



**Virginia  
Master  
Naturalist**  
Southwestern Piedmont Chapter

## THE VINE



Fall Quarter 2014

Volume 5 Number 3

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James River

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

September 2014

Hello fellow Naturalists and welcome Fall. Once again we are looking back on a great summer and I trust you all enjoyed everything that our local natural world has to give us. We had some wonderful events this summer and many thanks to the members that provided great support.



It is with a sad heart I report that we had another a loss of one of our members. Kim Hopkins was a friend, fellow Master Naturalist and work associate. He loved nature and enjoyed helping with our projects. His brother told of a story of how he enjoyed nature and he would go hunting with his family but never shot any wildlife other than with a camera. He had a lifelong love of wildlife, enjoyed plants and foliage, and had a heart of gold for all animals. He will be missed in the community.

Autumn is a beautiful and exciting time in Virginia. So please consider getting involved with the new projects and events planned for the remainder of the year. I hope everyone finds areas to get involved – join the Board for the next year, help out at meetings, engage in the group projects, lead outings or your own projects.

Share your expertise and bring a friend - why not bring all your friends to the projects and meetings. There is a new training program in January planned for new members that want to enjoy and learn more about nature and our community.



*Kim Hopkins, Master  
Naturalists R.I.P.*

*Best regards, Teresa Prillaman*

## Birth of a Bluebird Trail -- Fairy Stone State Park



*Male Eastern Bluebird on an icy day. Used with permission by Virginia photographer, David Kinneer.*

As State Coordinator with the Virginia Bluebird Society (VBS) and a newly certified Virginia Master Naturalist with the Southwestern Piedmont Chapter, it became apparent to me that we have possible locations for a bluebird trail at several public lands in our area. I became determined to establish one funded on a Virginia Bluebird Society grant which can offer bluebirds and other native cavity-nesting birds safe nesting homes. This will give Chapter members an opportunity to get involved in monitoring a bluebird trail, see the nesting cycles close up and learn about cavity-nesting birds, all while earning citizen science hours with the Virginia Master Naturalist program.

The planning officially started on January 19<sup>th</sup> of this year. Fellow Southwestern Piedmont Chapter members, Danny and Susan Martin, drove me around one crisp, sunny January afternoon to look at potential sites for a bluebird trail. At that point, I had no idea how many grant boxes could be possible. We spent time at Philpott Lake and surrounding areas along Rt. 57, then at Fairy Stone State Park, and all other public lands in that vicinity. When seeking best locations, I look for low ground cover in open areas kept low naturally or mowed, with directions facing ideally east or southeast, trees for cover from avian predators, for perching, and for guarding their nests, no more than 50-75 feet away from the nest boxes, while still maintaining the openness needed for the bluebirds' food sources. Additionally, it is important to have adequate spacing for territory per bluebird couple at about 100 yards apart with a minimum of 2 acres per nesting couple and easy and safe access by humans feet and by vehicle to maintain and monitor the nestboxes weekly. As we all know, the Virginia State Parks are managed by the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation — a perfect fit! I chose Fairy Stone State Park (FSSP) for the requirements for success of the proposed trail. Once I was able to sketch out the ideal sites in draft form, I contacted Park Manager, John Grooms, for a personal meeting in his office on February 7<sup>th</sup> to explain how the Virginia Bluebird Society's Grant Program works and to discuss a possible bluebird trail there. Not only was he happy to do this nestbox monitoring program, but he requested a nestbox next to the Park's main office and one at his residence inside the park.

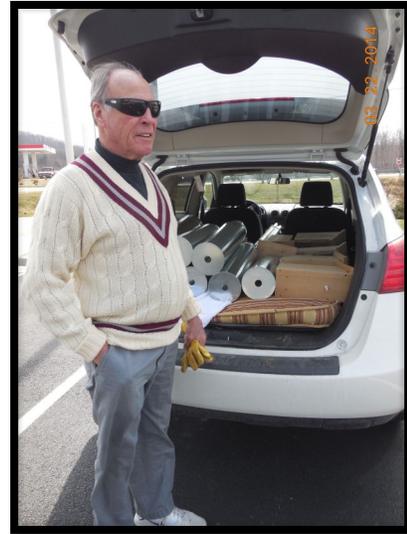
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(Birth of a Bluebird Trail - continued)

We immediately filled out and signed the VBS grant paperwork. I then submitted the paperwork for VBS approval. The nestbox setups had to be created using VBS protocol equipment --the "Carl Little" design nestbox installed on a one-inch conduit and including two predator guards. During mid-March, another meeting took place with the Assistant Park Manager, Billy Whitlow.



*Christine Boran and nestbox site markers on FSSP map.*



*VBS Volunteer Paul Davis with equipment.*

Using my proposed sketched locations, Billy and I surveyed the proposed sites and getting official FSSP park approvals for most of them. Billy was very helpful offering suggestions to other locations I was not aware existed – changes were established and we had a final map. VBS approved the grant. I then met with fellow VBS County Coordinator, and skilled woodworker, Paul Davis, in Bedford, VA, on March 22<sup>nd</sup> who built the nestboxes and associated equipment in his workshop at his home in Nelson County. We loaded the equipment from his car to mine, exchanged handshakes, and then proceeded on our way. Billy Whitlow then graciously made arrangements for an AmeriCorps/FSSP volunteer, Devin Merriman, to assist me in the installation of the trail in April. Virginia Master Naturalists and fellow Chapter members, Brian and Jessica Phillips had previously volunteered to monitor the trail weekly—I knew that and all was in place for monitors. We then met for a tour and training session on April 20<sup>th</sup> at the newly-installed bluebird trail of eight nestboxes. The planning, installation, and training tour now completed, it was a matter of weekly checks and wait to see what would happen next. Of course, that's the best part of all -- waiting for the native cavity-nesting birds to like what we put up -- just for them.

Ideally, it helps to have nestboxes in place by February 1<sup>st</sup>, as the male Eastern Bluebird in our area leaves mixed flocks in February and begins establishing breeding territory from other males and a search for his mate. Courtship to his new lady love will take place. He will feed her insect treats, wave his wings to attract her attention, and seek out nesting sites (natural cavities or nestboxes) he thinks she might like and show those to her. She makes the final decision of the location and begins building the nest from dried grasses or pine needles, averaging about 5 days to 1-week to complete it to the formation of a nest cup ready for eggs. This will vary per female in her building skills, whether he helps bring nesting materials to the nestbox for her to arrange into the nest, and the weather.

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Many bird species will pause nest building if there is a sudden cold spell or severe weather, such as high winds or an early springtime storm., which can very easily take place in the earlier months of the year.

With colder weather, insects are not readily available and thus no food is available to feed the young. The same will hold true during egg laying. The female bluebird will start laying one egg each morning. This is why I suggest monitoring the nestboxes in the afternoons as a general rule, if possible. If an ice storm entails, she'll stop laying another egg and come back to the nest to resume laying during the gentler, warmer temperatures, sometimes several days later. During incubation, her mate will bring her food.

Once the clutch is completed – average is 4 to 6 eggs— she takes a break and then incubation begins, usually starting the next day. Incubation is about 14 days to Hatch Day. Amazingly, this trail had a late installation date of April 6. Perhaps to the mere human, that may be late ; evidently it was not too late for the bluebirds – about a month later than the past several years on my own bluebird trail in Woolwine. We had a harsher winter season and a cold, rainy spring. The birds know the right time that helps keep their eggs viable and naked hatchlings warmer, while off the nest for a break in the afternoons, or during brooding.

The statistics recorded for the eight nestboxes for 2014 are completed with thanks to Brian and Jessica Phillips' excellent care of the nestboxes. The first egg laid was April 20 (the date I conducted the training session with Brian and Jessica) by an Eastern Bluebird! The first hatching was May 4. Though all native cavity-nesting birds are welcomed to use the bluebird housing, the final report submitted from Brian and Jessica showed only Eastern Bluebirds occupied the housing for active nestlings during 2014. The totals are as follows:

Nest attempts: 12

Number of Eggs Laid: 49

Number of Eggs Hatched: 40

Number of Unhatched eggs: 2

Number of baby bluebirds fledged: 40

Weekly monitoring of nestboxes helps the birds succeed in raising and fledging their young and assists us to better our troubleshooting skills as we assess problems that can arise at any time so we can correct them as soon as possible. There were two instances of an "unknown agent" in predations – those were missing or destroyed eggs, totaling 7. Though we don't know the cause, many times other bird species, particularly the House Wren, a native bird species, will enter nestboxes and destroy other species' eggs and throw out hatchlings from the nest onto the ground. House Wrens were recorded entering the nestboxes with a "dummy" nest built (made of sticks). A dummy nest is when the male House Wren will stuff any cavities in his territory — to keep other birds from using the nestboxes. The female House Wren may choose one to lay an egg clutch, so it is important we monitor determine a real nesting to a "dummy-stuffed nestbox" so that we stay within federal wildlife laws not to disturb any native active nesting. The two predator guards help deter large avian predators like hawks or owls and ground critters from accessing the nestboxes, such as the expert-climbing rat snakes, roaming domestic and feral cats, opossum, mice, field rats, and others.

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(Birth of a Bluebird Trail - continued)



Flying squirrels can enter nestboxes and cause some havoc to nesting birds' eggs, such as breaking and eating them.

This is why it is recommend not to install nestboxes too close to the woods – House Wren and squirrel territory — and never on tree trunks. This is typical in the bird world in general, even in trees and shrubs. The nestboxes are much better protected than open nests such as the American Robin, the Northern Cardinal, and the Northern Mockingbird will have in a shrub, as an example. The good news is Fairy Stone State Park habitat this year had no non-native invasive House Sparrows attacking bluebird eggs, adults or the young. This pest invasive species should never be allowed to reproduce in manmade bird housing. Nor was there any evidence of snake, raccoon, or feral or domestic cat predation this year.

Showing both predator guards, & the height installed (almost at 6 feet high) with the one-inch conduit.



*AmeriCorps Volunteer Devin Merriman and Christine Boran*

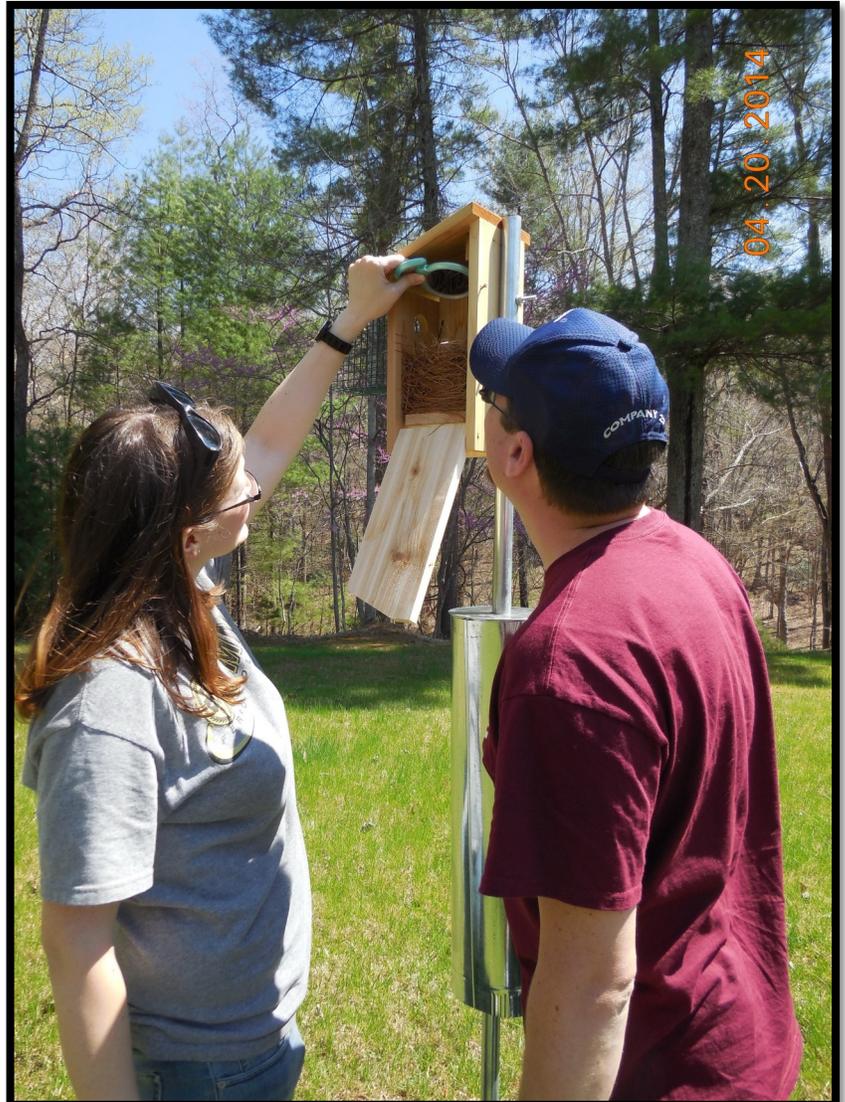
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I want to thank these wonderful people during the planning stages and support for the Fairy Stone State Park Bluebird Trail: John Grooms, Billy Whitlow, Susan and Danny Martin, Paul Davis, Brian and Jessica Phillips, and the AmeriCorps volunteer, Devon Merriman. The trail has been rated with high success considering the late installation – it is clear the birds were happy to have man-made housing available so readily! Brian and Jessica did a marvelous and diligent job with monitoring the birds and kept accurate records. I found out later how much they were enjoying it – not surprising to me! I can't thank them enough. Without trained monitors, the trail would not be possible.

With the natural woodpecker cavities on the edges of the woods probably available for the birds to use, I wonder if any bluebirds made a choice of using our

manmade housing over the old woodpecker holes. For the many reasons bluebirds have struggled in past, those reasons still exist today. They will always be in need of human assistance.

Thanks to nestboxes and monitoring, in the past decade, the Eastern Bluebird population has returned to healthy numbers. However, since on average only half of bluebirds fledglings actually survive to be one-year old, we can never have too many bluebirds – or other native songbirds in my humble opinion.



*Trail Monitors Jessica and Brian Phillips.*

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By Christine Boran – September 2014

Virginia Master Naturalist

State Coordinator/County Coordinator, Virginia Bluebird Society

## In Conjunction with the International Coastal Cleanup - J. Frank Wilson Park



Thirty-four volunteers: 9 from the Master Naturalists Chapter, 17 from Holy Trinity Lutheran Church and 8 from the members of the Interact Club at the Bassett High School that Dennis Reeves brought along. The church started the project off by having donuts/cake/drinks while everyone got their trash bags and tally sheets with instructions. In groups of two or more they went out and covered the park keeping recyclables separate from the other trash. The weather stayed nice for us while we did the trash pick up. Just as we finished up the rain came.

The liter pick up was a part of the International Coastal Cleanup sponsored by Clean Virginia Waterways at Longwood University in Farmville, VA. Clean Virginia Waterways who provided us the trash bags, tally sheets, and listed us on their site as a location for their International Coastal Cleanup as well as posters and information about last years cleanup and what was the most found items, as well as safety precautions to follow. They also sent us 24 trash grabbers for us to use in the future to make the job a little easier.



<http://www.longwood.edu/cleanva>



*Some members of the Interact Club.*



*Charles & Heidi Speakman*

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Getting to know everyone's name.



Ellen & Joe Jessee

**Some of things we picked up:**

- \* 1,084 cigarette butts along.
- \* 156 food wrappers,
- \* 73 bottle plastic caps,
- \* 63 metal bottle caps,
- \* 73 beverage plastic bottles,
- \* 69 glass bottles,
- \* 42 cigar tips,
- \* 245 glass pieces,
- \* 61 plastic pieces
- \* 1 Tree Swallow dead

Besides the dead bird, other items of concern were the cigarette lighters, and fireworks. As well as the balloons and tinsel that can be harmful to local birds.

It was decided that the small Monopoly green house was the most unusual item found.



From right to left Ashby Pritchett, CVMN; Pastor Lynn Bechdolt, Janine Howard, VNMN; & Nancy Hoy. Photos by Linda Drage.

(Cleanup at J Frank Wilson Park - continued)

**CLEAN VIRGINIA WATERWAYS**

With Grateful Appreciation,  
**CLEAN VIRGINIA WATERWAYS**  
 Recognizes  
**The Southwestern Piedmont Master Naturalists**

For outstanding and dedicated service to the 2014 Virginia Waterways Cleanup (Part of the International Coastal Cleanup) and commitment to trash-free rivers, beaches, coastal waters and seas.

*Kathleen M. Register*  
 Kathleen M. Register  
 Executive Director, Clean Virginia Waterways

Ocean Conservancy

INTERNATIONAL COASTAL CLEANUP  
 International Coastal Cleanup®

INTERNATIONAL COASTAL CLEANUP 2014  
 "A DAY OF SERVICE" AT J FRANK WILSON PARK

**CLEAN VIRGINIA WATERWAYS**

Virginia Master Naturalist  
 Southwestern Piedmont Chapter

*Thank You to all the volunteers who took part in our effort to clean up trash in Wilson Park.*

Next year we are talking about asking other churches, as well as others whose who live in the area around the park??. Come out and be a part of this next year.



Susan McCulloch and Mary, Dylan & Mauve

Submitted by Linda R Drage, CVMN & Site Captain

## United Way's Day of Action - Master Naturalists Leading Cleanup at Dr. Dana O. Baldwin Memorial Park

Clean Virginia Waterways (<http://www.longwood.edu/cleanva>) helped with United Way's annual Day of Action with MN leading a team of volunteers in picking up trash. I checked with Susan McCulloch from City Development, and she called the city parks and rec to see what park was in the most need. Susan stated Dr Dana O. Baldwin Memorial City Park was the most needed for cleaning. The volunteers were from Eastman Chemical Company & Martinsville Mustangs.

This was also a part of the International Coastal Cleanup <http://www.oceanconservancy.org/our-work/international-coastal-cleanup/> sponsored by Clean Virginia Waterways at Longwood University in Farmville, VA . Who again supplied Master Naturalists with everything we needed to be successful.

Fourteen brave souls volunteering who worked in the pouring rain to pick up the trash. They pulled together 1,235 total trash items out of the park that is next to the Albert Harris Elementary School. Our largest amount of items was glass bottles along with other items of concern: cigarette lighters, a chain saw motor, underwear



bags filled weighting over 350 lbs.

*Thank you to the United Way for asking us to lead this group, Clean Virginia Waterways for supplying items, and Susan McCulloch for helping finding a location in need.*

*Submitted by Linda R Drage, CVMN & Site Captain*



*A bottle with fern growing inside it. This is after taking it home and cleaning the outside.*



and other personal clothing, comforter with pillow, toys, and several qt. fruit jars, corning ware pan and etc. The group had nineteen (19) large trash



*Some of the other unusual items found.*



## Brown Marmorated Stink Bug

Do you need to earn more volunteer service hours? Try counting adult brown Marmorated Stink Bugs at human-made structures from September 15 - October 15. It is really simple and fun! Plus, you can count your hours in the Master Naturalist portal under Service-CitSci: USDA Stink Bug Counts. Contact Jessica Driver for more information on how to get started and to receive participant forms.

Submitted by Jessica S. Phillips



*Photo was taken by Jessica Phillips*

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**EVERYONE PLEASE HELP RECRUIT MEMBERS FOR OUR NEW TRAINING CLASS COMING UP IN JANUARY 2015.**  
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*Noel Boaz, CVMN spraying organic herbicide on the Physick Garden. Photo by Lynn Pritchett.*



*Lynn Regan, CVMN working at the Smith River Fest. Photo by Linda Drage.*

# JAMES RIVER BOAT PROGRAM

The Chesapeake Bay Foundation's James River Boat Program was enjoyed by members of our chapter as well as several other chapters in the state. Aboard a 42-foot Bay workboat which was a floating classroom that we explored a variety of locations that have historical ties to the health of the river: plantations, heavy industry, and wildlife preserves. As participants we explore the James and its tributaries, sample aquatic life, and perform simple water-quality tests.

We learned about the effects of human activities on the estuary, which deepen our knowledge of the Chesapeake Bay ecosystem.

CBF's one-day was certainly a hands-on field curricula designed to correlate to the Virginia SOLs.



*Teresa Prillaman & Lynn Ryan helping pull the fish net in.*



*Crab Cage*



Paul May, other chapter member & Denny Casey checking out crab. Photos by Linda Drage.



Captain of the boat explaining about the Blue Crab.

(Continued on next page)

(The James River Boat Program - continued)

Some concepts and activities that were emphasized during our experience.

|                        |                           |                   |
|------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------|
| Conservation behaviors | Water quality testing     | Trawling for fish |
| Crab potting           | Bay history and geography | Oyster dredging   |



*Christy Deatherage & Sydney Brown showing the proper way to kiss a fish.*

|                      |                    |                                          |
|----------------------|--------------------|------------------------------------------|
| Estuarine food chain | Sedimentation,     | Point source/ non-point source pollution |
| Fisheries management | Over-nitrification | Wetlands characteristics                 |
| Oyster reef ecology  | Watershed dynamics | Livelihoods on the Bay                   |



The boat was equipped with state-of-the-art water quality monitoring equipment. This allows groups to generate data instantaneously, including pH, temperature, dissolved oxygen, salinity, chlorophyll, and other indicators to build a complete picture of the health of the river.

Visit their website at <http://www.cbf.org/about-cbf>

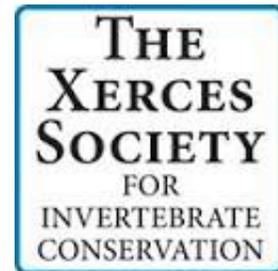
Submitted by Linda Drage, CVMN



**CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION**  
*Saving a National Treasure*

# ICSM becomes DGIF Habitat Partner© with Physick Garden Planning

written by Lynn Pritchett, CVMN



[Dr. Noel Boaz](#), founder and President of the [Integrative Centers for Science and Medicine](#) (ICSM), has provided additional leadership and training for the community ICSM Physick Garden after attending an advanced training workshop sponsored by the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (DGIF) [Habitat Partners](#)©<sup>1</sup> program in July.

This Physick Garden will be designed using local native plants which have medicinal qualities, and will be a valuable resource for future students enrolled in pharmacology courses at the medical college being planned to open in uptown Martinsville in 2015. There are also plans to showcase the Physick Garden as part of the Martinsville Tour during the 2016 Historic Garden Week, sponsored by the [Garden Club of Virginia](#).



This free all-day DGIF workshop, titled '**Pollinator Conservation: Improving Habitat for Native Bees**', promotes native plants and pollinators, with a special focus on the relationship between plants and native bees. It was held at the [Blandy Experimental Farm](#)<sup>2</sup> in Boyce, Virginia. The teacher, Maria Van Dyke, is the coordinator of Smithsonian's [Virginia Working Landscapes Project](#), and has a special interest in bees.

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As a joint effort among various organizations, a slideshow was created by the [Xerces Society](#) under the guidance of Carol Heiser, who supervises DGIF's Wildlife Education and Outdoor Education programs. [This slideshow](#) was prepared for training [Virginia Master Naturalists](#) and is a common core for training recruited Master Naturalists to teach others.

Van Dyke used this slideshow to teach how to support populations of diverse native bees in landscaping practices and plantings. The workshop provides Master Naturalists with the background information and tools needed to conduct presentations for landowners and local civic groups about habitat improvement methods for native bees and other pollinators. In order to attend this free workshop, Master Naturalist recruits agree to plan and present at least two Pollinator Habitat education programs for the public, within one year of the training, in support of the [DGIF Habitat Partners© Program](#). The slideshow at the core of that workshop is provided, with other supporting materials and handouts, to share with the public during these presentations.

Dr. Boaz presented his first free public Pollinator Habitat education program on Saturday, August 23, 2014. The well-attended presentation was followed with an opportunity to join in a collective effort to remove invasive species from the Physick Garden Site, which is an ongoing stewardship service project for this chapter. This garden is being designed to be an environmentally friendly sustainable Pollinator Habitat Garden for Martinsville's new green Medical School. He will hold his second presentation in the spring.

Habitat gardening, which is more accurately called conservation landscaping, is one way of "putting back", or making an attempt to mimic the original native plant community. This means removing exotic invasive plant species and replacing them with native species.

One of the points brought out in this workshop is that native plants are the most appropriate support for native bee populations. It has been shown that plots with invasive plants have less biological diversity and fewer native pollinators.



Workshop participants from the Habitat Partners training 8/23 visit the garden to remove invasives: Noel Boaz, Jim Bier, Jim Tobin, Paul May, Joe & Ellen Jessee, Patty May. Photo by Linda Drage.

An earlier assessment of the flora and fauna on the two lots where the Physick Garden is to be located indicated there were relatively few native plants or pollinators. We have concluded that a majority of the biomass on the site was composed of deeply rooted trees, thick vines, and non-native plants...and that they needed to be removed.

Just before Labor Day, a bulldozer was hired to carefully scrape the upper lot where the garden is to be. Healthy native species, previously tagged by our group, were left intact by the very skillful heavy equipment operator.

Since then, various work days have been set aside on a weekly basis to remove the remnants of the roots of the invasives that were still in the ground, smooth the ground surface, and cover the site with landscaping fabric. Hay bales have been set on the lower end of the lot to prevent erosion. Organic herbicides have been applied to any remaining unwanted plants along the edge of the lot.



*9/13 work crew Ashby & Lynn Pritchett, Joe Jessee, Noel Boaz, & Ellen Jessee.*

Carol Heiser from DGIF is scheduled to be in Martinsville on Wednesday, October 22 at 9 AM to review the Physick Garden site and to discuss plans. If any of you would like to meet Carol please come out to 108-112 North Moss Street that day. The garden is behind the building.

1. The Habitat Partners© program encourages corporate landowners, private landowners, schools and homeowners to improve habitat in their community that will benefit Virginia's songbirds, mammals, amphibians and other wildlife.

Volunteers are needed for VDGIF's Habitat Partners© program. Habitat Partners© provides outreach education to the public about how to improve habitat for wildlife. DGIF targets teachers, youth leaders, Master Gardeners, Master Naturalists, corporate interests and homeowners/landowners. Training opportunities are being made available for volunteers who would like to assist with [Schoolyard Habitat](#), [Habitat at Home©](#), and [Corporate Habitat Partners](#) workshops or presentations. For more information, please [contact Carol Heiser by email](#) or call (804) 367-6989. For more details, visit <http://www.dgif.virginia.gov/habitat/>

2. The Blandy Experimental Farm is a University of Virginia ecological research station managed through the University's Department of Environmental Sciences. Within its 712 acres are habitats typical of the northern Shenandoah Valley such as farm fields, early successional fields, hedgerows, woodlots, and wetlands. At the center of the property is the 175-acre Orland E. White Arboretum, the State Arboretum of Virginia. Programs at Blandy include university research, K-12 school programs, and diverse programs for the general public. For more details, visit <http://www.blandy.virginia.edu/>

## The Virginia Master Naturalist State Conference 2014

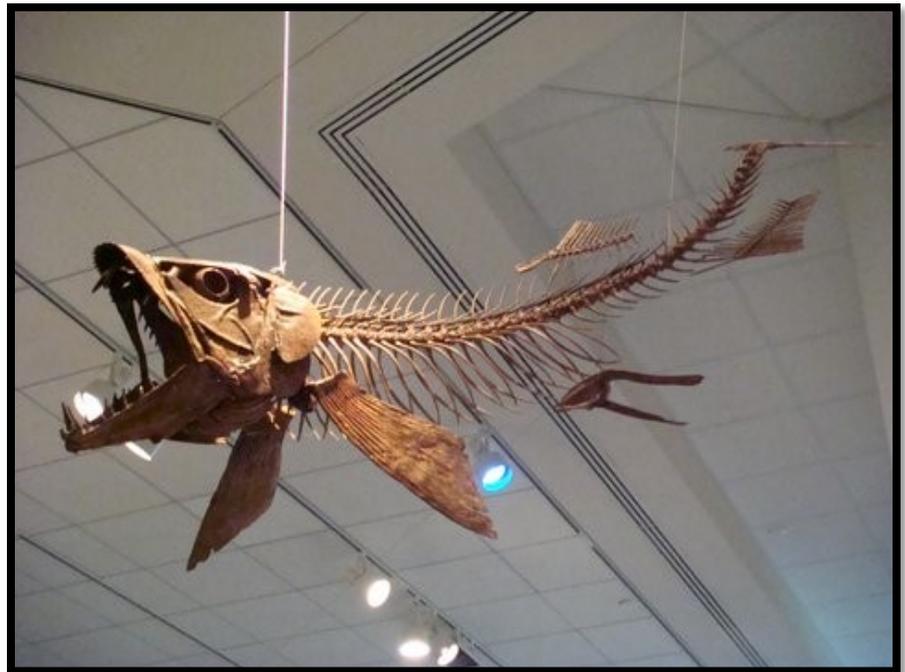
The Virginia Master Naturalist State Conference was in Newport News this year. It was a wonderful weekend of perfect weather, catching up with old friends and making new ones. As always, there was a fabulous selection of classes and field trips. There was a record participation of about 225 naturalists from across the state.

I arrived in Newport News on Thursday around 2PM and spent the afternoon at the Mariners Museum. Being an old sailor myself, I found this museum fascinating. I particularly enjoyed the exhibits on the history of ship design and the history of navigation. They have an extensive collection of ship models and a wonderful exhibit on the Monitor. The Monitor is one of the first iron-clad ships commissioned during the civil war. They also had a wonderful exhibit on dinosaurs of the deep including a 45 foot long Tylosaur!

<http://www.marinersmuseum.org/>  
Friday morning, I made a new friend in the Hotel over breakfast. We car-pooled to our field trip in the Dismal Swamp. What an amazing place! We learned how people escaping from slavery hid in the swamp for years, raising families and living on the edible wild plants and other animals that lived in the swamp. We saw evidence of the bears that live in the swamp and areas where wild fires burned through the swamp in 2008 and 20011.

It is amazing to see the how nature restores itself after a fire. Our trip ended at Lake Drummond, where the water is brown from the tannins in the peat that underlies the swamp. It was a beautiful day in a fascinating place.

[www.fws.gov/refuge/great\\_dismal\\_swamp/](http://www.fws.gov/refuge/great_dismal_swamp/)



This is *Enchodus petrosus* from the "Dinosaurs of the Deep" exhibit at the Mariner's Museum.

After our field trip, we had time to enjoy the exhibits at the museum and the little zoo outside. The zoo contains a number of Virginia native animals that are viewed from a raised boardwalk. The highlights for me were the red wolf, a pair of eagles and the otter. Outside, they have a wonderful garden of native plants. Inside there are exhibits on different local habitats with flora and fauna, including caves and cave dwellers, the swamp, and the tidal areas. The discovery areas for children are wonderful and include a "hospital" where children can dress up as veterinarians and tend to stuffed animals. In the evening, there was a showcase of service projects from chapters across state. There were many great displays about successful projects in habitat development and restoration. I enjoyed several exhibits highlighting habitat improvements for butterflies. Our chapter did not submit a display. Friday evening was also the judging of the photo contest. The photographs were all fantastic. I was disappointed that our chapter did not participate.

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Dinner was served in the hotel lobby. Winners were announced for the photo contest. Awards were presented for the naturalist with the most hours, the chapter with the most hours per member and for the best project of 2013. I enjoyed meeting new friends and catching up with old friends. It was a great day.

<http://thevlm.org/>

Saturday morning, I was up early for a second field trip. We met in the museum lobby to talk about Tidewater fossils, then traveled to a private location in Chesapeake, VA. This site is part of the Yorktown formation and is just covered



*Some of the fossils I found.*

with fossils from 3.5 to 5 million years ago. It is also quite swampy in areas, so we had to be careful not to sink into the mud. We were given some tips on fossil collection, then set to work. Many of the fossils resemble sea shells that I used to collect on the beaches in Maryland and Delaware as a child. I found different types of clam, oyster and scallop shells, some whelk shells, snail shells and slipper shells, cup and saucer shells. I also found some worm tubes, barnacles and coral. I think I ended up with about 25 different species. After about 90 minutes of collecting, we headed back to the museum to clean our fossils and see what everyone else had collected. Some of the highlights included a whale bone, a sea biscuit, a crab claw and a shark tooth. Two people found shells that still had some of their original color patterning on them, which caused great excitement from the museum staff.

Saturday, I also attended a lecture on Rising Sea Levels by Dr. Carl Hobbs, who has also written a book on the subject. We learned that the much of the North American eastern coast should expect to see a rise in the average sea level of about 8 feet by 2100. Dr. Hobbs presented an interesting look into the forces that are causing this to happen. Some key contributors include: the global rise in sea level (due to the melting of the polar ice), the “rebounding” of the North American plate, and the lowering of the underground aquifers. The eastern shore of our continent was raised up when heavy glaciers covered the center of the continent, causing the center to sink. When the glaciers melted, the center of the continent began to slowly rebound. This causes the east coast to sink back down to its original level. 2100 may not be in our life time, but it surely will be in the lifetime of our grandchildren. Dr. Hobbs suggested strategies for dealing with the rising sea level from protecting property with sea walls to abandoning property to the forces of nature. The people that live along the east coast from Maine to Florida and also in Louisiana have much to think about to plan for the future.

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(The Virginia Master Naturalist State Conference 2014 - continued)

<http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2012/06/120625-sea-level-rise-east-coast-us-science-nature-climate-change/>

<http://scienceblogs.com/intersection/2009/01/18/federal-report-warns-of-rising/>

The Saturday evening mix and mingle was outside in the Museum gardens. The weather was perfect! Dinner was in the museum lobby, followed by an informative presentation by Dr. Arthur Evans on Beetles. Dr. Evans is an author, photographer, radio personality, researcher and professor. He was also a friend of the late Dr. Richard Hoffman.

<http://arthurevans.wordpress.com/>

Sunday was the final day of the conference. I signed up for a look at the birds and butterflies of Virginia's Eastern Shore. Again, the weather was perfect. We piled into vans and took off across the bay bridge-tunnel for Kiptopeke State Park. We hiked many of the park trails and spotted a number of species of butterflies and birds. Our interpreter explained that many migratory birds follow the coast towards the south in fall, and stop at Kiptopeke to fatten up before attempting the trip across the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay.

We also spotted a box turtle, fence lizard and some interesting spiders, plants and mushrooms. We are all infected with the urge to stop and photograph anything interesting that we see along the way. Kiptopeke Park is also the resting place of the concrete ships that I learned about on Thursday in the Maritime



*Monarch at Kiptopeke State Park.*

museum! After a picnic lunch, we headed to the Eastern Shore National Wildlife Refuge on the ocean side of the peninsula. Here we saw more shore birds, such as Grebes and Herons as well as more migratory birds. It was after 4 when we finally returned to the museum.

(Continued on next page)

(The Virginia Master Naturalist State Conference 2014 - continued)

[http://www.dcr.virginia.gov/state-parks/kiptopeke.shtml#general information](http://www.dcr.virginia.gov/state-parks/kiptopeke.shtml#general_information)

<http://hamptonroads.com/2011/10/ships-concrete-long-sunk-eastern-shore>

[http://www.fws.gov/refuge/eastern\\_shore\\_of\\_virginia/](http://www.fws.gov/refuge/eastern_shore_of_virginia/)



*Eastern Shore Wildlife Reserve*



*Great Dismal Swamp*

*It was a real treat to be able to attend three field trips, though I was sorry to miss all the interesting lectures and classes held during the weekend. The state folks and the two host chapters did a fabulous job on the conference.*

*I wish more of you had been able to attend. Next year, we are planning four regional conferences instead of the one state conference.*

*Submitted by Kathy Fell, CVMN*

These pictures were sent with Picasa, from Google.

Try it out here: <http://picasa.google.com/>

## VOLUNTEER HOURS

Volunteer hours reported as of  
September 26, 2014:

Categories -

- Administration - 189.1
- Advanced Training - 152.60
- Citizen Science - 560.7
- Education - 227.55
- Stewardship - 46.25

**Reported Total– 1,176.2 hours or 118% of Chapter Goal.**

Make sure to enter all of your service hours in the Master Naturalists portal.

Thank you, volunteers!

Jessica Scott Phillips, Chair of Membership Committee

**2014 CHAPTER GOAL:**

**1000 VOLUNTEER HOURS**



### UPCOMING EVENTS

Oct 11 Reptile Day

Oct 11 National Public Lands Day

**DON'T FORGET TO LOG YOUR VOLUNTEER HOURS FOR THE FALL QUARTER 2014!**

<https://virginiamn.volunteersystem.org/UniversalLogin.cfm>

### **Have a new Volunteer Project in Mind?**

Download a Volunteer Project Proposal Form from our Chapter's VMN **Volunteer Management System**: <https://virginiamn.volunteersystem.org/users/documents/20Forms151.doc>

### **Southwestern Piedmont Chapter Website:**

<http://www.vmn.net/virginia-master-naturalist-program>

*Click on "Calendar of Events" to see what other things we are doing!*



*Blue Crag from the James River; Photo by Linda Drage.*