

# Northern Neck Master Naturalists

**January 2012**

## **Recent NNMN Activities**

Several Master Naturalists got an early start toward fulfilling their required hours by leading walks at Belle Isle State Park as part of the national [First Day's Hikes](#) program. Ellis Squires,



*Ellis talks to his group along Mud Creek Trail*

Earline Walker, Paula Boundy, and Temple Moore, along with park volunteer Tom Swan, led 50 people on walks of varying lengths. Hikers were educated about winter plants and feedback was very positive. It was a beautiful day, with weather in the 60s.



*Several people enjoyed learning more about loblolly  
Photos by Earline Walker*

People who hiked at Virginia State Parks were encouraged to enter a contest. A grand prize and five second place prizes were awarded. Out of 34 parks, Belle Isle had two second place winners.

At the January 10 meeting at Belle Isle State Park, member [Ted Munns](#) was the speaker for the afternoon's program, presenting "Flora of the Coastal Plains for Honey Bees." An amateur beekeeper, as he called himself, Munns presented a slide show and list of plants which are attractive to bees and sometimes, not always, he noted, attractive for landscaping gardeners as well. A list of pollinator plants is available from Ted Munns.

## **New VMN requirements**

[Master Naturalists can now claim travel time to and from approved service projects.](#) This is good news for those of us on the Northern Neck. Time to and from advanced training and meetings do NOT count as travel time. Ellis will send out information about how to record these hours.

When MNs give public programs, they will fill out a form outlining the number of people that are contacted, broken down by race, gender, and age. These can be estimates. This is required by federal auditors, as Virginia Tech and Virginia Cooperative Extension, two of our sponsors, receive federal funds. If a talk is given, there is a form that the audience can fill out where they can self-identify themselves into the various categories. If a public display is given (such as a farmer's market) then one person can record contacts to the best of ability. This ensures that federal tax dollars are used in a non-discriminatory manner and that

all have an equal opportunity to participate in MN programs.

At our last MN meeting on January 10, Carol Hammer, Jane Henley, and Charlene Talcott gave information about [the permitting and recording requirements for disturbing wildlife and invertebrates](#). The chapter will hold a permit for collection and study of live animals while on hikes with the public. (Collection entails capturing animals for a short time in order to show them during the program. They are released soon after.) A second permit will allow the salvage and display of dead animals, not including birds. This will include turtle shells, bones, furs, and taxidermied mounts. A third federal permit will allow the salvage and display of birds, feathers, nests, and eggs. Several MNs will be trained and listed as sub-permittees and accompany MN activities where disturbance is likely. These regulations ensure that minimal impact occurs as we explore nature and is the same protocols that scientists follow.

## Upcoming Meetings

**February** a “Naked Tree Walk” at Menokin led by Hilda and Charlie Wilson planned for Friday February 17, rain/snow date the 18th

**March 13** Jan Newton of the Native Plant Society will speak

**May** a program will take place at Sassafra Farm

**June** Teta Kaine will speak

**July** will feature John Sigler on environmental security

Meeting places and more information will be announced at a later date

## In the Outdoors This Month

### EDIBLE BERRIES

#### Partridgeberry (*Mitchella repens*)

*Vicki Shufer, Wild Foods Forum*

Trailing along the forest floor is an evergreen herb with almost round leaves growing in pairs and a white vein down the center. In late spring, patches of white appear as pairs of small, white flowers cover the ground, like a dusting of snow. The flowers have four petals that form a tube and unite at the base. It takes two flowers to make a fruit. In one flower, the pistil is long and the stamens are short while the other flower has a short pistil and long



Partridge Berry flower (*Mitchella repens*). Photo by T.G. Barnes, USDA NRCS PLANTS Database.

stamens. This prevents self-fertilization and requires that both flowers be pollinated, primarily by bumblebees, to produce fruits. The fusion of both ovaries to produce a fruit results in two blossom scars, giving it the name “two-eyed fruit.” The fruits turn bright red in the fall and remain on the plant throughout the winter, making them easy to spot while walking in the woods.

Partridgeberry is a native that grows throughout the eastern part of the United States, from the mountains to the sea. It can grow in dry, sandy soil as well as moist, heavy soil, mostly in the shade. It is most easily propagated by division or cuttings.



Partridge berries. Photo by Alan S. Heilman, University of Tennessee Herbarium.

Partridgeberries are edible, however they are mostly tasteless. They can be nibbled on while hiking or added to salads for a decorative touch. Gamebirds and small mammals eat the berries. Also known as squaw vine, partridgeberry is best known as a tonic for women. According to Rosemary Gladstar (*Herbal Healing for Women*, 1993), it is “considered one of the finest herbs for toning and nourishing the uterus” and “is often mixed with raspberry leaf for the perfect pregnancy tonic.” It is used for menstrual problems as well. Partridgeberry is also good for men as a tonic for the prostate gland.

## Advanced Training Opportunities

A mini-symposium on **VERNAL POOLS** takes place on **Monday, January 23** from **12-4pm** in the **VCU Commons Theater** on the VCU Monroe Park Campus.

There will be three 45 minute presentations highlighting the ecology of vernal pools along the eastern US, with an emphasis on conservation, management, landscape change, and the role of Citizen Science in vernal pool conservation. A freestyle panel discussion will follow the talks. Coffee, tea, drinks and light snacks will be provided. For more information and to register please contact Ann Wright at [abwright@vcu.edu](mailto:abwright@vcu.edu)

A **bird walk** with Frank Schaff of the Northern Neck Audubon Society will take place Saturday, January 28 at 8 a.m. at Belle Isle State Park. Loaner binoculars are available. Meet at the Camp Store parking lot. A \$3 parking fee applies.

## Volunteer opportunities

A **Weed Warriors group** is starting at Belle Isle State Park to maintain the native plant gardens there. Interested parties should contact Charlene.Talcott@dcr.virginia.gov to join. After the group is formed, a garden maintenance schedule will be created, and educational opportunities will be discussed.

Mark your calendar for **Invasive Removals Day** on May 5. This is a state-wide cooperation between the Virginia Master Naturalists and Virginia Native Plant Society. Invasives will be removed 9 a.m. to noon at Belle Isle, and from 1 to 3 p.m. at Chilton Woods. The chapter NPS will host a potluck lunch at Belle Isle. Service can be performed at one site or both. More information will be coming soon.

Pam Narney and Carol Hammer are looking for volunteers for the program modeled after one in Minnesota which gets kids out in nature using cameras titled **Digital Photography Bridge to Nature**. See this web site for more information:

<http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/eco/nongame/projects/digitalbridge.html>

The Minnesota Dept. of Natural Resources has successfully implemented this program which teaches teachers to work with digital cameras to teach the kids and apply this in the field for all fields of study. They have proved that when behind a camera, a child will take time to look, observe, listen and get closer to all things natural.

With our new connection to the Boys and Girls Club in Kilmarnock, they plan on making this an MN Project where we develop a program, take it to the Boys and Girls Club and work with the kids showing them how to use the camera and getting them out into nature. Once successful, this can be applied to youth groups visiting our local state parks, natural area preserves and possibly working with our local schools.

They have contacted the club which already possesses computers and a number of digital cameras. The Boys and Girls Club will be able to obtain more cameras if necessary, so our input at this point is to put together a working program to benefit these children in our community. The leaders at the club are excited about what we propose.

## **Annual Master Naturalists Conference**

Please mark your calendars for our next Virginia Master Naturalist Statewide Volunteer Conference and Training, September 7-9, 2012. The Southwestern Piedmont Chapter will be hosting the event, and the two main venues will be the Virginia Museum of Natural History in Martinsville, and nearby Fairy Stone State Park in Patrick County. There will be some lodging available in the state park cabins and some in a hotel nearby the museum.

Fairy Stone is the largest of Virginia's 6 original state parks, and its attractions include more than a dozen miles of trails, a lake, and, of

course, the staurolite stones that give the park its name.

The Virginia Museum of Natural History has been one of our sponsoring agencies since the beginning of the Virginia Master Naturalist program, and it is well-known for its educational programs, exhibits, scientific research, and collections. Just a few of the other nearby natural area attractions include the Philpott Lake Recreation Area, the Smith River, and the Turkeycock Wildlife Management Area.

Registrations for the conference and for the lodging will not open until early June, so keep an eye out for that announcement then.

## **Youth Ambassador**

Belle Isle State Park is searching for a outgoing, talented volunteer age 16 to 26 to serve as Youth Ambassador. Duties include using social media to promote the park and events. Perks include use of a camera, clothing, and a pass to all Virginia State Parks, as well as valuable experience for college and employment applications. Contact [Charlene.Talcott@dcr.virginia.gov](mailto:Charlene.Talcott@dcr.virginia.gov) for more information.

**Reminder that dues of \$20 are now due. Make check payable to "Northern Neck Master Naturalists" and send to Martha Berger, 2023 Simonson Road, Farnham, VA 22460.**

**From the President:**

Happy New Year!

If you were not at the January 10<sup>th</sup> General Meeting, I missed you. As the new President of the Northern Neck Master Naturalists, I hope that the chapter can find a way to make being an active Master Naturalist interesting and easy. We are planning more outside events and at least one event, NOT A MEETING, each month. If you were at the meeting, Great! help us reach the members who did not come.

Remember that if you do not have enough hours in a year to be a "Certified Master Naturalist" you are still a "Master Naturalist" as long as you pay your dues each year. Mail your check to: Martha Berger, 2023 Simonson Rd, Farnham, VA 22460.

We hope to make projects more accessible so that it is easier to find something that interests you and fits into your schedule. To do that the chapter will publish events up to two months ahead. Events will be posted in three places:

The Northern Neck Master Naturalist website: <http://www.northernneckmasternaturalists.org>

The state of Virginia Volunteer Management System site at:

<https://virginiamn.volunteersystem.org/UniversalLogin.cfm>

On the left menu Click on Calendar for upcoming events.

Click on Projects to see if any appeal to you. Contact the person in charge for more information.

Click on Newsletter to read the newly created NNMN newsletter.

The nmnemail list. If you are not currently receiving this, please email your information to:

[nmnemail@gmail.com](mailto:nmnemail@gmail.com)

Vice President, Gail Sigler, is arranging outdoor events for months when we do not have meetings. The first event is a Naked Tree Walk at Menokin on Friday, February 17. (Rain date the 18<sup>th</sup>) Hilda and Charlie Wilson, Mt. Holly residents, and Byron Carmean from Suffolk, will walk us down the Trail with lively commentary on the mysteries of identifying and naming our "naked" friends – leafless trees. Meet at the Menokin visitor's center at 10:30 a.m. for a brief introduction followed by the Tree Trail walk at 11 a.m. and hot chocolate and chat back at the visitor's center. Brown bag lunches are welcome. Wear warm clothing and sturdy shoes for the Trail.

If you have ideas about things you would like to do, places to visit, or speakers, please contact Gail at [gsigler@toast2.net](mailto:gsigler@toast2.net).

I hope that more of you will be involved in the coming year. Try to volunteer to be on at least one committee. The Chapter really needs your help.

Thanks for giving me the opportunity to help as your president.

Pam

<b>MASTER NATURALIST</b> opportunities to learn and earn hours	
Feb. 17, Fri	10:30. <i>Naked Tree Walk</i> at Menokin. Led by Hilda + Charlie Wilson + Byron Carmean. Hot Chocolate + BYOB lunch. <b>AT</b>
Feb. 17-20	Great American Bird Count. <a href="http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc">http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc</a> <b>V CS</b>
Feb. 28 Tues.	7:00 pm <i>Getting Your Garden Ready for Spring</i> Gail Sigler + Pam Narney Montross Library in Warsaw <b>AT</b>
March 13, Tues	2:00 Gen Meeting. Jan Newton on <i>Native Plants for Beauty and Wildlife</i> <b>AT + ADMIN</b> time for the meeting
March 31, Sat	Master Gardener's Seminar: All Day <b>AT</b> <a href="http://www.nnmg.org/">http://www.nnmg.org/</a>
April 14, Sat	10-4 After the Storm: A Water Shed Event <b>AT</b> if attending <b>V ED</b> if working
April 14, Sat	10-noon. Potomac Cleanup-many locations <b>V</b> Check for locations near you at: <a href="http://www.trashfreepotomac.org">www.trashfreepotomac.org</a>
May 5, Sat.	Invasives Removal Day. 9-noon at Belle Isle with potluck lunch. 1-4 at Chilton Woods. In cooperation with the NN Native Plant Society. <b>V</b>
May 8 Tu.	2:00 Gen Meeting. TBA
<b>V</b> = Volunteer Hours <b>AT</b> = Advanced Training <b>ADMIN</b> = Administrative hours	