



Northern Neck Chapter,
Virginia Master Naturalists
northernneckvmn.org

NEWS & NOTES
for Members
August
2022

Virginia Master Naturalists
shared by Camille

OUR NEXT MEETING

The Chapter Board did not meet in August. Our next Board and Program meetings will be on Tuesday, September 13, 2022. Stay tuned for details on time and location!



...to register for the VMN Statewide Conference and Volunteer Training on September 9-11 in Virginia Beach! Registration closes on **Monday, August 22, 11:59 pm.**

<http://www.virginiamasternaturalist.org/vmn-statewide-conference.html>

UPCOMING EVENTS

* = additional info in this issue

September 1 *

Hughlett Point Cleanup

September 9-11 *

VMN Statewide Conference

September 9-10 *

GS Love VA State Parks

September 13

Chapter Board & Member Meetings

September 17 *

NNLC "Boots & Barbecue (and Oysters)"

at Waterloo Farm in King George

(Mindy & Stu Ashton)

September 27 *

GW Birthplace NABA Fall Butterfly Count

October 6 *

Hughlett Point Cleanup

October 8 *

Belle Isle State Park Fall Festival

November 1 *

NNMN Board and Member Election Mtgs

(note change from second Tuesday!)

Anyone Up for a Road Trip?



Pawpaw Festival in Newport News!

The VMN, Peninsula Chapter, has an [upcoming Pawpaw Festival](#) at Historic Endview Plantation in Newport News, Aug 27, 11AM – 4 PM. Celebrate one of Virginia’s native fruits with free tastings, educational booths and talks by many local organizations, live music, and more. For questions, contact vmnpeninsula@gmail.com.

Let me know if you want to go together (Camille – cgrabb9@gmail.com).

Ibises in Colonial Beach?

YES! Sighted in July!

2021 BTC graduate Joyce Reimherr was soon putting her new knowledge and skills to work when a neighbor sent her pictures of large birds that appeared to be ibises. Joyce was puzzled, associating those with Florida. She did what most of us do when unable to be sure of an ID: she sent the pictures to a fellow NNMN. Sure enough, Jeff confirmed her identity of them as ibises and offered that they appeared to be juveniles. And while not often here in the Northern Neck, they have shown up in our “neck” in the past.

So yes, Virginia, there are ibises here—on occasion!



photo by Joyce’s neighbor, Pam Myers

The Great Bluebird Rescue of 2022!

by Leslie Fellows & Pam Narney

One morning in June, Carla Bangs and I started our bluebird monitoring at Westmoreland State Park. When we opened our first box, a mama bluebird flew out and we saw five eggs in her nest. We quickly realized that the box was infested with hundreds, if not thousands, of ants. They were everywhere, including all in the nest strata. I tried brushing them off of the open door and got stung multiple times in doing so. There was no question that once the babies hatched they would be killed within minutes, and it would be a painful death. Our first gut reaction was just to remove and destroy the nest, eggs and all. But first we decided to call John Narney, just to see if he could give us any alternative. John and Pam called Anne Little, of the Bluebird Society, to see if she had any suggestions.

The only likely way to save the babies was to discard the infested nest, brush all of the ants out of the box, then cover the now empty box inside with diatomaceous earth, **build a new nest** and move the eggs to that, then return the new nest to the box. The following day, John and Pam went to the park and got to work. The eggs were carefully removed from the nest and placed on a towel. The nest and most of the ants were removed from the box. Diatomaceous earth was sprinkled on the bottom of the box and around the base of the support pole to prevent the ants from returning.

Pam fashioned a new nest from pine straw and placed that nest in the box on top of the diatomaceous earth. The five eggs were carefully returned to this new nest inside the box. Almost immediately the parents returned to the nest.

Six days later Carla and I, back at WSP for the Butterfly Count, immediately checked the box. Mama was there incubating an ant-free clutch of five eggs, which eventually successfully hatched and added 5 new bluebirds to the Westmoreland population.

Editor’s note: Looks like the “Osprey Queen” doubles as a Bluebird foster mama and John is the “Bluebird King”! See photos on p. 7.

Caterpillars Count!

[Caterpillars Count!](#) Research Project Update

Our 2nd year of participating in the University of North Carolina's national citizen science project on the phenology — seasonality and abundance — of bird food is completed. Basically the scientists are interested in the timing of leafing and insect activity in relation to climate, migration and breeding. Caterpillars Count! is a catchy name for the project but it included looking for all Orders under the Class *Insecta*: Hymenoptera (better known as bees), Orthoptera (grasshoppers), Hemiptera (aphids), Diptera (flies), Araneae (spiders), Coleoptera (beetles), Lepidoptera (butterflies) and many more. Thinking back to basic training and hearing this nomenclature roll off Kevin Howe's tongue sure helped with understanding this project.

We joined the CaterpillarsCount! (CC) project in 2021 as a pilot project with 5 observers and a short season of 7 weeks. This year 8 Master Naturalists surveyed from May through July. On-site training was held two weeks before the survey season began. Teams of 4 visited 30 selected and coded tree branches, surveyed the leaves and branches for various orders of arthropods, and measured and photographed what was observed. The data and photos were then uploaded to the CC database each week for 13 weeks. CC then reviewed and uploaded the submissions to iNaturalist under project name: [Caterpillars Count! Foliage arthropod survey](#) and our data is linked to [Biodiversity of Belle Isle State Park, Lancaster, Virginia USA](#).

Our host site is Belle Isle State Park and as this is a research project we followed the DCR protocol for acquiring an annual research permit. Katie Shepard, BISP Park Manager, BTC16 and mentor to two of the survey observers, guided us through the permitting process and provided encouragement and guidance throughout the survey season. Many thanks, Katie! We'd also like to acknowledge and thank our chapter advisors, Tara Brent and Wendy Herdman, for helping navigate the

unique project requirements of the permitting process through the VMN approval process.

Thankfully this project required us to only identify the Order of the arthropod. Over time iNaturalist "identifiers" will chime in with accurate order, genus and species. We are pleased that some of our sightings have already been confirmed as research grade. It has been a great way to integrate and extend our training education concerning habitats, species identification, citizen science protocols, learn from each other, get out in nature and have some surprises and fun.

Many thanks to my fellow CC observers: Anne Parker, Kathy Moffitt, Alita Thomas, Leslie Fellows, Karen Williams, Camille Grabb, and Audrey Vaughn, Co-Lead. The team ended the season with lunch at Golden Eagle Grill. Lots of great catching up and even some CC discussion. We all agreed it was a great season.

- Anne Clewell, Chapter Co-Lead, *Caterpillars Count!*

During the survey season Caterpillars Count! provided a monthly online newsletter with updates, charts and graphs to help us understand the data and see how other sites were coming along. *This month two photos from our final survey week, a Hackberry at BISP, were highlighted as the Observation of the Month.*

Observation of the Month



photos by Anne Parker

These caterpillars are just two of the 75 total arthropods observed on this single Hackberry branch at [Belle Isle State Park](#) in Lancaster, VA on July 28. The one on the left is in the genus *Asterocampa*, either a Hackberry Emperor or Tawny Emperor. The fuzzy caterpillar on the right is a banded tussock moth caterpillar, *Halysidota tessellaris*.

Girl Scouts Love VA State Parks!



Pollinator Power:

Monarchs, Bumblebee Buffet and Jewell's of the Night

Friday, September 9 - Saturday, September 10, 2022

Every year on the 2nd weekend of September Girl Scouts across the Country explore the natural wonders found in their local State Parks.

On September 9-10, 2022, Belle Isle State Park, Girl Scouts of Virginia, and Northern Neck Master Naturalists will celebrate our shared love of the outdoors.

Current reservations include young scouts, scouts that attended last year, and 5-8 high school scouts plus their leaders and parents. Most scouts will attend Saturday activities. This will be a great opportunity to build relationships and offer mentoring skills.

NNMN Volunteers are needed; list is in order of priority:

Saturday, mid afternoon – Butterfly Safari, Picnic area at Boardwalk/Kayak Launch: We'll divide the scouts into younger and older groupings. The older group will be able to handle more information such as count protocols, seasons, where/how to volunteer. They would be the group to do some serious photography, introduction to iNaturalist and uploading photos to the Biodiversity of Belle Isle, Lancaster, Virginia, USA project. Both groups will review butterfly identification together before heading out to count. Leads and sweeps needed.

Saturday, 9:00 - Noon, Monarchs, Bumblebee Buffet and Jewell's of the Night, Picnic tables and shelter area at Motor Boat Launch: Extra hands to guide and engage scouts and leaders through 3 stations. We're planning to tag and release Monarchs. That is, if the Monarchs cooperate.

Friday evening events:

5:00-6:30 pm, Visitor's Center
Night Pollinator Identification and Mothing Experience prep. Small group.

8 pm, Amphitheater
Campfire with our own Lesley Newman, storyteller and environmental educator

9 pm, Amphitheater
Mothing Experience with Debby Tupper
Just a reminder: parking is free when volunteering at Belle Isle.
Check out the chapter website for additional information: www.northernneckvmn.org or Anne Clewell anne.clewell@gmail.com or call 410.456.6960.

2023

NNMN Basic Training Course

The BTC Committee reports that applications for the 2023 course, beginning in January, are now open! Application and instructions are here: <https://app.betterimpact.com/PublicOrganization/c42d3264-4547-46b9-82c9-4daa5908698e/1>.

If you have a friend or neighbor interested in becoming a VMN through our chapter, please pass this information along!

The BTC Committee has been hard at work. They have some new ideas for the course, conceived in an effort to make it less stressful and hectic for the trainees (a primary complaint of the past 3 classes). When they seek help from our members, please be ready to jump on board to assist. Here's to a great BTC 2023! Contact Lesley Newman, BTC Chair, with questions (newman.lesley@gmail.com).



**Remember, for recertification,
we are back to 40 +8!**



ELECTION TIME IS ALMOST HERE!

Our chapter will be electing our 2023 officers on **Tuesday, November 1**. Past President Charlene Talcott (charlene.talcott@gmail.com) is Chair of the Nominating Committee. Please contact her with the names of a NNMN that you would like to see serve on the Board! Please feel free to offer yourself for a position. The proposed dues increase for 2023 will also be voted on at this time.



The International Coastal Cleanup, sponsored by the Ocean Conservancy, is once again underway this fall.

In our state, it is being handled by Longwood University as “Clean Virginia Waterways.” As with last year, anyone may sign up to be a “site captain”, which means that you select a location for your cleanup, notify the organizer (Longwood U), publicize your cleanup dates, (Longwood and Alice Stieve, our postmaster) and members may sign up to work with you to clear that area of trash and debris. These dates and times could also be posted on our website.

Bob Dunstan (BTC 2021) is taking the site captain role at Hughlett Point. He sent this message for our membership :

“I am organizing the International Coastal Cleanup at Hughlett Point for September 1 and October 6, 2022, and need a few volunteers to help. The program seeks to clean Virginia’s waterways and quantify the types of debris that is found.

Because parking is so limited at Hughlett Point, the clean-ups will begin at 8:00 a.m. and we only need a limited number of volunteers (3-4). I scouted the area recently and the trails to the viewing stations have very little trash so the clean-up will be limited to the beach area. For those interested I will provide gloves and trash bags, water, and the data cards to fill out. Please bring a clipboard and if you want, a grabber of some sort. If you want to register, please contact robertwdunstan4@gmail.com or

781-825-3245. I look forward to hearing from you.”

If you want more information on this initiative, contact: <http://www.longwood.edu/cleanva/> .

If you have a favorite beach or natural area, sign up as the site captain for that area! contact:

<http://www.longwood.edu/cleanva/VolunteerSiteCaptain.html> .

Be sure to send Alice Stieve (nmn22.als@gmail.com) your cleanup site, dates, etc., and she can let the membership know they are available for volunteers to sign up!

Cleanups count as Stewardship volunteer hours under “Clean Virginia Waterways.”



Our booth will be at the Northern Neck Land Conservancy Boots & Barbecue on September 17. We need people to help staff it from Noon until 4:00 pm. Contact cgrabb9@gmail.com This is a great event to attend!

BISP Fall Festival – October 8. We need NNMNs to plan fall-related activities for the youth. Contact: cgrabb9@gmail.com if you would like to be involved in planning or helping that day.



Final Butterfly Count for 2022

The George Washington Birthplace NABA Fall Butterfly Count is scheduled for Tuesday, September 27. Jeff Wright will be the compiler for the Count, and he will put out a call for volunteers in a few weeks. Don’t miss this last opportunity to view butterflies before the season changes!



photo by Camille Grabb

If you missed seeing Nancy Joel's article in the "VMN Laurels – Summer 2022", it is copied here.

Northern Neck Chapter Stewardship Challenge

Contributed by Nancy Joel, VMN-Northern Neck

With the American Hiking Association's [National Trails Day](#) and the Chesapeake Bay Foundation's [Clean The Bay Day](#) both being celebrated on June 4 this year, it created a perfect opportunity for stewardship activities to be undertaken by members of the [Northern Neck Chapter](#). With over 1,200 miles of tidal creeks and streams feeding through the Potomac and Rappahannock Rivers into the lower reaches of the Chesapeake Bay, 22 Department of Wildlife Resources Bird and Wildlife trails in the region, three natural area preserves, two state parks, a state forest, and numerous environmentally important public lands, our members had their choice of a host of opportunities where they could record volunteer hours of stewardship.

In order to muster members to the task, after some discussion, the chapter board came up with the idea of creating a chapter challenge to promote this stewardship opportunity. Initial planning followed all the recognized format with stated objectives, specific organization, and an action plan for completion, but it quickly became apparent that we were overthinking the process, and that it would not take a lot of preplanning for it to be successful. What attracted us most to undertaking the challenge was that our efforts would directly benefit our sponsoring state agencies: Department of Wildlife Resources which oversees the Bird and Wildlife Trails; Department of Forestry which oversees state forests, in our case Chilton Woods, a 397 acre forest in Lancaster County; and Department of Conservation and Recreation which oversees our state parks, Belle Isle and Westmoreland, as well as our Natural Area Preserves, Dameron Marsh, Hickory Hollow, Hughlett Point and Bush Mill Stream.

Wishing to encourage participation, we increased the flexibility of opportunity from just the actual day, June 4, to the week preceding that date and the week following, and ultimately we designated the whole month of June as available to complete the challenge. We also embraced personal preferences by suggesting the stewardship opportunity could be completed by "walking, biking, or kayaking/canoeing". The original plan did have a challenge goal of 200 volunteer hours, but this was not publicly stated. As our first attempt at a challenge, we just wanted to see how the chapter membership responded to the opportunity to participate.

So what did we do? Some members offered to be "site leaders" for our larger natural areas, to help coordinate what, when and how specific stewardship tasks could be undertaken. Some members took responsibility for liaison with the staff of our state parks to ensure our volunteer efforts reflected the parks immediate stewardship needs. Not all our stewardship tasks

required brandishing a chain saw. Some required beach and river clean up, as well as signage cleaning, and generally reporting on the condition of trails and byways. Members of the chapter oversee all 22 Department of Wildlife Resources Bird and Wildlife trails in the Northern Neck Loop, and this challenge met their reporting requirement, which includes adding new information to the trail's online presence about any new flora and fauna present at their site. All this information is collated by our chapter coordinator and sent to the Department of Wildlife Resources. As all the areas available for us to steward have public access, it is an ongoing task to keep them free from trash and debris, and to report any conditions that might pose a hazard to seasonal visitors.

One of the planning points we pondered was how to judge whether the challenge was a success and worth repeating in the future. We asked members to report their efforts, and more importantly, make sure they entered their volunteer hours into Better Impact. This latter reminder made the exercise of evaluating success very easy. Working with our membership chair we were able to gather quickly all stewardship volunteer hours relating to trail work and clean up for the month of June, and even though some members may be yet to enter their hours, I can report that we are close to achieving the original challenge target of 200 stewardship volunteer hours. An additional benefit from the challenge was that over half of our recently graduated Basic Training Class members took part in the opportunity and recorded volunteer hours toward their first full certification.

The original invitation to participate is really all it took to get members engaged in the challenge. "Visit your special place" and "just grab the sunscreen and water bottles and go have fun for a good cause" prompted 26 members and counting, to volunteer time to stewardship. Members went out individually, in pairs and in groups, and established members took new members to experience places they had not visited before. What started as an idea, met our stated mission as Master Naturalists, of "volunteers providing services dedicated to the beneficial management of natural resources and natural areas within their communities" and will, in all probability, become an established event on our chapter's annual calendar.

As one of our members said of the challenge experience, "There is nothing I enjoy more than being out in the woods, learning, experiencing, sharing..."



Chilton Woods crew; photo by Pat McMurray - 6 -

**Photos from The Great Bluebird Rescue of
2022**

(photos courtesy of the Narneys)
(see story on p. 2)



Bluebird Rescue Accomplished!
And, now we ALL know what to do if we find ants
in our bluebird boxes!



...to our August
Contributors:
Anne Clewell
Bob Dunstan
Leslie Fellows
Pam Narney

*Member articles are
always welcome!*



Calling All NNMN Photographers
(YES, you know who you are!)
**Share Your Best Photos for the Next VMN
Brochure**

It is time for a VMN brochure re-design, and we are working on that this fall, with a tentative plan to have the new version published at the beginning of 2023. We very much need your high-quality photos that illustrate what the VMN program is all about.

Photo specifications:

- Photo dimensions should be at least 2200 pixels on the longest side at 72ppi resolution.
- Photo must be submitted by the photographer, with the understanding that by submitting, you are granting us permission to use the photo for VMN program needs, such as curriculum materials, program marketing materials, program reports, and communications.
- Individual VMN volunteers may submit as many photos as they wish. We will select from the best for the brochure, but we may be able to use other photos for other purposes.
- Please do not submit photos with views of faces of people who are not part of the VMN program unless you have documented media permissions from those individuals, or their parent/guardian in the case of youth. For people within the VMN program, most have a media release on file, and, if you can identify them in the photo, we can double-check that.
- We would especially like photos that show:
 - The diversity of people we would like to attract to the programs we provide. It is one of our VMN Diversity & Inclusion Working Group action items to include more photos that show a diversity of people involved, but I don't have many photos in my current supply that achieve that goal.
 - Current VMN volunteers in action, learning and doing service.
 - The diversity of locations, habitats, and seasons in which VMN volunteers learn and serve—urban to rural, coastal to mountain, spring to winter, etc.
 - Compelling views of flora, fauna, and landscapes (and, especially, volunteers interacting with those) that you think would make someone say, "Hey, I want to be part of that program!"
 - View [our old brochure](#) for inspiration!

How to submit:

Please submit your photos by October 14.

Recognizing that we have a range in technical skill level amongst our volunteers, we want to give you several options for submitting so that the tech is not a barrier.

1. Easiest for us – Upload your images to this [shared Google Drive folder](#). Include your name in the file name.
2. Least technical – Email your photos in their original, highest resolution to mprysby@vt.edu. If you have multiple photos that are too large for a single email, you may send multiple emails.
3. Dealer's choice – Share a folder or gallery of your photos on a sharing platform of your choice (Google Drive, Dropbox, Flickr, etc.) with mprysby@vt.edu. It would help if you could just limit it to a curated group of the photos you think would be the best for the brochure, rather than sharing every photo you have ever taken.



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If you are a person with a disability and desire assistance or accommodation, please notify the Richmond County Extension Office at 804-333-3420/TDD* during business hours of 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. *TDD number is (800) 828-1120.



Just around the corner!