

Peninsula Chapter

Field Notes



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

Volume 7/Issue 2

Summer 2015

Message from the President:

Hey everyone,

We are again heading into our Autumn busy season. We now have more than one hundred active volunteers teaching about, caring for, and doing science in the public lands of the Peninsula and Gloucester. (I counted them myself before I remembered that the VMS could probably do it for me...sigh.) That is fantastic!

As we head out of doors to work on our many projects, let's not only mentor the trainees of Cohort 9, but also put our best smiling faces forward and chat up new potential members, because Cohort 10 will begin in February!

Hope to see you out there soon,

Elisabeth

Congratulations to Cohort 8!



Who are those people proudly showing their certificates? It's Cohort 8! Their graduation was celebrated with a delicious potluck dinner held in June.



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Peninsula Master Naturalist's Water Quality Efforts – Protecting the Bay one sample at a time

By Daina Henry, Cohort 6

The Water Quality team of the Peninsula Master Naturalists is alive, growing, and expanding, not unlike the bacteria in some of our waterways! The team monitors and samples various locations in Newport News and Hampton and provides the data to Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), the James River Alliance (JRA) and to local government for action.

Last June the team consisted of four Master Naturalists sampling the water at the outfall and the James River at both Riverside Beach and Hilton Beach. During the summer of 2014 locations at Denbigh Park on the Warwick River and Lucas Creek off the Warwick River were added. Following a successful training and recruitment effort in January of this year, three more locations were added to the testing – Hampton River, Sunset Creek in Hampton, and Mill Creek in Hampton.



Above, Sally Young, Cohort 9, records data.

At right, Daina Henry, Cohort 6, measures



Through the efforts of Patty VanOhlen, one of the original team members, the group received a \$1000 grant from DEQ for supplies and materials. Each sampling kit costs about \$5. This grant has enabled the group to expand the number of locations tested and to provide training and materials.

What do we do? We take water samples at the locations, and incubate them to check for fecal material. We also measure salinity, turbidity (important in encouraging sea grasses), temperature and general local conditions (the presence of wildlife, oysters, crabs, people fishing, birds etc.)



How long does it take to sample?

About an hour including travel time. Samples must incubate for 24 hours, before readings can be done.

The samples are collected and reported on a monthly basis for DEQ, and on a weekly basis for the summer months for locations on the James River for JRA.

The current team members are:

- Mill Creek – Larry Svilha, Janet Tucker, Lylliane Battle, Margeret Trejo
- Riverside – Dave Singletary, Fred Kohlman, Phyllis Kohlman, Michelle Slosser, Wolf Eber (not PMN)
- Hilton – Patty VanOhlen, Dave Singletary, Michelle Scott, Chris Gwaltney
- Lucas Creek/Denbigh Park – Daina Henry, Sally Young (PMN Fall 2015), Dave Lauthers
- Hampton – Rhonda Graves, Daina Henry, Ellen Coleman;
- Sunset – Rhonda Graves, Ellen Coleman, Daina Henry, Linda Cline.

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How do the samples appear?



Samples are incubated on agar plates. The sample on the left is a bad one. Count the blue dots. Anything over six is NOT GOOD!



But sometimes you can actually see the results of pollution...



Ultimately we do it to save the Bay and our local waters. They are worth saving, and we can use your help. The more we know, the more we can act.



If you are interested in helping, please contact any member of the team.

Chapter Members Recertifying for 2015

By Pam Courtney, Cohort 6

Membership Chair

To recertify as Master Naturalists, each year a member needs to volunteer 40 or more hours on an approved project and attend 8 or more hours of continuing education.

As of July 28, 2015, the following Chapter members have recertified for this year:

Marilyn Adair, Chris Gwaltney, Brad Halcums, Daina Henry, Phyllis Kohlman, Fred Kohlman, Larry Lewis, Laura Marlowe, Marc Nichols, Paula Reichardt, David Singletary, Loye Spencer, Rose Sullivan, Susan Walton, Willard Waples, Elisabeth Wilkins, Gary Wright, and Susie Yager.

In addition, the following graduates from Cohort VIII in the spring of this year have attained their initial certification of 40 volunteer hours and 8 hours of continuing education: Ken Carroll, Beverly Heimbach, Georgia Holtz, Janet Tucker, and Helmut Walter.

Recertification pins will be requested from the state office in early January 2016 as these are yearly awards. Membership certificates and permanent name badges will be ordered for the Cohort VIII members listed plus other members as necessary.

A number of members are approaching the certifying and recertifying levels, so keep up the good work!

FROM THE VMN TRIVIA CONTEST

What five species have been featured on VMN recertification pins?

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Summer Camp at Beaverdam By Susan Walton, Cohort 2

Several Peninsula Master Naturalists used four weeks of their summer to engage children in the study of outdoors during Nature Explorer camp at Beaverdam Park in Gloucester.

Volunteers Mary Galloway, Margaret Greene, Page Hutchinson, Sherry Rollins and Susan Walton met with park superintendent Patti McGrath and lead ranger Michelle Maynora-Hostinsky in May and offered to take charge of activities for specific days of the week.



Page Hutchinson looks on as Ranger Michelle Maynora-Hostinsky views macroinvertebrates.

On Mondays, volunteers led children in a “Wet and Wild” day, teaching the campers about aquatic life, conducting activities such as seining, dip netting and identification of macroinvertebrates. Students also conducted a STEM activity, using sticks and a length of string to design a raft to simulate carrying pioneers across the water.

Students did indeed cross the water the next day, when Thane Harpole from Fairfield Foundation led an archaeology study on “Can You Dig It” Tuesdays, PMNs chaperoned groups, led aquatic stations and captained boats to the archeological site.



Crazy Critter Wednesday found children learning about animals and tracks, taking nature hikes to discover camouflage patterns, collecting insects with sweep nets, using field guides and examining whatever critters they came across. In one camp this included a black rat snake that had just ingested a very large meal! Older campers were shown how to use binoculars and got a taste of birding.



Mother Earth, aka Mary Galloway, visited on Thursdays to instruct students about plants, conducting scavenger hunts for park species that had special benefits to the habitat and art activities. Mary taught the older group how to make mason bee nests and gourd bird houses. This group also started a pollinator garden at the park.



Fun for All Friday found the group helping children with fishing, kayaking, canoeing and general and water fun. You should see Margaret go on a paddle boat!

Park staff were very appreciative of the volunteer leadership and held a thank you lunch for all.

Plans are already underway for next year. We hope to see more PMNs join in the fun!

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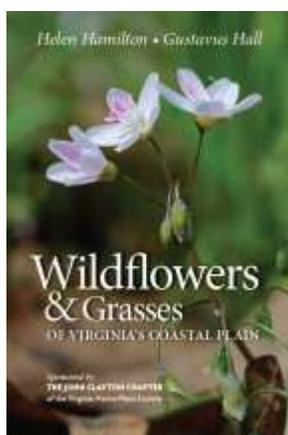
On the Naturalist's Bookshelf

By PMN Felicia L. Mason, Cohort 7

Twenty-three nature lovers joined PMN Susie Yager as she led a native plant walk for the John Clayton Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society along the Noland Trail on Saturday, Sept. 5, 2015. In addition to native plant society members and Peninsula Master Naturalists, members of the Historic Rivers Master Naturalists, trainees in Historic Rivers' Cohort 10 class, and people who saw the event in the newspaper participated in the class.

The field guide of the day was "Wildflowers & Grasses of Virginia's Coastal Plain" by Helen Hamilton and Gus Hall. Hamilton has been a PMN speaker and Hall is a College of William and Mary professor emeritus.

The book "was conceived to include only those plants considered native to the Coastal Plain," according to the VNPS. "However, in decades of field work, the authors have observed non-native plants displacing natives in many locations. This field guide includes the most common introduced [non-native] plants so homeowners can distinguish between native plants that could be used in home gardens and introduced species to be avoided."



Native Plant Walk participants on Saturday, Sept. 5, 2015, on The Noland Trail in Newport News. Photo by PMN Felicia L. Ma-

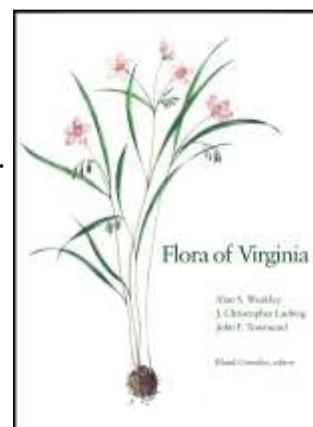
PMN Susie Yager talks while a native plant walk participant looks up the tree in a field guide. Photo by PMN Felicia L. Mason



So in addition to highlighting the many native plants along The Noland Trail in Newport News, Yager pointed out the non-natives, some of which were initially introduced as ornamentals. A four-page handout emailed to those who signed up in advance was also available in black-and-white copies for the walkers. Native shrubs, vines, ferns and forbs were among the more than 20 plants the group was on the lookout for. Along the walk, Yager also discussed native and non-native trees that were encountered, and what happens when invasive species take over.

"Wildflowers & Grasses of Virginia's Coastal Plain" is available online, at local stores for \$24.95.

Another indispensable resource, but definitely **not** a field guide, is "Flora of Virginia." Written by Alan S. Weakley, J. Christopher Ludwig, and John F. Townsend, this 1,500-page reference volume documents all of the state's plants, more than 3,000 of Virginia's native and naturalized plants.



It includes botanical drawings, essays and a key.

For more information on either book, go to www.claytonvnps.org or www.floraofvirginia.org.

Book covers: "Wildflowers & Grasses of Virginia's

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Regional Conference

By Brad Halcums, Past President, Cohort 2

The first conference for the Southeast Region of the Virginia Master Naturalists was held on Sunday, August 30, 2015 at the Wakefield Airfield 4H Center. Eight Chapters were invited with approximately 110 attendees. Our Peninsula Chapter had 10 members attend which was a great showing considering the long drive. Special thanks to Fred Kohlman who represented us on the planning committee.



A pre-conference two hour bioblitz was held on Saturday, August 29 with several members joining in on the macroinvertebrate search.

August 30 began with an opening session led by State Coordinator Alycia Crall. Her main point was the introduction of a new State Sponsor, Virginia Institute of Marine Science, at Gloucester Point. Michelle Prysby of the State Office, demonstrated on the State web page where new material was available for basic training. The long term goal is to eventually have all basic training material on line.

Morning sessions covered protecting the Chesapeake Bay, observing climate change, a review of the eMammal process, and a presentation on phenology (seasons related to plants and animals.)

Following lunch was a panel discussion with representatives from all seven state sponsors. Susan Walton spoke for the Virginia Museum of Natural History and Page Hutchinson represented the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality. They agreed to act as contacts for their agencies if Chapters are seeking projects relating to their areas.

After the panel discussion the main group broke into smaller groups to discuss and document basic training and communications. The results were collected by Alycia Crall for later reporting.

Afternoon sessions covered birding and citizen science, backyard weather monitoring, Project Learning Tree, and Project Rare-request (validating old paper records with current conditions.)

The next State sponsored conference will be in fall 2016 with the location in either western or northern Virginia. Based on positive feedback, Regional conferences will again be held in 2017.

Thanks to all who could attend and support our Chapter.



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Peninsula Chapter Board of Directors

President	Elisabeth Wilkins
Past President	Brad Halcums
Vice President	Laura Marlowe
Recording Secretary	Susan Walton
Corresponding Secretary	Yukari Hughes
Treasurer	Sandy Graham
Historian	Loye Spencer
Chapter Advisor	Megan Tierney



Committee Chairs

Basic Training	Daina Henry
Continuing Education	Michelle Slosser & Betsy Hodson
Community Outreach	Lee Hughes & Brad Halcums
Hospitality	Marie Smith
Membership	Pam Courtney
Volunteer Service Projects	Bob Vazquez
Publicity	Mary Galloway
Fund Raising	Suzie Yager
Newsletter	Susan Walton
Web Master	Larry Lewis

Upcoming Meetings

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

General Membership Meeting

Date: October 13, 2015
Time: 6:00 P.M.

Continuing Education

Date: October 13, 2015
Time: 7:00 pm. Scott Bartram, Colonial Beekeepers

General Membership Meeting

Date: November 10, 2015
Time: 6:00 P.M.

Executive Board Meeting

Date: November 5, 2015
Time: 6:00 pm

Continuing Education

Date: November 10, 2015
Time: 7:00 pm. Sandy Graham and Brad Halcums, VMN Regional Conference report

Cohort 9 Graduation

Date: December 8, 2015

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