

# Northern Neck Master Naturalists

## *Nurturing Nature*



**2014 Basic Training Class Graduation.** From left: Bobbie Burton, Pam Narney, Don Hess, Brian Barbre, Katharina Bergdoll, John Powell, Hurricane Thompson (seated), Alison Sowa, Bill Blair, Bryna Brennan, Nancy Joel, Petra Walian, Pete McElroy, Betsy Gorn, Bev McElroy, Elma Dirolf, and Paula Boundy.

### NEW MASTER NATURALISTS

After thirteen weeks of intense study, the Northern Neck Master Naturalists 2014 Basic Training Class graduated on May 8<sup>th</sup>. The fourteen new Master Naturalists are pictured above standing in front of Hull Springs Farm's 400 plus year-old Red Oak.

The class of 2014 came from varied backgrounds and experience levels but they shared a deep interest in nature and all things natural. The class quickly coalesced into a group of students eager for knowledge of the area around them. Their serious quest for knowledge did not negatively impact their attitude, however. They studied hard but maintained great attitudes in class. In short they had fun. So that the rest of the Chapter

can get to know its new members better, we asked the members to provide a short write up about their backgrounds, level of knowledge, and goals. You will see from their writing that some are outgoing and forthcoming while others have chosen to keep their light under a bushel. The fourteen graduates are:

#### **Brian Barbre**

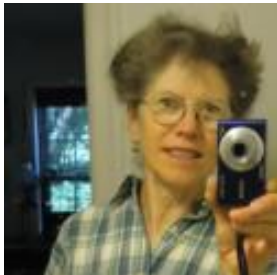
Brian Barbre is a native Virginian who was raised in Staunton where he worked as a costumed interpreter at the Museum of American Frontier Culture. He relocated to Fredericksburg to earn his Undergraduate degree in Historic Preservation and worked for many years as



May 2014

a city gardener and a carpenter/blacksmith, primarily in the Fredericksburg Historic District. He then attended Michigan Technological University for the Peace Corps Masters International program. His service was 27 months in the highlands of Ethiopia where he worked with the Ethiopian Wolf Conservation Program and the Frankfurt Zoological Society in and around the Bale Mountains National Park. After Ethiopia he returned to Michigan to complete his graduate work and earn his M.S. in Forest Ecology and Management. Brian now works at Hull Springs Farm as Educational Programming and Facilities Coordinator, but will be leaving that position for a job in Fredericksburg.

**Katharina Bergdoll**



The Virginia countryside is part of me...having grown up roaming a large hardwood forest along Gunn's Run Creek in Charles City county. There were also old-

field areas where Bob Whites, Rabbits, Pheasants and Doves all flocked...and were hunted by my two brothers and I, in my teens, before becoming vegetarian. My last year of high school was spent in Gloucester county to which we had moved as the house in Charles City, bought for a family of eleven, (I am youngest of nine!) became too large for we few who remained at home. Inspired by an older brother (Artist/Naturalist) who had moved to N.Y.C. to live, I went from high school to two schools there: The Art Student's League of N.Y.and the National Academy of Design, School of Fine Art, in both of which I studied, with Merit Scholarships, for four years. Summers were always spent in Gloucester, along Ferry Creek and the Piankatank. After leaving school, I moved back to Virginia, living in Williamsburg for several

years, then, to Mathews county where I painted landscape, still-life, and a few portraits. After twelve years there, moved to Richmond, continuing to paint, having a few shows and selling from my studio.

In 2008 I acquired half-ownership of 63 acres.of woodland and fields on Newton's Pond in Westmoreland. The pastoral beauty of the Northern Neck went straight to my heart...I knew I must live there...and, in April 2010 I found a suitable Cape of modest size only a mile from my land, at Hague (love the name, too) ...sold the Richmond house and bought it...have lived here most happily ever since. The wonderful landscape subjects for paintings are everywhere! At the time of contemplating my move to the country, I thought it was time to adopt a dog, as my aged cat had died some time previous, and in the country a dog is most companionable...I found Rosa at the rescue organization, B.A.R.K. just north of Richmond.

**Bill Blair**

Bill Blair has 2 BA degrees Accounting and Managerial Economics, MBA and MA degree Computer Science and almost completed my PHD in Museum Science. US Army Officer after 35 years retired as Commandant of the Aviation School Fort Eustis. Retired from My Own Consulting Business. Retired from State of Virginia as site manager for the Jamestown/Yorktown Foundation 2 museums. Living history Reenactor/Instructor volunteer for 53 years in excess of 17,000 hours, administrator for a French & Indian War unit located in 14 states and 3 international countries. Master Gardener/Tree Steward volunteer for 7 years with 4000+ hours. Boy Scouts of America member and leader for 62



years. Member of the Camellia Society, Native Plant Society, Rose Society, International Society of Arboriculture. Currently serve on Gloucester Clean Community Committee, member of the Executive Leadership Committee VCE-Gloucester, Master Gardener Coordinator Gloucester County Extension, Sitting President Gloucester Master Gardener Association.

Hobbies include: Hunting, Fishing, Boating, Wilderness hiking and teaching wilderness survival, wild edible & medicinal plants, primitive cooking, riparian buffers, plant propagation, Tree maintenance, DGIF's Hunter Safety Course, Management Philosophy and working/organizing training course's of all types.

I want to learn more about the environment, Northern Neck, meet a lot of good people who enjoy the same things I do and help to educate the public on what we/they can do now to help the future.

**Bryna Brennan**



Bryna is a former war correspondent with The Associated Press. She has some knowledge of aquatic ecology, basic ecology, and wildflowers. She could teach journalism. Her primary interests are wildflowers

and birding. She has done environmental stewardship volunteer work in the past. Bryna currently trains service dogs.

**Elma Dirolf**

Elma is new to the Northern Neck. She has a degree in elementary education, and has some knowledge of basic ecology, birding, mammalogy, ornithology, watersheds and

wildflowers. She could probably teach art. Her primary interests are birding, aquatic ecology, citizen science skills, ornithology and stream monitoring.



Elma has no past naturalist volunteer experience but is eager to participate in citizen science and environmental stewardship activities.

**Betsy Gorn**



Undergrad degree in Art History. Masters in Museum Education with my thesis about my Northern Neck ancestors, living near Warsaw, VA. Twenty years doing black and white film

photography which started while traveling and living in Asia for four years. Spent the last years of work as a teacher in New Mexico where I developed ecology programs for school age students. After working in a Native American school for a few years I realized how little I knew about the natural world and how much more my students knew! After retirement I am again working part time teaching English as a second language to refugees from Bhutan, Afghanistan, and Iraq, and attempting to become proficient in digital photography. And of course really enjoying my time training as a Master Naturalist.

**Don Hess**

Jack of all trades, master of none. Background in communications, marketing, public relations, pari-mutuel racing and broadcasting. General Manager of three US race tracks. Some knowledge of basic ecology, birding, journalism and photography. Could teach information



technology and marketing/outreach. Interests include most of the ogy (and all of the orgys): ecology, herpetology, mamalogy, etc.; photography and wetlands. Has been an

elementary school teacher. Interested in citizen science and environmental stewardship projects. Proprietor of the Erica Mall.

**Nancy Joel**

When Nancy speaks you know she is not from around here. Retired (semi) from the Westmoreland County Public Schools where she taught and still subs at the Middle School. Some knowledge of photography, Taxonomy, Watersheds and Virginia Biogeography. Primary interests are in the areas of photography, ornithology, birding, citizen science skills and taxonomy. Experience in volunteer outreach and stewardship programs to include Bluebird trails, butterfly gardens and shoreline planting.



**Bev McElroy**

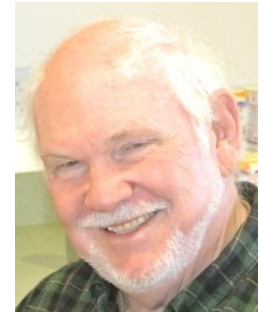


My life and career in Occupational Health/Therapy changed on April 15, 2013 after deciding to relocate to Essex County Virginia. A new career had emerged for me (and my husband) as caretakers of family owned land. Located on the Rappahannock River with diverse wildlife, forested areas, farmland, pond, landscaped acreage, and cows! The time spent on my grandparents' farms, becoming a Master Gardener and volunteer work at Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden honed

my intent to be an informed yet perennial student always seeking ways to be a better land steward. Becoming and belonging to the Master Naturalist group will carry my intent to the highest standard via informed resources, current information and ongoing support from those who embrace a love of nature.

**Pete McElroy**

Pete is a man of few words. The property upon which I live with my wife has a shoreline on the Rappahannock river, open fields, wetlands, woodlands, pond, streams and acres of grass. I am hoping that I will gain the necessary information from the Master Naturalist classes to become a better steward of the natural areas.



**John Powell**



John is a Master Gardener and tree steward in Gloucester County. He has some knowledge in dendrology and this is his principle interest as a MN. He has extensive

experience in naturalist outreach through his volunteer work as a tree steward and as a Master Gardener. John also participated in Master Gardener Training School.

**Alison Sower**

I've spent most of my life in Fairfax. It was a sleepy southern town when I was growing up, unlike today. I used to hear bobwhites outside all the time. My Grammie, who was my Dad's mother, had a farm in Burke with the old farmhouse, barns, outbuildings, chickens, horses, cows and lots of feral barn cats. The



fields were full of swallows and the woods were full of pink lady slippers that grew along the streams. My time on the farm, though it was not as frequent as I would have liked it to

be, left more of an impression on me than I ever realized until I started the master naturalist program.

As an only child I had a solitary childhood, so I developed a great imagination from daydreaming and books. I have many interests; in fact some started even before I could read. They include presidents, planets and the space program, the Civil War, old photography, genealogy, birds, dinosaurs, law and medicine. Currently, once a week I volunteer in an elder care program at a local hospital. Also I am the caretaker for my nearly 94 year old aunt. Once the master naturalist classes are over with, I want to return to working, if not full time then part time. I performed real estate titles exams for years in Fairfax and about a dozen other counties. I learned a lot about local history as well as my own ancestors, through deed books and other court documents. For twelve years I was a family services counselor at Fairfax Memorial Park where my parents are buried. I arranged and attended over 1,000 burials during that time.

When I saw the article in the Northern Neck News for the master naturalist program I literally jumped up and ran to the computer to apply. I had told several people I wanted to learn about the area from scratch. I had been coming down to the Northern Neck for nearly 4 years, some of it as a landowner, without meeting anyone who had similar interests to me. I finally have had a chance to enjoy the beauty and history of the area. So now I drive

down every Wednesday, I have met wonderful classmates, instructors and speakers, and have been given the opportunity to see the world in a different way.

### **Henry (Hurricane) Thompson**

My name is Henry Joseph John Thompson Jr but please call me Hurricane. I am one of 15 children so I love a crowd. I have a BS in Agricultural Engineering from the



University of Kentucky and a MS in Environmental Sciences from the University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA). I served 28+ years in the Air Force, mostly as a Bioenvironmental Engineer; our slogan is "Detect to Protect". My wife and I manage a 501c3 animal welfare charity called Precious Purrs and Paws; we have 29 dogs & 70+ cats. I belong to: Gloucester Master Gardener Association [sitting treasurer]; Gloucester CERT (Community Emergency Response Team), Gloucester Ruritan Club & Go Green Gloucester Advisory Committee (sitting chairman). I am a former long distance runner who hates marathons. I am an avid biker, beekeeper and music lover. I am thrilled to be considered for the role of Northern Neck Master Naturalist, both for the opportunity to educate my neighbors about their natural environment and because this may be the most 'fun' group of volunteers I have ever encountered.

### **Petra Walian**



Hello All! I am Petra Walian, mother of 11 year old twin girls, newlywed wife of David Dobson, lover of the outdoors, gardening and nature; enthusiastic crafter with not enough time and

potential master naturalist. I live in Hardyville,

VA in a small community that borders Healey's Creek, and am probably one of the few without a boat, but am lucky enough to get onto the creek with my family and our canoe. (who said working for it is not fun?). We love exploring the outdoors, hiking and camping and discovering. I received my Biology degree at Longwood College and went on to study Cytology at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. My first real job took me to Baltimore, Maryland where I worked as a staff cytotechnologist for 6 years. It is in Baltimore that I trained to become a volunteer EMT, firefighter and rescue tech. Being a part of the local fire department and spending many hours volunteering in several different capacities was a truly rewarding experience. When I returned to Virginia, I managed the cytology department at a private laboratory in Richmond and Chesapeake. In those days I had no children and no time for volunteer work but soon found myself in the company of multiple birth children and had new options for volunteerism. Along with parenting my children I served as president of the Peninsula Mothers of Multiples for five years and also served on the tri-state board for a number of years. I worked at Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation for just over three years as museum program assistant and in the office of volunteer services, helping organize and execute programs with a volunteer staff of 500. It was quite an adventure and I met some wonderful friends several are VMN's! I look forward to contributing my time to various projects through VA Master Naturalist with the added hope to engage my family in becoming aware of their natural surroundings and helping develop their curiosity and interest in volunteering.

## NEW NORTHERN NECK MASTER NATURALISTS "GO WILD"

Six members of the recently graduated NNMN class logged volunteer hours while enjoying a pleasant, albeit windy, late morning and early afternoon staffing the Chapter's outreach booth at Rappahannock River Valley National Wildlife Refuge's annual "Go Wild!" event at the Hutchinson Tract, north of Tappahannock, on Sunday, May 18. "Go Wild!" is an exciting, fun-filled day packed with activities for all ages. Guests visited with conservation exhibitors offering information on local efforts; and participated in a number of events; including a birds and binoculars scavenger hunt for children, nature walks, and birdhouse building. This year's event included archery and BB gun ranges.

Katharina Bergdoll, Betsy Gorn, Pete and Bev McElroy, Hurricane Thompson and Alison Sowar cycled in and out of the booth chalking up volunteer hours. Hurricane's backyard bird identification game, shown in this picture,



"Go Wild" Guests Playing Hurricane's Bird Identification Gamewhile Katharina Bergdoll Looks On

proved to be a big hit with young and old alike. Special thanks to Kate Daniel who schlepped the tent and booth contents to and from Hutchinson and stayed around all day as volunteer wrangler.

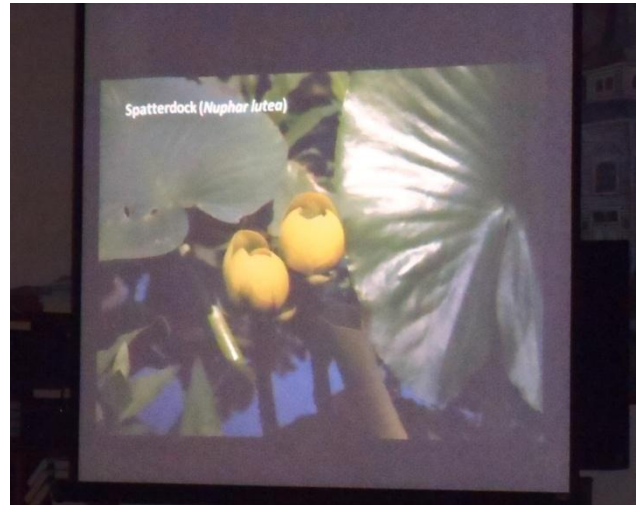
Working the outreach booth is a fun way to interact with the public while gaining volunteer hours. Jane Henley ([MLewisNut@aol.com](mailto:MLewisNut@aol.com)), the Chapter Outreach Coordinator, has events planned this summer at venues throughout the Northern Neck and is always looking for volunteers.

### EVER KAYAKED ON A DRAGON'S BACK?

On May 13, Teta Kaine, Paddlemaster of Dragon Run, presented "Flora of the Dragon". Her vivid photographs and fascinating descriptions gave us a taste for the Dragon. Dragon Run (near Saluda) flows into the Piankatank River. It is one of the best protected scenic waterways in Virginia with only three houses on it. *"The **Dragon** wilderness is a unique ecosystem which has been ranked second in ecological significance among 232 areas investigated in a Smithsonian Institution study which covered 12,600 square miles of the Chesapeake Bay region".* See [www.dragonrun.org](http://www.dragonrun.org).

In some spots the Dragon is fifty feet deep, but most kayakers have scraped their bottoms on the scales of the dragon as they powered their way through narrow and shallow (almost nonexistent) channels. If you'd like to see the Dragon up close, plan on an April outing. Later on Tearthumb and other vegetation close up the channel.

Teta revealed some of the Dragon's secrets. Green tree frogs hide in pickerelweed, which shimmers like an ebony jewelbox. Bald cypress, sometimes eight feet in diameter, live to be ancient because nothing bothers them, neither fire nor flood. The Dragon is lush with Duckweed, the smallest flowering plant in the US, as well as resurrection ferns, wild celery, lizard's tail, and American Feather tail, rare in all of Virginia. In winter you can see Feather tail



Spatterdock (Nuphar lutea) on Dragon Run

under the ice. Seven years ago, Teta saw white turtlehead, but hasn't seen it since. Hooded and Prothonotary warblers flit through the understory as kayaks move down the run. But take care. This Dragon can bite. Many novice kayakers have found themselves upended in very cold water.

If you prefer a land route, Dragon run has five walking trails but only one, The Mascot Trail, is open to the public. For more information go to [www.dragonrun.org](http://www.dragonrun.org) to play with the Dragon.

### VMN CONTINUING EDUCATION

#### Continuing Education Webinar Series

The next webinar in the series will be on June 11 from 12-1pm. Dr. Rachel Licker, with the Woodrow Wilson School of Public & International Affairs at Princeton University, will be presenting on climate change. Information related to this webinar will be posted on the Virginia Master Naturalist website (<http://www.virginiamasternaturalist.org/training.html>) under the "Continuing Education Webinar Series" link. Previous webinars are also available for download at this link.

Hours for the webinars are recorded to the *VMN-Advanced Training Webinar Series* project. This is the last entry in the list of projects on the VMS.

### Habitat Facilitator Training

Carol Heiser, DGIF, will be holding a Habitat Facilitator "Train-the-Trainer" Workshop on July 30 at the George Washington Birthplace National Monument. A previous message went out to NNMN members to gauge interest, and enough members did want to attend, so the workshop is now a "go".

The workshop is an all day affair, starting at 8:15 AM and running to about 4:00 PM. There is no cost for this training, but taking it does mean that you're committing to volunteer a minimum of 10 hours of contact time for DGIF habitat-related projects.

If you did not previously express an interest in attending, but now would like to do so, please contact Bonnie Wilson ([bartikbk@me.com](mailto:bartikbk@me.com)) for a flyer with all the details.

### VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

#### Projects at Rappahannock Westminister Canterbury

Tom Teeples has created five projects around Rappahannock Westminister Canterbury in Irvington. These projects are:

- C3t** Monitor Bluebird Trail
- C5j** Plant Survey
- E2h** Create Trail Maps
- S2o** Invasive Plant Removal
- S4j** Nature Trail Maintenance

Contact Tom for details and volunteer opportunities. [tomteeples@gmail.com](mailto:tomteeples@gmail.com)

### Chapter Outreach Booth

Jane Henley has created an attractive and informative display to support our Chapter outreach activities. The materials show Master



NNMN Booth at "Go Wild"

Naturalist activities and highlight the Chapter's focus on native pollinators. Jane has done the heavy lifting both literally figuratively but she can't do it all. Depending on the length of the event, four to six or more volunteers are needed to help set up, man the booth, and take down.

### ITEMS OF INTEREST

#### Becoming Bear Aware!



THINK THIS



NOT THIS

With a healthy, growing black bear population, bear sightings are becoming common throughout much of Virginia. A highly adaptable and intelligent animal, bears can live



close to people. While local residents often do not know bears are living close by, some bears may wander into residential areas due to the smell of food around homes. The most common food attractants are birdfeeders, garbage, and pet food; however, outdoor grills, livestock food, compost, fruit trees, and beehives can also attract bears.

What should you do if you see a bear?

- Enjoy and keep a respectful distance! In most cases, the bear will move on quickly.
- If a bear is up a tree on or near your property, give it space. Do not approach, and bring your pets inside to provide the bear a clear path to leave your property.

Read more information (at the DGIF website [www.dgif.virginia.gov](http://www.dgif.virginia.gov)) on what you should do if a bear is consuming bird seed, garbage, pet food, etc. on your property, and what to do if you see a bear cub on your property.

Always remember that a bear is a wild animal, and that it is detrimental to the bear, as well as illegal in Virginia, to feed a bear under any circumstances. Feeding bears may cause them to lose their natural distrust of humans, creating situations where bears may become habituated and sometimes aggressive towards people. Thus, human and bear safety is the responsibility of all residents of the Commonwealth.

If you experience a bear problem after taking appropriate steps of prevention, please call the NEW Wildlife Conflict Helpline at (855) 571-9003.

Living with Bears in Virginia, a video produced by the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, is available on the DGIF website and provides tips for peacefully

coexisting with bears. Please visit [www.dgif.virginia.gov/wildlife/bear/](http://www.dgif.virginia.gov/wildlife/bear/) to view the video, print a brochure, read more about bears in Virginia, and view other useful links to bear information.

## **Invasive Plant Management**

### **Best Savory Japanese Knotweed Recipe**

[Andrea Marshall](#) Sustainable Wild Medicine Foraging Instructor

Japanese knotweed is one of the most invasive plants in the northern hemisphere. In North America, well meaning conservationists and government workers are heavily promoting the use of herbicides in our public places to control



**Japanese Knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*)**

these plants. Yet many of these plants are important traditional food and medicine plants. Japanese knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*) is a traditional Asian vegetable. Gather the asparagus like spears as they arise from the ground ( rising up now in NH) cut into 1" pieces and blanch for 1-2 minutes. Set aside. Saute your favorite meat or veggies and add the knotweed during the last minute. Season with a dressing of ginger, soy sauce and sesame...Yum. The root is called "Takes away Pain" in China and can be dug to create a strong anti-inflammatory. If the plant is getting into ecosystems where it is unwanted, you can

cover it with black plastic for a year to kill the plant. Then dig. It is much, much easier to dig a dead plant than a living one...But, only make medicine from the roots of living plants. PS. This plant was originally brought to the US to hide portable toilets. Perhaps seeing it beside pottys so often has helped folks attain a disgust for this highly useful plant!

### FROM THE PRESIDENT

From the Prez,

Congratulations to our newest graduates! I'm very excited and impressed with many of them jumping right into helping on our various projects and coming up with some of their own.

It seems we are getting some Spring before the heat of Summer takes over, hopefully you are able to get out and enjoy our NN landscapes and shores. Remember to take photos and enter that exquisite one in the photo contest.

At the last meeting, we decided that "Nurturing Nature" would be our motto. If anyone is interested in coming up with a design to display this at our booth, let the board know, we welcome any ideas.

I also want to remind you to log in your hours (I'm as guilty of not doing this as the next one), but it lets our sponsors and the State see what we are doing and will keep the conferences and training opportunities in the budget that so many of us take advantage of.

Have a great Summer!

Cindy

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Thanks to: President Cindy Baliles, Pam Narney, Charlene Talcott, and especially the new members for their input on this issue.

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