

Northern Neck Chapter, Virginia Master Naturalists

NEWS & NOTES for Members January 2023 Virginia Master Naturalists Edited by Camille



Hello Northern Neck Master Naturalists! It's January with the days getting longer and I saw a Red Admiral butterfly last week on one of those unseasonably warm days! I also saw a pair of bald eagles circling each other in a romantic way. I've been chasing hawks away from my yard in protection of my poultry flock. That's the fun stuff. Tonight I'm renewing my training on Civil Rights and Risk Management...not so fun - but important and done!

While reviewing content on the state website, I found a video that I watched: "The Naturalist" by Sonny Bowers, Historic Rivers Chapter. 7:31 min. This video is available at video.vt.edu. It is a little out of date but well produced and gave me a grin - it might do the same for you.

Paula Boundy, Certified VMN, NNMN Chapter, President 2023 (email paglb4@gmail.com)



This is the first year of the NEW VMN Re-enrollment Process. All VMNs are required to re-enroll every year if they wish to continue as volunteers. The process is easy and should be completed by January 31, 2023. VMN is allowing a grace period until the end of February. To re-enroll, log into Better Impact. On the home page, hover at upper right on "My Profile." Select "Additional Info." The second box is for re-enrollment and consists of 5 questions. Respond to all and you're finished! While there, you may want to check your contact info, add recent CE or Volunteer Hours, or look over the list of activities. THANK YOU to the NNMNs who have completed this for 2023!



NNMN Board of Directors has two vacant committee chair positions: - DIVERSITY & INCLUSION and - HOSPITALITY Contact Paula (paglb4@gmail.com) for more information or to VOLUNTEER



HIGHLIGHTS



BOARD MEETING

from
the



The first Board meeting of 2023 was held via Zoom
Tuesday, January 10, 3:00-4:30 pm.

ADVISORS REPORT

After the recent newspaper articles about our Chapter's 15th anniversary and the upcoming training course, Wendy Herdman received a call from an interested member of the public. The person desired to participate in some NNMN activities to see if becoming a VMN was something she wished to pursue in the future. It would seem that this would be a good way to perhaps have potential BTC recruits "sample" NNMN activities. However, Wendy cautioned us about having non-VMNs engaged in official NNMN activities. We, as VMNs, have had Risk Management training and have liability coverage through VCE and VT. "Guests", including family members, would not have those. Wendy followed up with an email to Michelle Prysby for additional clarification, and her comments follow:

"I have gotten the question before about whether people who are not enrolled VMN volunteers can 'volunteer' with VMNs, and here's my long reply. The short version is yes, VMN volunteers can lead non-VMN individuals in activities that are 'volunteering' for the VMN volunteer, but the non-VMN would not be considered a 'volunteer' from the standpoint of the VMN program or VCE. Care should be taken when deciding whether a particular activity is appropriate for non-VMN individuals to participate, and it might not always be a good fit. On the other hand, sometimes it could be a great opportunity to engage the public and/or recruit future VMN volunteers.

Long version:

*If VMN volunteers are organizing and leading an event where other people are coming in to do some sort of volunteer work (like bringing in a Scout troop to do an invasive pull), those people usually should be treated the same as you would treat participants of other educational programs you put on for the public. For example, if the chapter were putting on a program to teach people about tree ID and people from the public came to a tree walk led by a VMN, then **that VMN has responsibility over those participants and making sure that the event is safe.** In the case of doing a bird count, it is the same; the activity just happens to be observing and documenting birds instead of taking a nature walk. Those individuals are not considered to be "volunteers" in the sense that VMNs are volunteers. The state liability insurance does not cover them. To be clear, what that means is that if one of the participants did something at the event that hurt another person or property, someone could sue them for it and Virginia Tech's liability insurance would not cover that (most likely...these things are never a solid yes or no unless you have an actual case being decided.) However, the VMN volunteer who is organizing and overseeing the event is responsible for the participants' safety and, assuming that it is an approved activity, the VMN volunteer is covered by the liability insurance, so if someone wanted to sue the VMN volunteer, Virginia Tech's liability insurance should cover that (again, it would depend on the specific facts of a specific, real case.)*

If you all as a chapter are trying to decide whether to invite non-VMN individuals (including friends or family members) to a particular VMN activity, here are some points of consideration, just to help you think through whether something is appropriate for non-VMN folks or not. FYI, I originally wrote this for someone who was asking about bringing family members along for activities, but I think the questions also are relevant for other members of the public.

- Is the event/activity organized and led by VMNs, or by another entity? If it's another entity, then whether families can attend is their decision to make.*
- Is this an event/activity for a group of people, or just a VMN or two going out on their own to do some service and wanting to bring other folks along?*
- Is there a VMN leader for this event/activity and is that person going to present at the actual activity?*
- Are other members of the public allowed to attend this activity?*

- Are there risk management concerns for this specific activity that would make it problematic to have non-VMNs there? For example, picking up trash alongside a busy highway would probably not be an appropriate activity for young kids who might run into the road. Likewise, a hike on steep terrain that would be beyond kids' abilities would be problematic.
- Are there limits on the number of people who can participate in this activity while still keeping it to be an effective learning or service opportunity? Would allowing other people or volunteers' families mean exceeding those limits?
- Would having additional people there negatively impact the learning or experience for other VMNs? Or, to spin it in a more positive way, would having additional people there enhance the learning or experience for other VMNs? (I don't want to make it sound like a VMN including the public/friends/family members in volunteer activities is always a bad thing! Obviously, there are lots of potential positives in terms of volunteer recruitment and retention, youth education, diversity, etc.)
- Is there a concern about how many additional people might join? I imagine that some VMNs going to a volunteer service event and finding that the kids outnumber the adults might feel disappointed. You might need to incorporate it into any sort of sign-up process, just in order to keep a handle on the total numbers and the non-VMN to VMN ratio.
- Are the leaders of the event comfortable with being responsible for these additional people? I think you can communicate to VMNs that they need to have primary responsibility over their family members, but, realistically speaking, I would think that the event leaders are going to end up shouldering some responsibility as well.
- Will the parents of any youth be with the youth at all times?
- Does everyone understand and accept that the family members are not covered by the state's liability insurance? (This means that if a non-VMN causes harm to another person at the event, and that person decides to sue them, the non-VMN is not protected by the liability insurance.)
- Does everyone understand that there is no accident insurance, health insurance, or worker's compensation for either the VMNs or the family members? (This means that if there is an accident and someone gets hurt, it would have to go on their personal health insurance. That's true for VMNs as well, but is worth mentioning here.)
- Are there any restrictions based on VMN status? For example, has the landowner of the site you are visiting restricted access to just VMNs working on the project?"
(Michelle Prysby, Director, Virginia Master Naturalists).

Wendy and Tara requested that ALL NNMNs have this information. If you are unsure about a specific activity in which you want to have non-VMNs participate, please contact the Chapter President for guidance.

Paula and Camille shared that the **2022 Annual Report** was completed with the help of several members, Pat McMurray, John Narney, Andy Bailey, Audrey Vaughn, Debby Tupper; and advisors Wendy Herdman and Tara Brent. The report is in the "Files" section of Better Impact.



Photos by Camille Grabb

Vice President Polly Foote announced that she is working on several programs for this year. The first program is the evening of January 10, 6:30-8:00 pm, at the Lancaster Community Library. The topic is "*Crassostrea virginica*, the Eastern Oyster," shared by Karen Hudson of VIMS. This program is also going to be zoomed for those who cannot attend in person. *Editor's note: This was the first "hybrid" meeting of our Chapter, in-person and zoomed!* Polly, way to start us off well in 2023! Polly is working with the Rappahannock River Valley National Wildlife Refuge to have a program on ephemeral pools in February or March. Watch your inbox for more details!

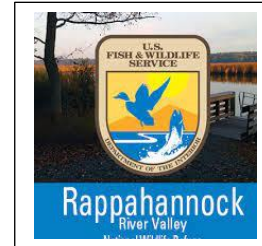


Treasurer Debby Tupper led the Board through the process of budgeting for this year. She reported that 61 NNMNs have sent their membership donations for 2023. We are grateful for these contributions and welcome other members to send in the \$30 suggested membership donation for this year.

Chapter Budget for 2023

Income	Amt
Dues (73 members x \$30)	2,170.00
Expenses	
General	400.00
Communication	275.00
Hospitality	450.00
Membership	200.00
Outreach/Education	300.00
Programs	1,000.00
BTC	500.00
Total Expenses	3,125.00

Activities Chair Audrey Vaughn suggested the need to connect with the Rappahannock River Valley National Wildlife Refuge for activity opportunities. Eric Hentges continues as the contact for the garden activities, and Polly Foote agreed to be the NNMN contact for other activities at the Refuge.



BTC 2023!

Lesley Newman, BTC Chair, announced that there are 16 trainees and an all-day Kick-off is planned for Saturday, January 21, at the Northumberland Public Library in Heathsville. The committee has been working hard and is eager to have the training begin! Zoom info was in the BTC chapter email.



Alice Stieve reported that the email blasts are working well. As a reminder to members, if you need Alice to send an email to the Chapter, please email it to nmn22.als@gmail.com.

Webmaster Anne Clewell is always seeking submissions for the

Chapter website, northernneckvmn.org. Send to anne.clewell@gmail.com.

Under new business, **Chapter Advisor Tara Brent** shared that she had attended the football game at which Lee Scripture was honored and remembered by the community. His family expressed their gratitude for the enjoyment which Lee had through his association with our chapter. The Board approved a memorial donation in his name to Wicomico Baptist Church.



The next Chapter Board of Directors Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, March 14, at 3:00 pm, via Zoom.

CAIRNS? Excerpted/Edited w/Permission of Eleonor Higgs, IFL Science, by Katharina C. Bergdoll

Picture the scene: you've huffed and puffed your way to the top of the local trig point as part of your New Year's Resolution. While the view from the top is worth the effort, the summit of the footpath is also covered in loads of stacked rocks, or cairns. The word "cairn" comes from the Scottish Gaelic word meaning "heap of stones". Usually, these kinds of rock cairns are built to show hikers the way on particularly confusing routes; you can find them dotted all throughout famous trails like the Camino de Santiago. However, recently cairns have been



Photo: National Park Service

popping up all over hiking trails, often in groups, usually by features or rest stops. *The US National Park Service suggests that the ornamental ones can confuse those not familiar with the area, often leading people down the wrong path. The practice of building cairns goes against a key principle of being out in the natural world: "Leave No Trace."*

When you pick up and move a stone, you may have inadvertently disturbed the home of a tiny critter living beneath it. Moving stones can also contribute to soil erosion or destroy the delicate microhabitats plants and animals need to survive. Those on the other side of the coin suggest that cairns are beneficial, as they keep hikers on the right track, preventing people from getting lost and trampling over protected areas. *However, the number of unauthorized cairns has increased so much that the US National Parks department suggests walkers are becoming confused by the would-be navigation signs. Those planning to do lots of hiking should always carry wayfinding tools such as GPS or maps to navigate.*

Cairns are thought to have been started by Waldron Bates, who was the lead author of an island path map published in 1896. He was devoted to the maintenance of hiking trails and wrote a handbook to establish standards of how things should be done. He also established how cairns should be built in a style now known as the Bates cairn, *quite different from the simple stacks we see today. You may easily find photos of some.* While you might think that building a rock cairn is harmless fun, *take into consideration that the National Parks across America received over 297 million recreational visits in 2021 – that is a whole lot of potential for damage even if every visitor was to move just one stone.*

So, what should you do if you see a rock cairn? Well, the advice from the National Park Service is to *leave them well alone, no tampering, building, or adding to existing ones. Don't be tempted to kick them over either. If that won't convince you, maybe the law will: the practice of moving the rocks could be seen as vandalism, which is illegal.*

Editors Note: *While we are not likely to see cairns in Virginia's Coastal Plain, this should be good information for those visiting the mountains of Virginia or elsewhere in the U.S. or world. The "Leave No Trace" reminder certainly pertains to ALL of us who enjoy being out in nature! ~CG*



Saturday & Sunday, February 4 & 5

- Winter Waterfowl Count

contact Jeff Wright, pec11908@me.com

Tuesday, February 7, 9:00-11:00 am

– NNMN Wild Side Walk at BISP for CE

Northern Neck Chapter, VMN 2023 Board	
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Vice President	Polly Foote
Secretary	Karen Williams
Treasurer	Debby Tupper
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BTC Chair	Lesley Newman
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Continuing Ed Chair	Charlene Talcott
Diversity/Inclusion Chair	We need YOU!
Historian	Temple Moore
Hospitality Chair	We need YOU!
Outreach Chair	Terry Jordan
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Better Impact Liaison: John Narney	
Webmaster: Anne Clewell	
Chapter Advisors: Tara Brent, Wendy Herdman	

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