

Northern Neck Master Naturalists

Winter 2018



January Sunrise Westmoreland State Park

With the beginning of the new year, the Northern Neck Master Naturalist Chapter starts its eleventh year with a robust and active membership. In 2017 our 73 active members drove over fifty thousand miles to perform 5,445 hours of volunteer work, surpassing 2016 by 28%. They also completed 855 hours of continuing education, 48% more than 2016. In all 33 members were recertified, eight achieved initial certification and 17 completed the 2017 Basic Training Class. This newsletter will highlight some of the events of last year and address some of the plans to carry this success forward into 2018.

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CHAPTER'S TENTH ANNIVERSARY

Thanks to Temple Moore for his historical perspective

Would you believe a dead bird was a catalyst in the formation of the Northern Neck Master Naturalists? Well it was. In 2007 a group of "non trained or certified" naturalists were on a bird walk with biologist Sandy Spencer. One of the group, Temple Moore, had brought with him a dead bird that had flown into the window of his house. He hoped that Sandy would verify his identification of the bird. The resulting discussions led to the conclusion that these nature lovers would like to know more about the natural world around them and that they should take steps to learn more. Temple had heard about the Virginia Master Naturalist Program and suggested that it might meet their desires.

Temple contacted Michelle Prysby, the state MN Program Director and asked about forming a chapter. The dead line for completion was within in a month, so Michelle said no. Not to be deterred, the would be Master Naturalists regrouped and, goaded on by Courtenay Altaffer and Harry Wells, Temple asked Michelle for an extra thirty days. Eager to get a chapter in the area, Michelle acquiesced. They now had seven weeks to create a chapter from scratch. With the knowledge and help of previously certified Master Naturalist Dorothy Tompkins, who was living on the Northern Neck, and DCR biologist Rebecca Wilson (who would become the Chapter's first advisor), they were successful in creating a mission statement, putting together a syllabus, finding instructors and venues, and starting what today is Northern Neck Master Naturalists. Much of the heavy lifting in this process was the work of Marty Moore, Harry Wells, Carter Welford, Courtenay Altaffer and Anne Neuman.

The first class graduated fifteen members and had two chapter advisors, Charlene Talcott and Rebecca Wilson. Members of the graduating class of 2007 were: Faye Andrashko, Paula Boundy, Gail Dickerson, Maggie Gerdts, Jane Henley, Marty Moore, Temple Moore, Bill McConahey, Darlene Nelson, Fawn Palmer, Jane Peterson, Tom Teeples, Earline Walker, Carter Wellford, and Harry Wells. Unfortunately, early organizers, Courtenay and Anne were unable to complete the class due to a family illness. Paula Boundy would become the chapter's first president. Ten of these members are still active in the chapter today.



Members of Original NNMN Class present at Dec 11 celebration: Temple Moore, Charlene Talcott, Earline Walker, Tom Teeples, Paula Boundy and Jane Henley

On December 11, 2017, the chapter marked its tenth anniversary with a celebratory luncheon. Members of the 2007 class were presented certificates of appreciation for their part in creating our organization.



Jane Henley Cuts 10th Anniversary Cake

CHAPTER RECOGNITION BY STATE

The Northern Neck Chapter and its members were recognized at the 2017 VMN Statewide Conference and Training for outstanding performance. Receiving Awards were Bill Blair as "Volunteer of the Year" and Alison Sowar's DGIF Birding and Wildlife Trail Adopt-a-trail Project as "Stewardship Project of the Year."

Bill Blair's nomination read: *"His energy, positive attitude, subject matter expertise, and communication skills have had a clear and measurable impact on motivating people to learn about and embrace the natural world and volunteer. His volunteer work defines what it is to be a selfless Master Naturalist to better the Commonwealth of Virginia."*



Bill Blair Demonstrating a Dichotomous Key on Winter Tree Walk

The Adopt-a-trail description was: *"The Northern Neck Chapter has turned this project into a major chapter project, monitoring 22 sites for the Northern Neck Trail spread out over some 8,000 square miles. Nearly one-third of their chapter members participate, and they contributed approximately 300 hours to the project in just 18 months. Much of their success is due to the hard work by Alison Sowar, who coordinates the project within the chapter, organizing the volunteers, collecting the data from the volunteers and creating reports, and communicating with DGIF."*



Wildlife Activity on Westmoreland State Park BWT

Congratulations to Bill and Alison and all those chapter members who helped us gain this recognition.

2018 CHAPTER OFFICERS

The election of Chapter officers for 2018 was held during the November General Meeting. Officers for 2018 are:

President – Jeff Wright (returning)
Vice President – Mindy Ashton (returning)
Secretary – Leslie Fellows
Treasurer – Lise Maring (returning)
Basic Training – Pat McMurray & Arlene Crabbe-Kilduff (returning)
Out Reach – Ann Moss
Membership – Petra Walian (returning)
Historian – Ernie Monschein
Continuing Ed – Pam Narney
Web Site – Kyle Langford
Hospitality – Carla Bangs
Projects – John Narney
Newsletter – John Narney

Congratulations and best wishes to our new officers and a great note of thanks to those who served us so well in the past.

2017 BASIC TRAINING CLASS

By Pat McMurray

On December 11, 2017 the members of the Basic Training Class (BTC) were recognized for three months of intense study of the natural history of the Northern Neck. The class began in September in Heathsville with an introduction to the Northern Neck Master Naturalists along with lectures on Weather and Climate and Citizen Science. The class then visited Bush Mill Natural Area Preserve to become acquainted with the location of their class project. (See related article.)

Some class high points included entomology at the Wilna Unit of the Rappahannock National Wildlife Refuge where students were able to observe insects feeding on the many native plants in the refuge. Bill Blair taught an



2017 BTC Looking for Bugs in Native Plant Garden at Wilna Refuge

excellent interactive botany class, in which the students learned to use a key to identify various local trees. The class room session was reinforced by a walk through Hickory Hollow

Natural Area Preserve, led by Bill and Paula Boundy, following the class.

A new topic for the BTC this year was Virginia Hydrogeology, led by DEQ's Coastal Plain Hydrogeologist, Scott Bruce. Scott described the depositional history of the Coastal Plain and how the depositional environment determines the fossil record. The classroom portion was followed by a field trip to the Cliffs of Stratford Hall, where the students were able to observe many fossils in the rocks along the beach with the help of Scott, Cindy Baliles, and John Bachman of Stratford Hall.



Looking for Fossils on Beach at Stratford Hall

The students completed the class on November 9 with a review of the final exam and their nature journals. On the last day, the students also each gave a five-minute presentation on one of their favorite naturalists or a research topic of interest. Although the class was a lot of hard work, most of the students agreed that it was worth the effort to be able to learn about the resources of the Northern Neck and to visit some of our most beautiful parks and natural areas.



NNMN 2017 Basic Training Class

Thanks to the Training Committee, Mindy Ashton, Stu Ashton, Bill Blair, Nancy Joel, Arlene Crabbe, Lise Maring, John Powell, Bonnie Wilson, Jeff Wright and Patricia McMurray for a successful BTC.

Class Project

By Jeff Wright

The 2017 Basic Training Class was given a new challenge – a Class Project. The 2017 Class planned and worked on NNMN citizen science and stewardship projects that were applicable to Bush Mill Stream Natural Area Preserve. The goal was that students would select chapter projects that could continue beyond graduation and benefit the NNMN Chapter and the community.

The NNMN Training Committee goal was to offer experiences for students that allowed them to apply the knowledge and skills learned during the classroom and field portions of their educational program to assess, create, and implement a plan to monitor and support a Virginia Natural Area Preserve.

Zack Bradford, Chesapeake Bay Region Steward, Department of Conservation and Recreation, Division of Natural Heritage supported the project. His comments to the class - *"I am pleased that the Class Project will be at Bush Mill Stream NAP. I hope your work will advance our knowledge of the preserve and increase our stewardship for public access and habitat protection...I look forward to being briefed by your class in October on your plans, ideas, and projects for the preserve."* Zach was briefed in October on the class plans and worked with students in the field at Bush Mill Stream Natural Area Preserve.

Twelve members of the class logged 145 hours across a variety of Chapter Stewardship, Citizen Science, and Environmental Education Projects. These hours do not include hours logged by other members of the chapter working

alongside the “students” while they were in the field. A special thanks to Temple Moore - advisor to the class project and members of Stuart Ashton’s Mentoring Team for going to BMS NAP with the students on many occasions.



Bush Mill Stream Natural Area Preserve

The students – outside of the BTC curriculum and hours – took the project to heart and adopted Bush Mill Stream NAP as a site to learn, build comradery, embrace stewardship, and collect census data on flora and fauna.

Since graduation, the newly minted Master Naturalists continue to work on projects related to Bush Mill Stream and have added to census data via camera trappings (see related article) and observations. Collection of species data continues. Stewardship work continues.



Kyle Langford and Kevin Howe During BMSNAP Class Project

A lot was learned and the class did a great job. Based on the success of the 2017 BTC, the Training Committee will include a class project in future Basic Training Classes.

The work at BMS NAP really helped motivate folks to work as a team, learn new skills, get out of their comfort zones, and “dive into” recording their work in the Volunteer Management System. Students also helped refine some of the chapters existing projects that applied to BMS NAP. [Well done 2017 BTC.](#)

Camera Trapping at Bush Mill NAP

By Liz Worsham

Recent graduates of the 2017 MN class have been maintaining game cameras at Bush Mill Preserve for about three months and have harvested many photos of local critters. This effort started as a class project and its continuation is now part of an ongoing MN project to collect and report flora and fauna population information to various organizations (i.e., DGIF, DCR, etc.). At our first field meeting the seven of us (Martin Hill, Kevin Howe, Kyle Langford, Jan Tyndall, Betsy Washington, Porter Washington, Liz Worsham) scoped the “human” trails of the preserve for possible camera locations (figuring animals would take the easy way through the brush). We placed three cameras right on the trail and another where we found a lot of “turkey scratching”. We were



Wild Turkeys Caught on Game Camera at BMSNAP

ecstatic when, only a few days later, we captured white-tail deer and wild turkeys on

three of the cameras. We also captured a good deal of human traffic through the park, mostly from the waist down but also a couple nice face shots of those making a point to identify the camera.

Until the Christmas holiday one or more of the team checked the cameras on a weekly basis. We did a lot of adjusting during those weeks as we tried to prevent the many, many photos caused by leaves falling and branches/grasses moving in the wind! In addition to deer and turkeys, we've captured a red fox, a raccoon, otters, and what look to be coyotes (see picture). We've also captured "eyes glowing" on



Otter Caught on Game Camera at BMSNAP

unidentifiable bodies (any experts out there who'd like to take a look?). We had some luck with video clips (fox, raccoon, otters, and what may be a muskrat turning tail) and have found that it's terribly time-consuming to check for results (but oh so rewarding!).

We haven't moved the cameras since the recent snow, so we're looking forward to seeing the impact on what critters were out and about. In the coming months we're planning to put together a reporting mechanism and to find camera locations that yield some new species.

Class Graduation

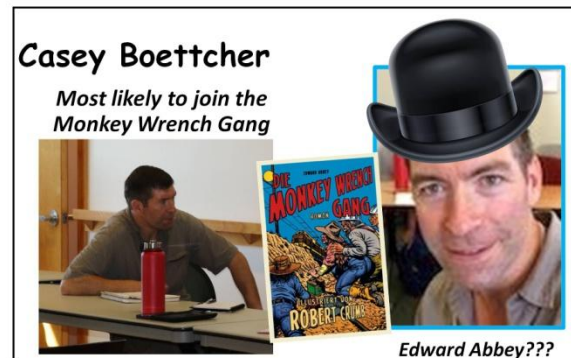
Although the 2017 Basic Training Class completed their final exams on November 9, class graduation was scheduled for December 11 to coincide with the chapter's tenth anniversary celebration. Graduation was held at the Transportation Museum in Heathsville with

a catered lunch organized by Nancy Joel, Carla Bangs and Mindy Aston.



Jan Tyndall Receives Virginia Master Naturalist Completion Certificate from Arlene Crabbe-Kilduff

Graduates were presented their completion certificates accompanied by a slide show with caricatures of them reflecting aspects of their class participation.



Casey Boettcher as Seen by His Classmates

Notably absent from the ceremony was graduate Carolyn Reiner. Carolyn's certificate was presented to her at her work place – Rappahannock High School in Warsaw. Carolyn is in the Science Department at the high school where she supports learning in three key areas that align with the Master Naturalist Curriculum: Chemistry, Scientific Research and Design, and Foundations of Conservation.

Realizing that Carolyn's participation in the NNMN Basic Training would work to the benefit of both the NNMN and the high school, school administrators allowed her time off to

participate in classes. The chapter hopes to build on this by working with more of the schools on the Northern Neck and Middle Peninsula to attract additional educators to take the Basic Training Course.



David Ferguson, Principal Rappahannock High School; Carolyn Reiner, New Master Naturalist; and Jeff Wright, President NNMN

EASTERN SHORE FIELD TRIP

By Jeff Wright

In October, a group from the chapter crossed the bay to find out what is on the other side. We found out that there is a lot to see on the Eastern Shore of Virginia. Trip objectives to learn and have fun were achieved. The Virginia Coastal Reserve (VCR) protects approximately 40,000 acres of barrier islands, marshes and uplands. So, our few days there only scratched the surface on the wonders of the barrier islands and the considerable scientific research by many organizations that occurs there year-round.



Field Notebooks and Cameras Record Observations of Species and Habitat

The Virginia Coast Reserve is a model and a lab for learning how conservation can help a landscape adapt and become more resilient in the face of a changing climate and sea level rise. Key aspects of our learning experiences while we were there focused on Coastal Resilience, Migratory Bird Conservation, Marine Habitat Restoration, and educational efforts for conservation within Virginia. Collectively VCR is part of the UNESCO Biosphere Program, U.S. Department of the Interior National Natural Landmark, National Science Foundation Long-Term Ecological Research Site, and Western Hemisphere International Shorebird Reserve Network Site.

The highlight of the itinerary was a boat trip to one of the Barrier Islands off of the Atlantic side of the Eastern Shore. Parramore Island was a great experience as we hiked both across the island and also had an extensive beach walk segment to navigate. The island was both rich in history and also in a variety of flora and fauna. It also provided us with an opportunity to learn about the movement of these islands over time and the various benefits they have to Virginia. Of note is that Parramore Island is also a DCR Natural Area Preserve.



Castaways on Ghost Beach on Parramore Island

In addition to our time at VCR we also visited the Virginia Institute of Marine Science (VIMS) Eastern Shore in Wachapreague, The Virginia Barrier Island Center, and DCR's rather excellent Savage Neck Dunes Natural Area Preserve. Side trips were also taken by several members of the NNMN crew to Kiptopeke Beach State Park for

the Kiptopeke Hawk Watch and the Eastern Shore National Wildlife Refuge.



Identifying Flora and Fauna at Savage Dunes NAP

One objective of the trip was to provide continuing education “blocks” each day. A maximum of eleven hours of CE were available for those participating in all of the trips events.



More Than the Usual Suspects

ECOLOGICAL COMPLEXITY IN LANDSCAPES FOR PEOPLE SYMPOSIUM

By Pam Narney, Meadow photos by Bryna Brennan

Ecological Complexity in Landscapes for People The 29th Annual New Directions in the American Landscape (NDAL) Symposium in Blue Bell, PA.

John and Pam Narney attended the NDAL Conference on January 11-12, 2017. The prime mover in the conference was Larry Weaner who is principal in Larry Weaner Landscapes, has won multiple awards, has established landscapes in 10 states, and recently authored

Garden Revolution: How Our Landscapes Can Be a Source of Environmental Change (Timber Press, 2016). The book received a 2017 Book Award from the American Horticultural Society.

The symposium centered on using meadows and native plants to improve ecological function while providing “cues to care” by placing designs in a format understandable and acceptable to viewers. Meadows and native plant gardens are dynamic and diverse while traditional landscaping is static. To be accepted and understood, however; these designs must look cared for to avoid the “messy” label. Speakers explained how to plan a meadow, build it, select the plants, maintain it, and interpret it so visitors can appreciate and understand it.

“The symposium explore(d) a core challenge of contemporary landscape design: blending plants, wildlife, and people in spaces that advance ecological function and are enjoyable to be in.” The symposium’s brochure is at <https://ndaldotorg.files.wordpress.com/2017/11/ndal-2018-conference-brochure.pdf>

Meadows are designed based on ecosystems first and aesthetics second. They look natural and sometimes wild but are carefully created to have different niches and micro-communities.



The keynote speaker, Stefan Bloodworth, is the curator of The Piedmont Prairie Garden at the Sarah P. Duke Gardens and owns his own landscaping firm. At Duke Gardens he and his crew

planted over twenty thousand plants to create a prairie.

In the planning stages, Bloodworth researched remnant prairies to learn the habits of species, who they associated with, what soil type they preferred, and where they tended to congregate. He collected wild seeds and grew them in hoop houses. The difference between a meadow and a prairie is basically one of semantics. Prairie is French for meadow.

Bloodworth's advice for the building stage, heartily reinforced by all of the speakers, is to limit large scale cultivation and only disturb the soil enough to accept the plant. With soil disturbance comes weeds. The best time to plant is July because that is when the native plants will do their best growing and the weeds are least muscular. Weaner agrees: do not till the soil, amend the soil, fertilize the area, install an irrigation system (water only through the first summer), or mulch.



Choose plants which function with the least maintenance and care. Use plants that work together to balance natural processes. The garden is still beautiful,

but the plants are ultimately chosen for function rather than beauty. The aesthetics are secondary and evolve out of the plan. Integrate into the design plants that prevent others from spreading while the slower growing plants weave together and cover the ground--no mulching needed. Use exotics if they are not invasive and serve a purpose. Most of the meadows profiled were 80% native. Meadows or prairies are seed factories for birds.

Manage your expectations. These landscapes are low maintenance, but they still need to be managed into perpetuity. Native plant gardens

are diverse and dynamic and will develop and change over time. Plants will move. This is to be expected. Monitor the garden over time and adapt the design if necessary. Allow plants to succeed for succession. If a plant dies or disappears, it probably does not belong there.

Create a management schedule by observing how your plants are functioning. One monitoring plan might be: Year 1-do nothing; Year 2- cut down the meadow or weed whack it; Year 3-burn it, all the while removing weeds by cutting them down at soil level and not pulling them. Pulling weeds opens up the soil and releases dormant weed seeds. Let cultivars reproduce naturally so one plant arises out of another.



The final stage is to interpret the site for viewers. Use hardscape and art as a frame to imply human intention. If the landscape looks well cared for and tended, it will be seen and appreciated by traditional gardeners and visitors as planned and not rejected as being messy. To the average person a swale looks like a ditch until a sign explains that this is a rain garden whose function is to slow down the rate and flow of water. By providing "cues to care" which might include interpretive signs, paths, mown strips of grass, statues, bird house, etc., you can help people more feel comfortable in the native landscape.

Blending plants, wildlife, and people in spaces that advance ecological function and are enjoyable to be in can readily be accomplished using the techniques of these large scale

landscapers. You don't need an area the size of a botanical garden to create function and beauty in nature.

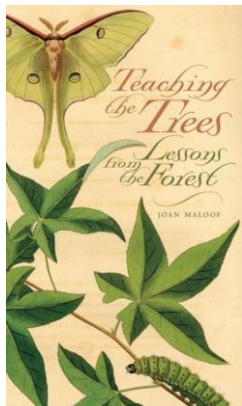
BOOK REVIEWS

Lessons from Old Growth Forests

By Betsy Washington

Joan Maloof is a Professor Emerita of Biology and Environmental Studies at Salisbury University in Salisbury, MD. She is an ecologist, writer, conservationist, and above all a “lover of old growth forests”. These days Maloof spends her time writing, lecturing, visiting and observing forests, and helping private landowners and local groups protect the few remaining old growth forests from development.

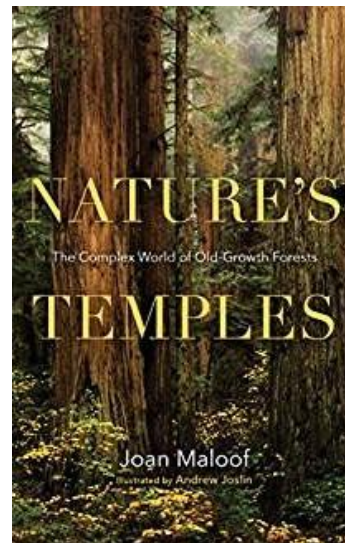
Her books have won numerous awards for her passionate and eloquent writing. All of them are immensely readable and take us on a series of intriguing adventures deep into the mysteries of old growth forests and “left alone places”. As one reviewer wrote, “Maloof examines forest ecology, often from the perspective of the... weevils that inhabit acorns, snails that live in the rich debris below trees, and parasitic wasps that dwell on a species of leafminer found only in American Holly. Clearly to know such details is to care about them.” Grab one of Maloof's fascinating books and curl up by the fire for a naturalist's perfect antidote for a cold winter's day.



In 2005, Maloof published her first book, **Teaching the Trees, Lessons from the Forest**, and shared her love and wonder at the beauty and complexity of these forests through a series of eloquent essays exploring the connections between a tree species and the fauna that depend

on it. The book contains illustrations from naturalist-artist John Abbot's book - **The Natural History of Rarer Lepidopterans in Georgia** - published over 200 years ago; the illustrations are a treat in themselves.

In 2011 Maloof published, **Among the Ancients: Adventures in the Eastern Old Growth Forests**. With less than ½ of one percent of old growth forests still left in the Eastern United States, Maloof realized that many readers will never see such a forest. She takes the reader on an intimate tour of 26 old growth forests east of the Mississippi River – one in each state, all open to the public. From old growth hemlock forests in Pennsylvania to Oak, Hickory, and Tulip Poplar forests in Ramsay's Draft Wilderness in the George Washington National Forest in Virginia, she shows us the rich diversity of life that these ancient forests support. And she provides directions, so that the adventurous reader might also experience their wonder.



Following in 2016, she published **Nature's Temple: The Complex World of Old-Growth Forests** where she explores the intricate web of relationships that make old growth forest ecosystems so uniquely rich

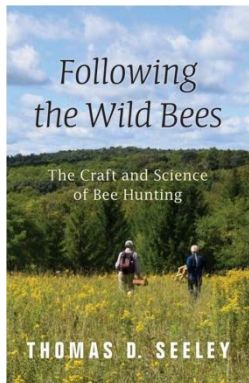
and biodiverse. With chapters entitled, “Birds and Their Habitat Preferences”, “Snails as Indicators”, and “Herbaceous Plant Populations and Logging”, she explores recent research comparing species diversity in old age, second growth, and recently cut forests. She argues eloquently that forest snails and salamanders may be the best indicators of a forest's health, and that while ground or herbaceous layer

plants make up only 1% of a forest's biomass, they account for over 90% of the plant diversity. Maloof points out that, "the diversity of all other organisms in a forest, from butterflies to mammals, is more closely correlated with herbaceous plant diversity than it is with tree species diversity", and this diversity does not appear to be recovering, even after several hundred years.

Following the Wild Bees

By Jeff Wright

I read *Following the Wild Bees* toward expanding my understanding of those amazing little flying objects – bees. As an avid birder and a novice butterfly and dragonfly observer I decided that I needed to be able to better identify and understand bees. I am not yet ready to ID mosquitos as a hobby – before or after they bite.



This excellent and easily readable book focused on the ancient practice and sport of bee hunting and bee lining. With the NNMN chapter's past and current focus on pollinators, meadows, and bees I picked up the book as a reference and was extremely pleased

that it is also a great read. The book focuses – on a second way – besides beekeeping – for people to get close to these fascinating creatures. The open-air sport called bee hunting has the bee hunter tracking, locating, identifying, and reporting on bees living in the wild. This sport and related agricultural practices can be traced back to writings from the first century A.D. and was practiced widely in Europe, North America, the Middle East, and Africa.

Selected excerpts from Reviews and Endorsements of the Book

Following the Wild Bees is scientific natural history at its very best: original, authentic, and exciting. It is at the same time science, science history, adventure, sport, and treasure hunting."--Edward O. Wilson, Harvard University

"Seeley's passion for the social insects blazes as he quotes historical accounts by Henry David Thoreau and describes the intricacies of the chase, from baiting with anise-scented sugar syrup to patiently amassing location data"--Barb Kiser, *Nature*

The book received an Honorable Mention for the 2017 PROSE Award in Popular Science and Popular Mathematics, Association of American Publishers. The author, Thomas D. Seeley, is a Professor in Biology in the Department of Neurobiology and Behavior at Cornell University. "His research focuses on the behavior, social life, and ecology of honey bees and has been summarized in four books: *Honeybee Ecology* (1985, Princeton), *The Wisdom of the Hive* (1995, Harvard), *Honeybee Democracy* (2010, Princeton), and *Following the Wild Bees* (2016, Princeton)."

Following the Wild Bees, 2016, Princeton University Press, is available in Hardback and as an E-book.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Flora and Fauna Data Collection (C9a DCR, b DGIF, c VIMS, d Other) These projects will support citizen science activities and data collection. Data is collected to improve the currency, accuracy, and breadth of population information for species within Virginia and at specific Virginia locations. These projects contribute to databases at the national,

and state level and provide the Commonwealth



Scanning the Marshes for Fauna at TNC VCR Brownsville Reserve

of Virginia and its citizens access to detailed information on flora and fauna. These projects are basically the same with the exception of being identified with their particular agencies. Contact Jeff Wright for details. pec11908@mac.com

Bethel Beach NAP Stewardship (S5h)

This project provides stewardship activities to include trail maintenance and shoreline clean up at Bethel Beach NAP on the Middle Peninsula. Contact Jan Towne for details. jtowne888@gmail.com

Virginia Birding and Wildlife Trail Adopt-a-trail Project (S4m)

VBWT monitoring aids the Virginia Dept. of Game and Inland Fisheries, as they do not have the manpower to do it themselves. Also, the trail system attracts nature lovers here in Virginia and nationwide. This volunteer project has several trails available for the next quarter



ending in March. Basic information has been collected since the beginning of the monitoring in June, 2016 so the paperwork to be reported is minimal

Available trails are: Caledon State Park, Wayside, Lands End Wildlife Management Area, and Wilmont Landing in King George County; Vir Mar Beach-in Northumberland County; and Rappahannock CC-in Richmond County. If you are interested, please contact Alison Sowar. alison.sowar@gmail.com.

Creating Meadows on the Northern Neck (E5w)

A cadre of Master Naturalists will be trained to assist with meadow creation and maintenance. Initial research will include a study of literature as well as projects in the area about



meadow creation, upkeep and maintenance. Subsequently, guidelines and tips will be developed, especially geared toward homeowners. For details contact Bryna Brennan brynabrennan@yahoo.com.

THIS & THAT

Birding by Ear

By Felicity Rask

Birding By Ear #1. Winter. Birders challenge yourselves!

If you have tried to learn bird songs by ear but simply given up, this challenge is for you!

You are absolutely right if you think it is tedious, hard and discouraging especially when you can't even figure out how to get started! But wrong if you think it takes special talent, special training and long hours trudging through cold

winter woods or buying an expensive bird song app.

Good news is that you only need three simple things to begin learning bird sounds. First you need a near-by space (your back yard?) frequented by some common birds of which you will choose two. Second you will need access to a computer or some bird song recordings, and third you have to be willing to listen to the songs of your chosen birds over and over again.

Pull up Cornell's <https://www.allaboutbirds.org/> (bookmark it) and search for your chosen birds, or find them on your recordings and listen to your two birds at least twice a day.

As you listen to the bird songs close your eyes and figure out what kind of a mental image you are getting (if you can put words to the song you are very lucky). What does it remind you of? Does it create a picture in your mind? Does it go up or does it go down? These will be your "hooks" which will help you remember which bird it is. Your reward will come when you reach that wonderful day that you realize you just heard, and recognized, one of your chosen birds! And, if the next day you go outside, hear it again but now can't remember which it is, welcome to the club! Just go back to your recordings and refresh your memory ... Perhaps, as you are reading you are thinking it is now the middle of winter and birds don't sing until spring. Actually, once you start really listening outside, you will realize that some birds call even in the winter. So as you run from your warm house to your cold car, or go on a bird walk, you may hear the unmistakable sound of a White-throated Sparrow uttering its morse-like code call, or you may hear the ([https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/White-throated Sparrow/sounds](https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/White-throated_Sparrow/sounds)) haunting, yodeling song of the Hermit Thrush ([https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Hermit Thrush/sounds](https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Hermit_Thrush/sounds)). Once you have conquered these two birds, or whichever two you have chosen,

and have recognized them calling in the open, you can choose two more and learn those. At least once a week review all the songs you are working on - even the best of birders frequently review bird songs and calls.

I hope the time has come when you will allow yourself to enjoy a non-pressured journey to a new level of magic as you unlock the bird songs of nature. So what if it takes you a day, a month or a year to learn just one song? No need to tell anyone, just keep working at it. I am certain that you can, in your own time, get there. Consider that it might be very similar to how you learned your native tongue, or a second language ... that certainly took more than a month or two!

This is the first of three articles.

Special thanks to Teta Kaine who taught me how to get started and Edie Bradbury who has patiently told me - over and over again - the names of the birds we hear.

Germinating Milkweed Seeds at Home

By Ted Munns, previously published in the NNVNPS Newsletter

One of the delights of the summer and fall seasons is the flight of the monarch butterfly.



Monarch Butterfly Just Out of its Chrysalis Drying its Wings

These beautiful insects have evolved with the plants of the milkweed family (*Asclepias*) that provide the foundation for their larvae (caterpillars) as well as nectar for the adults.

The sap of the milkweed plant contains an alkaloid that is non-toxic to the monarch, but the caterpillars eating this plant are distasteful to most predators. Birds leave them alone. The startling drop in number of migrating monarch butterflies over the last several decades is partially attributed to the lack of available milkweed plants. Modern farming practices discourage milkweed propagation and it has only recently become a plant that gardeners include in their gardens. Starting a milkweed patch requires some patience but the rewards are great. Not only are you helping out the dwindling population of monarch butterflies, but the beauty of the plant is something wonderful to behold.

The most economical method to begin a milkweed patch is to grow them from seed. Collecting seed in the fall from the pods is easy; separating the fluff (coma) from the brown seeds can be problematic because this fluff will blow around so don't do this procedure inside the house! This fluff or floss helps nature



Milkweed Seed Pod

disperse the seeds in the fall winds. By propagating seeds at home we are roughly duplicating nature. These seeds disperse in the fall, lie fallow all winter on the soil surface, and germinate in the spring after all freezes and frosts. We can fool Mother Nature if you follow these steps.

- 1) Place the seeds on a wet paper towel, place the towel in a zip lock plastic bag that is clearly marked, and put the bag in the refrigerator. This is called stratification and is a requirement for

success. Be sure to mark the bag with species, date put into the fridge, and another date about 30 to 60 days later. This later date is the time when you are ready to begin the active germination process.

- 2) Remove the seeds from the bag and inspect. Some seeds will be plump; others will show no change. It is the plump seeds that you will want to work with. Remember, there should be a minimum of 30 days cold stratification.
- 3) Prepare your propagation area by gathering together some peat pots or plastic starter trays with inserts, a sterile potting medium (mix of peat, perlite, vermiculite, commercially available) stratified seeds (see above) and a warm sunny window sill or a commercial propagation heating mat.
- 4) Fill the pots with the sterile potting medium that has been dampened. Place seeds on the surface and gently press them into the soil. I suggest that in a seed-starting kit that at least two seeds be placed into each cell. If using peat pots (highly recommended) I'd press in about a half dozen. Cover the seeds lightly with potting medium (or coarse perlite if available), mist with distilled water (use water from your dehumidifier) and cover with a domed lid from the seed starter kit, or use clear plastic wrap. Keep the tray or pots in a warm place at least 70 degrees for 7 to 14 days. A good warm spot to begin this process is the top of your electric hot-water heater. Germination should begin. NOTE: If you are germinating Butterfly Weed (*Asclepias tuberosa*) seeds, these seeds require a period of strong sunlight to begin the germination process. Put the tray in a warm sunny window sill until the first true leaves show in about one month or so. Be sure to keep your seeds moist but not soggy; watering from the bottom by pouring the distilled water

into the tray is a good way to keep the potting medium moist.



Asclepias tuberosa, Butterfly Weed

After a few months of careful tending, the plants are ready for the garden. Remember, these seedlings have a long taproot and don't like to be disturbed. That's why I like using peat pots because the whole pot can go into the ground without disturbing the roots. If there are several plants in a cell or pot don't despair. They will take hold and grow for you. The monarch butterflies will thank you!

Ted's Hat

By Alison Sowar

On the subject of Ted Munns, several years ago, Nancy Joel brought some NNMN hats to the general meeting.

The color tone didn't seem to meet with Ted Munns' desired one, so Pam and I conspired to find him one that would. Pam has secret contacts that could provide, on a one time basis only, no questions asked, one (1) NNMN patch that could be attached above the brim to a hat. I was able to find a proper hat after a lot of searching in a public venue. Ted gave a talk on spring gardens one afternoon at Angelos in Montross, and before he left, I told him we had something to give to him. After some trepidation, he opened the gift bag and lo and behold he allowed me to take a photograph of him. Ted is a Master Gardener, a Master Naturalist, a beekeeper, and breeds award winning earthworms. He is a great teacher, and

introduced me to the world of Carl Linnaeus in his Botany class. In fact, three years ago when I was in the Basic Training class, I came across a beautiful Linnaeus duvet cover and two pillowcase set from Ikea. I



Ted Munns and His Hat

recently decided that after three years of looking at it, I should buy it for me at a sale price of \$29.99. So Ted, always treasure your NNMN cap, as a gift from two of your many fans, and if you ever would like the duvet set, I'd need Mrs. Munns' approval in writing. I'm a notary as well. Thanks Ted, for all you do!

APP Updates

By Kyle Langford

Citizen Science projects conducted by Virginia Master Naturalist are becoming more reliant on the use of smart phones, pads, and computers to record data and for submitting the data to national databases used by agencies within the Commonwealth.

It is always good to have the latest versions of these programs on your devices. The updates are free and provide updated features, performance improvements, and enhanced information tools for locating species or delineating details about the species or habitat. Here is info on the latest versions of eBird and iNaturalist. If you do not have these versions, I recommend that you take advantage of the free updates.

eBird

eBird for Phones – Version 1.6.2 – Of note in December a new “tracks” feature was added that allows you to keep GPS tracks as you bird, automatically calculating the distance and duration of eBird checklists.



iNaturalist – Version 2.7.5 - In the past six months updated taxon/species details.

Saving the best for last is the rather amazing Flora of Virginia APP. The APP was first released three months ago. It presents “the complete app for learning the plants of Virginia...The Flora of Virginia APP is based on its predecessor, the “*Flora of Virginia*” book published by the Flora of Virginia Project in partnership with the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation...”



The APP does not need an Internet connection to run, so you can use it no matter how far a field or deep in a “hollow” you have wandered.

Version 1.53 is the most current and includes the full dichotomous keys from the Flora of Virginia Project.

If you have questions on the how to load APPS on your phones, updating APPS, or the use of these three APPS please contact Kyle Langford or Jeff Wright.

New Northern Neck Master Naturalists Web Site is On Line

The new NNMN Web Site is now on line. The new site, created by Kyle Langford, BTC 2017, takes advantage of a more sophisticated software package than the one previously used. This provides an easier to use interface for an enhanced user experience on any size display. The site home page provides an interactive events calendar for the Chapter. There is an extensive links page that will take you just about any place you want to go. In furtherance of our outreach activities there are pages describing what a Virginia Master Naturalist is and what we do. The site is attractive and well built. Go to <http://northernneckmasternaturalists.squarespace.com>.

PRESIDENT’S COMMENTS

We have a great year ahead of in 2018. The NNMN chapter has the privilege and the opportunity to further serve our communities and the natural world. I urge all of us to make it at least a “40 hours plus year” so we can increase the chapters work on stewardship, citizen science and environmental education. Dream big – go for 80 hours plus this year.

Some areas I will be working on with the NNMN Board of Directors and our committee chairs to accomplish this year are:

- **Working with Youth** - Leveraging the 2017 BTC graduates that have completed background checks and work closely with our Cooperative Extension sponsors. An Ad Hoc Committee is being formed to look at such ideas as: Junior Naturalist Program, Curriculum Support to County Schools, Journey South Programs, Sponsoring Envirothon 2018 Teams, and Supporting Environmental Programs at State Parks.
- **Meeting Venues** – Rotating monthly meetings within the counties of the NNK.

- **Field Trips** – A few day trips and another multiple day field trip.
- **Partnerships** – Adding some new partners such as the Smithsonian Institute and, Rappahannock Community College, and strengthening ongoing programs with existing partners and looking for new opportunities with existing partners
- **Projects** - Continue refining list of existing projects, furthering Information about the projects, and identifying current POC(s) for the projects. For Citizen Science Projects - listing the collection protocol, reporting criteria and reporting channel.
- **Next Basic Training Class** – Exploring initiatives to attract more folks still in the workforce and recruiting new candidates for BTC and proposing the date for the next class. We are considering all options to include possibly evening and weekend focused class schedules. A class project will again be part of the curriculum.
- **Chapter Committee Structure** – Adding New Committee Member “volunteers” from the 2017 BTC: Projects - Kevin Howe, Continuing Education - Betsy Washington, Basic Training - Marty Hill, Liz Worsham, Outreach - Jan Towne, Audrey Vaughan, Martha Tallent, Program Committee - Kyle Langford, Sandy Dodge, and Publicity Committee - Linda Shields.
- **Outreach Program** - Develop a master list of events to support. Develop theme(s) for 2018 outreach program. “Meadows” is one suggestion. Determine staffing and resource needs for each event supported. Review draft

master calendar at the February BoD Meeting.

- **Diversity** - Re-focus efforts to add diversity to our membership and sponsored/supported events.
- **Webpage** - Adding more photography and video, continuing to keep content current, leveraging the new features of the webpage, and expanded use of the master calendar features. Thanks to Kyle Langford for taking on this project.
- **Awards and Recognition** - Chapter Pin or certificate for graduating from BTC and milestone pin increments in-between the state award levels of 250, 500, 1000, 2500, and 5000 hours.
- **Photography** – Updating our photography awards programs and increasing the chapter’s photo submissions to the SmugMug VMN site, iNaturalist Photos, and support to the NNMN website and newsletter. Thanks to Porter Washington for agreeing to coordinate our various photography related programs.
- **Mentoring Program Expansion** – Keep the mentors involved until all graduates of 2017 BTC are certified.

Great news is that 2018 VMN Annual Statewide Conference and Training will be in Fredericksburg this year! Save the Date. WHEN: September 7-9, 2018. WHERE: Fredericksburg, Virginia at the Fredericksburg Expo and Conference Center. The conference will have many events that qualify as continuing education. Look forward to a big turn out from the NNMN chapter.

Please contact me if you have additional ideas or comments.

Jeff

UPCOMING EVENTS

Continuing Education Workshops

Again in 2018 we will have a series of Continuing Education Workshops. These will occur during the months where we do not have a General Membership Meeting. The workshops will occur following the Board of Directors meetings and generally run from 1:30 to 3:30 PM. Workshops are planned for February, April, June, August, and October. The workshops will occur at various locations around the Northern Neck.

Jan 29, Virginia Geology-Questions Asked and Answered Webinar.

Although the live presentation of this Webinar is passed, it and previous Webinars are available for Continuing Education at <http://www.virginiamasternaturalist.org/continuing-education.html>

Feb 1, Registration opens for NN Master Gardeners Gardening in the Northern Neck Seminar

<http://www.nnmg.org/nngardeningseminar.asp>

Feb 8, Emamal Camera Training Workshop (for NNMN members only) 9:30 AM to 2:00PM

George Washington's Birthplace NM, Log House.

Feb 13, Continuing Education Workshop, Taking Better Digital Pictures. 1:30 to 3:30 PM

Cooperative Extension Classroom, at the A.T. Johnson Building in Montross, VA.

Feb 16 – Feb 19, Great Backyard Bird Count.

<http://gbbc.birdcount.org/>

Mar 13, NNMN Board of Directors and General Meetings. Details TBD.

Mar 24, NN Master Gardeners Gardening in the Northern Neck Seminar. 8:00 AM to 3:00 PM, Church of the Nazarene, White Stone VA. Speakers: Thomas Rainer, Dr. Robert Lyons, Craig LeHoullier

Other sources for upcoming events:

<http://northernneckmasternaturalists.squarespace.com>

State site:

<http://www.virginiamasternaturalist.org/>

Volunteer Management site:

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

Thanks to, Pat McMurray, Jeff Wright, Liz Worsham, Betsy Washington, Pam Narney, Felicity Rask, Ted Munns, Alison Sowar, Petra Walian, Temple Moore, and Kyle Langford

Please send items of interest, continuing education opportunities, news and pictures about your projects, and other newsletter items to jnarney@verizon.net.



Your Newsletter Editor

Northern Neck Master Naturalists

The 2017 NNMN Basic Training Class



Kyle Langford, Jan Tyndall, John Ericson Kevin Howe, Marty Hill, Betsy Washington, Carolyn Reiner, Casey Boettcher, Martha Tallent, Audrey Vaughn, Felicity Rask, Sandy Dodge, Jan Towne, Liz Worsham, Anne Kornegay, Porter Washington, Not in picture Linda Shields

The Virginia Eastern Shore NNMN Castaways



Betsy Washington, Kevin Howe, Porter Washington, Kyle Langford, Carla Bangs, Jeff Wright, Darlene Nelson, Liz Worsham, John Ericson, Pat McMurray, Leslie Fellows Front Row: Bryna Brennan, Maggie Gerdts, Felicity Rask