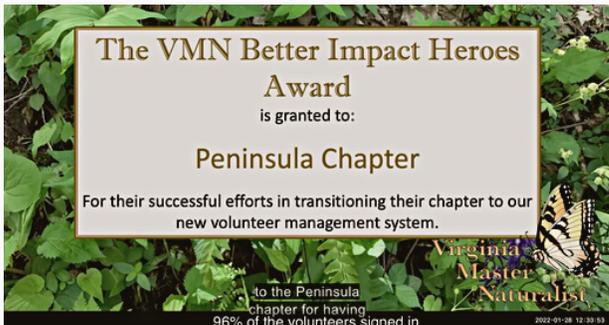




The VMN Better Impact Heroes Award

Our Peninsula Chapter of Virginia Master Naturalists has been awarded *The VMN Better Impact Heros Award* for having 96% of the volunteers signed in. We are grateful for all the hard work and support by Laura Marlow and to all the members who made this possible. In recognition of this achievement, the chapter has also been awarded \$50 to use for project or chapter supplies. This can be supplies for the chapter in general or something to be used for a specific project.



Screen shot from the VMN Awards video

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Springing to Action

Peninsula Master Naturalists are resilient and dedicated to improving the environment.

This issue is filled with Achievements, articles and photos by members making a difference in the world through continued service initiatives and new projects.

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to Field Notes this year. Please continue to share your photos and articles with Meera Rao, Newsletter chair. Email articles and photos to pnmfieldnotes@gmail.com



Spring brings Ospreys back to their breeding area in Poquoson. Photo credit: Meera Rao

CONNECTING IN NEW WAYS

by
Nathan S. Brauner



On March 12th, 2020, I spent part of the day at Dare Elementary, talking to first grade students about plant life cycles and seed starting. As part of the workshop, each class got to pick a type of seed to try, and we set up the seeds in vermiculite to check germination rates. We placed them on heat mats and under grow lights. The plan was that I would visit the classes again two weeks later, and we would evaluate the performance of the seeds, then transplant the new seedlings into small pots.

That never happened. The next day, school was cancelled, and teachers were told to report to the school to pick up any essentials. We were going into lock down because of COVID-19. Fortunately, I was able to drop into Dare that day and pick up the trays where we had started the seeds. I had scheduled a number of science lessons with the teachers at Dare, along with gardening and naturalist talks at the libraries, and it looked like all of that was going to be cancelled.

I decided that rather than scrap the plans that I had to teach the children about botany, I would reach out the only way that was left. I would make videos that I would post on YouTube and send the links to the teachers. They could then pass on the links to their students. I already knew from my own kids how big of a hit *YouTube* had become with younger generations, not to mention my own experiences. So, I made one on seedlings. A few days later, I made a video on roots, then one on the bluebirds that were beginning to nest at Dare. This was before we had plans in place for distance learning and while we were all still in lockdown. But the videos were a hit with the students, and I continued to make them. (The small plants eventually made their way home with the students.)



Photo credits: Nathan Brauner

As I continued to make the videos for the students, I decided to also create videos for some of the subjects that I taught in the libraries and schools. I shared the videos through social media and on YouTube through a channel that I created. Although we have returned to in-person programming, I have continued to make videos on a variety of subjects and posted them to the YouTube channel and to Facebook. Check them out. If you like them, subscribe to the channel, or share them on Facebook to increase their reach. And if you have any other ideas, let me know. I'm always looking for fresh subject matter.

You can find the videos here: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCime40VFMoBIlc_Qzcg9V2g

*For a seed to achieve its greatest expression, it must come completely undone.
The shell cracks, its insides come out, and everything changes.
To someone who doesn't understand growth, it would look like complete destruction.*

~Cynthia Ocelli ~



MYTHS ABOUT PLASTICS

By
Phyllis Kohlman

Reference: *Five Myths: Plastics*, Washington Post,
January 16, 2022, by Rebecca Altman

Growing up, I don't remember things depending so much on plastic. Now you can't make a purchase without plastic being involved. Wherever you travel, you see plastic objects discarded, in our country and especially in third world countries. You read about the micro plastics that are found even in fish harvested from our oceans.

This article, ***Five Myths: Plastics*** by Rebecca Altman, published in *Washington Post*, January 16, 2022, went through five myths we have about plastics and revealed the deeper concerns behind the way plastics are used, recycled, their by-products in manufacturing and deterioration.

Myth #1: Sustainability: The first plastics were derived from latex, which replaced ivory and tortoise shell uses. This did save these animals, but the trade-off was deforestation of areas in Southeast Asia and Taiwan, eventually displacing some Indigenous peoples, so the industry could access the sources for their production quotas.

Myth #2: Began in 1950: Data for the amount of plastics being produced yearly was first collected in 1950, around "4.4 billion pounds". Today we roughly produce "809 billion pounds". World War II saw an increase in the production of plastics with military uses. After the war, these uses were converted to the general population markets. "Marine Sediment cores" from the California coast show that plastics "pre-war sedimentary layers, markedly increasing after 1945".

Myth #3: How Long Plastics Last: It can be estimated that certain pieces of plastic can last for 400 – 550 years, but different environment exposure could have big impact on the reality of plastics' life span. "Plastics are a diverse class of contaminants containing complex mixtures of among 10,000 different monomers, additives and processing aids, making it difficult to estimate longevity." We all know that plastics deteriorate over time, breaking easily, discoloring, and now scientist see it becoming "micro- and nano-scaled particles". "These fragments also change chemically, releasing leachates as well as degradation products". Science is trying to understand how this impacts our environment and life as we know it here on earth.

Myth #4: Bioplastics Fix the Problem: There are two terms used for these products: Bio-based materials like corn and sugar, which may have toxic effects because of additives and/or processing steps before brought to market. Biodegradable may still have "fossil carbon source" as the base product. These nomenclatures are misleading when the consumer thinks the environment is much safer using these new products.

Myth #5: Clean-up Plastics: We recycle, eliminate our use of plastic bags, pick-up bottles, etc. to save our environment. Each action is helpful, but it does not even put a dent into the mass problems of plastics accumulation in our environments. "Nearly 8.8 million metric tons added to the sea each year. This figure is expected to triple by 2040". "Most plastics are minuscule fragments distributed below the sea surface, in the atmosphere, or are buried in sediments or shoreline sands."

Scientists have stressed the number of particles of plastics in our seas to be more numerous than the stars in our sky, but now they are studying to see if our soils could contain even larger amounts. Even the contaminants from processing to the deterioration of the existing plastics can have environmental impact.

The other considerations when discussing plastics is the effects on poor communities throughout the world, climate changes, and long-term health concerns, even the continuation of life of some animals, or even humans.



Plastic bags on a tree in Newport News, VA
Photo credit: Phyllis Kohlman

continued on page3



MYTHS ABOUT PLASTICS

By
Phyllis Kohlman

continued from page 2

Summary: We have not understood the invasiveness of the use of plastics and to ween ourselves away from their use(s) will take lots of effort from scientists, industry and the public. The scientists need to find alternative ways of replacing plastics and saving our environment in the production of the new materials. Industry needs to help in problem solving the alternative to plastic use in their practices, and be willing to follow through with needed changes, without charging exorbitant prices for these changes. The consumers need to be willing to change practices and accept responsibility to do their part to replace plastic uses and recycle what plastics that cannot be replaced. We all need to step-up to the task now and not ignore the plastics problem(s).

Photo on the right, taken by Phyllis Kohlman on March 2018, of a village on the Irrawaddy River, in Myanmar. Note the white/clear numerous pieces of plastic scattered along this village's access to the river. Even when the Touring Company was willing to pay the village people to clean-up the river's edges, they saw no need and continued to dispose of the plastic bags whenever they were finished with the bag. The changes will need to start with the industrialized nations, and then strongly encouraged for the third world nations to follow. This will take years to accomplish.



PLASTIC RECYCLING EFFORTS BY PMN



PMN chapter collected 151 pounds of plastic (total) in the months of January and February. That will go toward our next *Trex* bench.

Thanks, and keep it coming. Also, this is a link (<https://www.trex.com/our-company/news/introducing-nextrex-composite-decking-leader-announces-new-name-for-successful-retail-recycling-program/>) that tells the *Trex* story, i.e., more than 500 million pounds of plastic film and reclaimed wood repurposed annually, partnership with approximately 32,000 stores nationwide, etc.

submitted by Jim Francis

If it can't be reduced, reused, repaired, rebuilt, refurbished, refinished, resold, recycled, or composted, then it should be restricted, re-designed or removed from production.

~ Pete Seeger~





VMN AWARDS

Recertification (75)

John Adair
 Marilyn Adair
 Kerri Barger
 Bryan Barmore
 Kevin Barry
 Lylliane Battle
 Jane Berry
 John Berry
 William Boeh
 David Boehnlein
 Linda Boone
 Charlotte Boudreau
 Denis Boudreau
 Nathan Brauner
 Kenneth Carroll
 Jack Chirch
 Shirley Chirch
 Dawn Currier
 Elizabeth DeSalvo
 Hernly
 Susie Engle
 Jim Francis
 Jackie Frankewicz
 Kathleen(Kathy) Gallo
 Christy Gardner
 Anne Graber

Sandy Graham
 Chris Gwaltney
 June Hartzler
 Beverly Heimbach
 Daina Henry
 Caroline Herath
 Becky Holliday
 Jonathan Honchul
 Yukari Hughes
 Kathy Huston
 Linda Jenkins
 Merry Kennedy
 Sandra Kochersperger
 Frederick Kohlman
 Phyllis Kohlman
 David Lauthers
 Larry Lewis
 Jeanne Macomber
 Laura Marlowe
 Betsy McAllister
 Tracy McIntyre
 Cindy Moore
 Sharon Neal
 Marc Nichols
 David Nissen

Maria Nissen
 Laura Nusz
 Anne Owens
 Ward Phelps
 Hilary Propst
 Meera Rao
 Ella Reilly
 Ande Remington
 W. David Singletary
 Marie Smith
 Mark Sopko
 Jacqueline Spencer
 Loye Spencer
 Janet Tucker
 Francoise Veland
 Patricia VonOhlen
 Helmut Walter
 Willard Waples
 Barbara Waring
 Susan Webb
 Christiana Wilson
 Gary Wright
 Jeanette Yoh
 Raymond Yoh
 Sally Young

New Certifications

Mike Harris
 Gayle Phillips
 Helene Drees

Milestones:

Anne Graber 1000 Hours
 Willard Waples 1000
 Christy Gardner 500
 Linda Boone 250
 Nathan Brauner 250
 Kathy Huston 250
 Linda Jenkins 250
 Meera Rao 250

BASIC TRAINING FIELD TRIP TO PINEY GROVE PRESERVE

Submitted by
Christiana Wilson

The final outdoor field trip for Cohort 16 last year on Oct 30, 2021, was to the Piney Grove Preserve in Sussex County, VA. We were led by Nature Conservancy property caretaker, Bobby Clontz.

We were given the chance to view the Red-Cockaded Woodpecker nesting in tree cavities. Our leader explained how fire management helped to preserve the pine savannah. He explained that most of the area was a pine savannah until it was colonized. The indigenous people managed the forest though fire to keep brush to a minimum to support native grasses. The native grasses in turn supported the wildlife that the native people hunted for food.

We had the opportunity to walk through the savannah to a small wetland. We passed many plants in bloom among the two- to three-foot-tall native grasses. We spent several hours enjoying different habitats within the preserve.

Our final stop was a small stand of Long Leaf Pine Trees. They were mostly young trees that reminded me of the trees from a Dr. Seuss book.



Photo Credit: Christiana Wilson



One of our newest projects is helping in the creation of a **rain garden at the Big Bethel Landfill in Hampton**. PMN members are providing advice on how to prepare and plant a rain garden. Chris Gwaltney and Daina Henry helped mark out paths and identify spring plants that should be saved. Members also assisted by identifying fall and flowering natives for use. This is a five-year project and could always use more helpers and expertise. Volunteers meet on Fridays at 11am for about an hour. Please contact Daina Henry if interested.

Submitted by Daina Henry.

CHAPTER HIGHLIGHTS



“Keeping it all in the PMN Chapter”

Gary Wright (Cohort 5) and June Hartzler (Cohort 14) were married on 2-22-22 by Howard Miller (Cohort 16) in Newport News Park

Submitted by June Hartzler



Creation Care Outreach at Fox Hill United Methodist Church on March 12, 2022. Our first outreach event since 2020. It was great to talk with others. We focused on the use of rain barrels, and the importance of clean water. Many thanks to Jim Francis, Daina Henry, Fred Kohlman, Phyllis Kohlman, Janet Tucker, and Jackie Frankewicz for their help.

Submitted by Daina Henry

Yes, Virginia, There Are Florida Master Naturalists

by
David Boehnlein



Pine Flatwoods



Savannas Preserve



Saw Palmetto

I'm just back from five weeks in Florida. While I was there, I had the opportunity to learn about habitat that we don't have here in Virginia on a guided hike through the pine flatwoods of the Savannas Preserve State Park. The tour was led by Paul Strauss, a Florida Master Naturalist. The preserve is located on the Atlantic coast due east of Lake Okeechobee. We set out on the Gopher Tortoise Trail and Paul told us that sightings of gopher tortoises along the trail used to be common but have become rare in recent years. We didn't see any. In fact, the only fauna we spotted during the two-hour excursion were an eagle perched in a huge nest atop a pine tree and a couple of vultures soaring past. Despite the depletion of wildlife, the flat, sandy terrain before us was very similar to what would have existed here before the area was settled.

The present-day flatwoods are dominated by slash pines. The slash pine is extremely hardy, with a very tough core. Its name comes from the method of collecting sap from it: One can make a slash in the trunk and collect the sap without killing the tree. The sap is used to make turpentine and the tree was economically important in an era when turpentine was more widely used. It is now the predominant pine tree in the region south of Lake Okeechobee, although there used to be longleaf pines as well before the region was logged. The slash pine grows faster than the longleaf and could out-compete it as a logged area grew back. Also, they were preferentially replanted.

Unlike northern pines, the slash pine has a tall, limbless trunk, with its foliage all in a clump at the top. This structure gives the tree excellent protection from fire, which is the driving force in a natural flatwoods habitat. Florida receives more lightning strikes than anyplace else in the United States and consequently, wildfires are common. The slash pines generally survive them because the trunk is resistant to the flames and the foliage is above their reach.

We saw many trees that bore scorch marks from a fire that burned there 15 years ago, and they look perfectly healthy today. However, we also saw a stand of blackened ruins, the remains of trees that were destroyed by the fire. This, Paul told us, was the result of poor land management. Because of this section's proximity to developments, there were no prescribed burns here. When the wildfire came, the brush was piled so high that the flames were able to reach the canopies and incinerate the trees. The charred trunks still standing after 15 years is a testament to the toughness of the slash pine.

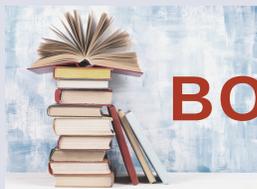


Sabal Palms



Burnt Pines

Photo Credits: David Boehnlein



BOOK REVIEW

Where the Deer and the Antelope Play, by Nick Offerman -The Pastoral Observances of One Ignorant American Who Loves to Walk Outside-

Book Review by
Bonnie Baffer

(I presented this book at the last book club Zoom meeting but wanted to expand my review here.)

Nick Offerman is an actor from the TV show Parks and Recreation, who wrote this book during the start of the pandemic in 2020. He and his wife, Megan Mullally (actress from the TV show Will and Grace) bought a camper and traveled the US to visit family. He also includes humorous tales of hiking and white-water rafting trips taken earlier.

His point is that park land and natural areas are important for our mental and physical health, and for keeping animals and plants healthy. Naturalist and author Aldo Leopold is a big influence on his writing. He also travels to a small farm in England and describes how hard the work is but rewarding to see ethically raised animals and crops thriving.

There are some political discussions and salty language, but this is an enjoyable read. Mr. Offerman's previous books are: Paddle Your Own Canoe; Gumption: Relighting the Torch of Freedom with America's Gutsiest Troublemakers; Good Clean Fun: Misadventures in Sawdust at Offerman Woodshop, and The Greatest Love Story Ever Told: An Oral History. (Written with his wife.)

Consider joining in the book club fun! We meet on the second Thursday, every other month on Zoom, and discuss whatever nature themed book you have read. The next meeting will be Thurs. May 12 at 7 PM. If you would like to participate, please send an email to Meera Rao (meeragrao@gmail.com), coordinator and moderator for the Potluck Book Club, for the link to the meeting. The Potluck Book club was conceived for PMN members by Daina Henry in the early days of pandemic quarantine!

Titles presented at the March PMN Potluck Book Club

- Ray Yoh: *The Price of Oil* by Julian Charter
- Anne Owens: *Fox and I* by Catherine Raven
- Daina Henry: *A Blizzard of Polar Bears* by Alice Henderson
- Bonnie Baffer: *Where the Deer and Antelope Play* by Nick Offerman
- Maria Nissen: *Something Deeply Hidden* by Sean Carroll
- Meera Rao: *How to be a Good Creature: A Memoir in 13 animals* by Sy Montgomery.



Forest Immersion at Endview Plantation Nature Trail.



A new location and new friends. Despite the cold and wind, the attendees at the forest immersion had a great time. We walked the trail for an hour, focusing on the senses, the healthy aspects of walking in the woods, and guided meditations. The daffodils were just beginning to bloom so it was glorious to use the sense of sight to watch them dance in the wind. It was a pleasure to have two schoolteachers who were excited about the walk.



Next forest immersion will be March 26 at 9:30 am. at Mariners Museum.

Submitted by Daina Henry

PENINSULA CHAPTER

2022 Peninsula Chapter Board of Directors

President	Jim Frances
Vice President	Shirley Chirch
Secretary	William Boeh
Historian	Maria Nissen
Treasurer	Christy Gardner
Chapter Advisors	Megan Tierney & Meghan Mulroy-Goldman



Member Meetings and Continuing Education

Day/Time: **Second Tuesday of every month, 6 PM - 8 PM**
Location: Sandy Bottom Nature Park
1255 Big Bethel Road, Hampton, VA 2366
(Currently held also on Zoom until further notice)

2022 Committee Chairs

Basic Training	Rex Holmlin
Better Impact Coordinator	Laura Marlowe
Continuing Education	Yukari Hughes
Community Outreach	Kimberly Prisco-Bagget
Fund Raising	Charlotte Boudreau
Hospitality	Merry Kennedy
Membership	Cindy Moore
Newsletter	Meera Rao
Projects	Chris Gwaltney
Property Manager	Jeanette and Ray Yoh
Public Relations	Nate Brauner
Web Master	John Berry
Past President	Charlotte Boudreau

Upcoming Meetings and CE are listed in VMS-BI Calendar

Date: March 31, 2022 CE - VIMS After hours lecture - Deepwater Horizon Disaster and What Came Next
Time: 7:00 PM - 8:00 PM

Date: April 09, 2022, Outreach to the Public Endview Plantation Guided Tree Walks.
Time: 3:30-5:30 PM.

Date: April 12, 2022 Member Meeting (Zoom link on BI Calendar)
Time: 6:00 PM CE: 7:00 PM Presenter is Mr. James Abbott of the James River Association.

Date: May 10, 2022 Member Meeting (Zoom link on BI Calendar)
Time: 6:00 PM. CE: 7:00 PM

Date: May 12, 2022 (Contact: meeragrao@gmail.com)
Time: 7:00 PM Potluck Book Club Meeting. CE for presenting a review.

FIND US!

Peninsula Chapter Website: <http://vmnpeninsula.weebly.com/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/VMNPeninsula/>

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCTbIGR9RcDI62oxfJSLi3Ww>

Pinterest: <https://www.pinterest.com/VMNPeninsula/>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/vmnpeninsula/?hl=en>

Our Address: 809 Aberdeen Road, #9263,
Hampton, VA 23670

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