

Peninsula Chapter

Field Notes



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

Volume 8/Issue 1

Winter 2016

Message from the President:

Welcome to our newest trainees in Cohort 10. Our tenth training class...what a milestone for our chapter! I know they will be enthusiastically welcomed.

I'm looking forward to celebrating with many of you and our local partners and statewide sponsors at the upcoming Spring Forward event. Hopefully fun will be had and many connections will be made.

Elisabeth

Dan Summers introduces Cohort X to the screech owl.



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Spring Forward Event

by Mary Galloway, Cohort 7

If you ever wondered how much of an impact your volunteer work through Peninsula Chapter of Virginia Master Naturalist makes, then coming to the Mariners' Museum on March 31st will answer that question.

You are appreciated by your fellow Peninsula members, your board, but most especially by our local partners and sponsors, many of which will be attending the **SPRING FORWARD EVENT** at the Museum.

Our Newport News City Manager, James Bourey, and Newport News Councilwomen Sharon Scott and Patricia Woodbury will be attending. Our local partners are represented by Laura Willoughby of Endview Plantation, Page Hayhurst and Dan Summers of Virginia Living Museum and Sarah Nuss of Chesapeake Bay National Estuarine Research to mention a few.

To discuss the benefits of the cooperation we experience with these special guests, our speaker Dr. Shawn Dash, Evolutionary Biologist, Hampton University has a lively presentation planned called: "Lean on Me: The Evolution of Partnerships."

It is also our first time as a chapter to formalize the presentation of certification and recertification of our members and pinning of milestone candidates. What we do as volunteers for stewardship, education and citizen science of our environment is often accomplished on our own or in small groups. This **SPRING** it will be wonderful to celebrate our work together going **FORWARD!**

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It is not easy being a Naturalist Confessions of a Gardener

By Larry Lewis, Cohort 3

I have been a gardener at my house for over 25 years. After meeting Charlotte Boudreau at a Master Gardener meeting in



2011, I was introduced to the concept of native plantings for the first time. She was the second person who told me to read Doug Tallamy's book, [Bringing Nature Home](#). I have definitely changed. I no longer see insect damage, but see a plant that has fed something and done its job. I understand that complexity and diversity is the only way to achieve self-sustaining balance.



I found the easiest way to connect with native plants and the insect world is through planting for butterflies. By planting specific host plants needed for a caterpillar to eat, you not only please the gardener's eye but support reproduction of more butterflies. Most butterflies are chemically bound to the native plants with which they evolved.

Native nectar plants offer the gardener a full season of blooms in every color and shape.

Has my garden changed? I have slowly removed the invasive, alien wisteria replacing it with American wisteria. English ivy no longer inhabits the beds that edge my lot, but is safely managed inside interior beds. Two crape myrtles were pulled from the garden and replaced with native viburnum. When an alien plant dies or has outgrown its boundaries, I try to replace it with a native equivalent.

My back yard is a diverse crop of clover, moss, and whatever wants to grow there. I leave leaf litter, mulching most from the yard to use in the flower beds. I created several new beds, two with 100% native perennials, shrubs, and trees. Another is around 85% native. In each of the remaining beds, natives are slowly becoming dominant. I try to think less about a pretty bloom or interesting leaf, but first ask does it support wildlife or produce a fruit?



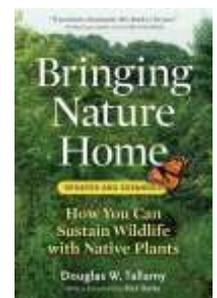
However, I still purchase non-native annuals and perennials. The backdrop of my yard is filled with azaleas, ligustrum, nandina, and acuba. I have hostas, liropie, and Japanese maples. I think a good, realistic goal is to work toward 80% native throughout your yard.



I find it hard not to feel guilty that I have NO real desire to change this. Yes, I said it. I am a gardener too, in love with everything growing, attracted to an unusual leaf or a beautiful bloom. It is not always easy being a naturalist.

Photos provided by Larry Lewis.

More about Doug Tallamy's work can be found at <http://www.bringingnaturehome.net/>



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Endview Update

By Daina Henry, Cohort 6

The trail is ready for the public!



With the completion of two Eagle Scout projects on Nov 29, the trail is ready. One project was the production and installation of signs for the trees and major points. The other project was the building and installation of a split rail fence and two Aldo Leopold benches that were

placed at the top of the hill. (Photo of bench and fence provided by Daina Henry.)

I want to thank each and every one of you for your help in getting this done. It is hard to imagine how much we have accomplished since March 2014.

We still go every Tuesday from 10 to 1 (in good weather) and do maintenance and removal of invasive bramble etc. Saturday work days will be once a month starting in January. We are in the beginning stages of creating another loop to the path (yes the map will have to be redrawn...) to reach a large hackberry.

Once again thanks for everything!



Peninsula Master Naturalists at VLM Reptile Weekend

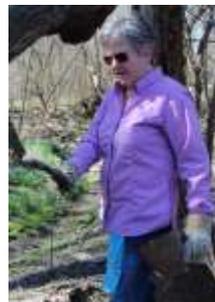
By Brad Halcums, Cohort 2

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.

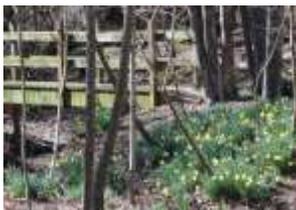
Thanks to all the Chapter volunteers who helped out and we are looking forward to the Museum Earth Day event in April.



Lee Hughes, left, and Loye Spencer, below, instruct visitors to the VLM's Reptile Weekend. Photos provided by Brad Halcums.



Ann Hageman removes trash during a recent workday.



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.

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Cohort 9 Basic Training

By Laura Marlowe, Cohort 7

Photos provided by Cathy Frey, Cohort 9

Congratulations to Cohort 9! In December, 22 new Basic Training Graduates joined the ranks of the Peninsula Master Naturalists. Two members of the cohort, Denis Boudreau and Angelic Werlein had accumulated enough volunteer hours for certification by the time class graduated, and two more, Laura Nucz and Sally Young were within an hour or two, though all needed additional continuing education hours for certification. Since then, Denis, Laura and Sally have attained their Master Naturalist certification.

This fall, the Basic Training Committee, led by Daina Henry, added a class on Astronomy by Dr. Kelly Herbst at the Virginia Living Museum (VLM) to the curriculum. The cohort received presentations on what astronomy is and isn't, the current understanding of the universe, galaxy, and our solar system, early astronomy in Virginia, and had an opportunity to view a double star from the VLM's observatory telescope.

In addition, a Night Watch field trip to Endview Plantation was added, and the class went for a dusk field walk to see bats with Michelle Schlosser, followed by a presentation on Virginia Bats. Once it was fully dark, the cohort went on a night field walk with Elisabeth Wilkins to listen for owls, and see bioluminescent fungi. There was also an opportunity to look at the stars and review some of the information learned in the Astronomy class. The cohort was also treated to a presentation by Dr. Shawn Dash and collected insects against a white cloth using a special lamp to attract them. This field trip turned out to be a big hit, and we were joined by several other members of the PMN chapter for continuing education.

Here are some of the reactions from Cohort 9 about Basic Training.

"I thoroughly enjoyed this class...they strive to bring in the best and brightest speakers and the content matter is always fascinating."

Dawn Bonavita



Reptile class has special visitors

"My experience with the Peninsula Master Naturalist class was wonderful. From my first class until we "graduated" I felt welcomed, and part of a new group. This was a step out of the box for me... Retired after teaching for 25 years, and recently caring for my ill husband, I entered the group not knowing anyone. The group made connections easily. Daina and Laura welcomed us the first night, along with others, and were there to answer questions about how these classes would work. It isn't possible to choose a favorite class. From the trip on the James River, to our time at Endview Plantation, to the night walk, I hung on every word. Each experience was different, but it has given me "new eyes" as to possibilities open to each of us. I must say that one of my top classes was the astronomy class at VLM. I've always loved the night sky and viewing from the observatory was fantastic. There's so much to learn. We learned that volunteer opportunities are limitless. It's up to each of us to try to make a difference in how the ecology of the world is changing. We want to leave the world in a better way than it is now. I wish those of you in cohorts following ours the best of luck. If your experience is half as good as mine was, you will come away a much richer person."

Cathy Frey

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Core sampling during geology class at Endview Plantation



“PMN course was life changing for me! The caliber of each weeks’ speakers and presenters matched those of any expensive conference I have attended in the past. I loved all topics because each week I was exposed to another, little recognized aspect of our vast, diverse natural world. I very much appreciated the 'localness' of the information and the fact one volunteer can make a difference, right here, now. Beware, the content is so rich that at times it felt like drinking from a fire hose! Felt great to be woken up and confused again!!”

Leigh Fenigsohn



CBF field trip



“I was impressed with the level of training and instructors. It was like a master’s level course that was accessible to everyone!”

Ann Hageman

“Dear Virginia Master Naturalist” ... This is how I started every entry to my naturalist journal for the course, the way you would start a letter to a dear friend or to family. The Master Naturalist program wasn’t just another class for me. I loved every week to come and extend my knowledge of such fascinating topics, many having already been highly intrigued by. There was never a class that didn’t teach me something new or a class that I didn’t leave wanting to learn more. The people teaching these classes aren’t just random folks that got picked up at the local PetSmart, these are experts in their field and have copious amounts of experience with the topic and were just as passionate about telling all of us what they know as we were to absorb it! I remember having this feeling of acceptance and just complete comradery with my fellow naturalists. We are all passionate about the natural world around us and enthralled with its beauty and complexity. It seemed that we all had a thirst to learn more about the amazing world we live in and a want to protect it and share it with others. I am lucky to have been able to find such a group that shares such similar views as I and somewhere to learn more about the planet I love. So to make this short...the Peninsula Master Naturalist class is rad!”



Allen Milby

“I was surprised at the complete dedication and knowledge of almost all presenters. I was amazed at how the courses overall demonstrated how everything is interconnected and depends on everything else. I was also impressed with the way administrators and facilitators made it all work smoothly.”

Lee Morris

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"I was impressed with the dedication of the staff and the wide range of members in our Cohort. I was surprised by the interest in raising bees. I really like the water testing and how it is done. The astronomy class was my favorite. I really liked the PPT and the visit in the observatory. The night at Endview was a close second."

Ray Yoh



More than birds were discovered while on the bird walk.



"I most enjoyed the James River field trip aboard the Dead Rise. Most enjoyed the experience with like-minded folks. The geology piece was also very satisfying. The enthusiasm and knowledge of the instructor enthused me as well. Very interesting historical connection with plantation."

Steve Underkofler

"I think the thing that caught me blank was the geology class: rocks, right? Ho hum. But Peter Berquist's delivery was so impassioned and his material so captivating that I was hooked, and I couldn't wait for the field trip - and that exceeded my expectations as well. Every grain of dirt, every color change, every dip in the surface of the terrain told a story. Amazing. I'm so glad he's willing to spend his time with us."

Sally Young



Cohort IX, Happy Graduates!

Gloucester Schoolyard Habitat Update

The Gloucester Schoolyard Habitat Pollinator Partnership has had a busy winter season of choosing plants and designing habitats. The time is near to prepare the soil and plant. Thanks are due to sponsor Carol Heiser of DGIF and PMNs Tina Chrismon, Ken Carroll and Mary Galloway, who serve as partners! We also have partners from Historic Rivers, Northern Neck and Gloucester Master Gardeners.

Want to help? We need volunteers for prep and planting. And, if your spring cleaning produces **any garden implements you don't need**, we could always use more tools. **Contact Susan Walton at pollinator.partners@gmail.com** for information.



Photo from a small demo habitat at the Gloucester County Board offices. Planted in May 2015, the habitat provided over 125 monarch caterpillars to Gloucester classrooms in September thanks to key species such as swamp milkweed and the asters shown.

Schoolyard Habitat Group at Armstrong

By Dave Singletary, Cohort 6

We have formed a group of MNs, Master Gardeners, and Hampton University students to support environmental habitat at Armstrong Elementary School in Hampton. An initial meeting has occurred at the site and we are gathering ideas and existing information of the site. Teachers are excited about the possibilities. This spring we hope to do a cleanup and flesh out ideas for the next couple of years. **If you are interested in participating** contact **Rhonda Graves at elcec@msn.com**



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Silent Auction Fundraiser

By Susie Yager, Cohort 5

Thanks to the efforts of Susie Yager, chair for fundraising, Marie Smith, chair for hospitality, and their many helpers, the first ever PMN silent auction and the annual holiday potluck events were a great success!



Here is Susie's report:

We held our first PMN silent auction during the PMN holiday potluck dinner on Dec. 8, 2015. Many members contributed items to the auction tables—some even created handmade items specifically for the event. The silent auction provided a measure of entertainment too, and nearly everyone participated in the bidding. Total income from the auction came to \$897.



Cohort 10 Joins PMN

By David Boehnlein, Cohort 10

The volunteers of Cohort 10 have joined the Peninsula Master Naturalists. Fourteen new members began their training on February 10 at the Virginia Living Museum. I'm one of them and, as a newcomer to Virginia, I'm looking forward to learning more about nature here on the Peninsula. That first night, we introduced ourselves, Laura Marlowe introduced us to the training program, and Megan Tierney of the Virginia Cooperative Extension introduced us to Risk Management. But with all due respect to our trainers, the real star of the show was an avian visitor to the classroom.



WildlifeMapping on Now Live on iNaturalist

By Susan Walton, Cohort 2

Many PMN members have been trained to be *WildlifeMappers*, the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries citizen science outreach that allows us to contribute to their biological databases. This important project went live on iNaturalist last month. Good news—no more habitat codes! The iNaturalist website uses GPS coordinates from your phone or Google Map information you provide when using your computer. Contributors also provide a photo, such as the one of this herring gull taken to report its presence at the James River Bridge last week. Once curators verify your species id, your contribution becomes research level data for DGIF and other scientists to use.



Look for a future PMN training opportunity. But, if you like using web based data sites, such as eBird, go to <http://www.inaturalist.org> and set up an account to get started. Be sure to join the Virginia Wildlife-Mapping project so that this vital data can be collected and saved for you by our own DGIF biologists!

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Spring Walks Sponsored by the Virginia Native Plant Society

by Susie Yager, Cohort 5

These walks are sponsored by the John Clayton Chapter of VNPS and can be counted for Continuing Education credits. All are free and open to the public, but registering in advance is strongly recommended.

Weeds and Orchids. Saturday, April 16, from 9:30 to noon. Join Donna Ware at Freedom Park to see native and non-native weeds [such as bluets (*Houstonia* spp.) and Veronica spp.] of early spring in the big fields near the Interpretive Center and to visit a calcareous ravine to see showy orchis (*Galearis spectabilis*) and other species that prefer high nutrient soils. For information and to register contact Donna at 757 565 0657 ordmeware@verizon.net

Wildflowers and Orchids! Saturday, April 23, at 10:am, at Grafton Ponds area. Join environmental consultant Meegan Wallace to look for showy orchis (*Galearis spectabilis*) which should be in bloom as well as many spring wildflowers. From Travel east on Fort Eustis Blvd (Va-105), pass Richneck Road on the right, look for a small parking area on the left, marked with VNPS signs. Contact Meegan at 757 291 1099 to register and for more information.

Spring Flowers. Sunday, May 1, 2:00 pm. Meet at Newport News Park's Discovery Center, Constitution Way. (GPS coordinates 37.181682, -76.537173); additional parking nearby along Constitution Way if needed. Peninsula Master Naturalist Susie Yager will lead a walk through this lakeside woodland area to see Pink Lady's-Slipper Orchid, Partridgeberry, Yellow Star-Grass, Putty-Root Orchid, Pickerelweed, and numerous other spring flowers as well as several ferns. The round-trip walk will be about 2 miles. The Discovery Center has restrooms. Contact Susie Yager to register at soozigis@cox.net.

2016 Great Dismal Swamp Birding Festival

Just released: the 2016 GDS Birding Festival event schedule now available. The event is free and open to the public but most activities require advance reservations. Make your selections and call the refuge headquarters to reserve your spots. For the complete information package follow the links from our homepage at [www.fws.gov/refuge/Great Dismal Swamp](http://www.fws.gov/refuge/Great_Dismal_Swamp).



Volunteers are always needed and greatly appreciated. This year the festival will include a bioblitz! Contact Visitor Specialist Deloras Freeman if you want to volunteer at the Refuge phone number or Deloras_Freeman@fws.gov

Gloucester Schoolyard Habitat Pollinator Partners will be at the Daffodil Festival

The Gloucester Master Gardeners have invited the Habitat Partners to share their space at the annual Daffodil Festival held at Gloucester Courthouse April 2nd and 3rd. We hope to educate the public about the importance of pollinators and the plants that support them while getting out the news about our schoolyard habitats. Volunteers are welcome! More information about this fun event is available at <http://daffodilfestivalva.org>. Contact Susan Walton (pollinator.partners@gmail.com) if you want to help.



Peninsula Chapter

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	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: March 8, 2016
Time: 6:00 P.M.

Continuing Education

Date: March 8, 2016
Time: 7:00 pm.
Topic: Oak Trees presented by Charlie Dubay

General Membership Meeting

Date: April 12, 2016
Time: 6:00 P.M.

Continuing Education

Date: April 12, 2016
Time: 7:00 pm.

Executive Board Meeting

Date: April 28, 2016
Time: 6:00 pm

Spring Forward

Date: March 31, 2016

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