

Field Notes



The Newsletter of the Peninsula Chapter - Virginia Master Naturalist Program

Volume 9/Issue 2

Spring - Summer 2017

Message from the President:

"Those who contemplate the beauty of the earth find reserves of strength that will endure as long as life lasts. ... There is something infinitely healing in the repeated refrains of nature — the assurance that dawn comes after night, and spring after winter."



Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring*

It is hard to imagine that I have been President for an entire year, and I am equally humbled that I have been once more elected. And our success as an organization is not mine alone – I have had the help of some fantastic folks – who have advised, discussed, strengthened, and cared for the organization. Without the efforts of so many, we could not get done all that we have.

We have a new permanent address, we are incorporated, we survived and learned a lot from our first external financial review, the VMS system has been streamlined, and have started to review all the projects for which we can volunteer. I am so grateful to all those who helped this year. And best of all, we are on sound financial footing.

What do the next 18 months look like? I look forward to another cohort (Cohort 13!!!) in the spring, more and different projects, more

coordination with other groups, more outreach to different audiences.

What has inspired me is your passion to make the world, mother earth, nature and your local community a better place to live. The strongest forest is not homogenous, but diverse; each tree and shrub offering something different. The PMN is like that – there is no one “ideal” way of volunteering, or educating.

We are a Gestalt – we are more than the sum of our individual parts. So continue doing the great work you are doing, count butterflies, clean ponds, watch frogs, educate children, test waters, etc. As Rachel Carson said “there is something infinitely healing in the repeated refrains of nature...”

Daina Henry

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Peninsula Chapter

On Safari with Cohort 12

By David Boehnlein, Cohort 10

Photos by Ella Reilley, Cohort 10

In April I accompanied Cohort 12 on a fossil-hunting field trip to the Southern Pines sand pit in Chesapeake, where digging exposes an abundance of Yorktown Formation fossils. The Virginia Living Museum conducted the trip, which included a lecture on fossils and a fossil preparation workshop.



Bo Baker and Jim Drummond of the VLM led the expedition, which is dubbed a “Paleontology Science Safari” for the benefit of the school groups who frequently go on these outings. Jim gave the preliminary lecture, a brief introduction to paleontology and fossils. Fossilized remains are a remnant of the organism, like a scallop’s shell. Trace fossils are evidence of an organism’s activity, like a hole bored in the shell by a moon snail. These are quite common and Jim said that anything with a hard shell is a menu item to this creature.



Imagine, if you would, the soft-bodied mollusk inside its protective shell, sensing the first scrape of the moon snail’s radula. There is nothing the scallop can do. A moment later, there is another scrape and then another. The victim cannot run. Another scrape. It cannot hide. More scraping still. It can only listen helplessly to the continuous scraping of the relentless radula inexorably drilling through its only defense, awaiting its woeful fate as a moon snail’s meal. Truly, this is a tale worthy of Edgar Allen Poe. I hope Jim doesn’t tell that one to the kids.

Peninsula Chapter



Afterward, we drove to the quarry and, after a brief safety orientation, made our way down into the pit. Bo pointed out the gray soil of the fossiliferous Yorktown Formation on the edge of the digging, but we would spend our time at the bottom of the quarry, where fossils were plentiful. As I descended into the quarry, I followed one of several small rivulets flowing into a marshy area full of dried and broken reeds. Some tiny fish in the stream were the only wildlife present. A few muddy steps through the reeds and I was in an open area carpeted with fossil shells, including some with round holes bearing mute testimony of the predatory moon snails. A few people found fossilized crab claws as well. The hunt continued until 1:00, when it was time to return to the VLM.



There, the lab tables were covered with newspaper and we set about preparing our finds. The staff provided us with toothpicks and pre-worn toothbrushes – not for our teeth, but for cleaning the fossils. The bristles of new toothbrushes are too stiff and could damage them. We also learned not to rinse the fossils with water, as this will degrade them and cause them to break apart. When our newfound fossils were reasonably presentable as keepsakes, we put them in plastic bags to bring home.

SAVE THAT PLASTIC!!!

Our plastics collection for the Trex recycling program will be at our meeting on Tuesday, Sep 12.

We need 500 pounds of plastic by Feb 28, 2018 to qualify for a bench.

All plastic must be clean, dry and free of food residue.

Peninsula Chapter

A New Type of Kayak— Easy to Transport

By Chris Gwaltney, Cohort 9

Kayaking is a sport that many of us enjoy. It's a great way to enjoy Nature from the water. However, transporting the kayak is not always so easy. I was faced with a dilemma this Spring when we got a new car that is not large enough to carry my kayak. I knew I would not be able to put the kayak on a roof rack by myself.

So I found a solution: a two-piece, sit inside kayak that can be put together with minimal effort. This kayak fits in the back of a car with the seats down. There is plenty of room for it in my Prius. So, now I get to enjoy a sport I love, and I can load, unload and carry it by myself.

I want to spread the word so that others who may want to kayak but have no way to transport one will know there is this option. Gemini Point 65 N Sweden is its name, and I ordered it online.



There is enough room in this hatchback for



The separate pieces of the kayak.



A happy Chris on the water with her new boat!

Peninsula Chapter

Lucas Creek Project Update

By Daina Henry, Cohort 6

The Lucas Creek Project is alive and kicking. After a great initial year in 2016 – with numerous water events, cleanups and the bioblitz – it is really nice to see permanent results to the creek.

Lucas Creek is a small (2 mile) tributary off the Warwick River near where the Warwick joins the James River. Daina Henry arranged two clean ups last year, and numerous paddles to create an inventory of flora and fauna.

It is easy to clean up an area once, and be content; but it is more gratifying when the areas cleaned last year from plastic bottles and trash, are staying relatively clean. We have to travel further each time to collect the trash from the weeds. This is not a Sisyphusian task.

Already this year we have had over half a dozen paddles – many thanks to everyone who has helped. This past week Ben Hawkins and Jamie Brunkow from the James River Association joined in paddling and cleaning the creek.

We have sighted a belted king fisher who is making its home nearby, along with many cooper's hawks, egrets, herons and osprey.

If you are interested in helping, paddling or just getting on the water, please contact Daina Henry. Our next big clean up will be in September.



Peninsula Master Naturalists at VLM Reptile Weekend

By Brad Halcums, Cohort 2

Lee Hughes led the Chapter outreach for the February 13-15 Virginia Living Museum Reptile Weekend. The Museum recorded about 3000 guests during the three days despite a delayed weather opening on February 15. Chapter contacts were nearly 10 percent of the total which is expected for these events. All the Chapter handouts were distributed and there were several guests who wanted information on upcoming PMN training. We had three display tables with general Chapter information, a display on the work at Endview Plantation and a board on the bombardier beetle. There were a number of guests who did not previously know about a trail at Endview and the great work being done there. The beetle board tied in nicely with the large display at the Museum on giant bugs.

Thanks to all the Chapter volunteers who helped out!

Chapter Representation in Suffolk

By Brad Halcums, Cohort 2

On January 30, Pam Courtney and Brad Halcums represented the Chapter at a shoreline stabilization project in Suffolk. This was sponsored by the Nansemond River Preservation Alliance (NRPA) in conjunction with Suffolk Parks and Recreation. Our Chapter has previously aided NRPA with their water quality testing on the Southside and with educational outreach. The shoreline project involved planting about 130 native shrubs and vines on steep slopes by a raised boardwalk and at the nearby parking area. Members from the Historic Southside Master Naturalists and the Suffolk Master Gardeners aided this cooperative effort. NRPA will be responsible for monitoring the health and stability of the plants.

Peninsula Chapter

Member Recognition Event 2017

By Susan Walton, Cohort 2

The April 11 gathering at Sandy Bottom Nature Park saw the recognition of 2016 certifications and other acknowledgements in the chapter recognition. This is the first time that milestone awards and other notable achievements have been celebrated at an annual event, providing of an exciting evening for all in attendance.

At this time, 37 new certifications and 59 recertifications were acknowledged.

Dr. Shawn Dash and President Daina Henry presided. Dr. Dash was recognized as an honorary member of Peninsular Chapter at this time.



Some of those who earned new certifications (above) and recertifications (below)



Thanks to each and every one of our Peninsula Master Naturalist volunteers! YOU make a big difference in our community!

Milestone awards:

250 Hours
Brian Barmore
Kenneth Carroll
Susan Crockett
Phyllis Kohlman
Marie Smith
Rose Sullivan
Janet Tucker

500 Hours
John Adair
Marilyn Adair
David Singletary
Susie Yager

1000 Hours
Susan Walton

2500 Hours
Larry Lewis



Larry Lewis with Daina and Dr. Shawn. Congrats to Larry for his 2500 hour award!

Dynamic Duos— couples such as John and Marilyn Adair shown here, were also acknowledged at our event.



Of course, there was lots of good food!

Peninsula Chapter

Congratulations to Cohort 12!

A dozen cohort groups have graduated from Peninsula Master Naturalist training. These classes are many possible only through countless hours of work by numerous volunteers. Thanks to our spring 2017 team, led by Becky Holiday and Sandy Graham.



Cohort 12 members at the June graduation, above, and on a field experience, below.



PMN Dave Lauthers was recognized by the Leave No Trace

Our own Dave Lauthers has been recognized by Leave No Trace on their blog. Dave is the Virginia State Advocate for Leave No Trace. Dave also works with Boy Scouts and many other organizations. Thank you Dave for all of your hard work for the environment!!

New Schoolyard Habitats Installed

Thanks to much work by Master Naturalists and school staff, four new schoolyard habitats were added in our area this year. David Singletary headed up a partnership with Armstrong Elementary in Hampton, where a new habitat was installed in May.

(Photo below) Gloucester High and Bethel Elementary in Gloucester also gained their own habitat as well as the York River Academy, which shares space with Yorktown Middle School. Further updates will be posted as the students start using these habitats this fall. Remember, our schoolyard habitat programs can ALWAYS use volunteers, even if it is for a one time weeding or planting event.



Summer Camp at Beaverdam

Thanks to the help of Peninsula Master Naturalists and our DEQ Meaningful Watershed Education Experience Grant, another group of summer campers enjoyed the wonders of nature.

Lego Bugs Inspire a New Generation of Naturalists

By Jeannette Nichols, Cohort 12

I facilitated the a PMN class and for show and tell a new Cohort; Jeanette DeBartolo showed us some Lego "bugs" that her 8 year old son Frank did after listening to her. Mom shared with him all about "bugs" following Dr. Dash's class. She took her son to the park and they looked all around for bugs.



Peninsula Chapter

Peninsula Chapter Board of Directors

President	Daina Henry
Past President	Brad Halcums
Vice President	Laura Nusz
Recording Secretary	Diane Peters
Corresponding Secretary	Yukari Hughes
Treasurer	William Boeh
Historian	Loye Spencer
Chapter Advisor	Megan Tierney



Upcoming Meetings

Day: Second Tuesday of the month
Location: Sandy Bottom Nature Park
1255 Big Bethel Road, Hampton, VA 23666

Meeting and Continuing Education

Date: September 12, 2017
Time: 6:00 P.M.

Executive Board Meeting

Date: September 19, 2017
Time: 6:00 pm
Location: TBA

Committee Chairs

Basic Training	Becky Holliday, Sandy Graham
Continuing Education	Maria Nissen
Community Outreach	Chris Gwaltney
Hospitality	Jeannette Yoh
Membership	Lylliane Battle
Volunteer Service Projects	David Singletary
Public Relations	Ella Reilly
Fund Raising	Kate Bernatitus
VMS Coordinator	Laura Marlowe
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