

The Naturalist

December 2024 Newsletter | Volume 20, Number 12
Historic Rivers Chapter of Virginia Master Naturalists

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Feature Photo: Virginia Pine (*Pinus virginiana*) needles and seed filled cone at New Quarter Park, 12/26/24 by Claire White.

A Message from the President

by Janet Harper

I hope you all had wonderful holidays with friends and family. We were fortunate enough to have a snowy pre-Christmas out west and had lots of time with our young granddaughters. Now that the busy times are over, I'm hoping to catch up on some rest and relaxation.

As we've been working on the final drafts of the **annual report** and describing some of our major or new projects, it's become obvious that we have accomplished a great deal in 2024! Chapter members have created a beautiful new habitat at Brickyard Landing, removed a lot of invasive plants from the William & Mary campus, developed a program to welcome new transfer members, made the Greensprings trail more accessible by coordinating funding and placement of 14 benches along the path, created an amazing interpretive sign for the trail, made two unusual discoveries on our Bluebird trails, expanded our reach to an underrepresented area of York County, and participated in the Williamsburg Christmas Parade for the first time. Those are just the projects we wrote about! We've also started at least 5 new projects this year, picked up over a thousand pounds of litter, recycled a whole lot of soft plastics, and done so many more educational, outreach,

stewardship, and citizen science projects as a group! Thank you to all the wonderful members who made these accomplishments possible. We are making a real difference in our community!

I hope we can continue with our great work in 2025 and continue to look for new ways we can have an impact locally. As we start a new year, look for ways YOU can be involved in interesting projects. Are there current projects you've wanted to be involved with, but haven't "gotten around to it"? Do you have a new project to propose, or a current one you'd like to expand? Let the board know if you have anything to suggest.

If you're looking for something new—the **Birdability Project** needs more volunteers as we have a lot of parks and trails in our area to evaluate. There are over 450 Virginia Bird and Wildlife trail sites across the state that the Department of Wildlife Resources (DWR) wants to have evaluated for placement on the Birdability map. So far, we've done Jamestown Island, York River State Park, Croaker Landing, and Gloucester Point Beach Park. It's been interesting to view the sites from an 'under-abled' point of view. What seems like a small incline or obstacle when walking might become a big hazard for a wheelchair. There is a

training video to watch and materials to review in order to sign up for a site and submit the data for it. You can be involved with the project without the training by working with a trained member to evaluate the site. Adrienne Frank, Dave Watt, Michele Garrard and I are trained if you'd like to join us on the project. Check out the link for more information: virginiamasternaturalist.org/virginia-bird-and-wildlife-trail.html

Photo below: Janet Harper, HRC president, dressed as a raccoon for the Williamsburg Christmas Parade. Photo credit Marie Robertson.



On the Calendar

See the "Opportunities" calendar and list in Better Impact and emails from the HRC Google Group for all volunteer and continuing education (CE) opportunities and the most up-to-date information.

Saturday	Jan 11	CE Waterfowl Walk & Watch 10am-12pm at York River State Park Register
Wednesday	Jan 15	HRC & Williamsburg Bird Club JOINT Monthly Meeting 7-8pm, Quarterpath Recreation Center , 202 Quarterpath Road Hybrid Meeting
Thursday	Jan 16	CE Milkweed Hybridization 7-8 pm with VA Native Plant Society Zoom
Saturday	Jan 18	MLK, Jr. Weekend of Service Event Litter Pickup info to come
Sunday	Jan 19	CE Bird Walk 7am with Hampton Roads Bird Club Newport News Park
Thursday	Jan 23	CE Seaside Shellfish 7-8 pm at VIMS After Hours Hybrid Event Register
Saturday	Jan 25	CE Bird Walk 8-10am with Williamsburg Bird Club New Quarter Park
Monday	Feb 3	Deadline for Early Registration for Annual CNU Gardening Symposium

Weekly Wildlife Mapping: Hope to see you at one of the upcoming events at York River State Park (every Monday), New Quarter Park (3rd Tuesday), Greensprings Interpretive Trail (2nd and 4th Thursdays), Jamestown Island (1st Wednesday), and Yorktown Battlefield (Last Sunday). Check email for any last-minute changes.



HRC Participates in Williamsburg Christmas Parade

by Judy Jones

On Sunday, December 8th, 24 enthusiastic members of the Historic Rivers Chapter (HRC) met at William & Mary and completed decorating our float for the town's Christmas parade. Once the sun set, we readied to walk the 2.25 miles down the parade route, sharing *Virginia Master Naturalists* with our community.

The parade theme was 'Believe' and we took it to heart. Our largest sign read 'Believe We Can ALL Make a Difference' and the float was covered with ways to do just that. 'Plant Trees Grow Hope' and 'Reduce Reuse Recycle' were just two of the signs that encouraged the 22,000+ members of the crowd to help us make a difference.

Led by our HRC parade coordinators, Dean and Valerie Shostak, we gathered in 'woodland' outfits, some dressed as animals, some as master naturalists, and one as the Green Man. Our goal was two-fold—first, to remind each individual that they have the power to protect and preserve our environment; second, to show the town that being a Master Naturalist is more than just volunteerism—it's a lot of fun. Adrienne Frank said this about the event: "For me the best part was the children along the route. They were excited about the birds, recognized our animals, and wanted to give high 5s." We think we accomplished both goals and all agree it was one of our more exciting and unusual outreach events.

Pictured above: Adrienne Frank, butterfly, and Judy Kinshaw-Ellis, tree, during parade preparations. Photo by Marie Robertson. **Pictured below, standing, left to right:** Suzanne Stern, Bill Weldon, Lisa Nickels, Les Lawrence, Valerie Shostak, Jeanette Navia, Judy Kinshaw-Ellis, Dean Shostak, Ginny Broome, Patty Maloney (on float), Michele Garrard, Cheryl Roettger, Sherry Brubaker, Anne Annala, Judy Jones, Ron Hunt, and Janet Harper. **Kneeling:** Adrienne Frank, Janie Moyers, Marie Robertson. Photo credit, Judy Jones.



HRC Field Trip to Zoar State Forest by Brad Glasebrook



On Friday, December 6, the Historic Rivers Chapter (HRC) had a successful field trip to **Zoar State Forest** with HRC chapter advisor Daniel Brooks, a Department of Forestry (DOF) Community Forestry Specialist. It was an interesting look at forest succession and ways the Virginia Forestry Department maintain their properties. Nine members joined for the adventure.

Lisa Nickels had this to say about the adventure: “I think this field trip was great because we had the amazing benefit of learning from two knowledgeable foresters—visiting on your own would not have a similar experience and would just be a walk in the woods. Part of the forest looks like a clear-cut, but as was explained to us, a necessary part of how they earn money to support their unit.”

Pictured above: 10 tree log samples, with bark and grain highlighted. Photo by Lisa Nickels.

Pictured left: Field trip group gathered at Zion State Forest, including Judy Kinshaw-Ellis, Gary Driscoll, Lisa Nickels, Ginny Broome, Adrienne Frank, Anne Annala, Daniel Brooks, Dave Stansbury, and David W. Slack (DOF Forester). Photo credit Brad Glasebrook.

A Reflection on Nature and Children: James River Nature Explorers Club

by Pat Murphy



Plastic magnifying glasses become the most important tool to look for life below our feet.

Ubiquitous sweetgum balls are admired for their potential as food for both our beloved birds and for the acting hungry bird children trying to gather up the most in a relay game but wait... are sweetgum balls really meant to be the body and tail of a crafted mouse? Perspectives change as new volunteer activities are completed.

Boxes of all sizes and rope become buildings and electric wires for nature explorers to navigate again as birds handling the challenges of migration. Why are they migrating? "They're cold?", the children offer. "Hungry."

Binoculars allow us to see further... a squirrel's leafy nest, a Tulip tree's "wooden flower," a busy Red bellied Woodpecker. "Where is it? I can hear it."

Leaves bagged by neighbors in plastic bags for trash pickup are taken to school to become the symbol of the Xerces Society's campaign, "Leaves are not Litter". Release the leaves, release the insects, the food, back into the woods as we rake faster than our friends.

Keep looking for fun ways to engage. Children working together; they are the most important to our shared future. We'll begin again late in February, date to be determined. Thank you, Robert, Portia, Elizabeth, and Gail, for joining in for the Fall 2024 session of Nature Explorers at James River Elementary! Happy 2025 VMN HRC!!

Longleaf Pine Tree Planting at National Wildlife Refuge

by Dave Watt

Unseasonably warm weather greeted eight volunteers on December 10, 2024, at the James River National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), located at 4550 Flowerdew Hundred Road, Hopewell, Virginia. Cyrus Brame, who works for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, manages the James River NWR, Presquile NWR (just outside Hopewell), and Plum Tree Island NWR (in the lower Chesapeake Bay, near Poquoson, VA).



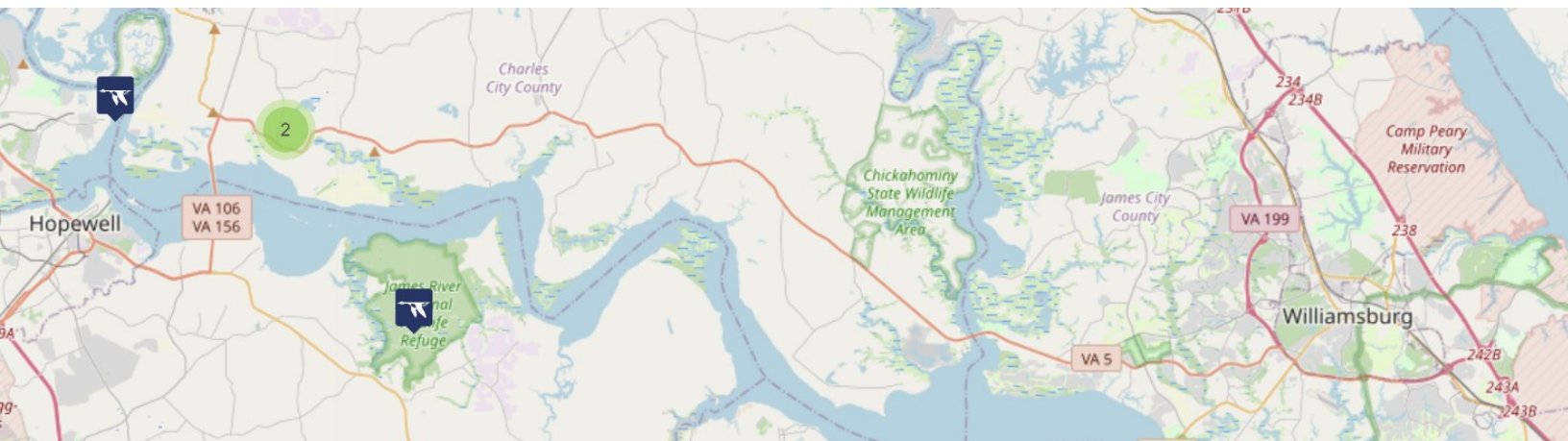
Cyrus laid out the day's work, which was to find a couple dozen long-leaf pines in an area where the surrounding trees would be harvested and relocate them, as well as planting 100 long-leaf pine seedlings. Tree planting here has been a long-term project aiming to promote restoration of forest land.

Dan Schardein, an active member of the Virginia Master Naturalists, donated the 100 long-leaf pine saplings the volunteers planted. Dan couldn't help planting that day, but we thanked him with a message made of long-leaf pines. **See picture above.** From left, volunteers are Laura Woody, Daniel Bolvin, Carolyn Dessauere, Tony Opperman, Richard Wahlert, Lynn Jenkins, Dave Watt, and Heidi Jack. Photo by Cyrus Brame.

There are many volunteer opportunities at James River and Presquile NWRs in 2025. See the volunteer event calendar below. *Boat transportation is provided to Presquile, so space is limited. All volunteers must pre-register no less than 48 hours prior to the event if interested by emailing Cyrus at cyrus.brame@fws.gov. Read more about the individual locations on the following page.

US. Fish and Wildlife Service Volunteer Event Calendar 2025

MONTH	DAY	TIME	LOCATION	PROJECTED TASK
February	Tuesday, 11th	10am-1pm	James River	Habitat improvement
March	Friday, 21st	9am-1pm	Presquile*	Native tree management, etc.
March	Saturday, 22nd	9am-1pm	James River	Tree planting
April	Monday, 21st	9am-1pm	Presquile*	Vegetation & building maintenance
May	Thursday, 15th	9am-1pm	James River	Trail Work
June	Tuesday, 24th	9am-1pm	Presquile*	Vegetation & building maintenance
July	Wednesday, 16th	8am-12pm	James River	Invasive species work
August	Thursday, 14th	8am-12pm	James River	Invasive species work
September	Monday, 22nd	9am-1pm	James River	Trail work, trash cleanup
October	Saturday, 18th	10am-3pm	Presquile*	Tree planting
November	Tuesday, 18th	11am-4pm	Presquile*	Year-end Maintenance
December	Wednesday, 10th	9am-1pm	James River	Trail work, tree planting



Pictured above: Map showing relative locations of Presquile National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) and James River NWR to Williamsburg. Both, denoted by the blue icons, are about an hour drive from downtown Williamsburg.

James River National Wildlife Refuge.

Established in 1991 to protect bald eagles and other species of special concern, the refuge encompasses 4,800 acres of pine-dominated, moist hardwood, and floodplain forests; freshwater marsh and shrub swamp; aquatic habitats; erosional bluffs; and non-forested upland. There are over two miles of trails at the Powell Creek Nature Trail, including interpretive signs, tree identification signs, and an accessible section to a ramp up to the bird observation platform overlooking the Powell Creek marsh (see photo to the right).



There's something for everyone who would like to volunteer at James River NWR: maintaining the buildings, dock, and trail; removing invasive species and applying herbicide treatments; planting trees; and removing trash along the river. They also conduct prescribed burns, and you can help if you're qualified.

Presquile National Wildlife Refuge. Established in 1953 to conserve habitat for migratory birds. The 1,300-acre refuge can only be visited during refuge sponsored events and by pre-arranged permit.

According to the FWS website: "Presquile NWR is an important migratory bird stopover site along the Atlantic Flyway, providing protected breeding habitat for State-listed threatened and endangered species, as well as many neotropical migrant bird species. The refuge offers an abundance of quality habitats that support nesting American black ducks, prothonotary warblers, clapper rails, and spotted turtles in high numbers. Presquile habitat consists of tidal swamp forest, mixed mesic forest, and freshwater marshes."

Presquile NWR hosts school groups and other special groups that can stay overnight in a dormitory. There is also a building with interpretive displays. In addition, an intern stays on the island for a couple months each summer. Some of the projects include research into prothonotary warblers, monitoring milkweed, surveying specific populations, surveying Sensitive Joint Vetch, planting riparian buffers, and managing invasive species.

Volunteers can help maintain the buildings, dock and trails; remove and treat invasive species; and plant trees.

New Native Plants Project at Paspahgh Town by Linda Hughes

Monday, December 16 the Historic Rivers Chapter (HRC) “broke ground” on a new project: *Paspahgh Town Native Plant Restoration*. The project is at Paspahgh Town, a Powhatan Indian outdoor interpretive site at **Jamestown Settlement**. The Paspahgh were one of the 30-plus Algonquian-speaking tribal groups that belonged to the Powhatan paramount chiefdom. They are the Indigenous peoples of Tsenacommacah, the eastern Algonquian word for this land. **The team, pictured right, included: me, Linda Hughes, 2024 HRC transfer member; Dan Foster, Cohort XVIII trainee; and Bain Schultz, Grounds Department Supervisor at Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation (JYF).**

We identified and mapped invasive plants using an *Early Detection Rapid Response* protocol. Taking advantage of the wet ground thanks to much-needed rain, we hand pulled English Ivy (*Hedera helix*) and Japanese Honeysuckle (*Lonicera japonica*), deemed among the most likely to cause harm to tree canopies. We also dug up smaller populations of Creeping Lilyturf (*Liriope spicata*).

Next, we’ll develop an annual *Invasive Management Calendar* to remove invasive plants at the optimum time via appropriate control methods. Until then, our HRC/JYF collaboration is putting together a list of plants used for food, medicine, and utilitarian and ceremonial purposes. Native plant selections will largely be based on reconstructive archaeological findings nearby, oral tradition from Virginia's state and federally recognized tribes, and descriptions and illustrations recorded by English colonists in the 17th century. This March, our program will be presented to the



Tribal Advisory Committee for their input. We hope our efforts will offer insight into the Paspahgh culture on foods they gathered from the wild and intentionally grew. This spring, we’ll schedule more invasive plant removal workdays and planting workdays.

It’s our hope this project will present visitors a snapshot of Indigenous agricultural practices. As well, we anticipate diverse audiences may see themselves in the Paspahgh struggles and successes to help them better connect to land and nature. “Those who have no record of what their forebears have accomplished lose the inspiration which comes from the teaching of biography and history,” wrote Carter G. Woodson, who’s known as the father of black history. In 1926, Woodson created Negro History Week, a predecessor of Black History Month.

To participate in this activity call, text, or email Linda Hughes using the contact information provided on the project listing in Better Impact. No experience necessary. Onsite invasive plant identification, native planting, and identification of possible hazards will be provided. JYF will provide equipment for scheduled workdays.

The Meadow is Seeded

 by Judy Kinshaw-Ellis

After the digging, weeding, raking, and mulching that filled our workdays this year at Brickyard Landing Park, seeding the meadow was a fun and easy activity to close out our work at the park. In the weeks leading up to the seeding, volunteers marked beds for about 20 species of perennials and raked thatch to expose soil to improve seed contact.

On December 19, volunteers spread bags of seeds in about 40 prepared beds, two beds for each species. Recent rains made some of the beds particularly wet, but that was helpful in getting seeds to stay where they were planted. Once the single-species beds were planted, volunteers raked large swaths through the meadow and planted several grass species. The last seeding was taking seeds that had been donated, some mixed species and some single species, and planting them in the areas that had not yet been planted. The meadow also has a path that reaches from corner to corner, so visitors can walk through and get a better look at all of the plants that are growing.

Early in December, volunteers planted five flats of perennials throughout the meadow area. Next year, we hope to plant a few gallon plants, so people who come to the park can see what the plants look like while the seeded plants get established.

Once again, we want to thank everyone who has helped with this project. About 50 volunteers, both Master Naturalists and Master Gardeners, have been involved in some capacity in the last 14 months. We will take January and February off, and we hope you will come out in March on Monday and Thursday mornings when we get back to work.

Celebrating 2024 College Creek Litter Pickup by Claire White



Seventeen Historic Rivers Chapter members gathered at College Creek Beach on Saturday, December 21st for the final litter pickup of 2024. Over 37 pounds of trash were collected pushing the grand total of trash picked up at this bimonthly stewardship project to 1,111 pounds. The usual litter suspects of fishing gear, food and beverage containers, and articles of clothing were collected from this National Park Service site along the Colonial Parkway.

Fun was had at the post litter pickup celebration hosted by project co-leads Marie Robertson and Martha Moss (pictured left). Following a meal of pulled pork, spanakopita, and many other treats, awards were passed out to volunteers that could not attend the National Park Service volunteer appreciation dinner on December 9th. Steel double insulated water bottles with NPS stickers were given by the NPS as gifts in addition to the certificates in appreciation of the contributions to the “Volunteers-In-Parks” program.

Pictured Above: (1) Volunteers at end of litter pickup: Donna Benson, Babs Giffin, Dan Foster, Martha Moss, Rick Brown, Alice Kopinitz, Gail Peterson, Lisa Cumming, Liz George, Stephen Parfet, Anne Annala, Carol Parfet, Bob Kaplan, Ron Hunt, Jeanette Navia, Keith Navia, and Claire White (kneeling in front). **(2) Project co-leads Marie and Martha at post pickup celebration. (3) Celebration lunch table.** Photos by Ralph Moss and Melissa Beattie-Moss.

Brief Glance at Williamsburg Area's 48th Christmas Bird Count

by Shirley Devan, Williamsburg CBC Compiler



Many thanks to the members of the Historic Rivers Chapter who helped with the **Audubon Christmas Bird Count (CBC)** December 22, 2024. The 7 am temperature was about 25 degrees and only reached about 35 by quitting time. On one of the coldest days of the winter season until that date, 76 surveyors flew over the fields of the twelve sectors in our 15-mile diameter circle and 56 feeder watchers counted their yard birds from the warmth of their inside perch.

Not all participants were Master Naturalists. Many participants were Williamsburg Bird Club members and some were neither but were bird enthusiasts who wanted to join in this popular worldwide event. *The approximate totals for our local 2024 count are 114 species and 35,579 individuals.* The numbers are very close to being finalized. I hope to have FINAL figures for the next newsletter. Much appreciation for your devotion to this unique citizen science event.

Notable species from the 2024 count include a hummingbird, Peregrine Falcons (2), Greater White-fronted Goose, and a Night Heron. The hummingbird will hopefully be identified after the cold weather passes out of our area. I have time before I need to submit the results to Audubon, so I hope we can include the hummingbird.



Pictured left: (top) Photos by Nancy Barnhardt: New Quarter Park sector participants and hummingbird species at feeder in Skimino. **(bottom)** Cranston Mill Pond Birders. Photo by Shirley Devan.

Table: Approximate 2024 Totals for Williamsburg CBC

Sector Name	Species	Individuals
Cheatham Annex	79	2,650
College Woods	59	897
Fords Colony	59	1,291
Hog Island (Surry)	59	2,187
Jamestown	95	15,447
Jolly Pond	58	1,411
Kingsmill	59	2,012
Middle Plantation	70	2,441
Skimino	59	1,334
Waller Mill	59	730
Warhill	33	274
Rosewell (Gloucester)	54	1,907



Basic Training Cohort XVIII in December

by Basic Training Committee

Local university instructors Linda Morse, The College of William and Mary (W&M), and Janet Steven, Christopher Newport University (CNU), presented at the two December events for trainees. The topics were geology and plant biology respectively.

On Saturday, December 7th our morning class was held at McGlothlin Hall on the campus of W&M, followed by a ferry ride to Surry for a short field day at Chippokes State Park. Linda Morse, W&M instructor and HRC member, used maps, hand drawn diagrams, and a plethora of mineral, rock, and fossil samples to engage our trainees in the topic of Virginia geology.

On Tuesday, December 10th trainees were back at our regular evening location, Coleman Nursery, for a class on plant biology led by Janet Steven. Though the trainees had some experience with plants through other course events, there was much more to learn in this vast topic including learning how plants work and the diversity of plant groups. Identification of tree leaves using a custom dichotomous keys closed out the evening.



Pictured: Top right, Liz George and Gail Peterson examine sassafras leaves. **Middle right,** Linda Morse talks about eroded cliff-face at Chippokes State Park. **Bottom left,** Linda pointing at map of physiographic provinces in North America. **Bottom right, grouping of local fossils** including mollusks, teeth, bone, and coral.





Photo above: Claire White, December 21, 2024, with NPS volunteer water bottle. Photo by Melissa Beattie-Moss

That's a Wrap: *The Naturalist*, 2024

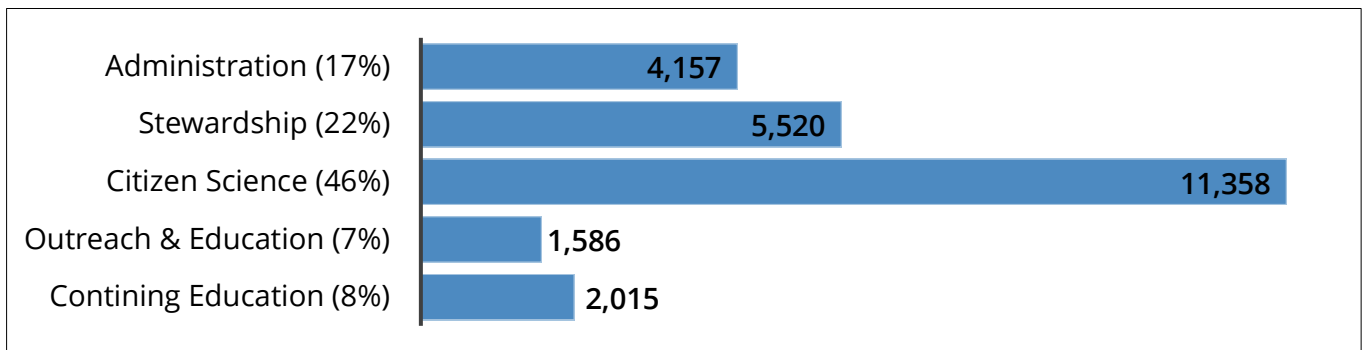
by Claire White, Editor

Hello Historic Rivers Chapter (HRC), as your editor of the last 22 issues of our monthly newsletter *The Naturalist* I hope you've enjoyed reading about the great volunteer service going on in our organization. Many thanks to the multiple contributors to the newsletter, especially those who ventured outside their comfort zone and submitted a piece this year. A very special thanks to the semi-regular article contributors: Tracy Melton our invasives champion; Pat Murphy and Marie Robertson our Nature Explorers Club leaders; Judy Kinshaw-Ellis co-champion of the Brickyard Landing Riparian Buffer Project; board members Shirley Devan, Judy Jones, and Adrienne Frank with their various projects; and Janet Harper for her monthly president's message. Photos greatly enhance our text, kudos to our frequent chapter photographers Martha Moss (and her husband Ralph), Lisa Cumming, Deborah Humphries, Barb Creel, Jeanette Navia, and many of the article contributors already listed. If I forgot your name know that I am so appreciative of your work. We've managed to capture a lot of it in *The Naturalist*. What would you like to see next year?

I encourage you all to reflect on your individual hours as an HRC member in 2024 and marvel at all the wonderful things you've been a part of and seek out new projects as you are able. At the end of the 2024 year a total of 24,636 volunteer hours were reported by HRC Virginia Master Naturalists. Most of the

hours were recorded in the Citizen Science category which includes wildlife mapping and bluebird monitoring. See the table below for a brief report provided by our Membership Chair Judy Jones.

24,636 Total Hours Reported by HRC Members in 2024, separated by category



When I look at my Better Impact Report for 2024 most of my hours were administrative as a board member and basic training committee member. Of the other hours categories I clocked the most hours in stewardship, followed by outreach, continuing education, and citizen science. I hope to flip the percentages of a few categories in 2025. New to me this year were Warhill bluebird monitoring (led by Cheryl Roettger) and the basic training committee (led by Tory Gussman and Jim Leech). Other 2024 projects that stand out in my mind as truly rewarding and memorable are crafting the cicada theme for the September BugFest outreach table with Marie Robertson; working year round with Judy Tucker on organizing our oyster gardening group; volunteering for the rainy July New Quarter Park Bioblitz with the Colonial Soil and Water Conservation District; working with Janet Harper at expanding outreach to the Lackey area, especially organizing and labeling nature book donations; litter pickup at College Creek Beach; and trail maintenance at Bassett Trace. Whew! What a year!

Shorter Shares from HRC Members and Beyond



12/9 NPS Volunteer Event —by Marie Robertson

Here is a photo taken by an unknown dinner guest at the Dec 9 volunteer appreciation dinner hosted by the National Park Service (NPS). Many of our chapter members' names were called but the four of us pictured were the ones that were present. Some of the projects HRC members participate in with NPS include litter pickup and wildlife mapping.

Pictured: Martha Moss, Marie Robertson, Jeanette Navia, and Jeff Honig.



DEI Used Book Purchase —by Janet Harper

The grant for the last 3 benches at Greensprings designated that any remaining funds be used to purchase books for our 2 book boxes at Lackey Free Clinic and Charles Brown Park. With these funds, I was able to buy 56 used adult and children's books online. The books represent most aspects of nature including general information, weather, insects, rocks and minerals, national and state parks, animal behavior, reptiles and amphibians, geology, trees, mammals, birds, and plants. It will take a while to distribute these books to boxes, but we have a very well-rounded selection to choose from. We're still happy to accept any book donations from members, if you have them. Bring them to any HRC meeting, or contact me or Claire White if a separate pickup or dropoff is needed.



12/10 Powhatan Pickup —by Cheryl Roettger

Here's a photo from today's Powhatan Creek cleanup! The group filled a large garbage bag with bottles, cans, a fire extinguisher, cigarette butts, mesh netting, plastic, and other debris.

Pictured: Janet Crowther, George Sallwasser, Robert Ambrose, Liz George, and Lisa Cumming.



12/11 Sign Committee Meets—by Adrienne Frank

The Greensprings sign committee met on December 11th for the last time prior to sending the design off to Pannier Graphics to be made into a 9-foot-long sign for the trailhead at [Greensprings Interpretive Trail](#). The Williamsburg Community Foundation and HRC VMN will cover the costs.

Pictured above Deborah Humphries, second on left, HRC member and sign designer, shared her work on a printed draft. Only a couple of minor edits were needed. Members of the committee that met that day included Alister Perkinson and Sarah O'Reilly (James City County Parks & Recreation, not pictured), Janie Moyers, Lisa Cumming (photographer) Jeanette and Keith Navia, and me.

12/22 Bird Count Facts —by Bob Ambrose

Some facts from my time with the Christmas Bird Count at Warhill Trail are below. After a chilly start the sun started to shine and warmed us up for perfect day by all and it was great being a part of a much larger bird study! See you next year!!!

Distance Traveled: 4.26 miles

Starting Weather: 21 degrees, sunny

Group: 5 people

My favorite species: Pileated Woodpecker



12/30- YRSP Wildlife —by Judy Kinshaw-Ellis

Nearly a dozen naturalists joined in for the last wildlife mapping for 2024 at York River State Park (YRSP) on Monday, December 30. It included a walk (pictured above) to Fossil Beach, which has been renovated to reduce erosion.

This Great Blue Heron (*Ardea Herodias*) gave us a good look at its tongue during the mapping. Its tongue is attached below the jaw and the barbs are helpful when it eats fish and amphibians.

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

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

Learn more about our chapter at historicrivers.org

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



Bonus pic: Closeup of fishing lure found in a tree at College Creek Beach during litter pickup on 12/21/24. Photo by Claire White.

HRC Executive Committee

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Vice President/Programs Chair

Shirley Devan

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Janet Curtis, MJ O'Bryan

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Marc Moyers

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Michele Garrard

Shan Gill

Bill Weldon

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Membership

Judy Jones

Basic Training

Jim Leech, Tory Gussman

Volunteer Service Projects

Adrienne Frank

Continuing Education

Barb Creel

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