

# Field Notes



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

Volume 6/Issue 1

Spring 2014

## Message from the President:

Please plan to attend the June 19th meeting. Join in as we celebrate the graduation of Cohort VII with our annual potluck dinner. Election of officers will also be held that evening.

Dawn Currier

## Slate of Officers

### Officers

President	Brad Halcums
Vice president	Elisabeth Wilkins
Secretary	Mary Galloway (to be shared)
Treasurer	Kasha Lang
Historian/newsletter	Susan Walton

### Committee Chairs

Cohort Training	Daina Henry
Continuing Education	Susie Yager and Michelle Slosser
Hospitality	Ashley DeCarme
Membership	Pam Courtney
Volunteer Projects	Bob Vazquez
Outreach	Chris Gwaltney
Publicity	open
Webpage	Larry Lewis

### Advisor

Megan Tierney

## Certification and Milestone Volunteer Service Pins

If you have completed the hours required to obtain your initial certification, recertification or have reached a volunteer service hour milestone, please contact membership chairperson Pam Courtney. With the number of members we currently have, it is no longer feasible for her to monitor the Volunteer Membership System (VMS) to determine who has reached a significant hours.

The yearly recertification pins, i.e. the dogwood featured species pin for 2012, are awarded AFTER you have completed your initial year of service.

Don't forget, your volunteer service hours are critically important to our partner organizations! Please keep your hours updated on the VMS so that they can be reported correctly.

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# Peninsula Chapter

## Peninsula Chapter Board of Directors

### President

Dawn Currier

### Past Co-Presidents

Pam Courtney and Brad Halcums

### Vice President

Brad Halcums

### Secretary

Ashley DeCarme

### Treasurer

Kasha Lang

### Historian/Newsletter

Susan Walton

### Cohort Training Committee Chairs

Elisabeth Wilkins and Sandy Graham

### Continuing Education Committee Chair

Elisabeth Wilkins

### Community Outreach and Development Chairs

Chris Gwaltney and Charlotte Boudreau

### Hospitality Committee Chair

Ashley DeCarme

### Membership Committee Chair

Pam Courtney

### Volunteer Service Project Committee Chair

Bev Nunnally

### Outreach Committee Chair

Chris Gwaltney

### Web Master

Larry Lewis

### Chapter Advisor

Megan Tierney



## Upcoming Meetings

Day: Second Tuesday of the month

Location: Sandy Bottom Nature Park

1255 Big Bethel Road, Hampton, VA 23666

### General Membership Meeting, Potluck and Graduation

Date: June 10, 2014

Time: 6:00 P.M.

### General Membership Meeting

Date: July 8, 2014

Time: 6:00 pm

### Other Events:

June 7 VCE Hampton Environmental Expo, Sandy Bottom

June 7 Clean the Bay Day- Denbigh Park

June 21 Endview Nature Trail Plant and Animal Identification

### Summer Butterfly Counts

July 29 Great Dismal Swamp National Wildlife Refuge

July Eastern Shore, Butterfly Society of VA, date TBA

August Historic Rivers Chapter, date TBA

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# Peninsula Chapter

## A Zoo In My Shopping Bags

By Clyde Marsteller, Historic Rivers Chapter,  
Honorary Member and PMN Sponsor

After I became a Master Naturalist I knew I wanted to become involved with teaching our children about the concepts of conservation, stewardship of our natural resources and to share with them the beauty and mysteries of our natural world. I felt they were getting divorced from the outdoors and addicted to TV games, iPods and cell phones. I realized the VMN training I received gave me the knowledge and the training to put together a teaching tool based on the idea of taking nature into the classroom and so "A Zoo In My Shopping Bags" was born.

I have tailored the presentation to third, fourth and fifth grade classes. This gives me an age range of eight to twelve year old children and fits perfectly into their Standards of Learning. Since its inception I have adapted the program to any age group that requests it to include K through 12, college classes and adult groups. The Zoo has become a sought after program in five major school districts: James City County/Williamsburg, York County, Newport News, Hampton and Poquoson.

The Zoo absolutely charms and fascinates the children. To see youngsters become involved and then respond to the plants and animals that share their world as they learn we are part of the Web Of Life is exhilarating and to open their eyes and minds to the concepts of Stewardship and conservation of our natural world is one of the most satisfying things I have done.

Has my particular project had an impact on my communities?

The children often write me letters as class projects that are eloquent testimonies of the Zoo's impact. Even more gratifying is to see them involved in their Ecology clubs, Junior Master Gardening clubs and 4H groups. The epitome is to have them run up to me at school functions or at shopping malls and have them tell me how much they enjoyed our visits and tell me stories of what they have experienced in the outdoors.

In order to properly and safely present the Zoo, to have the ability to explain, answer questions about how the animals live and interact with their environment, I have enlisted the aid of fellow HRC Master naturalists

who I fondly call my Zoo Cru. Without them the presentations would be impossible to do within allotted times.

Since the Zoo's inception in 2007, the Zoo Cru has presented to 10,709 people.

I feel the Zoo program fulfills a quote from one of my heroines – Rachel Carson: "If a child is to keep his in-born sense of wonder... he needs the companionship of at least one adult who can share it, rediscovering with him the joy, excitement and mystery of the world we live in."



Congratulations to Susan Crockett of Cohort V for receiving the Virginia Institute of Marine Science's Robert M. Freeman Volunteer of the Year Award! Susan helped with the VIMS aquarium, teaching marsh and with restoration of the VIMS forested wetland. Susan is shown with John Wells, VIMS Dean and Director.

## A sampling of Citizen Science Wildlife Monitoring Projects

**NatureMapping:** [naturemappingfoundation.org](http://naturemappingfoundation.org)

**Project Noah:** [www.projectnoah.org](http://www.projectnoah.org)

**eBird:** [www.ebird.org](http://www.ebird.org)

**WildlifeMapping:** [www.dgif.virginia.gov/wildlifemapping](http://www.dgif.virginia.gov/wildlifemapping)  
(contact Susan Walton for more information)

# Peninsula Chapter

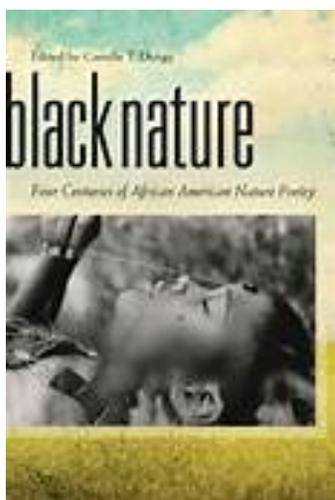
## On the Naturalist's Bookshelf: Nature poetry

By Felicia L. Mason, Cohort VII

As a member of Cohort 7, I jumped into the required readings for the classes and quickly looked for more. Local bookstores, libraries and Amazon.com fed my need to learn more about not only the topics covered but about nature and the environment in general. I'm a reader and so the plan is to share my reading with you.

Since April was National Poetry Month ([www.poets.org](http://www.poets.org)), what better way to observe it than to read a volume of nature poetry? I found "Black Nature: Four Centuries of African American Nature Poetry" quite by accident. While looking for a couple of Rachel Carson books recommended in class, I saw this and pulled it from the library shelf in Hampton.

Edited by Camille Dungy, an English professor at Colorado State University, "Black Nature" was the first anthology to focus on nature writing by African American poets. It was published in 2009 by the University of Georgia. The poets address topics ranging from growing things, spring, birds and spiders to trees, flowers, working the soil and mosquitoes. Hummingbirds are celebrated and the harvest is both reaped and observed in verse. The entomology lovers in VMN will be delighted to discover they have not been overlooked in the 387-page volume. Imagine my surprise to find not one, but two odes to cockroaches, including one titled "The Beginning of the End of the World" by poet Lucille Clifton.



Divided into 10 sections with topics such as "Just Looking" on viewing the elements of nature, each section of the book opens with a short essay. The section "Dirt on our Hands" pays homage to Southern seasons: "Our southern springs are filled with quiet noises and scenes of growth ... In summer the magnolia trees fill the countryside with sweet scent for long miles. ..."

There are old favorites, including Langston Hughes, a pre-eminent poet and writer of the Harlem Renaissance; Pulitzer Prize winning novelist Alice Walker ("The Color Purple") who began as a poet, and Rita Dove, University of Virginia professor and the U.S. poet laureate from 1993-95. No volume on poetry by black poets would be complete without acknowledging Phillis Wheatley, who in 1773 was the first black person in America to publish a book of poetry.

Poet Claudia Rankin reflects on the shadows and sky in the American landscape in "American Light." The haunting poem ends with these lines: "when the sun goes down on this aged dirt road, will I end in the dark woods, or make it home?" And Old Dominion University Professor Tim Seibles has several poems included in the volume.

Dungy's compilation in "Black Nature" runs the gamut of emotions and moments. Some of the poems are bleak, dealing with racial strife and heartache, while others are joyful, whispering words of solace, comfort and sunshine. Each however provides a glimpse into the nature of the African-American experience with nature and the environment.

**Thanks to Felicia Mason** for suggest a Naturalist's Bookshelf column in the newsletter! If you have a book you would like to review and recommend for the next newsletter, consider writing a summary for us. Please accept my apology for not getting her out in a timely manner for poetry month.

Susan Walton

# Peninsula Chapter

## The Catbird

By Jessica Rodgers, Cohort VII

You have to wonder as the weather warms and the blooms are bursting open and the world is being washed with color how it is that a creature that weighs about the same as a penny can travel as much as 2500 miles across an entire continent and the Gulf of Mexico. The ruby throated hummingbird does just that twice every year in order to breed in our backyards. Other birds do it, too, including many neo-tropical songbirds and some of the most enjoyable ones are the colorful warblers that are arriving right now all over the Hampton Roads area. They can be tricky to spot, but one can definitely hear them singing their musical songs in forests and swamps.

Other songbirds make the trek from South and Central America and even the West Indies, including members of the thrush family, like the gray catbird. It's incredible to think that like the hummingbirds, this little guy hanging out in my yard right now was here last year. He will nest here and raise his young and come back again next year.

How do I know it's the same catbird?

I know it's the same catbird because he recognizes the food whistle that was used last year when feeding mealworms and appears from seemingly out of nowhere to be fed. He has to settle for suet nuggets and grape jelly this year, but it doesn't seem to bother him or his other thrush relatives: the brown thrashers, northern mockingbirds, and American robins. They all appear when they hear the whistle, which is also pretty remarkable in itself. The thrushes have all learned and made the association of a human produced sound with food.

The catbird has learned it and retained the information, and filed it away with map coordinates or landmarks or whatever it is that they use to navigate on their migratory journeys. It's still unclear how

Photo by Joan and Daniel Emlin

exactly they navigate so far, but since they go to the same places, it's thought that they do indeed use landmarks, some natural ones like rivers and mountains and possibly even man-made ones.

Could changes in the landscape, habitat fragmentation and human development cause changes in migration pathways and effect populations? It would seem that it would, so it would be ideal if we could take that into consideration when developing and changing the landscape. Where we place roads or build subdivisions might mean the difference between having the same catbird in your yard again next year or not.

For more information about the gray catbird...

[http://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/gray\\_catbird/id](http://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/gray_catbird/id)



# Peninsula Chapter

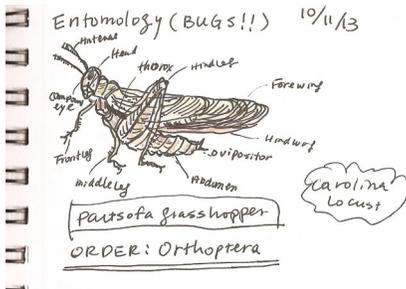
## Some Thoughts on Nature Journaling

By Susan Walton, Cohort II, Laura Marlowe, Cohort VII and Rose Sullivan, Cohort VII

### Illustrations by Yukari Hughes, Cohort VI

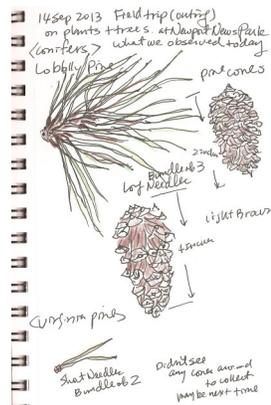
Beginning with Cohort VI, PMN moved to journaling instead of testing as an assessment process. Part of the philosophy for this change was the desire to encourage trainees to reflect about the topics as they explored areas of natural history that were new to them.

My journals are mostly full of lists of plants and animals that I see, along with some maps and a few comments, as I use my journal to take notes for *WildlifeMapping*. Recording these notes has made me notice more details.

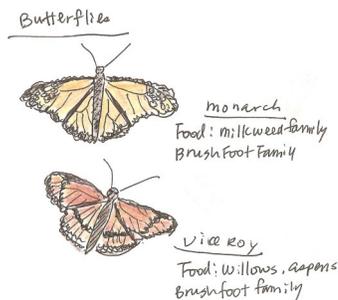


Here are some thoughts of some other PMN members as well as some illustrations from Yukari Hughes, who discovered some amazing talent in the process.

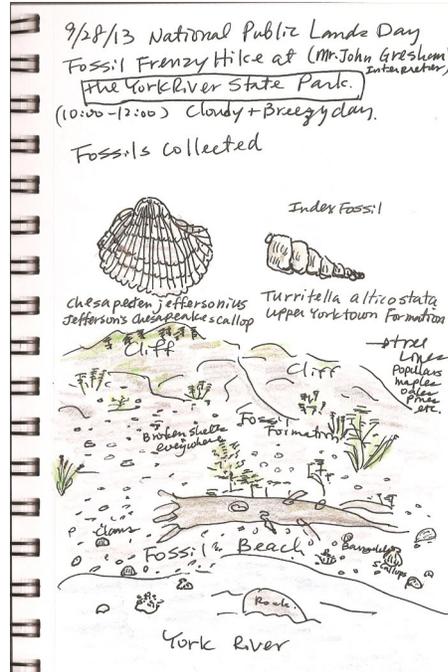
Susan Walton



I felt a little overwhelmed when Cohort 7 training first started, partly because I missed the first couple of classes, and partly by the amount of material that we would be covering. To be honest, I was not too thrilled about having to keep a journal at first, but now I realize the value of journaling. By reflecting on what I did in class or on a field trip, I focus more on what I have learned rather than what I don't know. Every week of VMN training enables me to find another piece of our environmental puzzle, and I can slowly see the jigsaw coming together. Journaling shows me that I know a lot more than I did yesterday, and that is a good thing

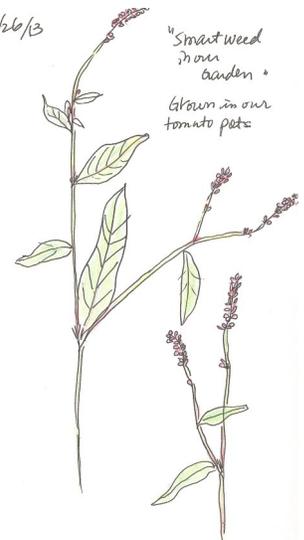


Rose Sullivan



I have been surprised to find that I have enjoyed the journaling process almost as much as the classes and field trips in the Master Naturalist Program. I am not a diary or journal keeper, so this has been a new experience for me. I find that journaling about what I learned or saw or did actually enhances my learning experience. It allows me to capture what specifically I liked or enjoyed about what I learned, and document what I think I will do with the knowledge I gained or how it might change what I am doing.

In class, I am a prolific note taker. I want to capture every bit of information the instructor is sharing. Then reflecting on the topic and writing about it helps me understand how the new information I learned fits into my personal life and changes how I think about a subject, or what I want to do with it. For instance, I never had thought much about the weather and climate, except how it was affecting my day. After taking the class, which I thoroughly enjoyed, while writing about it I realized that weather and the climate are crucial to every life form and an integral part of every aspect of human existence. They deserve a lot more of my attention and I have been observing the weather much more closely with a lot more attention and thought about its impact on my surroundings and life. I have since taken the training with SkyWarn to be a Severe Weather Spotter and pay more attention to weather related stories on the news.



Laura Marlowe

# Peninsula Chapter

## Cohort VII



Photos provided by Daina Henry