

Peninsula Chapter



Field Notes



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

Volume 5/Issue 2

Fall/Winter 2013

Message from the President:

We have a busy year ahead of us! There are many projects to complete and we have the state conference here in the fall.

New officers will be elected in June. Please start thinking about nominating yourself or someone else.

Dawn Currier



Service Pins Presented at January Meeting

Congratulations to the following PMN members for receiving hour pins in recognition of their time volunteered in service to our community!

Shown are Elisabeth Wilkins (500 hours) Larry Lewis (1000 hours) and Bev Nunnally (250 hours.) Not shown is Shirley Boyd (250 hours.)

If you have hours from last year that you did not report on VMS, you are allowed to do so. Please email membership chair Pam Courtney and let her know you have added them. It would make her job much easier as the system does not automatically tell her you have added information.

February 14th - Major Project

In cooperation with the U.S. Navy

Sailors from the USS Abe Lincoln are volunteering to help with conservation projects throughout the Peninsula. These locations include Newport News Green Foundation sites, the Bethel Landfill and other Hampton locations. We need volunteer MN to guide the Navy personnel in the proper tree planting or mulching and trash cleanup at these locations.

Work at the Newport News Green Foundation includes seven mulch sites throughout the city and trash pickup. Work at the Bethel Landfill will include tree planting and trash pickup.

Please sign up on the VMS calendar or contact David Singletary, who is coordinating this effort. He will contact you about the activities at your location.

Please help if you are available!!

In This Issue

Message from the President - page 1

PMN Board - page 2

2014 State Conference - page 3

Pilot Mentoring Project—page 4

The Cohort VI Experience—page 5

Wildlife in other Places —pages 6

Fall activities —pages 7

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 and Advanced Training 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

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

Date: February 11, 2014

Time: 6:00 P.M.

Advanced Training

Date: February 11, 2014

Time: 7:00 P.M.

Topic: *WildlifeMapping*

General Membership Meeting

Date: March 11, 2014

Time: 6:00 P.M.

Advanced Training

Date: February 11, 2014

Time: 7:00 P.M.

Topic: TBA

Other Events:

February 12: Cohort VII training begins

February 14-17: Great Backyard Bird Count

February 15-17: Reptile Weekend at VLM

March 15: SKYWARN Training, National Weather Service, Wakefield

If you haven't already "liked" Virginia Master Naturalists-Peninsula Chapter on Facebook, it is a great way to stay in touch with the many events that will be happening this spring!

*Virginia Master Naturalist Virginia Cooperative Extension programs and employment are open to all, regardless of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, genetic information, marital, family, or veteran status, or any other basis protected by law. An equal opportunity/affirmative action employer. Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Virginia State University, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture cooperating. Edwin J. Jones, Director, Virginia Cooperative Extension, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg; Jewel E. Hairston, Administrator, 1890 Extension Program, Virginia State, Petersburg. 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 Tierney 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 accom-*

Peninsula Chapter

2014 State Conference

The Peninsula Chapter and Historic Rivers Chapter will cohost the 2014 State Master Naturalist Conference and Training at the Virginia Living Museum (VLM) in Newport News. The Conference will be held the weekend of September 26, 27, and 28. It is anticipated that the Conference will follow the format of previous years to include pre-conference trips and a meet and greet social on Friday, September 26. Workshops, a keynote speaker and dinner will follow on Saturday, September 27. The Conference will conclude with workshops or field trips the morning of Sunday, September 28.

In late November 2013, Tiffany Brown, MN Administrative Planner, visited the VLM for a walkthrough of the facilities. She will be coordinating the Conference registration, hotel booking for out of town guests, catering contract, and audio-visual needs. The Peninsula and Historic Rivers Chapter planning group will coordinate programming (field trips, classroom sessions), social sessions, volunteer recruitment, and the photo contest.

The planning group members from the Peninsula are Elisabeth Wilkins, Pam Courtney, and Brad Halcums. Representing the Historic Rivers Chapter are Patty Maloney, Patty Riddick, and Felice Bond.

On February 6 and 7, Tiffany Brown and Alycia Crall (State Coordinator) will be visiting the VLM for more information on programs and to meet with the Chapter planning group.

The Conference will need volunteers in several areas, so we will be asking for your help in September. Stay tuned for updates on this event.

Brad Halcums

Great Backyard Bird Count

February 14-17

The Cornell Ornithology Lab's annual Great Backyard Bird Count is soon. You only need to count birds for at least 15 minutes on one or more of the days of the GBBC to participate. Your data is important! Find out how to register at <http://gbbc.birdcount.org>.

Outreach at the Newport News Marriott

The Peninsula Chapter had a display table at the Mid-Atlantic Horticulture Short Course and Home Gardener Day on January 13-16. As a first time event, our Chapter made over 150 quality adult contacts where we could talk with guests for several minutes each. There were several visitors interested in cohort training, especially those from Home Gardener Day who are already Master Gardeners. What made our table unique was that we had some bird and mammal parts on display and all other tables featured plants.

Thanks to Elisabeth Wilkins and Megan Tierney for securing such a great location for our display. Chris Gwaltney did a great job in coordinating the volunteers. Fred Kohlman and Dave Singletary volunteered several days which is much appreciated. They were assisted by Chris Gwaltney, Bev Nunnally, Carolyn Kutzer, Phyllis Kohlman, Bob Vazquez, Shirley Boyd, and Brad Halcums.

Next year the event will again be held at the Newport News Marriott and the dates will be January 20-23, 2015. We will put this on the VMS calendar later this year.

Check out the photo of the booth below!

Brad Halcums
Photo by Fred Kohlman



Peninsula Chapter

Pilot Mentoring Program

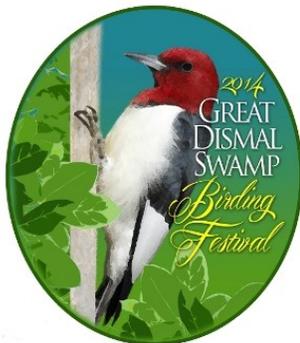
“Make new friends, but keep the old; one is silver, and the other gold.”

Make a new friend, become a mentor for a member of the new cohort group this spring. By setting up a mentoring system, new cohort members will have a friend, someone who has gone through the experience and can provide support and advice. It is hoped that the mentoring relationship will provide the newcomer with someone to ask questions, or to car pool to required community service hours, or a friendly face with common interests for advanced training activities.

If you are interested in becoming a mentor, please contact Daina Henry at dainapaupe@cox.net AND please come to the opening reception/get together for the newest cohort, currently scheduled for Feb 12, 2014 at 6 pm at The Virginia Living Museum. New cohorts are not required to have a mentor, and every effort will be made to pair folks with similar interests.

Great Dismal Swamp Birding Festival

The 2014 Great Dismal Swamp Birding Festival will be held on Thursday through Saturday, April 24-26. This year's event presents special opportunities to bring more of Virginia's birders and ornithology experts together in one weekend! The Virginia Society of Ornithology (VSO) has scheduled its Annual Meeting for April 25-27, 2014, to coincide with the Great Dismal Swamp Birding Festival and is partnering with refuge staff to coordinate activities associated with the two events



Congratulations and welcome to Cohort VI graduates!

More Member Achievements

At our December meeting, the following members were recognized as being certified as of December 31, 2013: Carolyn Christopher, James Cole, Ana Colon, Lew Dillon, Martha Graham, Caroline Herath, Sammie Joplin, Terry Moore, Melissa Mullins, Marc Nichols, Robert Vazquez, Julie White, and Susie Yager. Pam Courtney presented state certificates and name badges to all who were in attendance.

These members have certified and are pending receipt of a state certificate and name badge: Dawn Currier, Shirley Boyd, Fred Coy, Susan Crockett, Ashley DeCarme, Diane Richman, and David Singletary.

Thank you all for the great efforts!

Pam Courtney

Board Meeting with Historic Southside Chapter

One of Chapter President Dawn Currier's goals is to coordinate our efforts with those of neighboring Chapters. This objective is being implemented with the cohosting of the 2014 State Conference with the Historic Rivers Chapter. We are also seeking input from the Historic Southside Chapter (City of Franklin, Counties of Isle of Wight, Southampton, Sussex, and Surry). Several Board members met with a few of their Board members on January 22 to discuss mutual interests and concerns. Any commitments would have to be approved by our entire Board. As things develop, we will keep you informed.

Brad Halcums



Peninsula Chapter

Reflections on Cohort 6 Fall/Winter 2013

Three words best describe my experience as a Cohort 6 Peninsula Master Naturalist – **fun, educational, and friendship.**

Fun, first and foremost. The field trip with the Chesapeake Bay Foundation on the Bea Hayman Clark with Captain Jimmy Sollner and his first mate Yancey Powell was full of life time firsts, for me. We dredged for oysters, used a drag net for fish, and pulled crab pots. Sometimes, we were lucky and found what we came for – sometimes we got more than expected – with the oysters were beer cans; with the drag net, flounder, spot, grouper and shrimp, all returned to their habitat; and two crab pots one empty and one not. If we were required to eat off our catch, we would have been hungry. To experience the life of a waterman - without the cold, wet, and misery of a dock departure when the sun has not risen – gave me a true appreciation for life on the Chesapeake Bay, both human and marine, and its precarious nature.



There was also a field trip to Newport News Park with Park Ranger Becky Holliday, VNPS John Clayton chapter President Phillip Merritt and botany expert Ashley DeCarme. This was our first field trip as a cohort, and it allowed for something more than fun; bonding and meeting with the cohort members outside of the classroom. I learned all about trees, and ferns, mosses and grasses such as stilt grass and lizards tail, and swamp dogwood. I also had a chance to learn about the group.

Besides the informal ice breaker exercise and the chats at the snack table, this was my first chance to really meet folks from all walks of life with a common interest in nature.

Then, there was the geology field trip (in the mist, which then turned to rain). We started off with core samples at the Virginia Living Museum and then off to Yorktown with Peter Berquist and a short stay at Cornwallis Cave to observe the layering of sedimentation.

The second word to describe the cohort experience is **educational**. I learned how ignorant I truly am and learned more “ologies” than I knew existed. In Chris Crippen’s ictyology class I learned how to fillet a fish (sad, but true, my fish always came in a package). I learned not to be scared of snakes in herpetology. I did not learn how to overcome my distaste of “bugs” in entomology. I learned to appreciate the differences in animal fur and cranial bones in mammology. We learned about weather and climate, and the recent “polar vortex” made sense after listening to the lecture by ? from the National Weather Service at Wakefield. With these experts and the “amateur” experts in the cohort (we had folks knowledgeable in bugs, reptiles, birds, and butterflies) I truly understood the feeling that there is infinitely more to know.

The third word to describe the cohort experience is **friendship**. We learned from each other, we learned about each other, we accepted each other, and grew together as a group. As a Gestalt, our whole was more than the sum of our individual parts.

Thanks for a wonderful experience, and I know I shall see most of you in the future, counting birds, planting trees, doing outreach, doing citizen science, and continuing our quest for knowledge.

Story and photos, Daina Henry



Peninsula Chapter

Winter Adventure

Whenever my husband and I go to the Outer Banks in the winter, we never know what to expect. This January we had a mixture of days with 60 degree weather and some days of rain and cold blustery winds. We did not have to go far for our adventures. A fishing boat was fishing in front of our cottage. When they were pulling in the nets, some dolphins appeared. Another day, a school of fish swam by and attracted dozens of sea gulls and cormorants diving for the fish. We sighted ocean loons fishing out front around dusk one evening.

We took a trip to the Bodie Island Lighthouse and hiked the nature trail down to a sight seeing platform near some lakes. We saw an Avocet, several ducks too dark to identify, and hundreds of Tundra swans. We had hoped to see some snow geese, but did not go over to Pea Island where they usually are this time of year.

On one warm afternoon, we visited the Elizabethan Gardens, one of my favorite gardens. This year because of the cold, their camellias were not in bloom yet. We saw many evergreen and winter interest plants and lots of beautiful landscaping. The Christmas decorations were still there so we enjoyed seeing them before they were removed.

We ended our adventure by driving home and seeing a Red-tailed Hawk and an Eagle flying over the inland canal. We hope some of the rest of you will have a similar adventure someday.

Article and photos by Charlotte Boudreau



Cormorants, gulls and terns feasting in the surf at Nags Head
(left and below)



Tundra and mute swan in pond near Bodie Island light house



Kayaking the Eastern Shore

Recently my friend Kathy and I went on a kayaking trip. We put in at The Eastern Shore of VA National Wildlife Center in a small creek. Paddling out of the creek we occasionally saw Blue Crabs skittering out of the way. We turned into the main channel heading south. Just then we saw a Bald Eagle circling the trees and a Golden Eagle making his way toward one of the islands northward. There is marsh land on one side of the channel and a set of barrier islands on the other. Both are covered with different kinds of marsh grass, bushes and trees. There are small creeks running all through the marsh and are often used for crabbing. Periwinkles cling to the cord grass. We constantly saw a variety of fish jumping out of the water trying to catch low flying insects. We paddled over to Fisherman's Island which is off limits during the spring and summer do to the number of birds that come there to breed, many of which are endangered. We saw a wide variety of gulls, cormorants, oyster catchers, terns, herons, egrets, sandpipers, some osprey and a flock of pelicans. The water at the edge of the island was filled with hermit crabs, periwinkles, sand dollars, schools of small fish and horseshoe crabs (one smaller than the palm of my hand).



On the way back we stopped on one of the barrier islands where we found a conch shell that was at least 6-7" long. In it was the biggest hermit crab I have ever seen. When it came out of its shell its legs were at least as long my fingers. It was low tide as we paddled back and sitting on the mud bank all along the shore were rows and rows of conchs. As we paddled by thousands of fiddler crabs went running for their burrows. Since it was low tide we had to get out and walk the last part of the creek up to the ramp. On the side of the creek in a small pool was a single blue crab. As we passed by he stood up to full height trying to make himself look threatening and raised his pinchers in the air snapping them as hard as he could. We couldn't help but laugh. Each time we started to move he repeated the performance until we had passed by. It was an amusing ending to a perfect day.

Beverley Nunnally

Peninsula Chapter



**Hampton
Master
Gardeners
Plant Sale**



**Wilderness
First Aid**



Go Green



**JARC Clean Up
Huntington Beach**



**Hampton
Clean Up**



River Rats at Raft Up