

Northern Neck Master Naturalists

January 2013

HAPPY NEW YEAR

BELLE ISLE GOES TO THE DOGS FOR FIRST DAY HIKES



Blue the "Bark" Ranger leads the BISP First Day Dog Hike

Despite overcast skies, temperatures in the 40s and a big threat of rain, thirty humans and eight canines brought in the New Year by participating in Belle Isle State Park's First Day Hikes. Charlene Talcott, her husband Andy and Blue the "Bark" Ranger led the fifteen humans and canines on the dog hike. As you can see from the pictures, participants came in all sizes and shapes.



First Day Dog Hikers

NNMN led a group of fifteen Master Naturalists and Friends of BISP on a Naked Plant Walk to explore the Park's winter landscape. Read Carol Hammer's account of the day, below.



Ellis Squires points out a winter plant along the trail

FIRST DAY HIKES: BELLE ISLE STATE PARK

By Carol Hammer

New Years Day 2013 began with hikes in State Parks throughout the United States. I was asked to participate in America's State Parks First Day Hikes to lead folks around Belle Isle State Park and give them pointers on taking photos of flora and fauna in the winter. This walk was one walk among three that Charlene Talcott, our Master Naturalist leader scheduled. A second walk involved participants and their dogs led by Charlene. The third walk, lead by Ellis Squires and Earline Walker, informed the participants as to how to identify trees in the winter.

When no one showed up for the photography walk, I chose to go with Ellis and Earline and their group. As we walked along the paths I found some things of interest to photograph. Most interesting to me before the walk were the handsome dogs that came to walk with their owners.

I'm a dog lover and cannot stop from giving attention to any canine I meet.

As Ellis and Earline pointed out facts to identify trees, I kept my eye open to possible photo opportunities. My favorite photo was one I took looking skyward from under a stand of denuded deciduous trees with the trees seemingly to converge as they grew upward. I entered the photo in the VA State Parks First Day Hikes 2013 photo contest which ran on Facebook. I didn't win, but many mentioned they liked the picture.



Trees in Winter, BISP, by Carol Hammer

My eye is more trained to look downward having been on so many walks with the Northern Neck Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society, so it was fun to spot a *Tipularia discolor*, the Crane-fly orchid along the side of the walkway. In the winter one only sees the leaf, green on top (some with purple spots) and purple underneath. This is the only species of the genus *Tipularia*

found in North America. A single leaf grows in the fall that disappears in the spring. The orchid blooms in the summer (the only native orchid with asymmetrical flowers). The flowers look like an injured fly, hence another common name of "Crippled Crane-fly Orchid". I understand that its roots are edible being starchy and potato-like.

Ellis and Earline made it easy to differentiate between our native pine trees. The two most prevalent species on the Northern Neck are the loblolly pine and Virginia pine. One tells the difference by counting the needles. Virginia pines have clusters of two and Loblolly pines have clusters of three needles. Loblolly needles are longer, about 6 or 7 inches long and stay green all year. Virginia Pine needles are short, one and a half to 3 inches long. Both are pioneer trees, some of the first trees to take over a field.

I look forward to New Years Day 2014, and perhaps I will do more dog and tree photography. It was great to be outside walking and among nature lovers!

2012 CHAPTER CHRISTMAS PARTY

Thanks to the generous hospitality of Earline and Jay Walker, the 2012 Christmas party was a great success. Approximately 30 folks gathered at the Walker's lovely home in Callao for the event. All brought delicious fare from appetizer and sides to decadent deserts. No one left hungry. Midway through the afternoon, someone noticed that one of Earline's cats was sleeping peacefully on the back of a sofa. Guests were amazed at the cat's disregard for all of the activity and related noise around it-- turns out the cat is deaf!

Scheduling holiday parties is always a challenge due to all of the events taking place. This year's party was held in the afternoon rather than in the evening to allow people to get home early. The president would like to know your thoughts on having the party in the afternoon vice the evening. Please let Pam know your feelings.

Once again a thousand thank yous to Earline and Jay for their hospitality.

PAUL BILLINGS NAMED HONORARY



MASTER NATURALIST

Paul Billings receives Honorary Master Naturalist Certificate from Pam Narney

Paul Billings is retiring from Virginia DRC this month. At its January meeting, the Chapter Board voted to make Paul an Honorary Master Naturalist in recognition of sharing of his time, energy and expertise to inspire and assist our members. Pam Narney presented him with his Honorary Certificate at his retirement party on January 19.

WINTER BIRDING PROGRAM AT STRATFORD HALL

Thanks to Cathy Sachs for the following report on advanced training at Stratford Hall on January 12, 2013

Temperature mid 40s, damp and chilly with lots of dense fog.

Program at Stratford Hall: "Winter Birding: Mixed Species Flocking" with Dr. Andrew Dolby.

Dr. Dolby gave a presentation to a group of about 15 on the benefits of birds flocking during non-breeding season, either as a single or mixed species.

1. Foraging Benefit

- copying others' foraging, either the area, object or behavior (imitation)
- reduced need for individual vigilance of threats
- cooperative capture of prey/food in some species

However, there could be a risk of kleptoparasitism i.e. stealing others food

The proper size of the flock will lead to more efficient feeding and hence the overall success of the bird.

2. Protective Benefit

- diminished risk to individual
- selfish herd effect
- confusion of predator e.g. swirling patterns of the flock
- greater overall vigilance and early warning

The flock size leads to a greater ability to see the predator and escape. Generally, when there is a danger, birds will seek a

flock. When the flock is in a risky situation, birds are more likely to call and warn each other. If the situation is safe, they are less likely to call. Dr. Dolby distinguishes the different vocalizations: the call to flock, or the alarm call which is generally high pitched.

However, there is a cost/benefit ratio which leads to the optimal flock size. The downside is the increased competition for food, and more aggression.

Mixed Species Flocking

The main reason for different species coming together is that this generates a larger pool, less competition, and a “flushing” effect.

In our region a mixed species flock is divided into:

- Nucleus birds: Tufted Titmice and Chickadees
- Satellite birds: woodpeckers (Downy, Hairy, Red Breasted), Nuthatches (white and red breasted), Brown creepers etc.

Dr. Dolby has run field experiments where nucleus birds have been removed from the flock and the satellite birds fare badly, are not as healthy, and their growth slows down.

Field Trip



Serious Birders at Washington's Birthplace

The group then drove to the George Washington Birthplace for observations at different sites. However, the fog was so dense that it was hard to see many birds at all.

1. Pope's Creek
 - Tundra Swans
 - Canada Geese
2. Tree stand along roadway where there was a good example of mixed flocking:
 - Tufted Titmice
 - Chickadees
 - Sapsucker
 - Yellow Rump Warbler
 - Northern Flicker
 - Red Breasted Nuthatch
 - Hairy Woodpecker
3. Shore Line
 - Bufflehead, male and female, diving
4. Pond
 - Gadwall

NMNM TO HEAD UP NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

Ted Munns has been elected president of the Northern Neck Native Plant Society. The term is two years. Ted replaces another NMNM, Carol Hammer, in this role. Congratulations Ted, and good luck.



Ted Munns

DOWSING 101

The following is Polly Ward's review of the dowsing presentation at the January 8 meeting.

Is this watermelon ripe? How many birds are in that flock?

If you understand dowsing, the answers may be easily revealed. Dowsing Lesson 101 by Bill Bonnell, president of the Chesapeake Bay Dowsers Association and vice-president of the American Society of Dowsers, was given to NNMN members attending the January 8 meeting. Bonnell, who is owner of Green Point Nursery in Lively, has been dowsing for more than ten years, and says anyone can do it.



Dowsing with a pendulum to determine fruit freshness.

To prove his point, he showed everyone how to make a pendulum, using a 6 inch piece of string and a nut (mechanical nut), with which we practiced. For some, it

seemed to work. This writer found her pendulum pointed on a chart to almost exactly the number of rocks in the jar; others missed it by a mile. The straw placed on the watermelon did (so it seemed to this writer) actually swing around to show its stage of ripeness.

In his opening remarks, Bonnell talked briefly of citations of dowsing, or divining, in Biblical, literary, and historical sources, and of current uses, including locating water and minerals. He spoke of recent successes in African villages where dowsing was employed, with remarkable accuracy, to locate wells. The "rod" may be the forked willow branch we've heard of, or a length of copper wire, or a crystal on a thread, or a string and a nut, or perhaps just the dowser's hand. I haven't branched out into any independent dowsing yet, but the next time I ponder the best cantaloupe, I just may try the broom straw dowsing.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

New Projects

Northern Neck Go Native E5j

An upcoming and exciting project led by the Northern Neck Native Plant Society is the GO NATIVE--GROW NATIVE campaign that will be rolled out in their 21 February meeting. This effort is based upon a successful program initiated on Virginia's Eastern Shore. The NNNPS will partner with local garden clubs, plant nurseries, Master Gardeners, **Master Naturalists**, schools, local government entities, and non-profit groups to stress the importance of planting and nurturing plants native to our coastal plain. Education will be the primary focus of this program and a full color brochure is

being prepared for public distribution. This important project is designed to inform our citizens of the importance of native plants for wildlife, ecology, conservation, and invasive plant removal thus accommodating natives. Partnering with volunteer organizations, the nursery industry, and local governmental entities is intended to insure success of our efforts.

Contact Paula Boundy 804-436-4944 email: paula.boundy@va.metrocast.net for more details.

Bluebird Trail at Indian Creek Country Club C3r

The purpose of the project is to build/obtain and erect 5-10 bluebird nesting boxes on the golf course at Indian Creek Golf Club, Kilmarnock, and to monitor those boxes providing an accurate account of the fledglings for the Virginia Bluebird Society.

Contact Joyce Mullins, 804 5880 6302 email hullcreekcottage@yahoo.com for more details.

Bluebird Trail Monitoring Stratford Hall C3s

Initially participants will work with Stratford Hall and VA Bluebird Society personnel to renovate and replace existing nesting boxes (approximately 50) on the Stratford Hall property. This will include installing predator guards and baffles and attaching the nest boxes to the support poles. After the boxes are in place participants will monitor nest activity on a weekly basis during the breeding season, keeping records on a Virginia Bluebird Society (VABS) form. Monitors will provide maintenance of the boxes as required. The coordinator will submit a consolidated report at the end of the season to VABS.

Contact John Narney, jnarney@verizon.net for details.

Ongoing Projects

Bluebird Monitoring



In addition to the two new Bluebird monitoring projects shown above, the Chapter has seven ongoing Bluebird projects.

| | | |
|------|---------------------------|----------------|
| C3e | Belle Isle SP | Paula Boundy |
| C3c2 | Laurel Point | Bill McConahey |
| C3d | Menokin | Pam Narney |
| C3e | Westmoreland SP | John Narney |
| C3f | Hills Quarter Golf Course | Paula Boundy |
| C3n | Woodville Park | Bill Walker |
| C3o | Barnsfield Park | Tommy Ngo |

Bluebird monitoring provides a pleasant and rewarding opportunity to log volunteer hours. There are monitoring sites in all four counties of the Northern Neck as well as King George and Gloucester. All monitoring project are listed on the Volunteer Management web site. Please contact the project leader listed above if you are interested in volunteering.

Menokin Flora/Fauna Survey C2c

The Menokin Flora and Fauna Survey is an informal survey that will be used to aid the Menokin Foundation in securing permits for two soft water access landing canoe/kayak sites and one view shed. Participants will work within 20 feet on both sides of two main trails, Tree Trail and Menokin Landing Trail, to survey Flora and Fauna and locate



Nancy Millar measuring Loblolly Pine

project will run from August 2012 until June of 2013 and may be extended.

Only twenty percent of the main trail was surveyed before the trails were closed for



Pam Collins reading the GPS

pnarney@verizon.net, for details.

NOTES FROM CHARLENE

Preventing Frostbite and Hypothermia

Prolonged exposure to low temperatures, wind or moisture—whether it be on a ski slope or in a stranded car—can result in cold-related illnesses such as frostbite and

any Rare, Endangered, or Threatened species.

Because Master Naturalists is a volunteer organization, members will choose areas they

wish to sample. The

hypothermia. The National Safety Council offers this information to help you spot and put a halt to these winter hazards. Frostbite is the most common injury resulting from exposure to severe cold. Superficial frostbite is characterized by white, waxy, or grayish-yellow patches on the affected areas. The skin feels cold and numb. The skin surface feels stiff but underlying tissue feels soft and pliable when depressed. Treat superficial frostbite by taking the victim inside immediately. Remove any constrictive clothing items that could impair circulation. If you notice signs of frostbite, immediately seek medical attention. Re-warming usually takes 20 to 40 minutes or until tissues soften.

Hypothermia occurs when the body's temperature drops below 95 degrees Fahrenheit. Symptoms of this condition include change in mental status, uncontrollable shivering, cool abdomen and a low core body temperature. Severe hypothermia may produce rigid muscles, dark and puffy skin, irregular heart and respiratory rates, and unconsciousness. Treat hypothermia by protecting the victim from further heat loss and calling for immediate medical attention. Get the victim out of the cold. Add insulation such as blankets, pillows, towels or newspapers beneath and around the victim. Be sure to cover the victim's head. Replace wet clothing with dry clothing. Handle the victim gently because rough handling can cause cardiac arrest. Keep the victim in a horizontal (flat) position. Give artificial respiration or CPR (if you are trained) as necessary.

hunting season. The trails are open again and additional volunteers are needed to help complete this effort. Contact Pam Narney,

How to prevent cold-related illnesses

Avoid frostbite and hypothermia when you are exposed to cold temperatures by wearing layered clothing, eating a well-balanced diet, and drinking warm, non-alcoholic, caffeine-free liquids to maintain fluid levels. Avoid becoming wet, as wet clothing loses 90 percent of its insulating value.

Permission to reprint granted by the National Safety Council, a membership organization dedicated to protecting life and promoting health.

NATURE APPS

REFUGES



Explore 11 iconic National Wildlife Refuges of the Chesapeake Bay and share your wildlife encounters from each location. Connect with a community of outdoor enthusiasts, help document

species, and promote conservation, all with your iPhone with this [free app](#) designed by the Chesapeake Conservancy, supported by the USFWS, and built by the National Geographic Society using Project Noah's popular wildlife photo-sharing service.

Free App: Virginia Tech Tree Identification

-- Available on Google Play --

https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=org.pottssoftware.agps21&feature=search_result#?t=W251bGwsMSwyLDEsIm9yZy5wb3R0c3NvZnR3YXJlLnFncHM5MSJd --

It contains fact sheets for 969 woody plants from all over North America with an in depth description, range map and thousands of color images of leaves, flowers, fruit, twigs, bark and form. Users can narrow the species list for any location in North America using the phone's GPS, network signal or any entered address or zip code. For use with the Android smart phone; an iPhone version is currently in development.

FROM THE PRESIDENT

The Chapter's annual report was completed and submitted on January 10. A copy has been placed in the documents section of the Volunteer Management web site. When putting the data together for the report we found that some members missed recertification by just a few volunteer or advanced training hours. We also noted that some had waited until the last minute to enter their hours for the year. With the start of the new year I encourage all members to work toward ensuring that at the end of the year they will have the 40 hours of volunteer time and eight hours of advanced training needed for certification. This important not only to the individual member but also to the Chapter and the organizations that we support.

UPCOMING ADVANCED TRAINING*

February 14 – “Naked Tree Walk” 10:00 & “Forestry in the NN” 1:00: Rich Steensma. BISP

March 12 - Gen Meeting, "Medicinal, Edible- and Historic Plants in the NN" Lise Maring. 2:00 to 3:30 PM, Menokin

April 9 – “Tracks and Scat” with field training, Charlene Talcott. 10:00AM to 12:00 PM, BISP

May 9 – Gen Meeting, “Along Came a Spider” Teta Kain. 2:00 to 3:00. Wicomico Curch (TBD)

Jun 11 – “Pesky and Misunderstood Critters Especially Snakes” Temple Moore. 1:00 to 2:30, Northumberland Library

Thanks to, Carol Hammer, Ted Munns, Kathy Sachs, Polly Ward and Charlene Talcott for their work on this issue.

Please send items of interest, advanced training opportunities, news and pictures about your projects, and other newsletter items to 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>