



Field Notes



The Monthly Newsletter of the Peninsula Chapter - Virginia Master Naturalist Program

Volume 3/Issue 3

Fall 2011

Long overdue congratulations to Liz and Jon Arp, of Cohort Three, on the birth of their baby girl! Milena Monarda Arp was born on October 20, 2011, weighing 9 lbs. 13 oz, 22" long.



Congratulations to these members of Peninsula Master Naturalists who received their certification at the January meeting. They are, from left to right, Chip Petrie, Sarah McGuire, Chris Gwaltney, Julia Horton, Diane Rasner and Larry



Thanks to Hospitality Committee Chair Marjorie Wallace members have enjoyed an amazing array of delicious foods during meetings. Please sign up to help with refreshments at an upcoming meeting.

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Upcoming Meetings

Board of Director's Meeting /General Membership Meeting

Date: February 14, 2012

Time: 6:00 P.M.

Location:

Sandy Bottom Nature Park

1255 Big Bethel Road Hampton, VA 23666

Advanced Training

Date: February 14, 2012

Time: 7:00 P.M.

Location:

Sandy Bottom Nature Park

Topic: "Queen of the Sun"

1255 Big Bethel Road Hampton, VA 23666

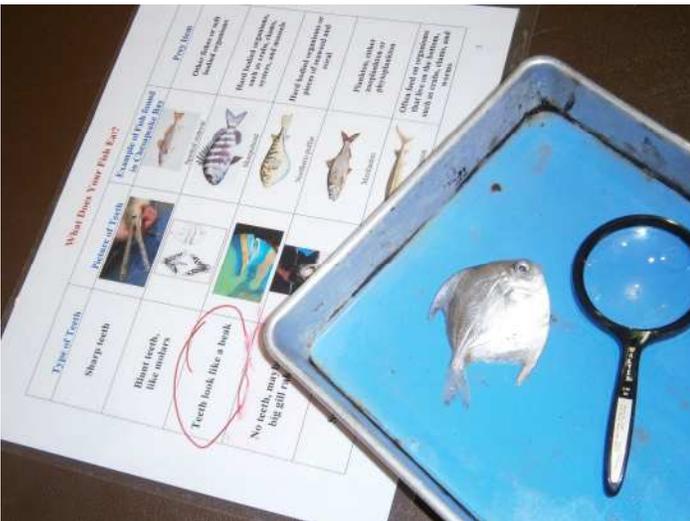
"Queen of the Sun: What are the Bees Telling Us?" is an in depth investigation into the causes and solutions of Colony Collapse Disorder. This film emphasizes the biodynamic and organic communities who have differing opinions from many commercial beekeepers and are overlooked in other films.

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Sarah McGuire provided the advanced training for the January 2012 meeting. The topic was the adaptations of fish, with a focus on species of the Chesapeake Bay.



PMN Projects

Great Backyard Bird Count

www.birdsource.org or www.birdcount.org

Check our web pages for many, many more projects!

We are looking for your input!

Please submit your articles for the next newsletter.

Deadline: March 10, 2012

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Join the Great Backyard Bird Count Feb 17-20

February 6, 2012—Warmer temperatures and lack of snow in parts of North America are setting the stage for what could be a most intriguing 15th annual Great Backyard Bird Count, coming up February 17-20.

Bird watchers across the U.S. and Canada are getting ready to tally millions of birds in the annual count coordinated by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Audubon, and Canadian partner Bird Studies Canada.

In past counts, participants were most likely to report American Robins in areas without snow. Will more robins be seen farther north this year? Will some birds, such as Eastern Phoebes, begin their migrations earlier? And where will the “Harry Potter” owl turn up next? Snowy Owls have dazzled spectators as these Arctic birds have ventured south in unusual numbers this winter--an unpredictable

"This count is so much fun because anyone can take part--we all learn and watch birds together--whether you are an expert, novice, or feeder watcher," said Gary Langham, Audubon's Chief Scientist. "I like to invite new birders to join me and share the experience. Get involved, invite your friends, and see how your favorite spot stacks up."

Participants count birds at any location they wish for at least 15 minutes on one or more days of the count, then enter their tallies at www.birdcount.org. Anyone can participate in the free event, and no registration is required.

Last year, participants submitted more than 92,000 checklists with more than 11 million bird observations. These data capture a picture of how bird populations are changing across the continent year after year--a feat that would be impossible without the help of tens of thousands of participants.

"This is a very detailed snapshot of continental bird distribution," said John Fitzpatrick, director of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. "Imagine scientists 250 years from now being able to compare these data with their own. Already, with more than a decade of data in hand, the GBBC has documented changes in late-winter bird distributions."

To learn more about how to join the count, get bird ID tips, downloadable instructions, a how-to video, past results, and more visit www.birdcount.org. The count also includes a photo contest and a prize drawing for participants who enter at least one bird checklist online.

Information and photos from the Great Backyard Bird Count is used with permission of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology.

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Carolina chickadee, Ken Childs, TN



Northern cardinal, Heather Taylor, MD

Participation in the Great Backyard Bird Count is an approved project of Peninsula Master Naturalists.

For regional bird checklists based on zip code:

<http://gbbc.birdsource.org/gbbcApps/checklist>

Top Ten from 2011 GBBC

Most Frequently Reported Birds

1. northern cardinal
2. mourning dove
3. dark-eyed junco
4. down woodpecker
5. American goldfinch
6. blue jay
7. American crow
8. black-capped chickadee
9. house finch

Most Numerous Birds

1. European starling
2. American robin
3. common grackle
4. Canada goose
5. red-winged blackbird
6. snow goose
7. American crow
8. American goldfinch
9. dark-eyed junco
10. mallard

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Trip Report

Virginia Master Naturalist

State Conference 2011

Pam Courtney and Brad Halcums attended the Statewide Volunteer Conference and Training on September 23, 24, and 25, 2011. It was held at Camp Friendship, a resident camp with cabins, dining hall, and recreational facilities. The Camp is in Palmyra about 20 miles southeast of Charlottesville. We stayed off site and cannot comment on sleeping facilities.

We registered at 9 AM on September 23 and then boarded a large charter bus for the hour drive north to the Skyline Drive and Shenandoah National Park. About 10 miles into the Park we began a hike at the Turk Mountain trailhead. Our group of 18 was led by two geologists from the Virginia Department of Mines, Minerals, and Energy. We also had a Park Ranger who is an expert in plant identification. Despite a constant rain, we could observe geological features and small plants. Skolithos tubes, fossilized burrows of worms, were very common. At the summit of the mountain was a large rock slide, but the rain prevented much of a view. The 2 mile round trip walk would be great to revisit in nice weather. We returned to Camp and after a dry off, had a family-style supper followed by a viewing of displays from several Chapters.

Michelle Prysby, the State Coordinator, made the following major announcements:

-The Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) will soon become a sponsor of Master Naturalists, so we will have another logo to add to the brochures.

-A training session will be held in November concerning wild-life permits for collecting, display, and salvage.

-The 2012 Statewide Conference will be held in either Martinsville or on the Northern Neck.

The Saturday morning (September 24) sessions were all held on site.

Brad attended a workshop on aquatic insects or macroinvertebrates. The instructor is the director of StreamWatch, a stream monitoring group. The session focused on habitats, identification, adaptations, and feeding habits. Preserved samples were available for study and discussion. Handouts were provided by the Virginia DEQ.

Pam went to a session on Virginia State Forests called "Tree Trunks" which is a trunk with activities and lesson plans for getting people into the forest and doing some learning activities. The lesson plans are available on the VA State Forestry website and downloadable.

All Saturday afternoon sessions were off site.

Brad's session was at Ivy Creek Natural Area, a 200 acre former African-American farm site located 2 miles from Charlottesville. The leader was a retired Department of Forestry employee. The hike showed the effects of human and natural disturbances on the land. Also discussed was the history of the forest for the past 150 years.

Pam travelled to the Cumberland State Forest to learn about forest management. The state forests were created during the depression from farmland that was worn out. The state purchased these lands and began planting trees. We viewed areas planted with stands of loblolly pines to protect the oak seedlings. The loblollies are harvested at maturity and later the oaks. Another site we visited was a mature oak stand. The largest oaks are left to reseed the area and then later harvested before their decline. Since it had been so wet, we had a great time looking at the variety of mushrooms. I counted seven different types.

Following a family-style supper, the keynote presentation was given by Lucia Cinder Stanton, Senior Historian at Jefferson's Monticello. She discussed Jefferson's role as a leader of men of science who came to him asking for plant and animal identification. Jefferson was one of the few men who wrote notes on the weather and kept a plant and animal journal thus being an early phrenologist.

The Sunday morning (September 25) sessions were a mix of on and off site events.

Brad went to an on site session on animal tracking conducted by a professional tracker. We were told to "become the animal" to see the landscape through the animals' eyes. Tracking is used to tie together the landscape, plants, birds, seasons, and the weather. We were shown how to create a theory of what happened and then prove it.

Pam went to nearby Pleasant Grove for botany and plant key training using *Newcomb's Guide to Wildflowers*. She would like further training on using this guide. We identified many invasive species including tree of heaven, beefsteak plant and Japanese stilt grass. We also saw many native flowers in bloom including a field filled with crown-beard, asters, boneset, ladies tresses, and coral berry. We spied several pearl-crescents and little blue butterflies flitting about.

The Conference ended about 1 PM as attendees packed lunches to head home.

We would recommend attending a Statewide Conference not only for the excellent training, but also for the exchange of ideas from other Chapter members as well as new friendships. This Conference was well organized and except for the weather, had no major problems.