

# The Naturalist

November 2024 Newsletter | Volume 20, Number 11  
Historic Rivers Chapter of Virginia Master Naturalists

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**Feature Photo:** Closeup of red oak leaves along Duke of Gloucester Street, Colonial Williamsburg, 11/24/24, by Claire White.

## A Message from the President

by Janet Harper

I hope everyone had a great Thanksgiving with friends and family! I can't believe it's December already; this year has flown by so quickly. We don't have a general meeting in December, so I'd like to pass on some news and reminders:

Please make sure you have all your **volunteer and continuing education hours** recorded for the year as we need to have these for the annual report, as well as for recertification and milestone bling. Don't wait until the last day of the month to catch up on any hours not yet recorded. The annual report committee has the template for the report and will be working to get it finished by early January.

Most members should have received an email reminder from the state office telling you if need to **re-enroll** or not. If you need to do so, please complete the process quickly so the Virginia Master Naturalist (VMN) state office doesn't have to send reminders. You may need to do Civil Rights training (yearly) and Risk Management training (every 3 years) as part of the process. Last year the compliance rate for the mandatory training was only 75%, so please do these if needed. If you don't re-enroll, you'll be archived and need to be reinstated by VMN. Last year they had to reinstate

27 people who “forgot” to re-enroll. We don’t need to add to their work.

Pictured below: Better Impact icons that will appear on your homepage before and after re-enrollment. For directions on the process [watch the video prepared by Tiffany Brown](#).



Dues for next year have been increased to \$35 and can be paid by check to “Historic Rivers Chapter” by mailing to the HRC PO Box, or online with PayPal. Marc Moyers has sent out the [dues reminder with options listed](#). You’ll also be able to make donations to the chapter if desired.

The board voted to hold a **Martin Luther King Jr. Service Day** on Saturday, January 18. We will do a giant litter pickup again, but this time we’ve added Warhill Complex to our pickup with Shirley Devan

and Adrienne Frank coordinating that site. Those of you that lead litter pickups elsewhere can choose to do your site that day or just keep your regular schedule and join the Warhill site. Please let me know if you plan to offer your site on Jan 18 or not, so we can let people know what’s available.

Because of the New Years holiday falling on the 1st Wednesday of January, we are moving all the meetings 1 week later than usual. The board meeting will be on January 8, and the **chapter meeting will be combined with the Bird Club meeting on January 15 at Quarterpath Recreation Center**. This will be hybrid, and the link will be sent closer to the date.

Better Impact has added a **new survey tool** which can accommodate various types of questions. We’ll be looking at how we can use it for polling, voting, or perhaps signing up for field trips and social events.

Thanks for all you do to make this a great chapter!  
Happy Holidays everyone! Janet

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## On the Calendar

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

**Weekly Wildlife Mapping:** Check out the upcoming events at York River State Park, New Quarter Park, Greensprings Interpretive Trail, Jamestown Island, and Yorktown Battlefield on the [Better Impact Calendar](#)

Thursday	Dec 12	CE Making FeederWatch Inclusive 1pm Webinar   <a href="#">Registration</a>
Saturday	Dec 14	Litter Pickup 9am <a href="#">Greenspring Interpretive Trail</a>   Contact Suzanne Stern
Sunday	Dec 15	CE Bird Walk 7am with <a href="#">Hampton Roads Bird Club</a>   Newport News Park
Thursday	Dec 19	CE Invasives, Restoration, Sound of Urban Streams 2pm Webinar   <a href="#">Register</a>
Saturday	Dec 21	Litter Pickup 10am College Creek Beach, Colonial Parkway   No signup
Sunday	Dec 22	Williamsburg Audubon Christmas <a href="#">Bird Count</a>   Contact Shirley Devan
Saturday	Dec 28	CE Bird Walk 8-10am with Williamsburg Bird Club   New Quarter Park
Wednesday	Jan 8	HRC Board Meeting 6:30pm   Email President Janet Harper for Zoom Link
Wednesday	Jan 15	HRC & Williamsburg Bird Club <b>JOINT Monthly Meeting</b> 7-8pm, <a href="#">Quarterpath Recreation Center</a> , 202 Quarterpath Road   Hybrid Meeting
Saturday	Jan 18	<b>SAVE THE DATE! MLK, Jr. Day/Weekend of Service Event</b>



# Basic Training Cohort XVIII in November

by Basic Training Committee

November basic training included two Saturday events and one Tuesday evening class. The cohort is over halfway through their coursework with a winter break from training scheduled from December 11-January 6. Graduation will be on March 12<sup>th</sup> at the general meeting scheduled at Quarterpath Recreation Center. Be sure to save the date to join us for the celebration and meet these Master Naturalists.

On Saturday, November 2<sup>nd</sup> trainees participated in a service activity at Jamestown Settlement living history museum. They worked outdoors pulling invasive plants and doing maintenance around native plants and reed houses in “Paspahugh Town.” Recent

transfer member Linda Hughes joined the group for the event. Photos below. After the service activity, Dan Foster, trainee, and Linda quickly spearheaded a new ongoing HRC project called “[Paspahugh Town Native Plant Restoration](#).” Learn more about this “Flora” opportunity on the Better Impact website.

On Saturday, November 16<sup>th</sup> the group headed to the Virginia Living Museum (VLM) for two classes on the study of fishes (ichthyology) and mammals (mammalogy), presented by VLM staff members Rachel Riesbeck and Bo Baker. The classroom presentation included dissecting a fish. The group also had an unexpected tour of the VLM outdoor spaces (pictured top left, photo credit Janie Moyers) as they walked to the new [Wild Care Center](#) that was scheduled to have its grand opening the following day.



**Pictured above: Paspahugh Town cleanup** by Karen Creef (left photo), Amanda Sample, Joanne Benecki, Gail Peterson, Jamie Serafin, and Linda Hughes (right). Photos by Jennifer Trevino.



**Basic Training photos continued:** Fish anatomy was explored through a dissection of a trout at the Virginia Living Museum on Saturday, November 16th. Left, closeup of fish mouth, photo by Janie Moyers. Right, Karen Creef, Jennifer Smith, and Mitch Dannon exploring fish anatomy, photo by Tory Gussman.

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## Meet Our Nature Camp Kids, 2025

by Judy Jones, photos by Martha Moss



On November 5<sup>th</sup>, our Scholarship Committee met and chose our Nature Camp kids for 2025. This year, we had a remarkable collection of very bright and involved individuals who applied so the selection process was challenging. But fortunately, Historic Rivers Chapter was able to offer [Nancy Norton Nature Camp scholarships](#) to five incredible young nature lovers. I think you will be proud of those who will represent us next summer.

Luke Walls is an 11<sup>th</sup> grader at Jamestown High School. He has attended camp before and had incredible experiences. Luke says he would like to have geology or astronomy as his major. He goes on to write, "Nature Camp is an

amazing place, and each new year brings unique experiences. This will be my third year at camp and getting to return to my home away from home will be the highlight of my summer. Scouting allows me to explore the rugged side of nature and camp shows me the more educational side of it. Nature Camp rounds out my knowledge and love of outdoors." His teacher tells us that "Luke is very

relational, creative, and intelligent. He is also caring toward others and values the contributions of all. He is a natural leader but follows well too. Nature Camp would be a special nudge to guide him and further foster his love of the natural world. He is an outstanding candidate.”

**Kiera Sohoni is an 8<sup>th</sup> grader at Berkeley Middle School.** She writes that “...attending Nature Camp was a life-changing experience. It has helped me be curious and eager to explore new topics such as botany. Last year this is what I studied and I really enjoyed learning about plants and their relationships with other organisms. I learned how plants protect themselves from insects which was interesting. But I really enjoyed learning about pollinators. When I returned home, I worked with my scout troop to make a pollinator garden at our neighborhood greenspace!” Her science teacher shared that “Kiera is a nature nut. She loves trails, mountains, beaches – anywhere that is outdoors. She is exactly the kind of student that you’d want to send to camp – a bright and lively individual who leads well, follows well, and can’t wait to learn something new.”



**Asher Sohoni, Kiera’s brother, is an 11<sup>th</sup> grader at Jamestown High School,** and will attend Nature Camp for the fourth time. He writes, “I would love to go again because I love how my knowledge base has expanded thanks to their unique and effective approach to teaching. In each class we learn a mixture of general knowledge, specific examples, and interesting exceptions, all in a hands-on setting. I would like to learn more about land-altering projects such as the building of roads and the geological surveys that should be conducted, as many such projects have been the cause of the loss of irreplaceable history in the form of fossils.” His teacher comments that “Asher has taken biology, AP chemistry, and is presently in AP Environmental Science. His love of

nature just shines through. He is a member of the Science National Honor Society and was an award winner in the WJCC Science Fair with a project on conductivity and electrolytes. He is endlessly curious and eager to make connections between all these science classes. He is just hungry for knowledge and will be a marvelous addition to the learning experiences at Nature Camp.”

**Maggie Dabney, an 11<sup>th</sup> grader at Jamestown High School,** will attend Nature Camp for the fourth time. She is hoping to study Ornithology or Ecology. She writes, “I am excited to attend camp this summer and continue learning more about the many interesting things there are to see in our world. For instance, when I am outside, I have learned to notice the fascinating colors and patterns nature

has to offer – the way a spider web will sparkle in the sunlight, how water slowly ripples on the surface of a lake, or how the small mushrooms are rising up from under the leaves on the forest floor, all going unnoticed except to those who stop and pay attention.” Her teacher shares that “Maggie has a true passion for the natural world. She is respectful, patient, engaging, polite, and practices strong listening skills. She prioritizes her friends over herself and is a team leader.” Maggie will be attending thanks to the generosity of Nancy Norton’s children, Paul and Heather Norton.



**Sadie Teer, a 12<sup>th</sup> grader at Jamestown High School**, is our final scholarship winner. She is last on this list but definitely not least. She has attended Nature Camp every year since fifth grade and has truly become an environmental advocate. She says that “my experiences at Nature Camp have shaped who I am today. Without your generosity, I would have missed out on the lifelong learning and experiences which have fueled my passion for conservation and which has inspired me to push myself, my family, and my friends to live a more sustainable lifestyle. I

believe, for example, in reducing single-use plastic. I even convinced my Latin teacher to add the school’s recycling program to his classroom.” Sadie’s AP Environmental Science teacher shares that “Sadie enjoys spending time outside and is interested in learning as much as she can about the environment and what can be done to protect it. When working with others, Sadie takes on different roles depending on the task and the needs of the group. She often takes leadership roles but is also able to follow directions from another student efficiently and effectively. She would be a great asset to Nature Camp and represent our community well.”

As a follow-up, I just want to add that, on the day that I called to share the scholarship news with Sadie and her family, her mother remarked that it was a ‘good news day’ as Sadie had just learned that she had been accepted at Roanoke College with an early acceptance. She will be studying environmental sciences with the goal of eventually entering the conservation field. Sadie’s mom went on to explain that this dream was planted, fostered, and nurtured by Nature Camp. Our scholarships have truly made a difference.

Thank you all for your support of the Nature Camp scholarships. It is a very effective and generous way to touch the lives of individuals who might, in the future, touch the lives of us all.

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**Photos in Nature Camp article by Martha Moss, in order of appearance:** (1) Nov 16, Night after Full Moon at WISC, the Williamsburg Indoor Sports Complex; (2) Nov 27 Highbush blueberry—*Vaccinium corymbosum*—Greensprings Interpretive Trail; (3) Nov 26, Green treefrog—*Hyla cinerea*—at Hog Island, Surry, Virginia; and (4) Nov 30. male Gadwall duck—*Mareca strepera*—Greensprings Interpretive Trail.

# Nature Explorers Club: Fall sessions at Clara Byrd Baker Elementary

by Marie Robertson



**Photo:** Marie Robertson with students trying to identify insects in a soil sample. Photo by Cynthia Ferentinos.

The Nature Explorer's club at Clara Byrd Baker Elementary School has met five times this fall and is going very well. We have an enthusiastic group of 18 students who meet with us on Tuesday mornings before school starts. We are also lucky to have five dedicated Historic Rivers Chapters members helping with the club: Robert Ambrose, Sherry Brubaker, Cynthia Ferentinos, Bob Kaplan and Jennifer Smith.

The students have learned about habitat, the importance of resources and space for habitat, and explored the area around the schoolyard looking for signs of creatures that have made it their habitat. With the new native pollinator garden that we started last spring, there has been more evidence of insects, birds, and reptiles. One session was spent digging in the soil and identifying beetles and insects that were unearthed. Jennifer also brought some moth specimens and cocoons to show students what might be hiding in the leaf litter around their yards.

During our fourth session, we played a bird migration game (given to me by Pat Murphy) in which each group was a different bird that was trying to successfully migrate. There were many hazards along the way, and the game taught about the importance of clean water, plentiful food sources, and fair weather. One group migrated successfully on their first try, but on subsequent attempts were killed by a cat and a BB gun. Other threats were polluted water, loss of habitat due to development, and window strikes. The students really enjoyed experiencing migration as if they were birds.

We have two more club meetings before the winter break. One of those sessions will be spent pulling invasive Japanese Honeysuckle along the Powhatan Creek trail behind the school. HRC members Tracy Melton and Keith Navia will join our club that day to help students identify the invasive vines and pull them. This activity is very popular with the students and supported by James City County Parks and Recreation.



## HRC at the Virginia Bluebird Annual Society (VBS) Meeting by Rick Brown

Judy Jones and I (pictured left) were honored to be recognized as the Virginia Bluebird Society (VBS) County Coordinators of the year and accepted on behalf of all the Historic Rivers Chapter's many dedicated volunteers, and others, who monitor the bluebird trails in this area of the Middle Peninsula. The award was given at the annual VBS meeting in Glen Allen, VA on November 2<sup>nd</sup>. This is a project created by our Chapter that provides volunteer monitors for almost 400 bluebird boxes throughout the Middle Peninsula. Judy has been a county coordinator for 6+ years, and I replaced Connie Reitz when she became president of our Chapter in 2022.

The Historic River Chapter had a fine showing at the conference with Nancy Barnhart, giving an excellent presentation on Hawkwatch, which was well attended. HRC members pictured below: Judy Jones, Portia

Belden, Joni Carlson, Nancy Barnhardt, Sue Mutell, and me. Photo credits to Joni Carlson and her husband Mike. Eastern bluebird photos at top of page by Martha Moss on November 27 along the Colonial Parkway.





# Update on Statewide Efforts to Mitigate the Impact of Invasive Plant Species

by Tracy Matthew Melton

The Historic Rivers Chapter (HRC) is doing some great, wide-ranging work removing invasive plants and restoring native habitats in our region. Heroic work is underway (or getting underway) at Cumberland Marsh Natural Area Preserve in New Kent County, Brickyard Landing Park in James City County, Paspahugh Town in Jamestown Settlement, Yorktown historic areas, and William & Mary and the Bassett Trace Nature Trail in Williamsburg.

Work is also being done as homeowners on neighborhood common land, which often includes extensive and environmentally critical woods and wetlands. These efforts are essential to protecting dwindling natural spaces and ensuring the future of native flora and fauna and their infinitely complex and essential relationships.

These regional efforts are grassroots. Similar efforts are expanding and coalescing across Virginia. I thought it would be helpful to update HRC Master Naturalists on some of this work.

**Blue Ridge PRISM (BRP) is the premier organization working on invasive plant removal in the Commonwealth.** Its mission statement declares, “Blue Ridge PRISM reduces the impact of invasive plants on the ecosystems of the northern Blue Ridge Mountains and surrounding areas through regional and statewide advocacy, landowner support, implementing control measures, and public education.” BRP supports efforts in other parts of the state, and other PRISMs are launching.

Blue Ridge PRISM hosts virtual and in-person workshops. It has a blog post and publishes a quarterly newsletter with useful information on invasive plants. It provides a panoply of resources for those interested in learning more. HRC Master Naturalist Linda Hughes worked with BRP while a member of the Central Blue Ridge Chapter.

[blueridgeprism.org](http://blueridgeprism.org)

The Virginia Invasive Plant Coalition (VIPC) is about “Imagining a Virginia Without Invasive Plants.” VIPC came out of a meeting sponsored by BRP in December 2023. The goal “was to build a statewide coalition and strategic blueprint to reduce invasive plants and increase the availability of native plants in Virginia.” It is working “to build a broad coalition of stakeholders to create a shared vision and a system-wide strategic plan.”

VIPC has created ten action groups focusing on Awareness & Education; Build Collaborative Networks; Effective Policy; Equitable Access; Incentives & Cost Sharing; Limit Access to Invasive Plants; Remove Invasives & Restore with Native Plants; Research; Support & Implement the Virginia Invasive Species Management Plan; and Workforce Development.

[virginiainvasives.org](http://virginiainvasives.org)

In Northern Virginia, Mike Littman has been enlisting Homeowners Associations (HOAs) in a unified effort to replace invasive plants with native ones on neighborhood common lands and to educate and support homeowners in using native plants in their landscaping. HOAs often control extensive common lands. Developers have typically landscaped these spaces with nonnative and invasive plants, like Callery pear trees, which then spread as the neighborhood matures. Homeowners also plant invasives, which then disperse onto nearby properties. They often don't know that they are planting invasives, or the repercussions of doing so.

Littman became involved in the issue in his Ford's Colony-sized neighborhood in Loudoun County. Their efforts led to conversations with people in other county neighborhoods. These conversations evolved into the 50+ member Loudoun Invasive Removal Alliance (LIRA). LIRA's website announces, “Our mission is to protect Loudoun County, Virginia from the adverse effects of invasive plant species. Acknowledging the pressing

need for action, we have formed a strong alliance with the Loudoun County government to collectively tackle the escalating threat presented by non-native plant species.

[loudouninvasives.com](http://loudouninvasives.com)

You can watch a PBS video of Littman discussing LIRA's work in Loudoun County, including the trees of heaven and the spotted lanternfly online. The

clip aired on 09/24/24 as a part of the *Virginia Home Grown* show, season 24, episode 7.

[pbs.org/video/invasive-plant-removal-alliance-gvafmk/](https://pbs.org/video/invasive-plant-removal-alliance-gvafmk/)

Now, there is also a Fairfax Invasive Removal Alliance (FIRA). How about a Colonial Invasive Removal Alliance (CIRA)?

**Editor's Note:** The Virginia Master Naturalist Program [Volunteer Policy Handbook, April 2024 edition](#), under the section *Use of the VMN Title* on page 10 states: "The Virginia Master Naturalist volunteers provide accurate, unbiased natural resource information. VMN volunteers should not engage in political advocacy; lobbying; political or private promotion of issues, agendas, or businesses; or personal endeavors on behalf of the Virginia Master Naturalist Program in an official capacity or while serving in one's role as a Virginia Master Naturalist."



## There's a Fungus Amongus by Dave Watt

As I was picking up "nature" in my yard (unfortunately an almost daily task), I discovered a **small white oak branch (pictured above)** with two lichens and a fungus growing on it. The whiteish and light green lichen on the lower-left end of the branch is a *Parmotrema arnoldii*, or powdered ruffle. "Typically growing among mosses that associate with plants, often on old shrubs or horizontal tree branches, the lichen prefers relatively well-lit and humid undisturbed woodlands." Source: [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parmotrema\\_arnoldii](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parmotrema_arnoldii), ref. 8.

The orange organism growing along the length of the branch is *Stereum complicatum*, or crowded parchment fungus. This is a very common fungus; you've probably seen it if you walk in the woods around Williamsburg. It commonly grows on oak, looks similar to some turkey tails, and can completely cover entire branches. I think it looks interesting up close. "The name *Stereum*, from the Greek 'stereós', means 'firm' and references the tough texture of those rubbery, overlapping caps seen above. *Complicatum* means 'folded back on itself,' which is another appropriate epithet for the way this mushroom grows. Source: [mushroommonday.com/post/crowded-parchment-stereum-complicatum](https://mushroommonday.com/post/crowded-parchment-stereum-complicatum).

Lastly, the light green "mini-shrub" on the top-left of the branch is *Usnea strigose*, a.k.a. bushy beard lichen. According to the Australian National Botanic Gardens, [anbg.gov.au/lichen/classification.html](https://anbg.gov.au/lichen/classification.html), "Lichens are classified by the fungal partner, so all lichens belong to the fungal kingdom." (The fungal kingdom was separated from the plant kingdom around the 1960's.) What I find interesting about bushy beard are the tiny, white fruit bodies, which require a very close examination.

# Phase Three of Brickyard Landing Demonstration Garden Complete

by Judy Kinshaw-Ellis, Cohort 10



An enthusiastic and hard-working crew of 40 volunteers with the help of some James City County parks and grounds personnel (pictured above) installed more than 130 trees and woody shrubs the week of November 11. Mother Nature gave them a great start with a two-inch rainfall the day before the planting started and another nearly two-inch rainfall once planting was completed.

This fall, we knew what size of plants would be delivered, so county grounds people dug about 20 holes for the larger plants, most in 15-gallon pots, the week of November 4. Earlier in the season when the county had some time left on a backhoe rental, grounds crew dug and back filled another 20 holes. This helped a lot when it was time to plant. Additionally, Bill Grass arrived first thing Monday morning with his auger. He started nearly 100 holes with the auger, which made it easier for volunteers to know where they needed to dig.

Nurseries and park personnel delivered plants on Friday, Sunday, and early Monday morning before volunteers arrived to plant. Using a design that had been prepared in the summer, the regular crew of Brickyard volunteers placed flags labeled with species where they were to be installed. Crews delivered mulch and a topsoil/compost mix the week before. Sarah O'Reilly came out on Veterans Day, a holiday for her, to deliver a large tank of water.

When the first crew arrived Monday morning, they got to work moving most of the largest trees to the prepared holes. Those went in the ground first and included 12 beautiful Serviceberries and five spectacular River Birches

along the river's edge. Teams of two or three people worked at each planting site to get each plant in the hole, backfilled, watered, and mulched.

After the larger trees were in, using Bill's pilot holes and the labeled flags, teams dug holes for the smaller plants, most in three-gallon pots. The smaller plants included a small food forest with blueberries, plums, and hazelnuts. By Tuesday afternoon, nearly everything was in the ground. On Wednesday, the morning team finished up planting the remaining trees and watered the big trees that had been put in on Monday. The afternoon crew finished some cleanup work. Three large Willow Oaks remained.

Thursday morning, a crew of about ten volunteers came out to get the Willow Oaks in the ground with the help of Jessy Martin, his grounds team, and a tractor. The trees were two-inch caliper balled and burlapped and were too heavy for volunteers to move. Volunteers had holes ready when the team arrived, and it took less than 15 minutes to get each tree planted with the right equipment. The Friday volunteer crew was cancelled.

Our last phase of 2024 is preparing and seeding the meadow. We plan to complete that the first two weeks of December and then close the project down for some much-needed rest in January and February. Stay tuned for 2025 plans, which will include mostly maintenance.

Brickyard Landing is a rewarding project. The work in November transformed the look of the park with the installation of some larger trees. The teamwork between volunteers and county employees was inspirational, and we owe a big thank you to the county parks and grounds employees. Bob Gaul deserves thanks for hauling water for us all summer and fall, in addition to helping in November. Project leads, Donna Benson and Judy Kinshaw-Ellis, want to thank everyone who helped and made this planting go so smoothly. Donna and Judy would also like to thank the regular crew who got us through the summer because at times, we had doubts about whether the weeding would ever end. And if you haven't been able to come out to Brickyard, come on out and help us put in the meadow in December!



**December 12 and 16, we need as many of you as possible to help rake and rough up the soil in the meadow to prepare for seeding on December 19.** December 12 and 16 will be a pretty rigorous workout, so we hope people can help for an hour or two. December 19 will be hand sowing seeds, which should be fun ending to a big year. We will be at the park from 9 am to 1 pm each of the days. Please come out for an hour or two. If you have not been able to get out to Brickyard, try to make it for the planting on December 19. The park is really coming together.

# Shorter Shares from HRC Members and Beyond



## Volunteer Opportunity with Native Plant Seeds —by Cynthia Ferentinos

If you'd like an indoor volunteer activity during the cold winter months, please consider supporting the Williamsburg Regional Library's Seed Exchange Program. This project has been approved as a volunteer opportunity for members of the Historic Rivers Chapter of Virginia Master Naturalists under the Flora “Acorn and Seed Collecting” project in Better Impact. We have lots of native plant seeds collected by HRC members and others, which are ready to be packaged so members of our community can plant these seeds to improve the wildlife habitat in their yards. If you'd like additional information about how you can help, please contact me at [chf2virginia@gmail.com](mailto:chf2virginia@gmail.com).

**Pictured above:** Seed pods from Common Milkweed (*Asclepias syriaca*), Golden Alexander (*Zizia aurea*) and Blue False Indigo (*Baptisia australis*).



## Nov 21: College Creek Litter Pickup, 65 pounds —by Martha Moss

We have already reached a 1,000-pound milestone and have only one more pickup for the year on the 21st of December, the winter solstice, at 10:00 am. We have bags, vests, gloves, and grabbers. RSVP not expected. We need you, so please come!



January 1<sup>st</sup> is Free Parking Day at all Virginia State Parks. Celebrate the new year with a “First Day Hike.” Learn more about the 43 Virginia State Parks and additional First Day Hike activities on the Department of Conservation and Recreation website: [dcr.virginia.gov/state-parks/firstdayhikes](http://dcr.virginia.gov/state-parks/firstdayhikes).

Locally, York River State Park will have two hikes starting at 10am from the amphitheater, including a two mile walk to the living shoreline along the river, and a four mile walk along the Pamunkey Trail.



## Save the Date: January 15, Joint Monthly Meeting

There will be a joint monthly meeting with the Williamsburg Bird Club on Wednesday, January 15th at Quarterpath Recreation Center in lieu of our normal HRC general meeting. Note this is the 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of the month. The hybrid meeting will start at 7pm. The speaker will be **Dr. John Swaddle, professor of biology and faculty director of the William & Mary Institute for Integrative Conservation (IIC)**. His topic is “Sparrows as sentinels: Health study illustrates the interconnectedness of humans and wildlife.”

**Pictured:** Song sparrow (*Melospiza melodia*) at Greensprings trail on November 27, 2024, by HRC member Martha Moss.

## Interesting Reads

Virginia Native Plant Society, **Winged Sumac, *Rhus copallinum***, November 2024 Plant of the Month, by Betsy Washington.

Chesapeake Bay Journal:

**A valley of small wonders in ‘Virginia’s Weekend Address’** by Jeremy Cox highlights the “Storywalk” project at the Rockfish Valley Trail System in Nelson County.

**All-terrain wheelchairs available at six Virginia state parks** by Whitney Pipkin.

NOAA (National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration) **Planet Stewards Monthly Book Club selections** for 2025 include: *Black Faces, White Spaces* by Carolyn Finney (Feb 11) and *Rooted in Earth* by Dianne D. Glave (April 8).



## Nov 21: Queens Lake Middle School Fall Festival Outreach—by Ron Hunt

HRC members Claire White, Daniel Keener, and Ron Hunt represented the chapter at the Queens Lake Middle School Fall Festival held on Thursday, November 21<sup>st</sup> from 5-6:30pm. The event had indoor displays showcasing student work from the first quarter of the school year, while outside vendors included food trucks, local organizations, and a few small businesses.

Many students and family members talked with us about our chapter activities and shared their appreciation of nature. The chapter trifold, a bluebird box, and framed copperhead snake (*Agkistrodon contortrix*) shed provided helpful conversation starters. Several youths were happy to receive a fun animal mask giveaway, and many parents indicated a future interest in our chapter.

Thank you to Daniel for enthusiastically and competently helping at the last minute. Claire’s outreach experience and organizational skills were a great help as we pivoted our display due to wind gusts and lower temperatures. Even though our table was outside on a chilly and windy evening, we all agree that this community outreach activity was well worth the effort.

**Pictured:** Daniel Keener and Ront Hunt at HRC display table before sunset and before the outdoor lights came on. Photo by Claire White.



## Nov 23: Meetup at W&M Oyster Recycling Station

Four HRC members volunteering with the [Chesapeake Bay Foundation \(CBF\) oyster shell recycling project](#) met up on Saturday, November 23<sup>rd</sup> at the Walter Zadan Shell Recycling Station near William & Mary's Dillard Field off Ironbound.

**Thad Hecht (top left)**, a longtime oyster shell recycler for the Captain George's Restaurant, was showing **Dan Foster (top right)** and Claire White (photographer) his bi-weekly routine. As they were about to leave, **Ron Hunt (bottom photo)**, the Craft 31 restaurant oyster recycler, arrived with two 5-gallon buckets of shells cleverly stored in totes to keep his car clean.

More recyclers are needed, including alternates. Learn more about this project on [Better Impact](#) or by contacting [CBF contact Ryan Westpfahl](#).



## Nov 29: Litter Pickup at Charles Brown Park —by Claire White

Seven HRC members gathered at Charles Brown Park the day after the Thanksgiving holiday for a morning litter pickup. Several bags of litter were collected, with glass and metal recycling sorted out. In addition new nature items were placed in the community book box including calendars, field guides, various books and a DVD documentary on bird migrations. Pictured above: Janet Harper, Dan Foster, Shirley Devan, green book box, Rick Brown, Gail Peterson, and Thad Hecht.



## Christmas Bird Counts

There's still time to get involved with the ten [Audubon bird counts](#) in our region running from December 14<sup>th</sup> through January 5<sup>th</sup>. The Williamsburg count is organized by HRC member Shirley Devan and will be on Sunday, December 22<sup>nd</sup>. The pictured map shows the many sectors for our local count. Tip emails with more information will continue to be sent in the coming weeks.

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](https://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).



*Common Flower Fly  
([Syrphus ribesii](#)),  
photographed by  
Claire White  
11/24/24.*

## HRC Executive Committee

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### Vice President/Programs Chair

Shirley Devan

### Secretaries

Janet Curtis, MJ O'Bryan

### Treasurer

Marc Moyers

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Vacancy as of June 2024

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### Basic Training

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### Education and Outreach

MJ O'Bryan, Ron Hunt

### Newsletter Editor

Claire White

### Field Trips

Brad Glasebrook

### Hospitality

Donna Benson, Marie Robertson

## Appointed Committees & Teams

### Risk Management Team

Roger Gosden, Patty Maloney

### Better Impact Contact

Judy Jones

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

Adrienne Frank

### Basic Training (William & Mary)

Linda Morse

### Webmaster

Jeanette Navia

## Chapter Advisors

Meagan Thomas, VA DWR

Daniel Brooks, VA DOF