

Northern Neck Master Naturalists

October 2014

NOVEMBER CHAPTER MEETING

The bimonthly general meeting of the Northern Neck Master Naturalists and election of officers for 2015 will be **Wednesday** November **12**, 2014 at 1:00 PM at the Northumberland County Public Library meeting room, Heathsville, Virginia. Current nominees are:

President – Don Hess

Vice President – Charlene Talcott

Secretary – Nancy Joel

Treasurer – Lise Maring

Nominations will be accepted from the floor. The Board of Directors will meet at noon. Any member is welcome to attend the board meeting.

At 2:00 PM, Temple Moore will speak on "Reptiles and Amphibians of the Northern Neck". The program qualifies as continuing education.

BETSY GORN TAKES THIRD AT STATE PHOTO CONTEST

For the third year in a row a Northern Neck Master Naturalist's photo has won a prize at the State Photo Competition. Betsy Gorn's "Yellow Ginkgo", below, garnered a third place ribbon in



Betsy Gorn's Yellow Ginkgo, VA MN State Photo Contest Third Place Winner

the flora category. Previous winners were Carol Hammer's 2013 third place in other and her 2012 first place in flora.

Betsy's photo was judged first place in the NNMN competition. Other chapter first places went to Katharina Bergdoll's Zenlike "Green Tree Frog" in fauna and Betsy's "Beach at



Katharina Bergdoll's Green Tree Frog, NNMN Photo Contest First Place Fauna

Westmoreland State Park" in the other category.



Betsy Gorn's Beach at Westmoreland State Park NNMN Photo Contest first Place Other

Betsy and Katharina's photos as well as others submitted for the NNMN competition are on display at the Kinsale Museum Ice Cream Shop in Kinsale from September 20 through October 25.

2014 STATEWIDE VOLUNTEER CONFERENCE AND TRAINING

Six Northern Neck Master Naturalists, shown below, attended all or parts of this year's State Conference and Training. The conference was hosted by the Historic Rivers and Peninsula Master Naturalist Chapters and held at the Virginia Living Museum in Newport News.



Bill Blair, Bev and Pete McElroy, Pam and John Narney, Alison Sowar, and Petra Walian at the 2014 State Conference

NOTES FROM THE MASTER NATURALIST CONFERENCE HELD AT THE VIRGINIA LIVING MUSEUM

by Alison Sowar

I had never been to Newport News before until August.

The first time I got lost there, and I don't know how, but obviously I made it back home and tried again for the Virginia MN convention. That time I did not get lost at all.

The hotel and convention center are very close together. I only needed to make three turns and I was there. Plus I got comfort food at Cracker Barrel when I arrived. I was a little lonesome at first but learned to enjoy the GPS in my Smartphone. I had a new little friend.

I had never heard of the Virginia Living Museum before. I think it offers something for everyone who loves nature.

Plus, attending a convention gives us MNs private time in a museum-that would not occur if it was open to the public.

Friday evening there was a happy hour and goodies to eat in the registration room where different chapters had set up displays.



INNMN Display at State Conference

Afterwards dinner was served in the lobby and Petra and I spoke with a very nice lady; the subject was one of my favorites: BLUEBIRDS!!!!

The first class I attended was "Honeybees and Their Environment". Evan Davies, from the Colonial Beekeepers Association, was just wonderful. He's so knowledgeable and animated that the time flew by. I've wanted to learn about bees and beekeeping for over thirty years and his lecture was full of fascinating facts for a beginner like me. Plus a big bonus was to see Bev and Pete there after not seeing them for over four months. I was happy once again to see their faces after so long.

At one point I made a wrong turn and checked in with the Wildlife Mapping Class, where I found Bill Blair. Where's Bill Blair? Everywhere!

Saturday afternoon I decided to take a break and do things my way, so I skipped a class or two and explored on my own. I enjoyed walking around at my own pace and even checked out the kiddie areas. Plus I could crank and uncrank

the huge model of the snake jaw without anyone watching me.



Figure 2 Allison Sowar Discovers a Beaver While Walking About VLM

By Saturday evening, the Narneys, fresh from a previous social engagement, were in fine form



Water Falls at Virginia Living Museum Provide Backdrop For Saturday's Pre-dinner Reception

as they held court during Happy Hour at a picnic table near the Fall Native Plant Sale.

Our dinner speaker was Art Evans, a Big Bearded Bear of a man. He signed copies of his new book on beetles and he has a great smile and loads of enthusiasm. His photography is outstanding and from what I remember he is working on even a newer book: besides writing he also hosts a show "What's Bugging You?" on Richmond Public Radio.

Sunday morning at nine AM was a lecture on "Practical Astronomy" with John Wright. The seats were padded and tilted back, and yes in the dark you can get overly comfortable. He is so interesting you just don't want to miss anything he's talking about. Planetariums, or

PLANETARIA, are magical places and have changed a bit since elementary school (many, many years ago). John's the kind of guy who has sparkling eyes, because he loves what he does for a living. Another DO NOT MISS kind of speaker. His wife is a Biologist and also employed at the museum. She lectured on animal tracks and was quite lively as well, from what I understand from those who met with her.

The last class I took on Sunday was "Conservation and Ecology of Virginia's Turtles". The lecturer, J. D. Kleopfer, is a herpetologist from the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries. I never realized there were so many species and subspecies of turtles here in Virginia. Unfortunately so many turtles are endangered. Gone are the days when we used to paint our initials on the shells of the many box turtles we found in the backyard. I did enjoy hearing about the box turtle, still living, who was over a hundred years old. He was not only initialed but dated "1913" as well.

by Pam and John Narney

General descriptions were taken from the Virginia Master Naturalist website under conference details.

The grounds of the Living Museum are loaded with native plants. The parking lot has the largest beautyberries (*Callicarpa Americana*) that I have ever seen. The museum is worth a visit just to see the native plants.

Bird Walk at Newport News Park

Newport News Park is one of the largest municipal parks east of the Mississippi River consisting of 8,000 acres and housing two reservoirs. The park is beautiful and loaded with birds and other critters, including the mammoth turtle we saw. We walked a portion of the White Oak Trail which turned out to be the path

most traveled. We were passed by joggers, dog walkers, families with kids, and one determined power walker. Dave told us that the other side of the park, which has the campground and bicycle paths, is much quieter. There have been over 140 species of birds identified in the park. When Dave Youker, our tour leader, monitors Prothonotary Warbler nesting boxes from his kayak, he sees many of these species.



Honest There's a Bird in There Feasting on Dogwood Berries

I think that we saw or heard all of the 50 species usually sighted in early fall. Resident and migratory species were so prolific that we birders had to change directions and binocular settings faster than someone could say, "There. Two o'clock on that snag to the right of the hickory tree." Just a few of the birds we saw were: warblers, woodpeckers, great egrets, phoebes, kingfishers, and great blue herons.



Great Egret at Newport News Park

A lone Osprey flew overhead. It was past time for him to go south.

INSTRUCTOR: Dave Youker is the President of the Hampton Roads Bird Club and participates

in numerous avian surveys and studies around the Tidewater area. He has been a Master Naturalist since 2009. This was a great trip with great people.

Behind the scenes tour with the VLM Aquarium Curator, Chris Crippen, showed how they take care of the 200 plus live animals at the VLM. This tour was instructive, challenging, and amazing. We climbed up and down catwalks, around tanks that ranged from 30 to 30,000



One of Many Freshwater Fish Tanks at Virginia Living Museum

gallons, and over hoses in through and around the back of the museum. Some of the fish are old or injured and have to be hand feed and some of these guys are BIG. The smaller ones love to jump out of holding tanks, and the crabs are often found under someone's desk or climbing up the stairs. For the most part, the museum grows its own fish to avoid contamination and diseases from the outside. If you want to work here you need to be able to lift 40 pound bags of salt higher than shoulder level into the mixing tank, be comfortable in a wet suit as you enter the tanks and clean the sides, and chase all of the escapees.

We also wandered through the other sections where I got to pet a screech owl and hold a live and healthy starfish in my hands.

There are over 35 thousand Osprey in the Bay area in the summer.

Osprey Watch Project provided information regarding why it is important to monitor Osprey and the health of the population in Virginia. The

session also covered the breeding cycle, incubation, brooding, and fledging of Ospreys. We learned amazing facts about this majestic bird, such as it being the only raptor whose outer toe is reversible and why this is important. Osprey migrate because they catch fish within 3 feet of the surface. As temperatures decline and the fish go deeper,



Osprey Diving from Hover

Osprey can't find enough food. Osprey use the swoop and snatch or dive-hover methods to fish. When they dive their nasal passages close.



Splash!

They come vertically out of the water with their fish and can drown if they cannot let go of a fish that is too heavy to lift.



Due to the comeback of the Osprey, nesting sites and food are tough to find and the birds are moving up the tributaries toward the headwaters, and with the decrease in the salinity of the water, the Osprey diet changes.

INSTRUCTORS: Cheryl Jacobson has been a Master Naturalist for two years. When the Osprey Watch Project was approved by the State organization, she organized a group of Master Naturalists in the Historic Rivers Chapter to become involved.

Dr. Bryan D. Watts' from the William and Mary Center for Conservation Biology <http://www.ccbirds.org> research focuses on solving conservation problems primarily within the mid-Atlantic region. Current interests include population estimation, habitat modeling, policy, migration ecology, ecological-economic tradeoffs, demography, spatial ecology and conservation limits.

If you contact Dr. Watts, members of his team may band your Ospreys. Then you can differentiate them with binoculars. To join Osprey Watch go to: www.osprey-watch.org.

I did not attend **Using native plants for survival**, but walked in as people were questioning the speaker, Vickie Shufer, who is a naturalist, forager, and herbalist. She has written "The Everything Guide to Foraging". Vickie Shufer is someone to look up if you are interested in finding out which plants provided food, medicine and crafts and the parts of the plant that were used. She also discussed the cycles of the plants, their harvest season, gathering techniques and how to use conservation ethics when harvesting wild plants.

Conservation and Ecology of Virginia's Turtles

Turtles are considered by many conservationists to be the most imperiled major taxonomic group of vertebrates. Of the approximately 320 species of turtle, almost 50% of them are in

danger of extinction. This presentation covered the basic conservation and ecology of turtles and focused on the 24 species and subspecies of turtles including five sea turtles that occur in Virginia.

What is a turtle? Turtles have shells (hard, soft or leather back); turtles have no teeth or ear openings. Turtles are very long lived and have excellent eye sight. Their primary cause of mortality is nest failure. Virginia's terrestrial and semi aquatic turtles vary in size from the small, 4" and .3 pound, Bog Turtle to the large, over 18" and 50 plus pound, Snapping Turtle. Turtles



Large Snapping Turtle Seen at Newport News Park

occur throughout the state; their distribution is based on habitat. Their ranges vary from the ubiquitous Eastern Box Turtle, the only terrestrial turtle in the state, which exists everywhere in the state to the endangered Eastern Chicken Turtle which is only found on a farm in Isle of Wight county and in Virginia Beach. All this info and more is included in a soon to be available DGIF booklet "A Guide to Turtles of Virginia" www.shopdgif.com.

INSTRUCTOR: For the past 10 years, J.D. Kleopfer has been a herpetologist for the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries and co-authored the recently published "A Guide to the Turtles of Virginia".

NNMN ARTIST DESIGNS STATE RECERTIFICATION PIN

Polly Ward's Cardinal design has been chosen for the 2014 Master Naturalist recertification pin. Congratulations Polly.



VA NM 2014 Recertification Pin Designed by NNMN Polly Ward

NNMN DISPLAY GETS GOOD REVIEW AT STATE CONFERENCE

Carol Heiser, DGIF Habitat Partners © Program, has said that, in her opinion, the NNMN display was the best one at the State Conference. Kudos to Jane Henley for her work in creating and maintaining the display and to Alison Sowar for her solo manning of the booth for the meet and greet on Friday night.

HOLIDAY PARTY

The chapter's annual holiday party will be Saturday December 6 from 3:00 to 6:00 PM at Jane and Page Henley's farm, The Oaks. Details and directions will be provided in November.

CERTIFICATION/RECERTIFICATION HOURS

Certification/recertification as a Virginia Master Naturalist requires forty volunteer hours and eight hours of continuing education annually. Members of the 2014 class have until the end of 2015 to achieve certification. An October 1 review of the volunteer time recording site showed that only nine members had logged enough hours for certification/recertification and only two others were at 75% of the requirement. Also it was obvious that not all volunteer hours had been recorded. Please review your records for accuracy and completeness. If you are having difficulties with the site please ask Pam Narney, pnarney@verizon.net, for assistance.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Wetlands 101 Project E5I



Tidal and non-tidal wetlands are a broad and complex subject and their role in providing valuable ecosystem services is not widely understood by the general public. Initially, the **Wetlands 101** educational program will focus on three primary messages that are relevant to local property owners:

1. Wetlands protect shorelines from erosion and storm damage
2. Wetlands provide habitat for wildlife
3. Importance of preserving riparian buffers

The purpose of this project is to request assistance with the following activities to communicate our primary messages and aide in the development of this program:

1. Conduct basic research for articles to be published in local newspapers and magazines (topics will be provided)
2. Provide assistance with scheduling and coordinating a "speakers bureau"
3. Provide assistance with creation of a "talking points" document that communicates a common wetlands conservation message throughout our Northern Neck network
4. Review of NNMN wetlands projects to determine which are still active, could be re-activated or could be combined with other activities in other organizations

Contact Kate Daniel

kcdaniel@thewetlandsproject.org 303-886-6953 for more information.

Native Plant Display at Stratford Hall Project E5j

On October 4, 2014 Stratford Hall hosted a native plant festival. Associated with the

festival, the Northern Neck Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society (NNNPS), the VA DGIF Habitat Partners © Program, and the Northern Neck Master



Dick Cheatham as "John Clayton", Paula Boundy, and Matt Peterschmidt from Stratford Hall plant a sweetbay magnolia to dedicate native plant garden. Picture by Janet Pawlukiewicz

Gardeners (NNMG) will work together to establish a native plant display near the entrance of the property. The purpose of the display (also known as a demonstration garden) is to illustrate for visitors how they can improve wildlife habitat on their own properties and to promote the Plant Northern Neck Natives Campaign of NNNPS. The location provides an opportunity to install a shady garden this year and expand to sunny gardens, meadows, woodland trails in the future, if desired. In an adjacent area, there are also many existing native plants that can serve as a conservation area and there are some alien invasive plants, so the overall area will serve well as a teaching tool.

NNMN members can log volunteer hours for assisting with the installation and maintenance of this garden using the Northern Neck Go Native project, E5j. Contact Paula Boundy, paula.boundy@va.metrocast.net, for details.

UPCOMING EVENTS

October 24, 2014 - "Wildlife Mapping Workshop" 9:00 AM - 3:00 PM, at the Northumberland County Public Library meeting room in Heathsville, VA. Bring a brown bag lunch or you can eat at the Subway nearby. The first portion is all indoor class and if weather permits, we will be in the field for the last hour



or so. It will not be serious hiking, but comfortable walking shoes would be helpful. Binoculars would also be worth having if we are able to go into the field. The cost will be nominal. It only covers the necessary copying since VADGIF no longer furnishes any materials and

will probably be no more than \$10.00. For those coming for refresher there will be no charge but please bring your manual. Time permitting, Temple Moore will connect and go over the procedure for logging information onto the site. If you want to bring a laptop, we may have time to go through the process if the Library wifi is available. Please let Temple know (templemoore207@gmail.com) if you will be attending so he can have enough materials. (Continuing Education)

October 24, 2014 – VMN Continuing Education Webinar, Vernal Pools, 12:00 to 1:00 PM. http://connect.ag.vt.edu/vmn_ce10/

October 29, 2014 – "Project EduBat: Education Taking Flight!" a US fish and Wildlife live broadcast designed for teachers, non-formal educators, and all those who care about bats. Log on to [Project Edubat – Education Taking Flight](#) at 2:00 PM.

November 12, 2014 - "Reptiles and Amphibians



of the Northern Neck" Program speaker: Temple Moore. Bimonthly meeting of the Northern Neck Master Naturalists and election of officers for 2015, 1:00 PM, Northumberland County Public Library meeting room, Heathsville, Virginia. The program will start at 2:00 PM following the general meeting. The Board of Directors will meet at noon. Any member is welcome to attend the board meeting. The program qualifies as continuing education.



December 6, 2014 – Chapter Holiday Party, 3:00 to 6:00 PM, at the Oaks. Details and directions forthcoming.

Thanks to Paula Boundy, Kate Daniel, Ted Munns, Pam Narney, Alison Sogar, and Bonny Wilson for their work on this issue.

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