

# Northern Neck Master Naturalists

March 2012

## STATEWIDE 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 our two main venues will be the Virginia Museum of Natural History in Martinsville, and nearby Fairy Stone State Park in Patrick County. We will have 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.

## MASTER NATURALISTS AT WORK

### Trail Improvement

Margaret Anne Fohl relaxes on the bench that Glyn Surdam built for the Menokin Tree Trail. After everyone had walked down the trail with Byron Carmean, and Charlie and Hilda Wilson, it was a shock to realize that coming back was all up hill. Glyn put his bench precisely in the spot where most folks need a breather. The bench is



extra long, very sturdy, and as, Margaret Anne, can attest, verrrry comfortable. The next time that you are at Menokin, visit the bench that Glyn made.

### After the Storm



As a prelude to the "After the Storm" workshop in April, Master Naturalists and others installed a demonstration rain garden in Placid Bay.

## OF INTEREST

### Organic Pesticide

With spring approaching it is time to get ready for our high speed hovering guest the Ruby

Throated Humming Bird. Keeping insect pests such as ants and wasps out of Humming Bird feeders is always a challenge to the backyard bird watcher. Doing it without harmful



chemicals is every naturalist's goal. Pam Narney has found an effective **organic** solution for ridding her feeder of pesky wasps at no cost. Now if she can get the Mantis to come back this year she will be all set.

**Field Guide to the Chesapeake Bay App** -- The free app provides geographically targeted information so a user can be in Central Maryland or the Virginia Mountains and pull up data about plants and animals indigenous to those particular areas of the watershed. The guide provides bird calls, pinchable photos, range maps, identifiable characteristics of animals and more. It has advanced search functions and is designed to be visually appealing and user friendly. The app is available from a computer through [www.cbtrust.org](http://www.cbtrust.org) (<http://www.cbtrust.org/site/c.mijPKXPCJnH/b.5724307/apps/s/content.asp?ct=8498983>) or by visiting the Apple Appstore from an iPhone and searching for Chesapeake Wildlife. The guide, from the Chesapeake Bay Trust, is free and a quick download.

**Virginia State Parks App** -- The Official Virginia State Parks Pocket Ranger® app offers educational and interpretive information. With the help of the app, users may locate the nearest park and gain access to in-depth information such as trail-touring videos, activities and descriptions designed to enhance their overall visit. In addition, the app includes advanced GPS mapping technology allowing park visitors to mark, record and share trail blazes, explorations and discoveries. To download the Virginia State Parks Pocket Ranger® app go to [www.stateparkapps.com/apps/va/apps.php](http://www.stateparkapps.com/apps/va/apps.php). It can also be downloaded by visiting Apple iTunes or Android Market. For information on all Virginia State Park offerings, including the new app, go to [www.virginiastateparks.gov](http://www.virginiastateparks.gov). Developed collaboratively by the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation and ParksByNature, the new Pocket Ranger® Mobile Tour Guide is available at no charge thanks to the Virginia Association for Parks and Imperial Multimedia.

### **VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES**

Possible Restoration Grant Volunteer Opportunities and Training at VIMS

Sarah McGuire, Education Coordinator at the Chesapeake Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve in VA, located at VIMS, asked our chapter for help applying for a Five Star Restoration Grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. The Board agreed to sign onto to the grant proposal. If approved, this project will provide Advanced Training opportunities for Virginia Master Naturalists in the areas of living shorelines, shoreline management, oysters, restoration, and habitats. Several Advanced Training opportunities will be hosted at CBNERR in the fall of 2012.

**Westmoreland State Park (WSP)** sitting between George Washington's birthplace and Stratford Hall in Westmoreland County occupies over 1,300 acres of beautiful woodlands along about a mile and a half of Potomac shoreline.



#### Horsehead Cliff, WSP

The park offers camping, cabins, swimming, boating, and over seven miles of hiking trails that allow visitors to observe the flora and fauna of Virginia's coastal plain as well as scenic views of the Potomac River. In addition to the things that WSP offers to its regular visitors, it offers Northern Neck Master Naturalists three volunteer projects that can be used to rack up hours toward annual certification.

**Project C3e:** Bluebird Trail Monitoring at Westmoreland State Park. In February, the NN Audubon Society replaced the old Bluebird



nesting boxes like the one shown here with twenty new boxes. The new Bluebird trail starts at the main gate of the park and ends at the Visitors Center.

NNMN and the Friends of Westmoreland State Park have a joint project to monitor these boxes throughout the nesting season (April to September). Monitoring consist of checking each box weekly and recording the activity in the box. The goal is to have four teams of two with each team monitoring one week a month. Monitoring should take one-and-a-half to two hours. This is an excellent opportunity to enjoy the park setting while getting volunteer hours. Contact John Narney, [jnarney@verizon.net](mailto:jnarney@verizon.net), for details.

**Project S3f:** Native Garden Maintenance at Westmoreland State Park. NNMN and the Native Plant society planted an extensive native plant garden at the WSP Visitors Center in 2009. On February 25 NNMN and other volunteers planted native plants in raised beds in front of the WSP Discovery Center. These demonstration gardens are meant to show



people that native plants can be used decoratively in their yards in place of non-native and invasive plants. For people to buy into native plants, the plants need to be presented well. This means that the plantings need to be maintained. At this time park personnel, who are stretched extremely thin with bigger problems than tending native plant gardens, would appreciate volunteer assistance. This is a project that can be done by individuals or as a group effort. If you are into gardening and native plants this is an excellent opportunity to



get volunteer hours. Coordinate with Park Interpreter Shanna Minarik, [shanna.minarik@dcr.virginia.gov](mailto:shanna.minarik@dcr.virginia.gov). The Friends of Westmoreland State Park group is having a planting day for more native plants on May 21. NNMN are welcome to participate; contact John Narney, [jnarney@verizon.net](mailto:jnarney@verizon.net), for details.

**Project S4i:** Nature Trail Maintenance at Westmoreland State Park. Westmoreland State Park (WSP) has over seven miles of hiking trails that allow the visitors to observe the flora and fauna of Virginia's coastal plain as well as scenic views of the Potomac River. As is the case with all our state parks, Westmoreland personnel assets are limited. The park would like our assistance in keeping trails clear of litter and debris. This is especially important at this time at WSP because of the extensive damage caused by last year's hurricane Irene. They are



still cleaning up. This project will aid park personnel and help to provide an enhanced nature experience to all visitors. This is a project that can be done by individuals or as a group effort. The park is having a beach/trail clean up on May 21. Coordinate with Park Interpreter Shanna Minarik, [shanna.minarik@dcr.virginia.gov](mailto:shanna.minarik@dcr.virginia.gov).

**Remember that Master Naturalists can count volunteer time at state parks for both Master Naturalist certification and state park volunteer hours.**

#### **ADVANCE WITH US**

Make 2012 your year for taking advantage of all the advanced training opportunities planned with you in mind. For the first time ever, each month will have at least one advanced training possibility – sometimes two or three.

On odd-numbered months, the advanced training programs are on the second Tuesday of each month. From January-May and September-October, these training sessions may be at different locations, but are always held at 2 p.m., followed by a brief business meeting at 3 p.m. There may also be interesting additional training held on other days in addition to the second Tuesday.

For even-numbered months, there are also advanced training events at a variety of times and places. They are all about subjects to challenge and intrigue you. Check the Northern Neck Master Naturalist website for the particulars: subject, place, and time.

To date, programs have taught us about the benefits of honey bees in the Coastal Plain; taken us for a winter tree walk at Menokin; introduced us to the challenges of rescuing and rehabilitating native wildlife; and featured the beauty and benefits of native plants.

Our year started with “Flora for Honey Bees in the Coastal Plain.” Ted Munns, one of our Master Naturalists, treated us to a talk featuring a succession of succulent treats to tempt honeybees to pollinate our Coastal native plants. As a beekeeper, Ted told us about the honeybees’ favorite snacks – snacks being squeezed out of existence by alien, invasive plants. Our conclusion: while honeybees

themselves are not native, they certainly perform a beneficial job of pollination of our native plants.

February found us in a Coastal Plain forest at Menokin. While we hiked the half-mile trail and breathed in the fresh air, Byron Carmean (a contributor to the Remarkable Trees of Virginia book) could not be stumped. His amazing knowledge of trees kept us all eager to ask questions and learn more as we followed him down the tree-lined trail.

After a brief slide show orientation program (again at Menokin), our first March advanced training opportunity set us on the trail to the Wild Bunch Wildlife Rehabilitation facility in Warsaw. As Diana O'Connor, director of the Wild Bunch and a wildlife rehabilitator for over 30 years, lead us around the grounds, she told us of her many and varied volunteer needs. Construction/repair of animal enclosures; care and feeding of the critters; office organization, curriculum planning for school programs and community groups, creation of on-site education programs for visitors to learn about Virginia's native wildlife. All volunteers are welcome at the 83-acre facility.

Our second March advanced training opportunity was a Virginia native plant extravaganza! Jan Newton fairly danced around the Belle Isle Visitor Center as she mesmerized us with her beautiful plant photos and her extensive knowledge. She left us with lists of native plants, websites of information, and an enthusiasm to get out and plant natives.

Hop on board our advanced training train and join us for the rest of the trip. Each month holds new opportunities to expand your knowledge, and see new places. Check the MN website for a complete listing and watch each month for an expanded, informational write up.

Call Gail Sigler with questions or comments at 804-472-2409 or 703-455-8637.

## **Wildlife Center of VA Announces Schedule for "On the Road" Rehabilitation Classes Starting February 25**

Amanda Nicholson, Director of Outreach for the Wildlife Center of Virginia announces their full schedule of "On the Road" introductory wildlife rehabilitation classes can be found [online](http://www.wildlifecenter.org/wp/rehabilitator-training/wildlife-rehabilitation-classes/), [www.wildlifecenter.org/wp/rehabilitator-training/wildlife-rehabilitation-classes/](http://www.wildlifecenter.org/wp/rehabilitator-training/wildlife-rehabilitation-classes/).

### **Saturday, March 31**

Bridgewater College, Bridgewater

Classes TBD

### **Saturday, June 30**

Lynchburg Parks and Recreation, Lynchburg

*Wildlife Capture, Restraint, Handling, & Transport*

*Introduction to Raising Orphaned Mammals*

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Thank you for the assistance of Pam Narney (who sent in lots of pictures), Gail Sigler (who sent articles), and John Narney (who made the newsletter look nice).

Please send items of interest, advanced training, news and pictures about your projects, and other newsletter items to [ctalcott@nnwifi.com](mailto:ctalcott@nnwifi.com)