

The Naturalist

January 2025 Newsletter | Volume 21, Number 01
Historic Rivers Chapter of Virginia Master Naturalists

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Feature Photo: **Northern Cardinal** (*Cardinalis cardinalis*), on a snowy Williamsburg beach by Martha Moss, 01/22/25.

A Message from the President

by Janet Harper

It seems like a long time since we've had our regular general meeting with business. I'm looking forward to seeing you all and catching up at the February 12th meeting. In the meantime, I'd like to briefly share some news and information. **We finished 2024 under budget** with more money received than we spent, which is always a good thing. This was due in part to the fact that we received a number of generous donations. We still need your dues to help run the chapter, so please get those in before the end of March.

From the 2024 annual report we had **174 members out of a total of 195** who recorded volunteer hours last year. We have a very active chapter. Thank you all for your hard work.

Outreach = 1,586 hours by 70 members
Citizen science = 11,506 hours by 156 members
Stewardship = 5,520 hours by 110 members
Administration = 4,089 hours by 140 members
Continuing education = 2,027 hours by 166 members

We have several new projects since our last meeting: Paspahugh Town (Jamestown's native village) invasive removal and native planting is well under way by Linda Hughes and Dan Foster.

Tracey Melton received permission for invasive plants removal behind Berkeley Middle School. Lastly, a Gray Fox wildlife camera video analysis project has been included under the current wildlife camera project. If interested in helping confirm video results, fill out an interest form at <https://forms.office.com/r/XQPdGLwAiY>.

If you remember, both Virginia Master Naturalists (VMN) and Department of Forestry (DOF) are celebrating big anniversaries in 2025. At the January webinar, VMN announced their plans for the **anniversary celebrations** throughout the year. There will be picnics (with CAKE!) in various locations across the state to celebrate as well as special communications and interviews with long-term members. VMN hopes to have some special activities at the conference in September. They are asking us to do projects and outreach related to this year's **theme of "Trees and Forests"**. Please keep this in mind when planning booth displays and activities. DOF mentioned 3 new projects for chapters to help with their mission. More specifics will come later.

The **VMN 2024 Program Awards** were announced in a separate section of the webinar. Our very own **Judy Jones** was selected as Chapter Leader of the Year, and **Meagan Thomas** was chosen as the Chapter Advisor of the Year! **Claire White** was announced as a nominee for VMN Volunteer of the Year! Please congratulate them when you see them!

We have applied to the 2025 **Virginia Wildlife Grant Program**, a joint effort of the Department of Wildlife Resources (DWR) and the Wildlife Foundation of Virginia (WV), to purchase and stock 50 backpacks with nature exploration references and tools for distribution to local parks, elementary school libraries, a community center, and the bookmobile. We should know by the end of February if our proposal was accepted, so stay tuned.

Finally, a reminder about the **March 12th Annual Meeting**. This will be a big event with graduation, board elections, milestone announcements, bling and business, but no speaker. It will be **IN PERSON ONLY** at Quarterpath Recreation Center starting at 6:00 pm. Hope to see lots of you there!

On the Calendar

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

Wednesday	Feb 12	HRC General Meeting 6-7:45pm at JCC Library with Hybrid Zoom option
Thursday	Feb 13	CE VIMS After Hours 7-8pm <i>Romance Beneath the Waves</i> Register
Fri-Mon	Feb 14-17	Great Backyard Bird Count 15 minutes+ More details on Better Impact
Sunday	Feb 16	CE Bird Walk 7am with Hampton Roads Bird Club at Newport News Park
Wed-Thurs	Feb 19-20	VA Tech Giving Day 12pm Support VMN, unlock \$25,000 gift, Link TBA
Wednesday	Feb 19	CE Birdlife, Colonial Historic Triangle 6-8pm with Bird Club Quarterpath
Wednesday	Feb 19	Deadline to register for Virtual Forestry CE 3pm See "Shorter Shares"
Saturday	Feb 22	CE Bird Walk 8-10am with Williamsburg Bird Club New Quarter Park
Wednesday	Feb 26	CE Flora of Virginia App 6-7pm Webinar with Flora of VA Project Register
Wednesday	Mar 12	HRC Annual Meeting 6-8:30pm at Quarterpath Rec. Center In person only

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.

Second Annual MLK, Jr. Day of Service

by HRC Litter Picking Members

On Saturday, January 15th, 35 members of the Historic River Chapter (HRC) bundled up on the cold day to collect over 189 pounds of trash from four local public sites in honor of the civil rights leader Martin Luther King, Jr.'s commitment to community service.

At the Warhill Sports Complex, a site specially picked for the service day, eight members weighed in with the heaviest litter load thanks to a battery found in the woods weighing 37 pounds! During the 2-plus hours of cleanup around the complex other litter finds included a ceiling fan, scrap lumber, and sporting gear. Nature sightings included a fawn skeleton.

College Creek Beach (CCB), a National Park Service (NPS) site, had fourteen volunteers who collected 65 pounds of trash in an hour. The team enjoyed tea, coffee, and hot apple cider after the cleanup. Justin Andrews, NPS employee, said the following to CCB co-lead Martha Moss after the pickup, “We all appreciate what each and every one of you do. **It’s always great when we can come together as a team and get the job done.**”

The James City County Marina litter pickup team of six picked up 9 pounds of trash. Sherry Brubaker reports, “New World Record for cigarette butt removal—82! Plus or minus.” And last the Powhatan Creek team of seven members collected 5.5 pounds of debris. George Sallwasser was the lucky collector who found a ten-dollar bill along the path. Cheryl Roettger says, “It pays to pick up trash!”

Pictured: (1) Warhill Cleanup Crew. Notice the 37-pound battery held by Daniel Brooks. Photo by Barb Creel. (2) Justin Andrews, NPS employee, helped close out the pickup at the beach site. Photo by Martha Moss. (3) College Creek Beach (NPS) Crew behind the Virginia Master Naturalist Volunteers at Work Sign. Photo by Marie Robertson.





More images from the MLK Day Litter Pickup: (1) Powhatan Creek team next to the park sign. Photo by Cheryl Roettger. (2) James City County Marina team of six in front of the Marina Store. Photo by bystander.

Meeting the Marbled Salamander on a Winter Day

by Cynthia Ferentinos

On the afternoon of January 15th, I noticed this striped amphibian (pictured below) striding across the snowy patches remaining in my front yard in the 37-degree weather. At one point, it slipped and fell on its back but was able to quickly right itself. A bit surprised to see a salamander this time of year, I snapped several photos and submitted them to iNaturalist. What did I see? A mole salamander, Genus *Ambystoma*. As you might guess from the name, mole salamanders spend much of their lives underground eating worms and insects but emerge annually during breeding season. A little more research revealed this mole salamander to be the appropriately named Marbled salamander (*Ambystoma opacum*).

Both the [Virginia Herpetological Society](#) and Meagan Thomas, our chapter co-advisor from the [Department of Wildlife Resources \(DWR\)](#), confirmed the identification through email after I reached out to them. While looking at their websites I learned that marbled salamanders are unusual because the females lay their eggs in dry vernal pools in the fall and frequently guard them until the pool fills with the water that the eggs need to hatch. Perhaps I was fortunate to see a mother marbled salamander on her way back from watching over her brood since the rain and melting snow had recently refilled the nearby swamp.



Mosses

by Adrienne Frank

Mosses are a great thing to look for this time of year. I have been taking photos of moss, lichens, liverworts - a bunch of photos are from the Dragon Run property and of course my yard. Here are some common mosses. The names are based on Helen Hamilton's 2019 book *Ferns & Mosses of Virginia's Coastal Plain*.

Brocade Moss, *Hypnum sp.*



Ohio Haircap Moss, *Polytrichum ohioense*.



Worm Moss, *Bryoandersonia illecebra*.



Plagiothecium species:

Silk Moss



and Thyme Moss.



Fan or Hook Moss, *Forsstroemia trichomitria*.



Pocket Moss, *Fissidens sp.*



The most abundant moss that I have seen is Fern Moss, *Thuidium delicatulum*.



Here is Fern Moss and a Shining Clubmoss, *Lycopodium lucidulum*.



Another common moss in our area is Pincushion, *Leucobryum glaucum*.



Proposed Board of Directors, March 2025

by Historic River Chapter (HRC) Nominating Committee

At the end of each year the ad-hoc nominating committee checks in with current board members to see about their interest in continuing in their position and looks for nominees for open positions. Board members are encouraged to stay on for a minimum of two years but are reelected each year at the March Annual Meeting, and “may serve no more than three consecutive one-year terms in a given position.” Appointed committees and teams, as well as chapter advisors (permanent ex-officio members), are non-voting members of the board. This year’s nominating committee has proposed the following Board of Directors for the March meeting:

HRC Executive Committee

President

Janet Harper (elected 2024)

Vice President/Programs Chair

Dean Shostak (new)

Secretaries

Janet Curtis (elected 2022)

Linda Hughes (new)

Treasurer

Marc Moyers (elected 2024)

Additional Board Members

Historian/Publicity/Media

Laura Grove (new)

At-Large Members

Michele Garrard (elected 2024)

Rick Brown (new)

Ron Hunt (new)

Chairs of Standing Committees

Membership

Barbara Creel (new)

Basic Training

Donna Benson (new)

Bill Weldon (new)

Volunteer Service Projects

Adrienne Frank (elected 2024)

Continuing Education

Claire White (new)

Education and Outreach

Marie Robertson (new)

Cynthia Ferrentinos (new)

Ron Hunt (appointed 2024)

Newsletter

Claire White (elected 2023)

Shirley Devan (new)

Field Trips

Brad Glasebrook (elected 2024)

Hospitality

Judy Jones (new)

Alice Kopinitz (new)

Appointed Committees & Teams

Risk Management Team

Roger Gosden

Patty Maloney

Better Impact Contact

Judy Jones

Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion (DEI)

Adrienne Frank

Webmaster

Jeanette Navia

Chapter Advisors

Meagan Thomas (appointed 2020)

Daniel Brooks (appointed 2024)

The responsibilities for each position are listed in the [HRC Operating Handbook](#) found in the “HRC Documents” files section on Better Impact, while the procedures for electing new officers are found in the [HRC By-Laws](#). Several current board members are switching to new positions, two are returning from previous years of service (Rick Brown and Dean Shostak), and three members will be new to the HRC board in 2025 (transfer members Linda Hughes and Cynthia Ferrentinos, and Cohort XVIII trainee Laura Grove). The following current board members will be leaving the board: MJ O’Bryan (Outreach, Secretary), Jim Leech (Basic Training), and Tory Gussman (Basic Training).

Voting will be in person at the March 12 Annual Meeting, starting at 6pm at Quarterpath Recreation Center (202 Quarterpath Road, Williamsburg, VA 23185). Any questions can be directed to the chair of the nominating committee, Judy Jones, or President Janet Harper.

Congratulations to Meagan Thomas and Judy Jones!!

On January 23, 2025, Michelle Prysby, Director the Virginia Master Naturalist (VMN) Program, hosted the Virtual VMN 2024 Program Awards. Two Historic Rivers Chapter (HRC) members, Meagan Thomas and Judy Jones, won awards, Chapter Advisor and Chapter Leader, respectively. These awards are based on nominations by fellow members. Pictured below, Meagan (top) teaching from the pond at York River State Park in September 2024, and Judy (bottom) leading a bluebird talk at Chickahominy Riverfront Park in May 2024.

An excerpted transcript from Michelle Prysby's presentation featuring our chapter winners is below:



“Our Chapter Advisor of the Year, Meagan Thomas, is a watchable wildlife biologist with the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources and is a co-advisor for our Historic Rivers Chapter. From the very beginning, Meagan has been very visible and active in the chapter, coming to the social events in addition to attending meetings and helping with activities. She's always smiling and positive and shares her enthusiasm of nature with the volunteers in the chapter. She teaches the chapters herpetology class for basic training and gives freely of her time to help out whenever she can. She's always smiling and positive and shares her enthusiasm of nature with the volunteers in the chapter. She's also engaged the chapter in three new projects, including Diamondback Dash, a kayak-based survey of Diamond-backed terrapins. To quote her chapter members, “Meagan's enthusiasm is contagious. She not only supports and encourages our efforts, she has made us a more effective chapter.” Thank you, Megan, for all that you bring and do for the Virginia Master Naturalist program.”



*“We would not have this program without the hundreds of volunteers in chapter leadership roles. So this award is meant to recognize a chapter leader who has made particularly noteworthy impacts in their leadership role. **Historic Rivers Master Naturalist Judy Jones has earned this award for her leadership as a project coordinator and board member.** Judy Jones is a leader in every sense of the word. Her enthusiastic personality and pleasant manner are welcoming to everyone, and she has served as an effective chapter historian, president, past president and membership chair, just to name a few of her board roles. Along with other accomplishments, she collaborated with other leaders to develop a comprehensive program to welcome transferring members to the chapter that has helped new members feel included and to get involved more quickly. She also coordinates the bluebird monitoring project for the chapter, the chapter's Nature Camp Scholarship program that honors the memory of Nancy Norton, and the chapter's annual photo contest. Other leaders in the chapter expressed that Judy is an excellent mentor for them. Congratulations, Judy, and thank you for your extraordinary dedication.”*

Basic Training Cohort XVIII in January by Basic Training Committee

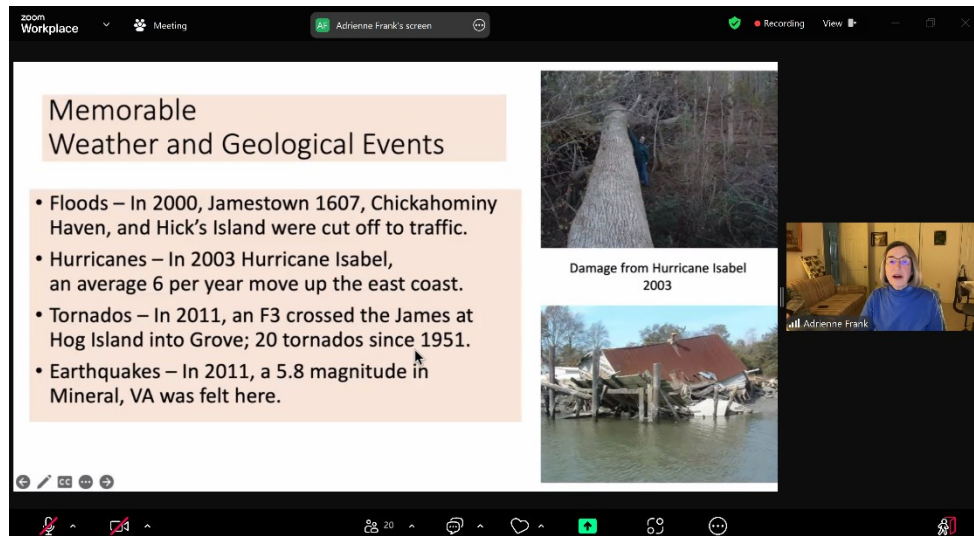
January was a month of pivots for our trainees and training team. Weather related rescheduling certainly kept us busy as two of our classes were impacted by icy conditions at Coleman Nursery and a third class ended early due to quickly falling snow midway through the class. Overall, the cohort met in person two times in January, and once online via Zoom.

We were lucky to have **Steve Living** from the Department of Wildlife Resources (DWR) present his ecology class at the Quarterpath Recreation Center, where the parking lot was clear of icy conditions. He brought gifts for the cohort including the latest release of the “**iconic Virginia Wildlife calendar.**” **Stewart Ware**, Professor Emeritus at The College of William & Mary, spoke on dendrology, the following week while snow began to fall, and Adrienne Frank, Historic Rivers Chapter (HRC) member, moved her presentation on local habitats online to Zoom (pictured right) so the group could get home safely before the snowfall became a risk to the team.

Several other HRC members, including Marie Robertson, Shirley Devan, Janet Harper, and Jennifer Trevino, updated presentations on Master Naturalist Skills that trainees viewed on their own when the January 7 class was cancelled due to winter weather. Trainees also worked hard on completing their external

training requirements, include attending an HRC meeting, bird walk, and VIMS “After Hours” lecture as needed.

Basic Training will wrap up in February with a few more events and the final exam. Graduation will be March 12th at the start of the HRC Annual Meeting. We’ll have cake to celebrate, so please come in person to the Quarterpath Recreation Center and celebrate with us and also participate in the other annual meeting activities, including certifications and voting in the new board.



Wildlife Transport by Janet Harper



I’m so excited that I got to do my first animal transport as a **Wildlife Center of Virginia (WCA) volunteer transporter** on January 30th for two birds of prey. When I signed up in early December, I had no idea of the number of transports that are needed every month. There have been several times when someone was needed but I wasn’t available, so finally I was free at the right time. Based on the

number of requests I’ve seen so far, we could use more volunteers. Please consider signing up for this worthy project by reading the information on the Wildlife Center website and filling out the application. Barb Creel has been doing this for a while and can give more information if you have specific questions. The animals are already in a container and just need to be picked up at a specific location and driven to another one.

<https://wildlifecenter.org/support/volunteer-opportunities/transport-and-rescue-volunteer-application>

Winter Wildlife Week Adventures in Delmarva

by Judy Jones

In January, I traveled up and down the Eastern Shore for a week with friend, fellow birder, and nature photographer [Barbara Houston](#). We hit the Virginia Beach Winter Wildlife Festival first, then crossed the Chesapeake Bay to visit wildlife sites along the Delmarva Peninsula, which includes the Eastern Shores of Virginia and Maryland, and Delaware. In Virginia we visited the [Eastern Shore of Virginia National Wildlife Refuge \(NWR\)](#), [Kiptopeke State Park](#), [Ed S. Brinkley Nature Preserve](#), the towns of Oyster and Onley, then on to [Chincoteague NWR](#) and [Saxis Wildlife Management Area](#). In Maryland we went on to Assateague Island, Cambridge, [Blackwater NWR](#), and Bestpitch. Then we cut over to [Bombay Hook NWR](#) followed by [Prime Hook NWR](#) in Delaware. Then, of course, back to Chincoteague and back home. Following are three photos from my adventures.

The first photo (pictured top left) is a Great Blue Heron (GBH, *Ardea herodias*), photographed at Blackwater NWR. This photo was taken during the coldest week of January, and it shows. The poor little guy was holed up in a corner by some rocks and just all puffed out. The amazing thing is that on his bill there is a short icicle. This was one frozen popsicle of a GBH!



The second photo (pictured center left) is of a Brown Pelican (*Pelecanus occidentalis*) photographed at the annual [Virginia Beach Winter Wildlife Festival](#) during the seal boat trip.. It was trying to down a huge fish and just kept working and working on it...but the fish was enormous!

This last photo (bottom) I wanted to share is a male Bald Eagle, *Haliaeetus Leucocephalus*, carrying a fish to the nest in [Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge](#) in Cambridge, Maryland. The female is badgering him, wanting to share. I was so amazed by the size of the nest. I think it's the biggest I've ever seen.

It was 7 freezing days of great fun, beautiful animals, and much camera activity. We even got photos of Sandhill

Cranes in the snow, foxes in the snow, and Clapper Rails dancing on ice! It was a wonderful time!



Back to the Brickyard on March 3 by Judy Kinshaw-Ellis



A couple of snowstorms and a few sunny, warm days, and it is time to get back to breaking bricks. We have a few more things to do to finish out our grant project for the Coastal Resilience and Trees Fund (CRTF) Grant, and we have some additional funding from the Ford's Colony Garden Club to buy larger plants for the meadow.

The major project left for CRTF is the construction of a dry swale, which will be a dry riverbed through one of our existing gardens. This project requires completion of a site plan because of the digging required, so we are on hold until that is complete. We will be ordering the supplies in the spring with the hope to have it completed by June.

The Ford's Colony (FC) Garden Club awarded the project a grant to add larger plants to our meadow area. We planted five flats of plugs in the fall and then seeded about 40 beds of 20 species in December. The FC grant will buy larger plants that will bloom this year. Many of the seeded plants will not bloom this season. Using the seeds, plugs, and larger potted plants will contribute to the educational portion of our demonstration garden. Visitors will be able to see for themselves the difference in using different planting options. We will also seed some non-native annuals, such as cosmos, zinnias, and sunflowers, to add color,

provide nectar, and compete with weeds while the native plants get established.

Spring plantings will also include planting right at the river's edge. Marsh Mallow seedlings will arrive mid-March, and we have several nursery beds of native grasses that we will transplant along the river to help slow erosion. We also hope to replace a few trees that were removed by some new beaver activity.

We had a thank you luncheon for volunteers in January and about 40 people joined us, including the management team from James City County Parks and Recreation. It was nice to catch up and see the large group of people who helped at Brickyard. We are grateful to everyone on the team who has worked to get this project off the ground.

If you want to come see what Brickyard Landing Park is about, we will start Monday and Thursday workdays on March 3 from 10 a.m. to noon. We will adjust our times as the weather warms up. If you would like your name on the Google Group list to receive our weekly emails, send an email to Donna (mid520@mac.com) or Judy (kinshawellis@gmail.com). We look forward to seeing you at Brickyard Landing Park this year.



Pictured: (Top Left) More grasses will be added along the edge of the river this year to help slow erosion. (Bottom Right) Just when we thought it was time to rest for the winter, a busy beaver decided it liked the new Bald Cypress at Brickyard Landing. Instead of picking up trash on our (MLK) day of service (January 15), we fenced more trees to keep them safe.

Shorter Shares from HRC Members and Beyond



Deadline to Register for Virtual Forestry CE—by Daniel Brooks, co-advisor

Earn Virginia Master Naturalist continuing education (CE) hours during the virtual portion of the Virginia Association of Forest Health Professional (VAFHP) Conference. The **virtual cost is \$20** for one-and-a-half days of presentations by experts from universities, the Virginia Department of Forestry, National Zoo, and more.

DEADLINE for virtual registration is 3pm, **Wednesday, February 19**. The conference runs Thursday and Friday, February 20-21. Check out the lineup of speakers at vafhp.org/agenda. Register at vafhp.org/event-details/2025-vafhp-conference.

Photo of Daniel with Biltmore tree measurement tool by Janie Moyers.

Save the Dates: College Creek Litter Pickups

Saturday, February 15, 9:30 am
Monday, March 17, 9:30 am
Wednesday, April 16, 9:30 am
Wednesday, April 30, 9:30 am



Deadline: Order Earth Day T-shirts by Feb 12

Judy Jones is once again organizing the order of Earth Day T-shirts, with profits to benefit the Nature Camp Scholarship. T-shirt orders and money (\$12) are due by Feb 12 at the general meeting. **Details in the email that was sent earlier this month.**



1/31 Skunk Cabbage —by Dan Foster

I stumbled across these skunk cabbage flowers while hiking today. Learn more about *Symplocarpus foetidus*, an “obligate wetland plant” from the Virginia Native Plant Society, which named it their **2009 Wildflower of the Year**.



Kids Learn to Grow Native Plants at Local Library —by Cynthia Ferentinos

Patty Maloney, Marie Robertson, and Cynthia Ferentinos planned and conducted a workshop for children called “DIY Native Plant Greenhouses” at the Williamsburg Regional Library. Sixteen kids and 15 parents attended the sessions on January 11th and 18th and learned about the value of native plants and how to grow them using a recycled plastic jug, potting soil, seeds from native plants, and clear packing tape. Each child took home the mini greenhouse that they had assembled, extra seed packets, and the instruction sheets so they could build more later. Everyone seemed to have a great time and was excited to grow some native plants, especially butterfly milkweed!

Pictured above: (1) Native plant kit, and (2) Volunteers Marie and Patty work with kids and their parents to assemble the greenhouses.

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Seaford Outreach Update —by Deena Obrokta

Prior to the York County winter break, the 5th grade students at Seaford Elementary created a bird-feeder tree in the school garden. Forty plus students, under the guidance of Dr. Deena Obrokta, HRC member and schoolyard outreach partner for Seaford, coated pinecones with sunflower butter and birdseed. They made garlands by stringing cranberries and orange slices. The students then placed these on an artificial tree in the center of the Seaford Elementary Monarch Garden. The students are looking forward to participating in the 2005 Great Backyard Bird Count in the garden Feb 14-17, weather permitting.



Virginia Master Naturalists

State Laurels, Winter 2025

The Historic River Chapter (HRC) was featured twice in the VMN State’s quarterly **Laurels post on January 30th**. Check out the Christmas Parade and College Creek Beach Pickup articles online, among submissions from chapters across the state.

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Dragon Run Spring Paddles—Register March 8

Registration for the opportunity to kayak the Dragon Run watershed on the Middle Peninsula with the Friends of Dragon Run (FODR) open at 9am on March 8. The spring paddle season will run from April 18-May 22. Spots fill quickly. Details can be found at <https://www.dragonrun.org/paddle-season-information.html>



Experienced in creating Planting Plans? We want you! —by Linda Hughes

Our chapter is collaborating with Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation to educate school groups & visitors on the plants used at “Paspahugh Town,” a Powhatan Indian outdoor interpretive site at Jamestown Settlement. In this new project, we hope to offer insight into the Paspahugh culture based on plants they gathered from the wild and intentionally grew for food, tools, construction, and medicinal & ceremonial purposes.

Since our project started two months ago, we’ve removed invasives and developed an annual maintenance plan to control them. We’re currently researching historical documents to build our list of appropriate plants for site conditions. The area Tribal Council, as well, a Monacan tribal member at Virginia Tech will provide feedback on our plant

recommendations. Once we settle on and purchase the plants, we’ll schedule planting workdays. But we will need a scaled planting plan to guide our efforts.

Are you interested in joining us in what is sure to be a fascinating chapter project? If so, contact Linda.hughes711@gmail.com or call. Phone number on the [member roster in Better Impact](#). **Pictured:** Linda and Dan Foster, project co-leads.



Feb 26, Flora of Virginia Webinar and Ambassador Training—by Leisa Clark

Flora of Virginia just announced its annual training for this year. The training involves live, online webinars, one in-person event, and a final event of your choice. [More information about the program can be found here](#). After completing the program an individual is certified by Flora of Virginia as being able to train people in the use of the app. If you’re interested but not sure that you want to commit to the training, I would encourage you to attend the webinar on February 26 at 7pm.

I participated in this program last year and found it very interesting. It allowed me to (a) interact with the developers of the app, both online and in person; (b) learn how to utilize lesser known components of the app; (c) learn how others are using the app; and (d) give feedback about the app directly to the people who created and continue to update the app.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions. Register for the webinar at <https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/ec2cS1qVT56iCakI3ih40Q#/registration>



Bluebirding 2025 & CE —by Judy Jones & Rick Brown

There are currently 19 bluebird trails our chapter maintains. If you think you might want to join one of them, contact the **trail leaders** listed on the Feb 5 email to see if there are openings for the mid-March to early August season. Most trails are happy to welcome new folks and can share with you bluebirding basics and how the monitoring process works. It's a wonderful way to get to know other HRC members, to learn more about bluebirds, and to enjoy the outdoors. If you've never been on a monitoring team before, here's hoping that you'll give it a try!

If you'd like to learn more about Eastern Bluebirds and earn approximately 1 hour of approved continuing education (CE) credit, please join Judy Jones on Sunday, March 30th at 3 p.m. in the Kitzinger Room of the James City County Library. Judy's presentation covers the Eastern Bluebirds' life cycle—nesting, eggs, chicks, fledglings, and life beyond the nest. Judy will also talk about predators and other dangers and how we can work to protect the species. For example, she includes lots of recommendations for bluebirds' safety for those who want to install a nest box at their home.

Two Trex Bench Locations Selected—by Karen Hines

Many thanks to all of you who responded to my request for input on where to place the two benches on hand and the third that will be available

in February. **Charles Brown Park** drew the most support with 43.5% of the vote. **James River Elementary** in the Grove community received the second most votes with 25.6% of total input.

I'll be arranging delivery with selected locations and will let you know when they're in place. The remaining responses included five other possible sites for the future, none receiving more than 10% of total vote. We'll be revisiting choices in February and I encourage additional input from members. Again, thank you for your ideas and support.

Oh, and the 2025 soft plastics collection will begin in February. I'll be eager to start collecting pristine, dry, stretchy soft plastic from you all.



Jan 15 Bird Presentation by Dr. Swaddle Available to Watch

Dr. John Swaddle, Professor of Biology, The College of William & Mary **Institute for Integrative Conservation**, presented to a joint meeting between the Williamsburg Bird Club (WBC) and the Historic Rivers Chapter (HRC) on *"Sparrows as sentinels: Health study illustrates the interconnectedness of humans and wildlife."* The presentation is now available to watch on the WBC YouTube page if you missed it or want to revisit it.

HRC and WBC member Shirley Devan encourages you to pay particular attention to Dr. Swaddle's recommendations to keep yourself and your pet cats safe from the avian bird flu, which starts at about the 25-minute mark.

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).



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No bonus photo this month. If you have a photo of a species that is small and would like it featured here send it my way!