

# Northern Neck Master Naturalists

August 2012

## PRYSBY LEAVING

Michelle Prysby recently announced that she will be leaving her position as Program Coordinator of the Virginia Master Naturalist program and Extension Associate at Virginia Tech, effective August 10. She will be joining the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of Virginia as the Director of Science Education and Public Outreach. In addition to her work at the state level, we all know Michelle as the vibrant instructor for the Basic



Ecology class from our basic training program. Michelle will be attending and helping out with the statewide conference in September, and is looking forward to becoming active (as a volunteer) in the Master Naturalist chapter in her own community.

In her announcement email Michelle left us with these words: "Please keep in mind that the Virginia Master Naturalist program is YOU, not me! I hope you'll continue to make this program successful in your communities and across the Commonwealth. ...Thank you for being my partners for natural resource education, citizen science, and stewardship in Virginia since 2005!"

At this time no replacement for Michelle has been announced.

## NEW SPONSOR FOR VA MASTER NATURALIST PROGRAM



The Virginia Department of Environmental Quality has been added as a 6th state sponsoring agency for the Virginia Master Naturalist program. DEQ has supported the program in several ways over the years and they are now on board as an official sponsor.

The Virginia Department of Environmental Quality's mission is to protect and improve the environment for the well being of all Virginians. From the DEQ Web site: "DEQ administers state and federal laws and regulations for air quality, water quality, water supply and waste management. In addition, other programs cover a variety of environmental activities, such as improving the ability of businesses and local governments to protect the environment, and offering technical and financial assistance for air and water quality improvements. Through its six regional offices, DEQ issues permits, conducts inspections and monitoring, and enforces regulations and permits."

One of the major ways DEQ interacts with the Virginia Master Naturalist program is through Citizen Water Quality Monitoring. Many of our volunteers monitor streams and lakes in their regions. You can learn more about DEQ at <http://www.deq.state.va.us/>.

Thanks to Michelle Prysby for this article.

DEQ included the June NNMN Newsletter write up of Faye Andrashko's highly successful May 24 "Think Outside the Sink" program at BISP on their web site at:

<http://www.deq.virginia.gov/ConnectWithDEQ/EnvironmentalInformation/VirginiaNaturally/MeasuringWatershedEducationalExperience/EducatorsinAction.aspx>

### STATEWIDE CONFERENCE

Registration for our next Virginia Master Naturalist Statewide Volunteer Conference and Training, September 7-9, 2012 in Martinsville closed on August 6.

### NN NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY WILDFLOWER WALK

#### Paul Billings Westmoreland State Park Trail Walk and Endurance Training

##### *A Cautionary Tale*

On Thursday July 19 Department of Conservation and Recreation District Resource Specialist Paul Billings led what organizer, Carol Hammer of NN Native Plant Society, had advertised as an informative "walk in the park"



Paul Billings and Pawpaw

(emphasis added) along rerouted trails at Westmoreland State Park in Montross. Assembled for this adventure was what could be called a multi-organizational, inter-generational and international group of stalwarts totaling, by your scribes count, 29. (There were 9 NNNPS members, 6 NNMN, 4 Friends of Westmoreland State Park, and 3 adult and 5 teen/preteen visitors from England. There may have been some double counting in these numbers as the scribe learned to count from a Chicago election official.)

After carpooling to the back of Camp Ground C the group set out on what Paul said was a little over a mile hike on the new trails. At 10:00 it was a mild 90° and the humidity was 59%; we were going to be in the shade and there was a light breeze. What could spoil this day?

The park suffered massive damage during last fall's hurricane Irene; so much damage that the park was closed for months. In some areas professional loggers were called in to remove downed trees; other areas were cleared by park staff and staff members from other parks in the state. The scope of the damage was evident from the number of downed trees that can still be seen along the trails.



Downed Trees on Old Trail

The trails that we hiked on Thursday were the Turkey Neck and Beaver Dam Trails. Turkey



Neck has only been reopened recently. Paul, and other park staff, determined that rather than clear all of the trees that were down on the trail, they could improve the hikers' experience by rerouting the trail to more scenic areas. The original trail had followed old logging roads and had not been designed with hikers in mind. With the help of a national hiking group, Paul and other members of the

#### Forest Apartments

staff designed the revised trails and cleared them using chain saws and hand tools. The resulting trail provided a beautiful walk downhill with forest views transitioning to views of Big Meadow Run and Yellow Swamp.

This late in the season and after the scorching weather we have had this month, there wasn't a great expectation of a lot of wild flowers to see. It didn't take long, however to find an interesting plant. Marie, Judy, Paula and Nick were summoned to provide identification. There was much discussion; Newcomb's was



#### Elephant Foot

broken out and a consensus was formed. This was repeated many times along the trail. Our guests from England added interest to the discussions by comparing the plants we have here to the ones in the UK. Throughout the hike Paul kept up a steady discourse on the variety of trees in the park and provided more history of the park to include its being built by the CCCs. The event was a pleasurable experience, for most, but not all.

I started this with a little silliness in the head count—the actual number of participants was 18—but now I would like to get serious, after all, this is a cautionary tale. Although most of the group experienced no problem with the heat, a couple of folks did. These were people



#### Survivors?

who felt they were in good condition. What contributed to their problems? The walk may have been closer to a mile-and-a-half. We started on a gentle downhill from about the 150 foot elevation down to about the 20 foot level followed by a relatively steep climb back up, and 90° and 59% humidity may not have been as hot as the past few weeks but it is still hot. Just a few notes on heat issues: on the trail, make an honest personal evaluation of your physical condition; hydrate, hydrate, hydrate; rest before you have to; know the symptoms of heat illnesses both in yourself and others around you and the steps to deal with it. This

isn't Marine boot camp. Enjoying nature is supposed to be fun.

### MASTER NATURALIST PHOTO CONTEST

#### Look Out Phelps, Carol Hammer Scores Double Gold

Our Chapter's internal photo contest to select our entries for the State Photo Contest wrapped up last month with seven members submitting a total of 28 pictures for judging. Carol Hammer was the big winner, taking first in both the Fauna and Flora categories. Carol's pictures will be our Chapter's entries for the state contest.



**First Place, Fauna. Luna Moth by Carol Hammer**

Also scoring Ribbons in Fauna were Jim Eury and Tommy Ngo, second and third respectively. Flora second and third went to Polly Ward and Ellis Squires. All entries can be seen on the Northern Neck page of Volunteer Management System site. They are in the Photo Albums tab under General Information. The entries and

other NNMN photos will be on display at Kinsale, Virginia's Museum on the Green's Ice Cream Parlor annex during the Museum's regular hours: 10:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m. every Friday and Saturday through September 15th.



**First Place, Flora. Spiderwort by Carol Hammer**

Given the short lead time, this was a great first year start. We hope to continue this contest and have more entries next year. We know that there are lots more good pictures out there and you have a year to take more.

#### Judges Impressions

By Cathy Sachs

Mike Geissinger, Bill Martz and I recently enjoyed the opportunity to judge the first NNMN Photo Contest, and have our first place winner in Flora and in Fauna categories to go on to the Virginia State exhibition. Although we did not have a huge number of entries, there was a large variety both in terms of subject matter and level of expertise. It would seem that we have an excellent photographer in our midst – Carol Hammer – since her entries took first place in both categories. Congratulations, Carol!

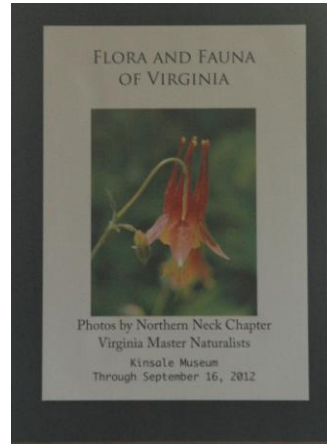
Mike and I met up again on July 24 at BISP to give an evaluation of the entries to anyone in our chapter who was interested. Mike and I

have different approaches: he as a photographer and I as a photo editor, and this enabled us to talk about how images work or don't work. The key factors in this regard were composition and focus since nature images of this type must generally be sharp, unless there is an artistic reason why not. Indeed two of our winning entries were deliberately "soft" which worked for their subject matter. However, we both felt (and Bill did too) that too often the photographer just didn't take enough images, or "work" the situation. I am most emphatic that photographers need to move more, and thus can create better framing for their subject, which can also include positioning against a better background, or different lighting. A rule of thumb which Mike stressed was to get as close to your subject as you can ... while admitting that this may not be easy with flighty subjects! It was interesting too to see how Mike was able to play around with the images on his computer, experimenting with different light settings, or cropping, to show how they can be enhanced.

All in all it was a fun experience and made me think how much photography is an amazingly useful tool for Master Naturalists especially. In addition to our field journals, we so often pull out our camera, whether that is a point-and-shoot or something more sophisticated. And there is nothing wrong with the point-and-shoot, by the way. It is your ability to see that is the most important ingredient here, not the piece of equipment. Because Master Naturalists are so aware of their surroundings, they do tend to have a good "eye" for a picture, and not just as documentation. So next year, please let us see what you have been seeing, by sending in your pictures. You may feel shy, but don't be. You may say "Oh it's not good enough" .... But let us be the judge of that! You

may be pleasantly surprised and bring home a ribbon!

### SoHo on the Yeocomico



Carol and Gail did a fantastic job staging the Chapter's photo exhibit: hanging the pictures, and arranging for other displays. Gail elevated the Kinsale Ice Cream Shop to an art

venue with music, live plants and matching tablecloths, etc. All we were missing for a high end art show was the champagne. Over 35 guests attended to ooh and aah over the pictures. An overall success!



### THANK YOU TO RAPPAHANNOCK COMMUNITY COLLEGE



Picture Courtesy of RCC "Rappennings"

As a gesture of thanks for being allowed to hold our Spring 2012 series of training sessions at Rappahannock Community College's Warsaw Campus, the Northern Neck chapter of the Virginia Master Naturalists recently donated a DVD set of the 13-part documentary series "How the Earth Was Made" to the Warsaw Campus Library Center. Pictured above, left to right, are RCC president Dr. Elizabeth Crowther; Certified Master Naturalists Earline Walker and Faye Andrashko; Cherie Carl, RCC's Dean of Learning Resources; and Ellis Squires, also a Certified Master Naturalist, who coordinated this year's class.

### MASTER NATURALIST SUPPORTS KIDS KAYAK AND CONSERVATION CAMP



Kids Kayak & Conservation Camp. Photo by Dianne Campbell

Kayaking and Nature on the Middle Peninsula

The Mathews Maritime Foundation's Kids Kayak & Conservation Camp

([www.mathewsmaritime.com/kayakcamp.htm](http://www.mathewsmaritime.com/kayakcamp.htm)) this July educated 20 area middle school-aged children in paddling skills, natural and cultural history, and conservation practices. Other camp sponsors included Mathews County, the National Park Service, and Mobjack Kayaking. Volunteers from a variety of organizations gave presentations on topics from birding, to water quality, to making boats from used plastic

bottles. **Master Naturalist Chelsea Clifford** assisted Dianne Campbell of Mobjack Kayaking and Marcy Benouameur of the Ladies International Picnic and Paddle Society in conducting tours of the East River. Chelsea discussed the importance of wetlands, the history of Chesapeake fisheries, and basic ecological principles with campers. However, it was the opportunity to closely observe wildlife, including blue crabs, great blue herons, periwinkle snails, that really captured campers' interest in and enthusiasm for conservation while paddling.

### VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

**September 8<sup>th</sup>, 2012**, Friends of the Rappahannock is having their **Annual Tidal Fall Clean-up**. This will be a great family day of helping our river, showing stewardship, and enjoying a cookout lunch. Everyone will meet at the Tidal Office at June Parker Marina at 9am, Saturday morning. From there, volunteers will be dispersed by boat or car to specified locations along the Essex and Richmond County riverbanks. At 12pm all volunteers will come back to the office where we will add up the weight of the trash collected and enjoy a grilled lunch! If you are able to bring a boat or truck to shuttle people and pick up trash please let us know. Pre-registration is required; you can register at [www.riverfriends.org/tidalcleanup/](http://www.riverfriends.org/tidalcleanup/) or call Lowery Pemberton at 8043135080. We are looking forward to another great day on the water! A NNMN project proposal for this event is being processed.

### Sept. 28 through Oct 7. The Virginia State Fair

1) The Virginia Dept. of Forestry is again seeking Master Naturalists to help staff its exhibit area at the Virginia State Fair at the Meadow Event Park in Caroline County. The following times/dates are available: Sept. 29 - Oct. 7, from 9:30 a.m.-2 pm or 1:30 -6:00 p.m., as well as Sept. 28 from 1:30-6 p.m. Exhibits inside the building will focus mainly on acorn collection for the DOF seedling nursery and invasive species

awareness. Outside under canopy tents will be hands-on youth activities. If there is enough interest, we may offer guided hikes on the trail along the river. No special forestry knowledge is needed—even on the trail there are interpretive signs—we just need friendly faces willing to interact with the public! Any Master Naturalist who would like to work can email Ellen Powell ([ellen.powell@dof.virginia.gov](mailto:ellen.powell@dof.virginia.gov)) no later than August 17. Please give your name, MN chapter, email, phone and regular mailing address (for mailing tickets).

2) The Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation needs volunteers to help with hands-on exhibits including gold panning, looking for shark's teeth, and the educational activity of the day. Hours are similar to DOF hours above. Training provided. Contact Tom Cervenak at [thomas.cervenak@dcr.virginia.gov](mailto:thomas.cervenak@dcr.virginia.gov) and let him know which day(s) you are available.

**Sept 29, 9 AM. to noon, National Public Lands Day.** Join in the volunteer activities at Belle Isle State Park that will include trail work, invasive plant removal, and more. Attendees can receive a certificate signed by Governor McDonnell. Pre-registration requested. Please bring a water bottle, gloves, and sunscreen. Some tools available or bring your own. Contact Charlene Talcott, (804) 462-5030 [Charlene.Talcott@dcr.virginia.gov](mailto:Charlene.Talcott@dcr.virginia.gov).

**Sept 29**, NNMN will have a booth at the Northern Neck Land Conservancy's annual **Boots and Barbecue** from 3 PM to 6 PM at Lancaster Court House at the open area behind the historic jail which is under a conservation easement. There will be music, some educational talks, vendors, and food for all. \$25.00 per person if tickets purchased before event. \$30.00 at the entry on Sept. 29. Contact Jane Henley to volunteer, [MLewisNut@aol.com](mailto:MLewisNut@aol.com).

**Oct 14**, Rappahannock River Valley National Wildlife Refuge and the Rappahannock Wildlife Refuge Friends Group will cosponsor the second annual **Go Wild! Festival**. The event will be held

at the Hutchinson Tract in Essex, Virginia, from 1 PM to 5 PM and will feature a nature-themed silent auction, a guided kayak tour, and free lunch. Many demonstrations and activities are planned at this fall event which is free to the public. NNMN will have a booth at this event and the Outreach Committee will be planning some youth oriented activities to go along with our educational displays. Contact Jane Henley to volunteer, [MLewisNut@aol.com](mailto:MLewisNut@aol.com).

#### NOTES FROM CHARLENE

These notes were in the last Newsletter but bear repeating. Each year there are members who get to the end of the year and find that they are short on hours needed to remain certified. And remember, putting in the hours won't matter if you don't enter them into the volunteer management system.

With the year half over, I hope everyone is making progress toward the required 40 hours of service and 8 hours of continuing education. If you are not half-way there don't wait until fall!

There are plenty of opportunities for advanced training. The Audubon walks are always informative. Whenever they have them at Belle Isle and I join I learn not only one or more new birds, but their habits and other interesting facts as well. There is at least one a month throughout the year. Wildflower walks, nature lectures, guided hikes and other events at Belle Isle and Westmoreland State Parks, VIMS, and RRVNWR are just the beginning.



For projects, at Belle Isle we have a Weed Warriors group, shown above, that meets on Tuesdays to keep the gardens productive. Glyn Surdham is looking for partners for trail work he is conducting at the park. Rebecca Wilson needs help at the natural preserves with rare plant monitoring and shore-line clean-up. Bill Walker is conducting a "Grasses for the Masses" program in which shore line grasses are grown at home and then planted on the shores of the James River. Other possibilities are available at Westmoreland State Park and along local trails. Just check the "Opportunities" on our website [www.northernneckmasternaturalists.org](http://www.northernneckmasternaturalists.org) and contact the appropriate chair.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### "Black Gold" in Your Own Backyard

Save money and reap a wealth of benefits by learning to improve your soil. The Northern Neck Master Naturalists' Tuesday, **August 14**, 2012 program features inexpensive ways to create nutritious organic soils for your outdoors. Join us at the Northumberland Library in Heathsville at 1:00 PM.

### Nature Outing, BISP

The public is invited to celebrate environmental reclamation efforts at BISP with the Northern Neck Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society on August 16 at 10:00 AM.

Charlene Talcott, Belle Isle's Chief Ranger of Interpretation and Education, promises that: "A hayride will take us to a future forest where over eight thousand native hardwood trees and shrubs were planted in approximately 22 acres of previously farmed fields."

District Resource Specialist Paul Billings, who will lead the program, adds, "We will also stop at some former agricultural fields where plantings of warm season grasses and native wildflowers are creating an open grassland that will benefit all animals, especially the pollinators like bees and butterflies."

## Native Plant Sale

NNK VNPS will hold their plant sale Sat. Sept 8th from 9 AM to 12:30 PM in Wicomico Church on route 200 next to the Episcopal Church.

**August 14** – Composting and Vermiculture, John Lunsford and Ted Munns, Northumberland Library

**August 18** – Nature Outing, BISP

**Sept 7-9** – State Conference, Martinsville

**Sept 8** – Native Plant Sale, Wicomico Church

**Sept 11** – General Meeting, Sam Johnson on Soils

**Sept 29** – Boots and Barbeque

**Oct 9** – Native Wildlife-Mammals, Galon Hall (tentative date)

**Oct 14** – Go Wild Festival

**Nov 13** – General Meeting, John Sigler "Environmental Security"

**Dec 4** – Annual Christmas Party and Board Meeting

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Thanks to Michelle Prysby, Kathy Sachs, Chelsea Clifford, Pam Narney and Charlene Talcott for their work on this issue.

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Please send items of interest, advanced training opportunities, news and pictures about your projects, and other newsletter items to [jnarney@verizon.net](mailto:jnarney@verizon.net).

\*For more details, times and locations go to the Event Calendar on the Virginia Master Naturalist Volunteer Management web site. <https://viriniamn.volunteersystem.org/users/index.cfm>