



Field Notes

Virginia
Master
Naturalist



The monthly newsletter of the Peninsula Chapter

Virginia Master Naturalist Program

www.vmnpeninsula.org

A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

Volume I No. 5 May 2009

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Chairman's Message To Boldly Go

After several months of hard work and preparation, we have finally arrived at the moment of truth and reached the long sought goal for which we have been preparing. Yes, at last 'the wait is over,' and we will be rewarded for our patience. The new *Star Trek* movie hits theatres on May the 7th.

Now maybe the last thing on your mind is the relevance of some silly science fiction movie that re-imagines an old 60's TV series to the mission and purpose of the Virginia Master Naturalist Program. But there is a basic philosophical resonance between how the characters on that old TV series (and its later incarnations) performed their mission to explore and protect their environment and how we should hope to explore and protect ours.

Of course, for us, time travel is not a practical solution to the extinction of Humpback Whales (*The Voyage Home*), or any other species threatened or endangered by the reckless activities of the human species. But the moral of the story, the profound importance of 'connection' between what we do and what will be our ultimate fate, is a lesson that we, as amateur naturalists and citizen scientists, can take to heart.

Although a space adventure at its heart, *Star Trek* imagined a future full of human beings (and others) that had transcended all of the prejudice and greed that makes us so harm-

ful to each other and our environment. Sure it was a naïve technocracy that had merely invented its way out of hunger and hate and ecological disaster, but it offers an optimistic vision of the future that, if not attainable, can at least be aspired to.

And if we don't believe in the possibility that the human species can become something better, a better steward of this one world that we have evolved upon and the fragile layer of life that we depend on, what would be the point of doing any of this. In a hundred years a ravaged and dying ecosystem won't care that we failed to protect it. Our only option is to not fail, to embrace that same dopey dedication and optimism of the *Enterprise* crew and boldly go out and save the planet anyway.

Carl J. Shirley
Coordinating Committee Chairman

Field Facts:



The fence lizard is Virginia's only scaly or spiny lizard. Look for it perched on a log or basking on a rock in a sunny opening within forested habitats or on wood fences in forested areas. Adult males are distinguished by elongated patches of blue or hyacinth on their underside, as well as, a large blue - black patch on throat, which becomes prominent in their display to other individuals.



Who's Who?

Gray fox vs. Red fox
The tells are in the tails.



Note from the Editor

Please be involved, and submit your articles, notes, photos and materials to:

VMN.newsletter@gmail.com

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If you are a person with a disability and desire any assistive devices, services or other accommodations to participate in this activity, please contact Megan Ketchum at the Hampton Cooperative Extension Office, 757-727-1401 or *TDD 1-800-828-1120, Monday through Friday during the business hours of 8:30 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. to discuss accommodations 5 days prior to the event.

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Virginia Cooperative Extension
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VIRGINIA STATE UNIVERSITY

VMN Class Schedule for Spring-2009

Classroom provided
by our local partner:
Thank you



2/17 INTRO TO VMN
RISK MANAGEMENT
Michelle Prysby

2/24 BIOLOGY
Dr. Turner Spencer



- 3/3 MAMMALOLOGY
Bo Baker
- 3/10 URBAN ECOSYSTEMS
STREAM ECOLOGY
Dawn Currier
- 3/17 BOTANY
Anne Tucker
DENDROLOGY
Dr. Stewart Ware
- 3/24 ENTOMOLOGY
Dr. Barbara Abraham
- 3/31 HERPETOLOGY
Tim Christensen
- 4/7 ORNITHOLOGY
Bill Williams
- 4/14 GEOLOGY
Dr. Jerre Johnson
- 4/18 FIELD TRIP – GEOLOGY
- 4/21 ICHTHYOLOGY
Chris Crippen
- 4/25 FIELD TRIP -COASTAL ECOLOGY
Dr. Ben Cuker
- 4/28 ECOLOGY
Dr. Stephen Living
- 5/2 FIELD TRIP – YORK RIVER STATE
PARK – WETLANDS ECOLOGY
- 5/5 CITIZEN SCIENCE
Shirley Sypolt
INTERPRETIVE SKILLS
John Gulick
- 5/12 GRADUATION



Chapter Committees

Membership Committee

Responsible for maintaining applications and membership records and tracking volunteer hours and eligibility status of chapter members.

Dawn Currier, Libby Carmines, Jessica McKinnon and Sandy Graham

Volunteer Service Projects

Responsible for the planning and coordination of chapter service projects. Includes working with chapter partners to discover and create opportunities.

Kristine James, Shirley Sypolt, Charlotte Boudreau and Kim Powell

Training Committee

Responsible for the planning and coordination of annual basic training classes. Includes planning schedules, recruiting instructors, securing locations, and creating a curriculum that meets the standards of the VMN Program.

Sheila Kerr-Jones, A.D. Hanline and Debbie Blanton

Community Outreach and Development

Responsible for the coordination of community outreach, including publicity, organizing chapter participation in public events and fundraising.

Maria Page, Bill Garlette and Jackie Roquemore

Hospitality Committee

Responsible for the planning and implementation of chapter social events such as graduations, picnics and parties.

Bonnie Baffer and Chris Ausink



Field Trips:



Land's End Wildlife Management Area

The Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries' Land's End WMA is situated along the north shore of the Rappahannock River, an area that can boast of the densest bald eagle breeding population in the lower 48 states. Virtually any trip to Land's End is an eagle fest, illustrated by these regal birds soaring over the Rappahannock or perched along its shores. In 1967, VDGIF began managing the property primarily as a waterfowl refuge. Fields here are prepared annually for waterfowl, and at least 10,000 Canada geese winter here each year. The forests at Land's End host a number of neotropical landbirds, such as red-eyed and white-eyed vireos, hooded and black-and-white warblers, ovenbird, northern parula, great crested flycatcher, and orchard and Baltimore orioles. In 1972, Land's End was nominated for inclusion in the state & national register of historic places.



These lands were once home to a sizable population of Nanzatico Indians, who farmed and fished along the Rappahannock shores for hundreds of years. This area is riddled with the remnants of their presence, including a number of burial mounds that have recently been identified. Please respect the original residents of this land and leave all artifacts untouched.

Description

The 462 acre Land's End Wildlife Management Area (WMA) was established in 1966 and expanded in 1970. It consists of two tracts of land, the 50 acre Salem Church tract and the 412 acre Land's End tract, located in southeastern King George County. Land's End WMA is a mixture of open farmland, woodland and wetlands. It is bordered on two sides by the Rappahan-

nock River and on one side by Jett's Creek. Due to deed restrictions, Land's End WMA has been managed primarily as a refuge for migrating waterfowl. The goal is to promote wildlife viewing opportunities in eastern Virginia. Waterfowl and wildlife habitat management research also occur on the property.

Directions

From Yorktown, on US 17, heading north. Drive approximately 90 miles to A P Hill Blvd/US 301 and turn right. Travel 2.5 miles and turn right on Rt. 625, Salem Church Road. Proceed 3.1 miles east on Rt. 625 to Rt. 698, Nanzatico Lane, and turn right. Drive south on Rt. 698 to the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries' Land's End Wildlife Management Area. Continue along the entrance road to the manager's residence. Turn left onto Land's End Trail. Follow it for 0.6 miles to the Education Center Construction site.

New Point Comfort Natural Area Preserve

Depending on the tide, this site combines tidal shallows, mudflats, beach, exposed pilings, and deep offshore channels, all of which offer their own assortment of flora and fauna. The low woodlands just inland attract numerous migrating land birds moving southward along this point. The boardwalk is an excellent place from which to study the lusty displays of hundreds of fiddler crabs. Numerous too, are the diminutive black and yellow seaside dragonlets, our only truly saltwater dragonfly. Canoes and kayaks may be launched here for naturalists seeking an intimate view of the marsh and its great blue herons, blue crabs, killifish, and other residents. Please remember that New Point Comfort is a Natural Area Preserve and as such, contains sensitive natural communities. Respect this area by staying on designated paths, leaving pets in the car or at home, and not removing anything from the area

Directions

From Yorktown, on US 17, heading north. Drive approximately 19 miles to VA-14 to Mathews County. Turn right at VA-14/VA-3. Continue to follow VA-14 for 13.6 miles. Turn right at Buckley Hall Rd/VA-14/VA-198 and proceed 1.7 miles. Turn right at Main St/VA-14 and travel 8.3 miles to a T in the Village of Bavon. Turn left on Rt. 600 and follow it for 1.0 miles, turn right at a small Nature Conservancy sign, and continue for 0.2 miles to the right to the parking area and boardwalk.

Bethel Beach Natural Area Preserve

Bethel Beach is a sandy, southward pointing finger that separates the eastern side of Winter Harbor from Chesapeake Bay. The beach, actually a spit, may be walked northward, and southward as far as the tidal cut. The northeastern beach tiger beetle, a federal threatened insect that thrives in the soft sand, inhabits the beach. In addition to the beetles, over 185 species of birds have been observed here, including 25 species of shorebirds. Visitors should carefully scan the beach, offshore bay waters (where Wilson's storm-petrels fly during summer), tidal lagoons, salt marsh, shrubby swamp, and deeper channels. During fall, American golden plover and stilt sandpiper are among the shorebirds that inhabit the site; watch the marsh for rails, bitterns, and sparrows. Winter brings opportunities to encounter snow bunting, northern gannet, tundra swan, and numerous types of waterfowl. Please remember that Bethel Beach is a Natural Area Preserve and as such, contains sensitive natural communities. Respect this area by staying on designated paths, leaving pets in the car or at home, and not removing anything from the area.



Directions

From Yorktown, on US 17, heading north. Drive approximately 19 miles to VA-14 to Mathews County. Turn right at VA-14/VA-3. Continue to follow VA-14 for 13.6 miles. Turn right at Buckley Hall Rd/VA-14/VA-198 and proceed 1.7 miles. Turn right at Main St/VA-14 and travel 0.6 miles. Turn left at VA-611 travel 2.3 miles. Turn right to stay on VA-611 for 1.7 miles. Turn left at Canoe Yard Trail/VA-677 and travel 0.7 miles to VA-609. Turn left on Rt. 609, and follow it 2.0 miles to the end of the road.

"Both the cockroach and the bird would get along very well without us, although the cockroach would miss us most."

- Joseph Wood Krutch

American Naturalist:

Aldo Leopold



Considered by many as the father of wildlife management and of the United States' wilderness system, Aldo Leopold was a conservationist, forester, philosopher, educator, writer, and outdoor enthusiast.

Born in 1887 and raised in Burlington, Iowa, Aldo Leopold developed an interest in the natural world at an early age, spending hours observing, journaling, and sketching his surroundings. Graduating from the Yale Forest School in 1909, he eagerly pursued a career with the newly established U.S. Forest Service in Arizona and New Mexico. By the age of 24, he had been promoted to the post of Supervisor for the Carson National Forest in New Mexico. In 1922, he was instrumental in developing the proposal to manage the Gila National Forest as a wilderness area, which became the first such official designation in 1924.

Following a transfer to Madison, Wisconsin in 1924, Leopold continued his investigations into ecology and the philosophy of conservation, and in 1933 published the first textbook in the field of wildlife management. Later that year he accepted a new chair in game management – a first for the University of Wisconsin and the nation.

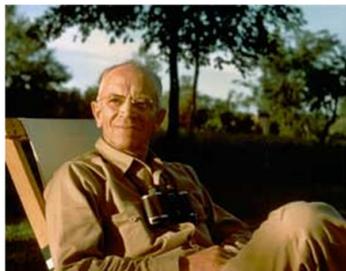
In 1935, he and his family initiated their own ecological restoration experiment on a worn-out farm along the Wisconsin River outside of Baraboo, Wisconsin. Planting thousands of pine trees, restoring prairies, and documenting the ensuing changes in the flora and fauna further informed and inspired Leopold.

A prolific writer, authoring articles for professional journals and popular magazines, Leopold conceived of a book geared for general audiences examining humanity's relationship to the natural world. Unfortunately, just one week after receiving word that his manuscript would be published, Leopold experienced a heart attack and died on April 21, 1948 while fighting a neighbor's grass fire that escaped and threatened the Leopold farm and surrounding properties. A little more than a year after his death Leopold's collection of essays *A Sand County Almanac* was published. With over two million copies sold, it is one of the most respected books about the environment ever published, and Leopold has come to be regarded by many as the most influential conservation thinker of the twentieth century.

Thinking Like a Mountain

By Aldo Leopold

A deep chesty bawl echoes from rimrock to rimrock, rolls down the mountain, and fades into the far blackness of the night. It is an outburst of wild defiant sorrow, and of contempt for all the adversities of the world. Every living thing (and perhaps many a dead one as well) pays heed to that call. To the deer it is a reminder of the way of all flesh, to the pine a forecast of midnight scuffles and of blood upon the snow, to the coyote a promise of gleanings to come, to the cowman a threat of red ink at the bank, to the hunter a challenge of fang against bullet. Yet behind these obvious and immediate hopes and fears there lies a deeper meaning, known only to the mountain itself. Only the mountain has lived long enough to listen objectively to the howl of a wolf.



Those unable to decipher the hidden meaning know nevertheless that it is there, for it is felt in all wolf country, and distinguishes that country from all other land. It tingles in the spine of all who hear wolves by night, or who scan their tracks by day. Even without sight or sound of wolf, it is implicit in a hundred small events: the midnight whinny of a pack horse, the rattle of rolling rocks, the bound of a fleeing deer, the way shadows lie under the spruces. Only the ineducable tyro can fail to sense the presence or absence of wolves, or the fact that mountains have a secret opinion about them.

My own conviction on this score dates from the day I saw a wolf die. We were eating lunch on a high rimrock, at the foot of which a turbulent river elbowed its way. We saw what we thought was a doe fording the torrent, her breast awash in white water. When she climbed the bank toward us and shook out her tail, we realized our error: it was a wolf. A half-dozen others, evidently grown pups, sprang from the willows and all joined in a welcoming melee of wagging tails and playful maulings. What was literally a pile of wolves writhed and tumbled in the center of an open flat at the foot of our rimrock.

In those days we had never heard of passing up a chance to kill a wolf. In a second we were pumping lead into the pack, but with more excitement than accuracy: how to aim a steep downhill shot is always confusing. When our rifles were empty, the old wolf was down, and a pup was dragging a leg into impassable slide-rocks. We reached the old wolf in time to watch a fierce green fire dying in her eyes. I realized then, and have known ever since, that there was something new to me in those eyes - something known only to her and to the mountain. I was young then, and full of trigger-itch; I thought that because fewer wolves meant more deer, that no wolves would mean hunters' paradise. But after seeing the green fire die, I sensed that neither the wolf nor the mountain agreed with such a view.

Since then I have lived to see state after state extirpate its wolves. I have watched the face of many a newly wolfless mountain, and seen the south-facing slopes wrinkle with a maze of new deer trails. I have seen every edible bush and seedling browsed, first to anaemic desuetude, and then to death. I have seen every edible tree defoliated to the height of a saddlehorn. Such a mountain looks as if someone had given God a new pruning shears, and forbidden Him all other exercise. In the end the starved bones of the hoped-for deer herd, dead of its own too-much, bleach with the bones of the dead sage, or molder under the high-lined junipers.

I now suspect that just as a deer herd lives in mortal fear of its wolves, so does a mountain live in mortal fear of its deer. And perhaps with better cause, for while a buck pulled down by wolves can be replaced in two or three years, a range pulled down by too many deer may fail of replacement in as many decades. So also with cows. The cowman who cleans his range of wolves does not realize that he is taking over the wolf's job of trimming the herd to fit the range. He has not learned to think like a mountain. Hence we have dustbowls, and rivers washing the future into the sea.

We all strive for safety, prosperity, comfort, long life, and dullness. The deer strives with his supple legs, the cowman with trap and poison, the statesman with pen, the most of us with machines, votes, and dollars, but it all comes to the same thing: peace in our time. A measure of success in this is all well enough, and perhaps is a requisite to objective thinking, but too much safety seems to yield only danger in the long run. Perhaps this is behind Thoreau's dictum: In wildness is the salvation of the world. Perhaps this is the hidden meaning in the howl of the wolf, long known among mountains, but seldom perceived among men.

A Born Naturalist



Continued from April's newsletter

By Clyde Marsteller , Virginia Master Naturalist

Early on Dad took me on fishing and eventually hunting trips with him. I grew up in the outdoors and was determined to be a Forest Ranger.

We always had dogs and sometimes cats. My first dog was a little black and white rat terrier named Jerry. My favorite was our collie, Major of Willow View, and Uncle Mike's Heinz 57 variety SNAFU (from the old Army phrase – Situation Normal All Fouled Up). Occasionally a cat would adopt us but I must admit Dad didn't like cats very much. There was one old tom that would catch snakes and bring them home with their heads in his mouth and their bodies wrapped around his neck. Of course he would carry them into the house and let them go. Panic City! My favorites were my green tree snake (who you already met), a skunk, a raccoon, and a blue jay.

Dad found my tree snake in North Bangor on the first piece of property we owned. It was three acres right where Lake Minsi is now. They were chopping down trees to clear an acre for a camping site when she showed up. I kept it a couple of years and used to carry it around inside my shirt. Steve Irwin had nothing on me.

Dad was the recognized local expert on wild animals and whenever a neighbor needed help with snakes, bats, etc, he was called. One day Zeke Norwicke called and said they had a skunk trapped in the furnace pit in his barn behind Harold's. It had been there for almost a week, and it was so weak it couldn't stand up. Dad took a burlap sack and his pistol and headed over there. About 15 minutes later he came back carrying a full grown female skunk just about dead. We put her in one of our rabbit hutches and with a lot of TLC we nursed her back to health. We left the hutch door open when she regained her strength, but she adopted us as her family and stayed. She would sleep during the day and at night she would roam the backyard. If you went out she would run up to you for something to eat. You could sit on the ground and she would crawl all over you nosing in your clothes and pockets. She and the collie got along great.

One day when Mom had hung out her wash, the collie started to scratch and growl at the woodpile by the creek. Suddenly he started to scream and roll in the dirt. It seems that our lady skunk (we named her Clara Belle Peebody) had attracted about five male suitors who all sprayed Major at once. Our place smelled worse than Skunk Hollow for a week. Mom gave me an ultimatum: either the

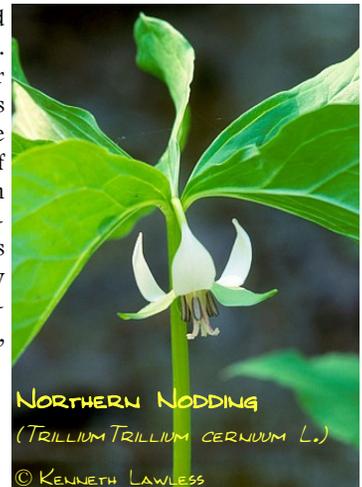


skunk goes or she does. First we carried Clara Belle over to the Nowicke's barn. No good. She followed us right back home. Next we drove her out to Hecktown road. Two nights later she was at our door. Finally we drove her to the other side of Nazareth and never saw her again.

In the spring of 1950 a ball of fluff and love with a mask on her face and an insatiable curiosity came into my life. Mamie the raccoon had arrived. She was born in Minnesota and had been found along with her brothers and sisters by hunters, one of whom was a co-worker at the Steel with Dad. She was perpetual motion that poked her nose into every corner, under every piece of furniture and into every closet in the house. If she found something she liked, she would pat it with her front paws (they were like human hands). If she thought it was good to eat, she would take it to her water dish and dunk it. She loved Major and would crawl all over him growling ferociously and ambushing him from behind the furniture. She would snuggle on your lap, burrow her nose in her tummy, and wrap her little ring tail around herself. She would give out little chirps that made her sound like a coffee percolator. She wore a collar and I walked her on a leash. She would sleep at the foot of my bed and in the morning she would pounce on my feet and bite my toes to wake me up. Mamie lived in the house with us for a year until she decided it was time for nest building. She tore apart our easy chair and carried the stuffing into my room. Mother issued her standard ultimatum. Mamie was given the dog house outside and put on a leash. She grew into a mature adult at about 20 pounds. One day she got mad at Dad and bit through his hand. We had a family conference, and it was decided to release her at the farm house. Dad made a transport kennel and he borrowed a truck and we took her to North Bangor. Mamie hung around the farm house and would greet us when we went up on weekends. She would hurry out of the woods to beg food from us. But as the summer went by she became wilder and would not let us get too near her. Finally she disappeared. In the spring of the following year (in May, I think), Dad and I were cutting grass and we heard her chirping. Soon she came up to the house and guess what? There were four little roly poly balls of fluff following her. She wouldn't let us get near her children. When I tried, she put her head down, arched her back, and snarled. She said goodbye to us and called her babies to her. That was the last time we ever saw them.

The Flora of Virginia: A Resource for Naturalists

Virginia plant people have needed their own flora for a long time. After all, the last reference on our plant life, *Flora Virginica*, was published in 1762, based on the collections and descriptions of Gloucester County naturalist John Clayton. The call for a flora remained alive for decades, thanks especially to the Virginia Academy of Science, but meanwhile, everyone has had to make do. Sadly, floras created for other states or regions don't cut it for Virginia. We have more species than other states our size, thanks to the diverse topography between the





ocean and mountains and to the convergence of ranges of northern and southern plants.

At last, in 2001, the Flora of Virginia Project was founded with a fourfold mission: a) produce a comprehensive manual on the plants of Virginia; b) provide a tool for plant identification and study by professional and avocational users, from academia, government, industry, and the public; c) incorporate the latest genetics-based information on evolutionary relationships, along with the best traditional taxonomic approaches; and d) increase interest in the appreciation and conservation of Virginia's diverse and unique botanical heritage.

As naturalists, you're going to find the *Flora of Virginia* helpful in many ways. For starters, a flora is more accurate and inclusive than other guides. The detailed, Virginia-specific descriptions will include notes on habitat, bloom time, range in the state, and, for 1,400 of our 3,600 species, botanically accurate illustrations to aid in plant identification. Taxonomic names will reflect the latest advances in genetics and be the most up-to-date available in one volume. In addition, as so many of you strive to incorporate more native plants in your own landscapes, the *Flora* will be especially useful, but it will also help you find relatives of your favorite cultivars and identify weeds—depending, of course, on what you consider a weed!

Slated for publication in 2012, the *Flora of Virginia* will be a 1,400-page volume covering plants native to Virginia or naturalized here. The authors are Chris Ludwig, chief biologist with the Division of Natural Heritage in the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation; Alan Weakley, curator of the University of North Carolina Herbarium; and Johnny Townsend, botanist with Natural Heritage.

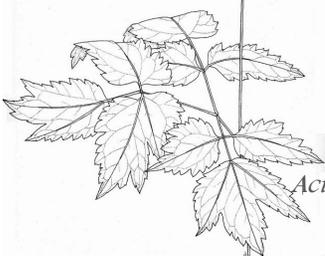
Much of the writing of taxonomic descriptions is behind us, as is much of the illustrating, and the plan is to have a complete manuscript by the end of 2010. We have begun to turn some attention to perfecting what we've done, fine-tuning ecological and habitat information, and editing the manuscript. Publication isn't far off. We're also thinking of ways in which we can use the *Flora* in learning programs. Obviously, it will be a key text for plant taxonomy courses at Virginia colleges. But we're looking at K-12 and community and continuing education too. With the Master Naturalist program, we have begun to discuss using the *Flora* in learning activities about plant classification and identification.

The latest excitement at the *Flora* is our recently redesigned website. Please check it out at floraofvirginia.org. You'll meet the authors, board of directors, and illustrators; you'll learn more about how the project came about, and see a preliminary section on the plants, which is targeted for much expansion.

You'll also see a section about support. The economic downturn came just as we were hitting our stride, and individual support of our work is more important than ever. We hope you'll want to give us a leg up.



—Bland Crowder, editor, *Flora of Virginia Project*



Actaea pachypoda

Field Shots:



In Bloom at the Yorktown Battlefield



Advanced Training:



ADULT PROGRAMS

Learning can be a life long adventure. Join VLM staff biologists, naturalists and scientists to explore the natural world in special adult-oriented programs. Each activity-oriented program is presented in a relaxed, hands-on format and includes classroom instruction combined with opportunities to examine specimens from the Museum's extensive collections and up close encounters with live animals. Come and share a journey of discovery with others who have an enthusiastic desire to continue to learn about the natural world of Virginia and beyond.

Advance registration is required for all adult programs. For more information or to make a reservation, call the Reservations Coordinator, at 757-595-9135, Monday-Friday, 9 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

May 2

What inadvertent cargo do ships carry in their ballast water?

"The global transport and discharge of ships' ballast water represents a significant dispersal of species that threaten the structural and functional integrity of coastal ecosystems. We know much more about plants and animals in this regard than we do about microorganisms, yet there are numerous good reasons to investigate the presence, dynamics, and survival of microbes in ships' ballast tanks. Not the least of these reasons concerns the documented and potential dispersal via ballasting operations of pathogenic and other harmful microbes, some of which are resistant to antibiotics. In the course of research programs in Chesapeake Bay and on the Great Lakes, we have collected water, sediment, and biofilms from more than 200 ballast tanks. Most of these have been "end-of-voyage" samples, but some have been collected while riding commercial vessels across the ocean. From the viewpoints of microbial ecology and invasion biology, I will highlight some of our research results. I will discuss the cornucopia of technological solutions proposed to reduce or eliminate organisms in discharged ballast water. Finally, I will consider the ongoing formulation of national and international regulations intended to decrease the risk associated with movement and release of ballast water." Presented by Dr. Fred C. Dobbs, professor and Graduate Program Director of the Department of Ocean, Earth and Atmospheric Sciences at Old Dominion University.

Ages: 16 and above.

Time: 2 p.m.

Cost: included in Museum admission: \$15 adults, \$12 children ages 3-12, members free. Call 757-595-9135 to register.

May 5

Diversity of Fishes

The diversity and specialization of fishes around the world is astounding. The Amazon boasts the most species of any freshwater system, from the familiar, to the bizarre and even the dangerous. We will take a look at many interesting species and their roles in this unique ecosystem, as well as conservation concerns and learn how hobbyists and professional aquaria may help and/or hinder the survival of fish species. Presented by Chris Crippen, VLM Aquarium Curator.

Ages: 16 and above

Time: 6-8 p.m.

Cost: VLM members \$5, non-members \$7, active VLM volunteers free. Call 757-595-9135 to register.

May 9

Eagles of the Chesapeake: An ecological portrait

Celebrate International Migratory Bird Day with a look at the research work of the Center for Conservation Biology. As part of its research into the resource needs of migratory birds using the mid-Atlantic stopover areas, the center is using radio transmitters to study the bald eagles in the Chesapeake Bay - both the migratory and resident eagle populations. Presented by Bryan D. Watts, Ph.D, the Mitchell A. Byrd Professor of Conservation Biology at the College of William & Mary and Director of the Center for Conservation Biology of The College of William & Mary and Virginia Commonwealth University.

Ages: 16 and above.

Time: 7:30 p.m.

Cost: Free

Virginia Natural History Society Symposium on the History of Natural History in Virginia

Historical Explorations into Virginia's Natural History This symposium will present the contributions of the leading naturalists over the past 400 year history of Virginia in the fields of: Fossils, Marine and Estuarine Invertebrates, Mussels, Spiders, Entomology, Marine and Freshwater Fish, Amphibians and Reptiles, Birds, Botany, Mammals, Biospeleology. Plus a presentation on the contributions of Thomas Jefferson to Natural History.

Saturday, Sept. 26, 2009 at the Virginia Museum of Natural History in Martinsville, Va. <http://www.vnmh.net/>

Hotel accommodations will be available at the Jameson Inn on Commonwealth Blvd. for approximately \$45 per night when reserving for the symposium http://www.jamesoninns.com/Hotel_Detail.asp?ID=65

A reception will be held Friday evening at the museum. If you are not a member of the Virginia Natural History Society you may join at: <http://fwie.fw.vt.edu/vnhs/>

If you have any questions please call Tom McAvoy (540-231-6320) or tmcavoy@vt.edu

This will be a unique and a important addition to the history of Virginia and natural history.



Upcoming Events:

Invasive Plant Removal Day

May . 02 . 2009

Non-native, invasive plants are threatening habitats worldwide, from tropical ecosystems to polar regions. These plant invaders alter habitats and reduce biodiversity. They cause ecological and economic harm. Experts consider these plants to be the second most serious threat to the quality of our natural areas and their ability to support wildlife. Scientists estimate that 14 million acres of land (about half the size of Virginia) in the U.S. are newly infested each year!



Invasive
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This year, we're declaring an Invasive Plant Removal Day all over the state of Virginia. Invasives have taken a firm foothold in many parts of the state and everyone's help is needed to reclaim our natural areas. Removing invasive plants and sowing native flora is a fantastic way to restore water quality and wildlife habitat in any biome.

Join volunteers at sites throughout Virginia on an endeavor to stop the spread of non-native invasive plants.

<http://www.virginiamasternaturalist.org/invasives/index.html>

John Clayton Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society

www.claytonvnps.org

Saturday, May 9 at 10:00 am

Location: Native Plant Walk at York River State Park

Phillip Merritt leads us on a walk along marshes flowing into the York River. Plants that may be in bloom include mountain laurel, partridge berry, and trailing arbutus. The walk will be about 1 1/2 miles, fairly rugged and hilly.

The York River State Park is located on York River Park Road, off of Riverview Road near Croaker. Meet in front of the visitor's center at the end of the road. There is a park entrance fee of \$3

Please register by calling 757-604-1026 or by emailing claytonsnatives@yahoo.com

Mountain Lake Migratory Bird Festival

May 29-31, Giles County: . More information: (540) 921-4340 or peggy@mountainlakebirding.com; Web site: www.mountainlakebirding.com.



WILLIAM & MARY VIMS Annual Art Show and Auction

Starts: May 2, 2009 at 6:30 PM

Location: Chesapeake Bay Hall, VIMS campus, Gloucester Pt.

Event URL: <http://www.vims.edu/giving/auction/index.php>

Contact: Jennifer Dillon for details at 804-684-7226 or jsdill@vims.edu.

VIMS' 11th-annual Art Show and Auction, *Turning Tides*, will feature renowned wildlife sculptors William H. Turner and David H. Turner. The event, which begins on Saturday, May 2nd at 6:30pm in Chesapeake Bay Hall, will feature a silent auction of items from regional artists and craftsmen, festive cuisine, and a hosted bar. A live auction of art, nautical, and maritime items begins at 8 pm. Proceeds from the event support graduate student research at the Institute.

WILLIAM & MARY VIMS Marine Science Day 2009

Starts: May 30, 2009 at 10:00 AM

Location: VIMS Campus

Event URL: <http://www.vims.edu/public/marinescienceday/index.php>

Contact: Susan Maples

VIMS' annual open house is a fun-filled event for the whole family. Join us in Gloucester Point for exhibits, children's activities, seining on the York River, lab tours, seafood cooking demonstrations, mini-lectures, and much more. All activities are free, as is parking. The event proceeds rain or shine.

Great Dismal Swamp Birding Festival 2009



May 7- May 9, 2009

All events and activities are free. Space on bus tours, guided walks, and workshops will be limited, reservations are required.

Call 757/986-3705 for reservations and more information.

Event URL: <http://www.fws.gov/northeast/greatdismalswamp/pdf%20files/09lb brochure.pdf>

Activities Include:

- Bird Banding Demonstration at the Jericho Ditch Banding Station
- Guided Bird Walk at Jericho Ditch
- Bus Tour to Banding Station (from Jericho parking area)
- Bus tour to Lake Drummond
- Owl Prowl at Washington Ditch
- Photographing Nature workshop & guided nature walk
- Sounds of the Night- guided bus/walking tour

Field Tips:



The caterpillars of most butterflies are "host specific", that is they feed on relatively few species of plants. Monarch caterpillars, for instance, feed only on milkweeds and the Gulf fritillary caterpillar feeds only on passionvine. If you learn the favored host plants of butterflies, you can increase the likelihood of seeing females visiting these plants to oviposit their eggs.