our litter pickup at the park. We collected 2 bags of trash, one large, and a large box with Styrofoam in it.

Activity: Yorktown Wildlife Mapping—by Jeff Honig

The walk went well. Beth Alberth and David Garner from Historic Southside chapter attended. Gail Peterson from the new cohort came and plans to come again next month. Grasshoppers and bees were super abundant.

Reflection: Thoughts from the conference—by Janet Harper

The VMN conference kicked off Friday night (September 26th) with a welcome reception where we were shown how to navigate into the various virtual booths, and then were separated into small breakout groups. In the small groups we introduced ourselves and then answered some general questions about what our favorite part of being a VMN was, what projects we enjoyed, and what we liked about service. My small group had 2 ladies from the Peninsula chapter, so that was nice to meet local folks from a nearby chapter. I even saw one of them the next day at BugFest.

The keynote speaker Friday night talked about “Ornithotherapy” which, as the names implies, uses birding as a form of therapy for relaxation and stress relief. This entails mindful watching and listening to birds without any goal in mind, just enjoying the sights and sounds as opposed to trying to identify each bird or adding to one’s bird count for the year. She mentioned several studies that demonstrated multiple physiological and psychological benefits of mindful birding and connecting with nature. She credited mindful birding as helping her cope with her cancer. I’m a believer as I always enjoy just sitting in the backyard taking in all the sights, sounds, and smells of nature.



Photo above: Black-capped Chickadee (*Poecile atricapillus*) at Greensprings Interpretive Trail by Martha Moss, via Flickr.

Reflection: Inclusive Participatory Science—by Barb Creel

Deja Perkins was the keynote speaker for the Sunday closing session of the VMN Annual conference. The topic was “Consideration Towards More Inclusive Participatory Science” and made a distinction between citizen science and participatory science, where participatory science includes social learning. What I found most

interesting is all the data we collect and report it not inclusive in many areas, most notably data is often not recorded in neighborhoods or communities of color. This got me thinking that we may consider, as a chapter, to create a wildlife mapping volunteer event in areas that are more inclusive, in varying neighborhoods.

I know we all get approached by folks passing by asking what we are doing and if we find anything interesting when viewing wildlife. Often these folks are of varying race and ethnicity. This got me to thinking maybe we can develop a business card that we can have quickly on hand to share in hopes to keep the interest encouraged. The business cards could be held in one of our cargo packets and not take up much space when wildlife mapping, birding, or photographing wildlife.

Reflection: Coexisting with Beavers—by Adrienne Frank



Photo above: Beaver (*Castor canadensis*), July 2022 by Martha Moss, via Flickr.

I participated in a zoom on Saturday 9/28 during the VMN State Conference called “Coexisting with Beavers” by Alison Zak. The session provided an overview of beavers, habitat benefits and trapping/harvesting from the 1700s to the present. Beaver numbers were as high as 400 million and down to 100,000 at their lowest point. Today, beavers are tolerated much more readily.

Benefits of beavers and the habitat they create include filtering sediment, increasing water quality, drought proofing, increasing habitat and biodiversity, restoring streams, etc. Alison offered ideas/solutions for landowners when beavers begin to cut down trees. Trapping and dispatching are only a temporary solution. Live trapping is illegal. Besides, you really

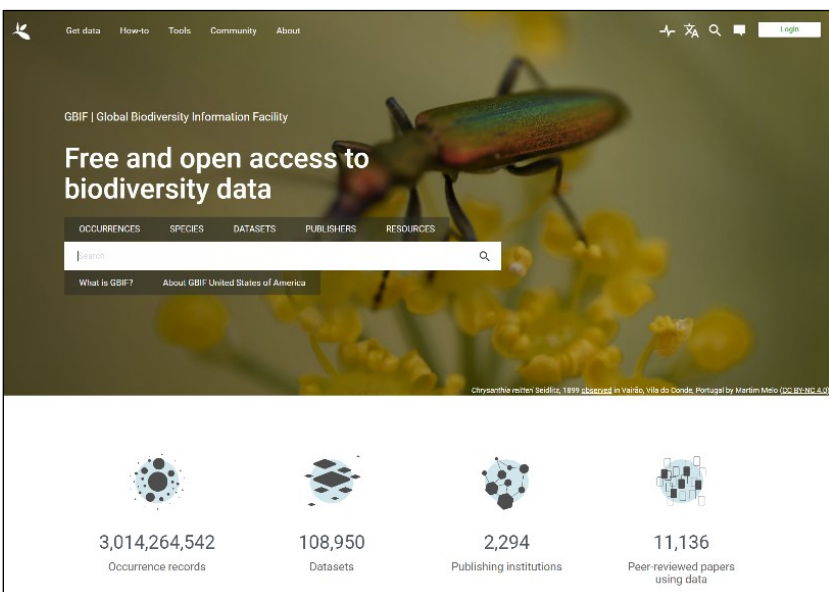
need to catch the whole family. Better to wrap some favorite trees with 4 foot tall, 14-gauge fencing. Flow devices can lower the water level to limit the size of the pond.

There is a Human-Beaver Coexistence Fund available to help landowners. They offer consultation by a certified Beaver Core educator. See their website at coexistwithbeavers.org.

Reflection: GBIF Discovery—by Shirley Devan

I tuned into the virtual session, "Community Science: Nature Education through data collection" at the VMN State Conference Saturday, September 28. The primary focus of this session was to promote [iNaturalist](https://www.inaturalist.org) as a citizen science database and a tool for education. [eBird](https://www.ebird.org) and a few others were mentioned as other citizen science databases. At the end of the session, I noted in the chat box that I was frustrated in having to enter data twice (if I felt compelled) – for [eBird](https://www.ebird.org) and for [iNaturalist](https://www.inaturalist.org) and sometimes another database like [eButterfly](https://www.ebutterfly.org). Also annoying is that [iNaturalist](https://www.inaturalist.org) is not really interested in your data if you don't have a photo. [It's usually not likely to be rated “research grade” unless you include a photo.]

One of the Master Naturalist participants on the Zoom meeting typed “[GBIF – Global Diversity Information Facility](https://www.gbif.org)” in the chat box along with the web address [gbif.org](https://www.gbif.org). I took a deep dive into GBIF after the conference weekend and realized that a good bit of the data we submit to [eBird](https://www.ebird.org) and [iNaturalist](https://www.inaturalist.org) are “sucked up” into GBIF because the organizations that accept and manage that data are members of GBIF! Hooray! Thanks, [Cornell Lab of O!](https://www.cornell.edu)



Per the website, pictured left, “GBIF—the Global Biodiversity Information Facility – is an international network and data infrastructure funded by the world’s governments and aimed at providing anyone, anywhere, open access to data about all types of life on Earth.” As you can imagine, such an international effort of collecting, organizing, and making big data sets available to scientists and researchers around the world is a monumental and costly effort. And so critical to research at every level.

On the home page I found a section called “Data Use” which features articles that have used GBIF datasets including “Climate Change” with 2,332 peer reviewed papers using data from GBIF. I explored many of the other pages

including: gbif.org/citizen-science and gbif.org/dataset/search. On the dataset search page, they indicate they host over 108,000 datasets. An example of one is “Check list of jumping plant-lice (Hemiptera: Psilloidea) of the Korean Peninsula.”

Emergency Veterinary Care: York County Wildlife

by Janet Harper

My husband and I are lucky to live in an area of southern York County with a lot of wildlife. We always enjoy seeing the deer, box turtles, herons, ducks, skinks, and bunnies in and around our yard. On our Ring camera, we see raccoons, flying squirrels, and opossums visiting in the evening. Unfortunately, we also need to rescue these animals occasionally. A couple years ago we rescued an Osprey chick that fell off its platform nest and a black rat snake that swallowed a golf ball. Each time we had to make numerous phone calls to various rehabbers to find someone to help, and we had to drive to different cities to deliver the animals.

During the last week of September we had to rescue a small Cottontail bunny who got stuck halfway through a mesh fence. He must have been frightened by something and run into it by mistake as we had never seen him try to go through the fence before. He was so badly injured that he needed medical care before he’d be able to go to a rehabber. We needed an emergency veterinarian who would take a wild rabbit. After several phone calls we were referred to the **Peninsula Animal Referral Center**. This was good news as this is close to our home, and the bunny was in shock. This facility accepts injured wildlife from “Good Samaritans” without charge. They keep a list of licensed rehabilitators and will call them to pick up the animal after care is given. As it turns out, they would have accepted the Osprey and snake previously mentioned. Rather than desperately trying to find someone to take injured animals in the future, we’ll use this clinic as our “one-stop” wildlife help. We also discovered that the **Animal Emergency Center** up the road will also accept injured wildlife without charge and is open from 5:30 pm to 8:30 am. Between the two facilities, there is 24-hour coverage. If you live on this end of the peninsula, keep these places in mind.

Peninsula Animal Referral Center

8am-10pm

1120 George Washington Memorial Highway, Yorktown

Animal Emergency Center

5:30pm-8am

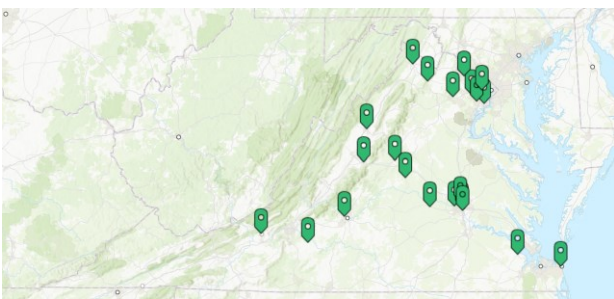
2025 George Washington Memorial Highway, Yorktown

Shorter Shares from HRC Members and Beyond



9/02 Labor Day Wildlife Mapping—by Barb Creel

Pictured left to right: Shirley Devan, Shan Gill, Adrienne Frank, Les Lawrence, Babs Giffin, Joyce Lowry, and Gary Driscoll during wildlife mapping at York River State Park (YRSP) on Labor Day. One highlight included a **Six Spotted Fishing Spider** (pictured above) spied and identified by Shan.



VMN StoryMap of Urban & Community Forests

The State VMN Program office is looking to update their **VMN Urban and Community Forestry StoryMap**. Check out the interactive map to see how other VMNs throughout the state are involved.



Monarch Chrysalis Rescue—by Donna Benson

During the end of September, I was doing some tidying in my garden when I noticed this beautiful jewel on the ground under the fig tree. I was so excited to see a monarch chrysalis, but not on the ground! I felt really bad for the little guy and a bit guilty thinking I may have been the one who inadvertently dislodged it.

Luckily, I have lots of fellow nature nerds to reach out to for advice. Marie Robertson recommended using dental floss to reattach it in a secure location. I made a loop with the floss and was able to "lasso" the cremaster (the little black tail that attaches the chrysalis to its perch) and pull it tight. Then I looped it around a small branch of the fig tree and tied it tight. Worked like a charm! I kept an eye on it for a few days and it hatched, but I didn't get to witness it.



9/20 College Creek Litter Pickup = 92 pounds

The litter pickup along the Colonial Historic Parkway continues to bring large numbers. Since January 1st of this year 744 pounds have been collected. **Pictured:** (Standing) Bill Weldon, Dave Watt, Bob Kaplan, Keith Navia, Jeanette Navia, and Martha Moss (co-lead). In front with trash bags, Marie Robertson (co-lead).

1,000-pound Trex Plastic Collection Goal Almost Reached—by Karen Hines

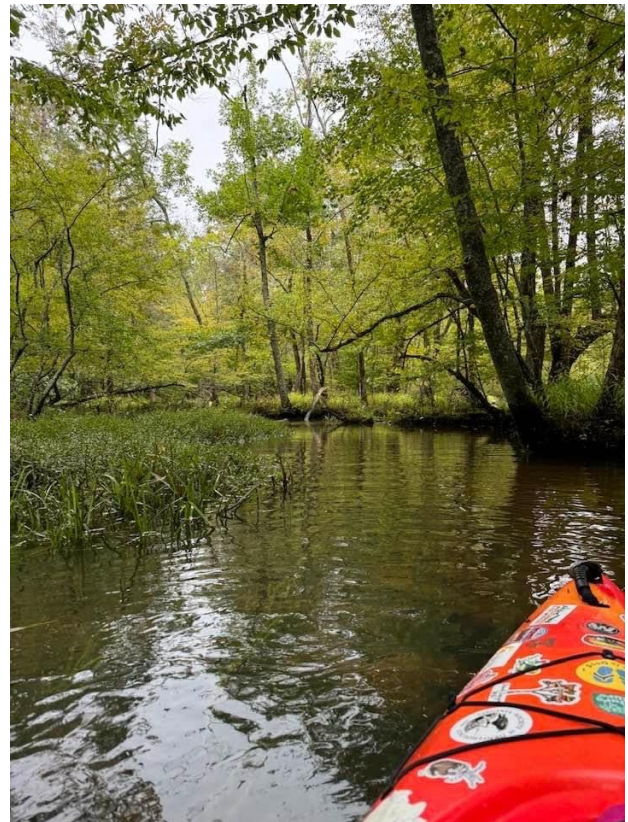
The last full week of September brought in 46 pounds of acceptable clean, dry, crumb-free, slime-free, paper-free, stretchy soft plastic! Only 9% of the total amount turned in went to the garbage due to tainting, which was an improvement that I truly appreciate.

We have 128 pounds left to collect in this year's drive and four months to collect it. I hope by now you're coming up with alternatives to using plastic. When you can, grab your HRC bag or something else to tote some of your purchases home. See if you can manage your items without doubling or tripling up on bags. It may sound strange, but I'd be perfectly happy if it took all the time left in the challenge to reap that last 128 pounds. After all, if we use fewer bags, the stores buy fewer bags, and that means far fewer go into the landfills.

September 2024

Put that Tree in the Right Place! VMN Webinar

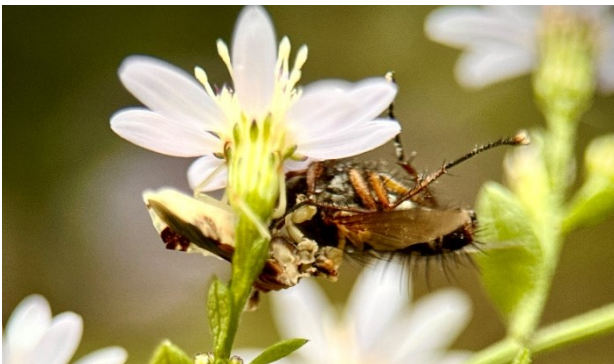
The State's [Continuing Education Webinar Series](#) offered a webinar on September 16th by Laurie Fox, a Horticultural Associate with Virginia Tech. The webinar focused on how to assess a site and select the right tree to fit the growing conditions and the owner's goals. The [recorded webinar](#) is available online for viewing and counts as a part of your annual 8 hours of continuing education (CE) if you log your hours in Better Impact. There are several recorded webinars available on virginiamasternaturalist.org/continuing-education along with many other CE opportunities.



9/29 High Tide Kayaking —by Judy Kinshaw-Ellis

An advantage of the high tides we are experiencing is the ability to paddle into areas that are not usually accessible. Powhatan Creek has a wonderful Bald Cypress swamp where you can get an up-close look at birds and vegetation. [Catch the King Tide!](#)

The Naturalist 16



9/30 Macro Photography —by Marie Robertson

Today I tested a new clip-on macro lens for my phone and was able to take a photo of a **Looper caterpillar of the wavy-lined emerald moth (*Synchlora aerata*)** on aster, top photo. According to the **Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC)**, “The caterpillar of this species is a looper (or inchworm) that decorates itself with pieces of plants, especially small clippings from flower petals. The fresh petal fragments start off looking colorful but then dry out to look like crumbs. In this way, the caterpillar either blends in with the colorful flower, or else looks like a mere chunk of debris. Either way, it is camouflaged from predators.”

The second photo is of an **ambush bug (*Phymata spp.*)** on mistflower, while the third photo is an

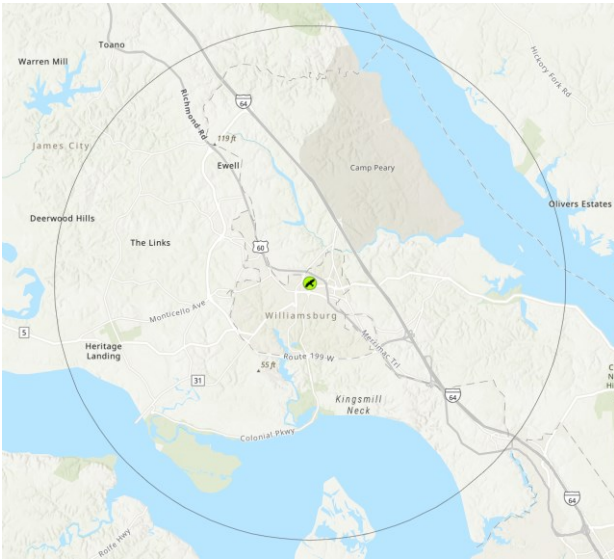
ambush bug injecting venom into the fly (*Tachina fera*) that it caught on my asters. **MDC states** that, “Ambush bugs use the same hunting strategy as flower crab spiders: they sit, motionless, in a flower, and wait for an insect to come near. Like many crab spiders, they are perfectly camouflaged, and some species may have the ability to change color to match their surroundings. When an unwitting insect approaches, the ambush bug quickly grabs its prey, *delivers an injection of immobilizing and digestive fluid, then drinks the liquefying nutrients from the prey’s body.* Unlike spiders, which have a pair of fangs, ambush bugs have their mouthparts arranged into a single strawlike (or knifelike!) beak. Ambush bugs often capture insects much bigger than themselves — bees, butterflies and moths, large flies, and more.”

Seeking Future Newsletter Editor (March 2026) —by Claire White

If you are interested in learning about how I assemble the monthly newsletter, utilizing new technology, or experimenting with how the newsletter is formatted please consider reaching out over the next 12 months. I am committed to doing a third year as your editor. That means I’ll be on board through 2025 to the beginning of March 2026, but after that according to our HRC Bylaws the torch must be passed on to another member.

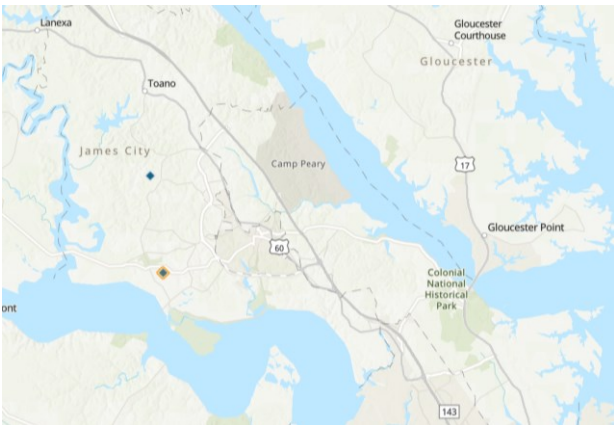
Shoot me an email anytime or seek me out at the HRC picnic on October 26th to chat. Showing interest is not a commitment to the job but opening the door to possibilities. Perhaps there are more than one of you interested in the job and would like to partner up for the task? By starting the conversation with me I can better prepare everyone for an eventual shift. Current trainees and past editors are welcome to jump on board too.

Currently I use good old-fashioned Microsoft Word to assemble the newsletter. Perhaps you would like to see how that is possible, or you see room for improvement. Are you a Canva, Adobe InDesign user, or email newsletter blog dabbler? The possibilities are endless. Let me know what your newsletter thoughts are.



SAVE THE DATE! Dec 22nd Williamsburg Christmas Bird Count—by S. Devan

This is an approved Volunteer Service Project for HRC members and opportunity to gain a significant number of hours just before year's end. More info later about how to participate.



10/08- Birdability Zoom Training (6:30pm)

Tiffany Brown, from the State VMN Program Office, linked the [Zoom pre-registration](#) in a Bi-weekly email. Learn how VMNs can help reduce or remove the information barrier about accessible wildlife hotspots. **Birdability**, a non-profit has created an interactive map (linked in the photo above) for finding accessible locations.



Book Recommendation —by Joe Beene

I recently read *The Comfort of Crows: A Backyard Year* (2023), by Margaret Renkle. Before I could write a review, the book was due to return to the [Williamsburg Library](#) and I couldn't renew it. Instead of my review, here's a short synopsis gleaned from the inside cover of the book: "In *The Comfort of Crows*, Margaret Renkle presents a literary devotional: fifty-two chapters that follow the creatures and plants of her backyard over the course of a year... With fifty-two original color artworks by the author's brother, Billy Renkl, [this] is a lovely and deeply moving book from a cherished observer of the natural world."

From one HRC Master Naturalist to another, you will enjoy this book and the paintings that accompany each chapter. *The Comfort of Crows* it is a popular book. I had to wait several weeks to get the book, with more people on the reserve list after me. [It is on Reese Witherspoon's Book Club List]

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

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Learn more about our chapter at historicrivers.org

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



Where do you order 150+ cicada stickers from? For BugFest we used WildernessInsider on Etsy for our purchases.

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