

Fall 2019

# THE SOUTHSIDER

Volunteer educators, citizen scientists and stewards helping Virginia conserve and manage natural resources



**Hello, Historic Southside Chapter.**

**Congratulations again on winning the VMN Award for Project of the Year  
– Education/Outreach!**

In recognition of your achievements, the chapter has \$50 to use for project or chapter supplies.

**Tiffany Brown, Project Assistant, Virginia Master Naturalist Program**

## **Posted on the Virginia Master Naturalist website**

The Historic Southside Chapter embarked on an effort to help Windsor Castle Park, a town park in Smithfield, develop the natural aspects of the park to enrich park visitors' experiences. Their plan had four initiatives: creating interpretive signs, adding ecological information to the park's website, developing a booklet for use by group nature tours, and an outreach program to bring local schools to the park for field trips. To date, they have created and installed 14 interpretive signs at the park and added information on the ecosystems at the park to the website. They have begun offering family-oriented nature walks, and the trips for school groups are being planned. This project is a great example of how VMN volunteers can bring added value to local parks so that they are used and appreciated beyond sports fields and playgrounds.



*One of many interpretive signs the VMN-Historic Southside members have installed at Windsor Castle Park in Smithfield.*



**“A Rufous Hummingbird visiting a friend's feeder in Suffolk. I've never seen one before today and here it is Nov. 29th!”**

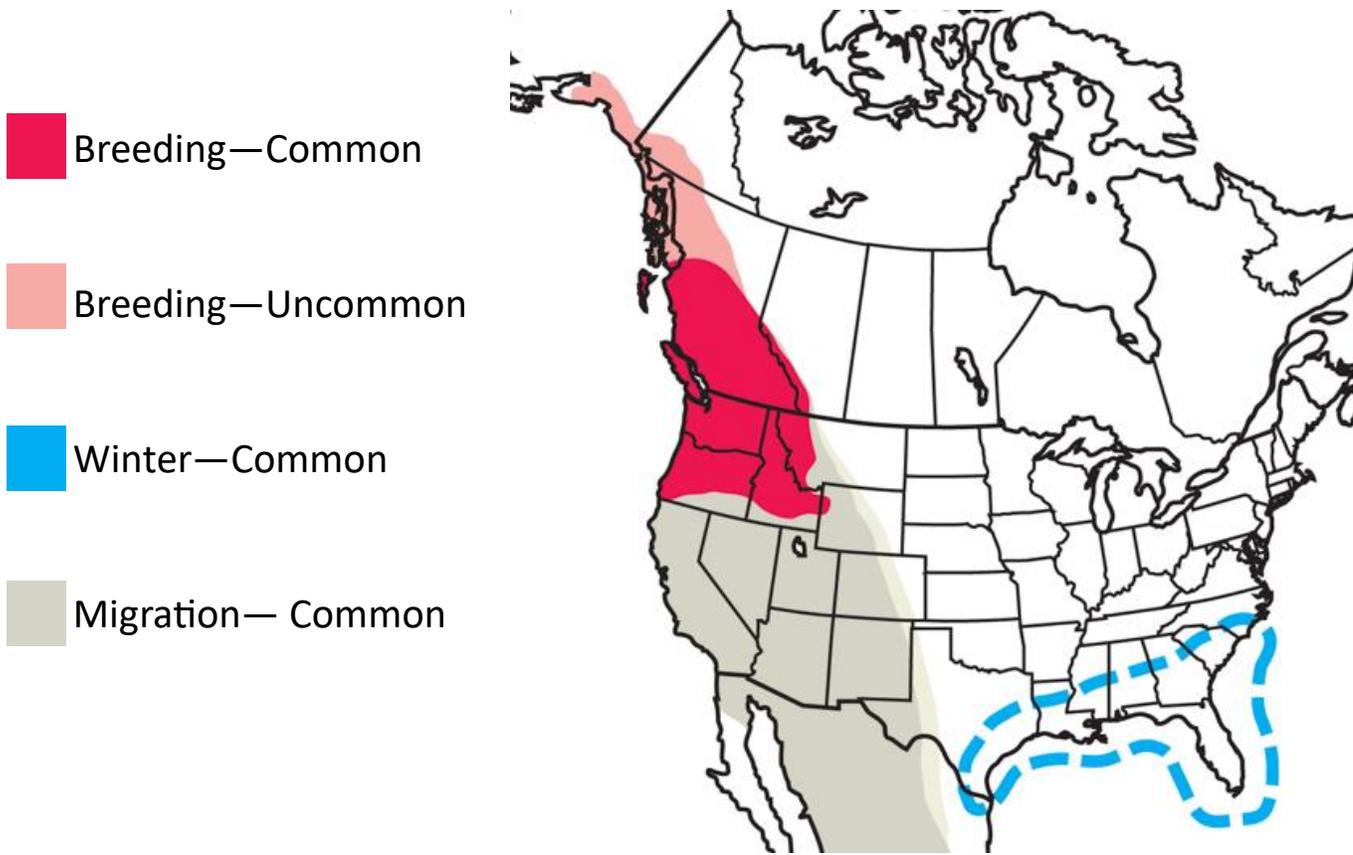
**John Bunch**

## **The Rufous Hummingbird**

Source Audubon Website

Although it is one of the smaller members in a family of midgets, this species is notably pugnacious. The male Rufous, glowing like new copper penny, often defends a patch of flowers in a mountain meadow, vigorously chasing away all intruders (including larger birds). The Rufous also nests farther north than any other hummingbird: up to south-central Alaska. Of the various typically western hummingbirds, this is the one that wanders most often to eastern North America, with many now found east of the Mississippi every fall and winter.





## Family Habitat

Forest edges, streamsides, mountain meadows. Breeding habitat includes forest edges and clearings, and brushy second growth within the region of northern coast and mountains. Winters mostly in pine-oak woods in Mexico. Migrants occur at all elevations but more commonly in lowlands during spring, in mountain meadows during late summer and fall.

## Nesting

Nest site is usually well concealed in lower part of coniferous trees, deciduous shrubs, vines. Located 3-30 feet above the ground, usually lower than 15 feet, although nests may be higher later in the season. Old nests may be refurbished and reused. Nest (built by female) is a compact cup of grasses, moss, plant down, spider webs, and other soft materials, the outside camouflaged with lichens and moss.

## Conservation Status

Still widespread and very common, but surveys show continuing declines in numbers during recent decades. Because it relies on finding the right conditions in so many different habitats at just the right seasons during the year, it could be especially vulnerable to the effects of climate change.

On Wednesday, Feb. 26 there will be many outdoor workshops and classes such as “Wandering the Winter Woods” or “A Wetland Wander at Sweet Briar.” There are full day workshops such as “Communicating Climate Change” and “Lynchburg’s Urban Water Cycle Tour.” Plain old fun can be had in the “Make-n-Take” session in which you can make a



Mason bee house, a Bluebird box, a Rain Barrel, or Nature Crafts such as corn husk dolls, vine baskets, cordage or memory keepers. The Interactive Activity Showcase will give you many new tools for your education toolbox.

On Thursday, Feb. 27 nineteen different concurrent sessions will be offered, the Awards Luncheon, and most importantly the keynote speaker, Dr. J. Drew Lanham, an author, poet, wildlife biologist and Clemson University’s Alumni Distinguished Professor of Wildlife Ecology. In 2019 he was awarded the National Audubon Society’s Dan W. Lufkin Prize for Environmental Leadership, recognizing "individuals who have dedicated their entire lives to the environment".

His research focuses on songbird ecology, as well as the African-American role in natural-resources conservation. A South Carolina native, Lanham is active on a number of conservation boards, including the South Carolina Wildlife Federation, Audubon South Carolina, the Aldo Leopold Foundation, BirdNote, and the American Birding Association, and he is a member of the advisory board for the North American Association of Environmental Education.

On Friday, Feb. 28 there will be 14 more concurrent sessions and a closing session with the keynote speaker, our own Nancy Striniste, author of the new book *Nature Play at Home: Creating Outdoor Spaces that Connect Children to the Natural World* (Timber Press, 2019). Nancy is founder and principal designer at EarlySpace, is a landscape designer, an educator, and an author.

Registration will open on November 15! You will have many options from full conference registration to only attending one day.

# Living Off the Grid...The 3 Rs

By Jo Weaver

Reduce, Reuse, Recycle...easier said than done...and how far do we really want to take this idea anyway. Shortly after moving off the grid we replaced our household paper products with paper made from recycled material (at least 50% post-consumer). We started out with facial tissues, toilet paper, paper towels, and napkins; and quickly dispensed with the napkins to begin using folded paper towels instead. The paper towels are brown in color as the manufacturing leaves out the bleaching process. We buy the items by the case now and the challenge has been how to store them, \$55 at a local auction for a lovely old wardrobe did the trick.

Additionally, we have always relied fairly heavily on cloth products. We have used cloth napkins for most occasions for decades (my mother made terry cloth napkins she used every day) and use dishtowels in many places where we would have used paper towels in the distant past. For our 25<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary we steered people toward dishtowels if they were inclined to bring presents. I am happy to say we received many great examples and, in addition to having a cache of them, we rely on them even more heavily in food preparation and kitchen clean up.



When I am in the grocery store, I have cloth bags and a cooler for transporting frozen foods in the summer. One of the employees of my local store said to me during a recent hot spell, "you're always so prepared." I will frequently joke about "wanting to save a plastic tree" used in the making of plastic bags. While I had used cloth bags for years my husband had to grow into the behavior. As his grocery shopping increased (he was in charge of dinner 3 nights a week) he eventually decided that if he forgot his cloth bags in the truck he would go out and get them before he completed his shopping. Eventually, it became second nature and trips to the truck got fewer and fewer.

Perhaps the most challenging addressment of disposable products has been to take empty containers for leftovers when we went out to eat. Having fallen off the radar these past 5 years, I am once again trying to get the habit in place. While initially perhaps feeling a bit odd pulling out the containers at the end of the meal, it does decrease the amount of Styrofoam coming into our home that needed a plan for disposal. While I once cut up and shipped a bunch of Styrofoam to California for recycling, I now cut it up and use it for packing which addresses the Styrofoam that comes with packed food, particularly meat, from the store. Packing material from shipments coming into the household; paper, peanuts, bubble wrap, and the “air pillows” are all set aside/stored for future use. Fortunately, I have a friend who sells on eBay and when storage proves a challenge, I can always take things to her.

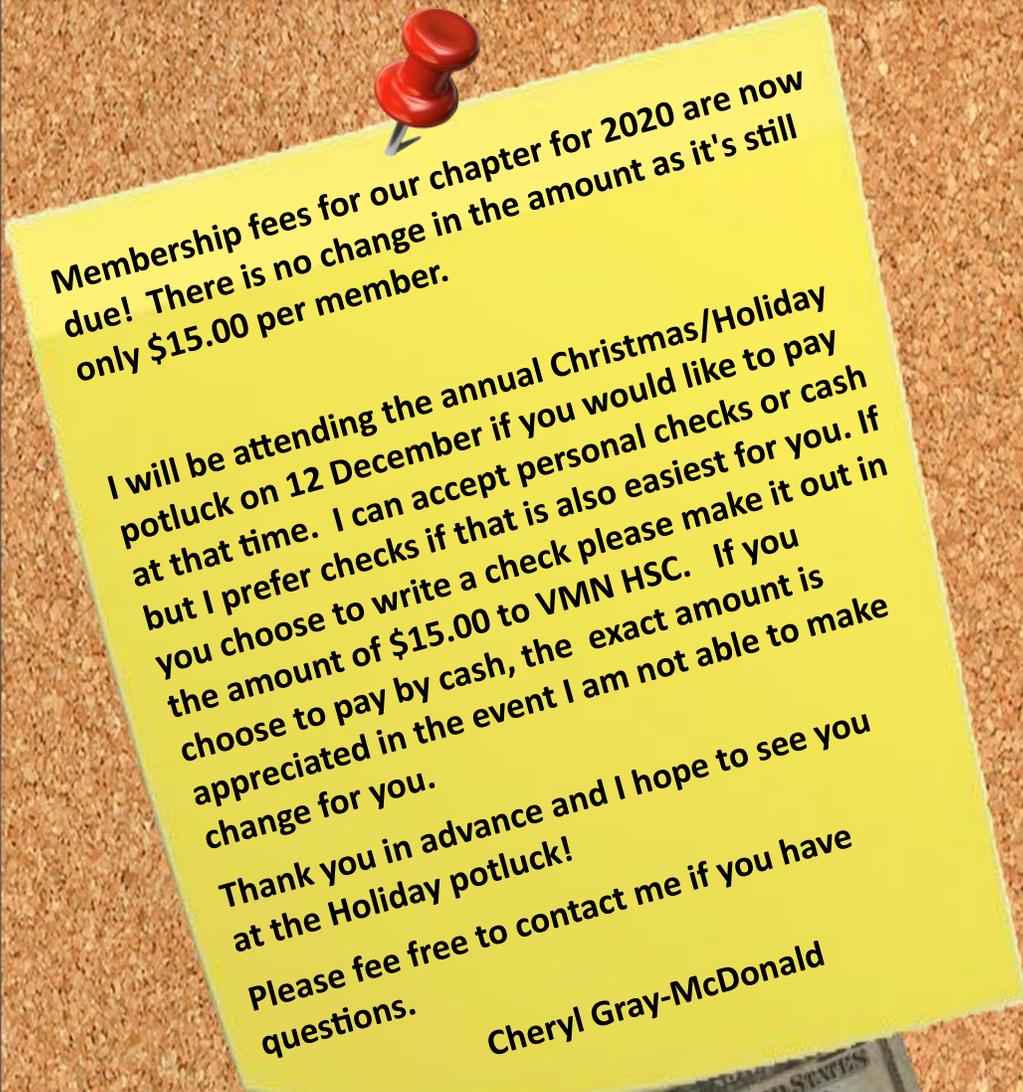


We have an under the sink trash can that was designed to use common plastic shopping bags for its liner. And I save the inner bags from cereal and the like to use as waxed paper in my pie making and in shipping backed goods. Quartered 8 ½ by 11 sheets of printed paper have become the note pads of the house and plastic bags coming into the house are sorted for future use: without holes for the trash can, small holes for transport, fancy ones for fancy occasions, and the rest for recycling.

Staging areas for this endeavor needed to be identified and once in place, management became easier. I have a drying rack for washed food service plastic bags so they can be reused multiple times as they travel to the freezer/refrigerator and back out again.

It is very clear that “Reduce, Reuse, Recycle” can be quite messy (I’m looking for another wardrobe for the packing material) and it has been a challenge to move solidly into the Reuse column from Recycle. The Reduce (as in taking containers for leftovers) continues to be the overall goal. As recycling has become increasingly problematic with companies putting much of the items saved for recycling into the trash, Reduce and Reuse have become increasingly important.





Membership fees for our chapter for 2020 are now due! There is no change in the amount as it's still only \$15.00 per member.

I will be attending the annual Christmas/Holiday potluck on 12 December if you would like to pay at that time. I can accept personal checks or cash but I prefer checks if that is also easiest for you. If you choose to write a check please make it out in the amount of \$15.00 to VMN HSC. If you choose to pay by cash, the exact amount is appreciated in the event I am not able to make change for you.

Thank you in advance and I hope to see you at the Holiday potluck!  
Please fee free to contact me if you have questions.

**Cheryl Gray-McDonald**



As you know our chapter participates in Vernal Pools monitoring and this falls under the Collection Permit that we have with DGIF. It is time for that permit to be renewed which occurs every two years. As the permit requires that participants who are actively involved with monitoring have their names listed on the permit, I'm asking who plans to be involved with this monitoring activity in the upcoming year(s)?

If you know or think that you'll be participating please let me know. I want to also let you know that if your name is not on the permit, it doesn't mean that you can't participate, but that you would really need to be with someone who is listed.

I hope to hear from you if you're interested in monitoring Vernal Pools.

Thanks,

John Bunch

## Vernal Pools Monitoring



# Insect Hotel

By Wayne Jones



Insects are really struggling and we need to do more to create habitat for them. I built this out of scraps and filled it with sticks, pinecones, bamboo, cardboard and logs. I was inspired by our upcycling activity at the September picnic. For those that didn't attend the group made insect habitats using a large soda bottle, bamboo and sting. Very simple, fun and urgently important.

# Why insect populations are plummeting—and why it matters.

**A new study suggests that 40 percent of insect species are in decline, a sobering finding that has jarred researchers worldwide.**

By Douglas Main, Published by National Geographic February 14th 2019

Rocky Mountain locusts once gathered in such large numbers that they blotted out the sun over the Great Plains, rivaling the famous bison herds in size and appetite. In the summer of 1875, for example, a swarm of around 10 billion locusts took nearly a week to pass through Plattsmouth, Nebraska.

But in the following decades, ranchers and homesteaders developed special areas of the prairie where they bred. Only 27 years later, the last living specimens were collected on the Canadian prairie. They went extinct shortly thereafter, dealing a blow to the ecosystem, as they provided food for countless insectivores.

New research shows that large-scale declines in insects, while perhaps less dramatic, are by no means a thing of the past—and that insects may be more vulnerable than we thought. A study published recently in the journal *Biological Conservation* made headlines for suggesting that 40 percent of all insect species are in decline and could die out in the coming decades.

## **Why it matters**

“There is reason to worry,” says lead author Francisco Sánchez-Bayo, a researcher at the University of Sydney in Australia. “If we don't stop it, entire ecosystems will collapse due to starvation.”

The paper, the first global survey of research on insect populations around the world, singles out a few groups of critters that are particularly threatened: moths and butterflies; pollinators like bees; and dung beetles, along with other insects that help decompose feces and detritus. (Related: Without bugs, we might all be dead.)

The study follows several high-profile papers on insect declines that shocked even experts in the field. In October 2017 a group of European researchers found that insect abundance (as measured by biomass) had declined by more than 75 percent within 63 protected areas in Germany—over the course of just 27 years.



Bees and similar creatures pollinate more than a third of our food crops, meaning significant declines in their numbers could affect agriculture. to

A year later, two researchers published a paper in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences suggesting that within a relatively pristine rainforest in Puer Rico, the biomass of insects and other arthropods like spiders had fallen between 10- and 60-fold since the 1970s.

Most of the relevant data comes from Europe, and to a lesser extent the United States, but the rest of the world remains woefully understudied, says David Wagner, an ecologist at the University of Connecticut who wasn't involved in the paper.

The study found that half of the moth and butterfly species studied are in decline, with one-third threatened with extinction, and the numbers for beetles are almost exactly the same. Meanwhile, nearly half of surveyed bees and ants are threatened. Caddisflies are among the worst off—63 percent of species are threatened, likely due in part to the fact that they lay their eggs in water, which makes them more vulnerable to pollution and development.

### Why the decline?

There are a number of reasons why these animals are in trouble, and there's no single smoking gun, Wagner says. "I'm afraid the answer is that it's death by a thousand cuts."

Factors behind the decline include, perhaps foremost among them, habitat changes wrought by humans, such as deforestation, and conversion of natural habitats for agriculture. In Europe and North America, the decline of small family farms, known for open pastures, hedgerows, and other areas where "weedy" plants like wildflowers can grow—areas that are perfect for insects—has certainly played a part, Wagner adds, as has the draining of wetlands and swamps.

Along with agriculture comes the use of chemicals like herbicides, fungicides, and pesticides. Insecticides, unsurprisingly, hurt non-target species, and neonicotinoids have been implicated in the worldwide decline of bees. Pesticides may play a role in one-eighth of the species' declines featured in the study. (Related: 9 ways you can help bees and other pollinators at home.)

Climate change undoubtedly plays a big role as well, especially extremes of weather such as droughts, which are likely to increase in intensity, duration, and frequency in the future, Wagner says. Other factors include invasive species, parasites, and diseases.

### **The impact of the decline**

Insects serve as the base of the food web, eaten by everything from birds to small mammals to fish. If they decline, everything else will as well, Sánchez-Bayo explains.

They also provide invaluable "services" to humanity, including plant pollination, says John Losey, an entomologist at Cornell University. About three-fourths of all flowering plants are pollinated by insects, as well as the crops that produce more than one-third of the world's food supply.

"No insects equals no food, [which] equals no people," says Dino Martins, an entomologist at Kenya's Mpala Research Centre and a National Geographic Explorer.

Another service: waste disposal and nutrient cycling. Without insects like dung beetles and decomposers breaking down and removing animal and plant waste, "the results would be unpleasant," says Timothy Schowalter, an entomologist at Louisiana State University.

So just how dire is the situation for insects? Ultimately, while it's concerning, "we don't really have the information yet to answer [that] question," Wagner says. That's mainly due to a lack of long-term studies, but insect abundance is also tough to study. Many of these animals have boom-or-bust life cycles, which can take advantage of prime conditions to explode. However, they're also highly sensitive to fluctuations in weather.

One definite result of recent studies is increased interest and funding for long-term research, Wagner says. Such attention could help prevent extinctions like the loss of the Rocky Mountain locust.

"Even insects that can seem very abundant can disappear over a short period of time," Schowalter says. "But unless somebody is watching or concerned, nobody [will] prevent that."



**Thank you to those who volunteered at the  
 Isle of Wight County Fair.**

It's the biggest outreach event in our calendar.

Special thank you to Gail Bernacki for coordinating !!!

# THE SLATE

*President: Cynthia Edward*

*Vice President- Della Carico*

*Treasurer- Linda Langdon*

*Secretary- Jane Baur-Constant*

*Membership- Karen Poulter and  
Penny Owings*

*Basic Training- Beth Aberth and  
Cathie Cupp*

*Volunteer Service Projects-  
Sandra Holloway*

*Continuing Ed – Sallie Gilman*

*Outreach-Linda Maddra*

*Media- Kieren Smith*

*Newsletter – Wayne*

*Goldsworthy-Jones*

*Host- Katie Moore*

*Historian – Chris Peters*



# The GREAT work at Windsor Castle Park goes on!

Long Leaf Pine planting on November 16th 2019

Well done to our chapter members for turning out.



September 27th 2019

## Hi Fellow Master Naturalists!

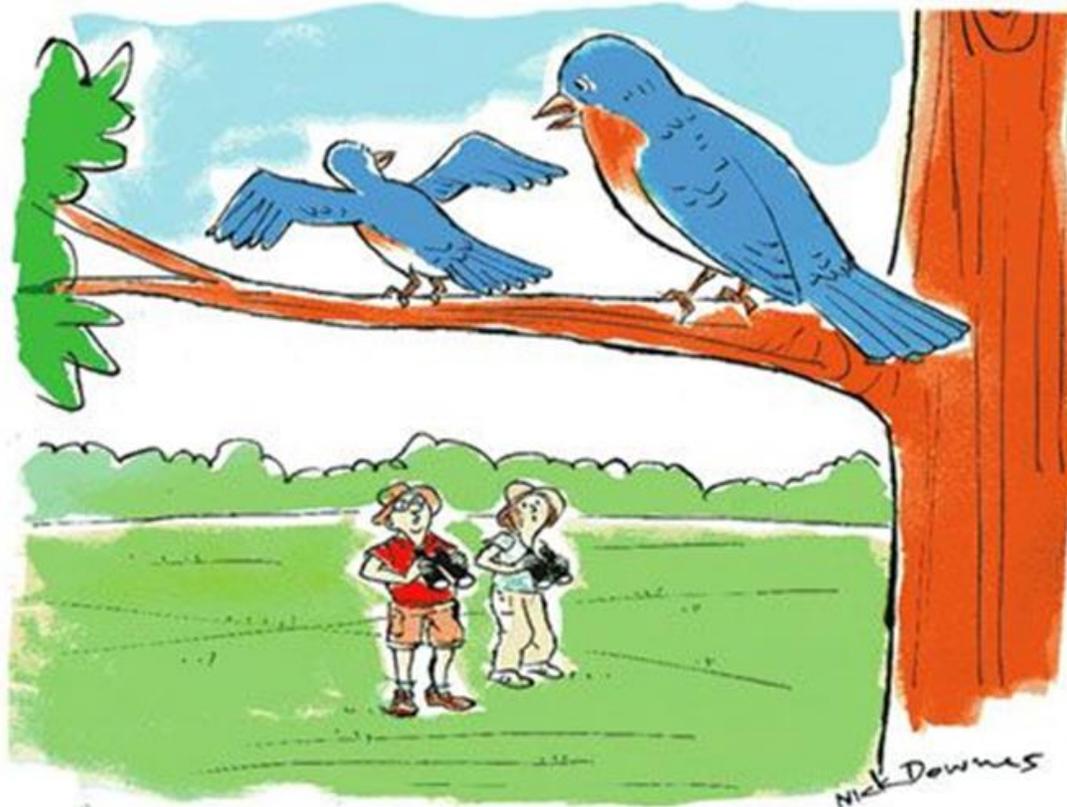


Received word from Jessica Ruthenberg, Watchable Wildlife Biologist, Virginia Department of Game & Inland Fisheries, that Lake Meade Park, 201 Holly Lawn Pkwy, Suffolk, VA 23434, has been approved and added to the Suffolk Loop of the Birding and Wildlife Trail! Here is the link: [www.dgif.virginia.gov/vbwt/sites/lake-meade-park](http://www.dgif.virginia.gov/vbwt/sites/lake-meade-park)

Claudia Lee is responsible for making this addition by filling out the proper paperwork; contacting, coordinating, and working with all parties involved. Way to go Claudia!!!!

Penny Owings, Project Coordinator

VDGIF Birding and Wildlife Trail



"Not yet. Don't fly off until the moment they raise their binoculars."

Hi Everyone,

Thanks to those of you who volunteered to work in the extension office during the holiday season!

Cindy Edwards, President

**December 23-Chuck Spann (VMG)**

**December 26-Jo Weaver**

**December 27- Katie Moore**

**December 30- Katie**

**December 31- Cindy**

**January 2- Lynn Wehner**

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## **Greetings Fellow Virginia Master Naturalists,**

As most of you know we are about to begin our Basic Training classes on January 28, 2020. I would like to invite each of you to become involved in this endeavor by letting your family and friends know about the classes and encouraging them to consider joining us.

I am sure you can all attest to the excellent instruction by our many speakers and the exciting field trips to places here in Virginia that showcase our natural environment. Think back to those hours you spent in the classes learning, sharing and growing in your understanding of our local environments. What a pleasure it all was!!

**Now more than any time in our world, we need to enlist the understanding and help of as many people as we can to pass on to others the need to care for and share concern for our living environment.**

Sallie Gilman

## 7 Virginia counties, 11 cities now under fire ant quarantine

Source AP NEWS, 6th December 2019

RICHMOND, Va. (AP) — Virginia officials say an imported fire ant quarantine has been expanded to include a total of seven counties and 11 cities.

The Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services announced Thursday that the area of quarantine was expanded after survey data showed that imported fire ant populations were widespread in additional localities.

The imported fire ant is known for its aggressive behavior and ferocious sting. Once established, it has the potential to spread to uninfested areas through natural means or through the movement of infested articles.

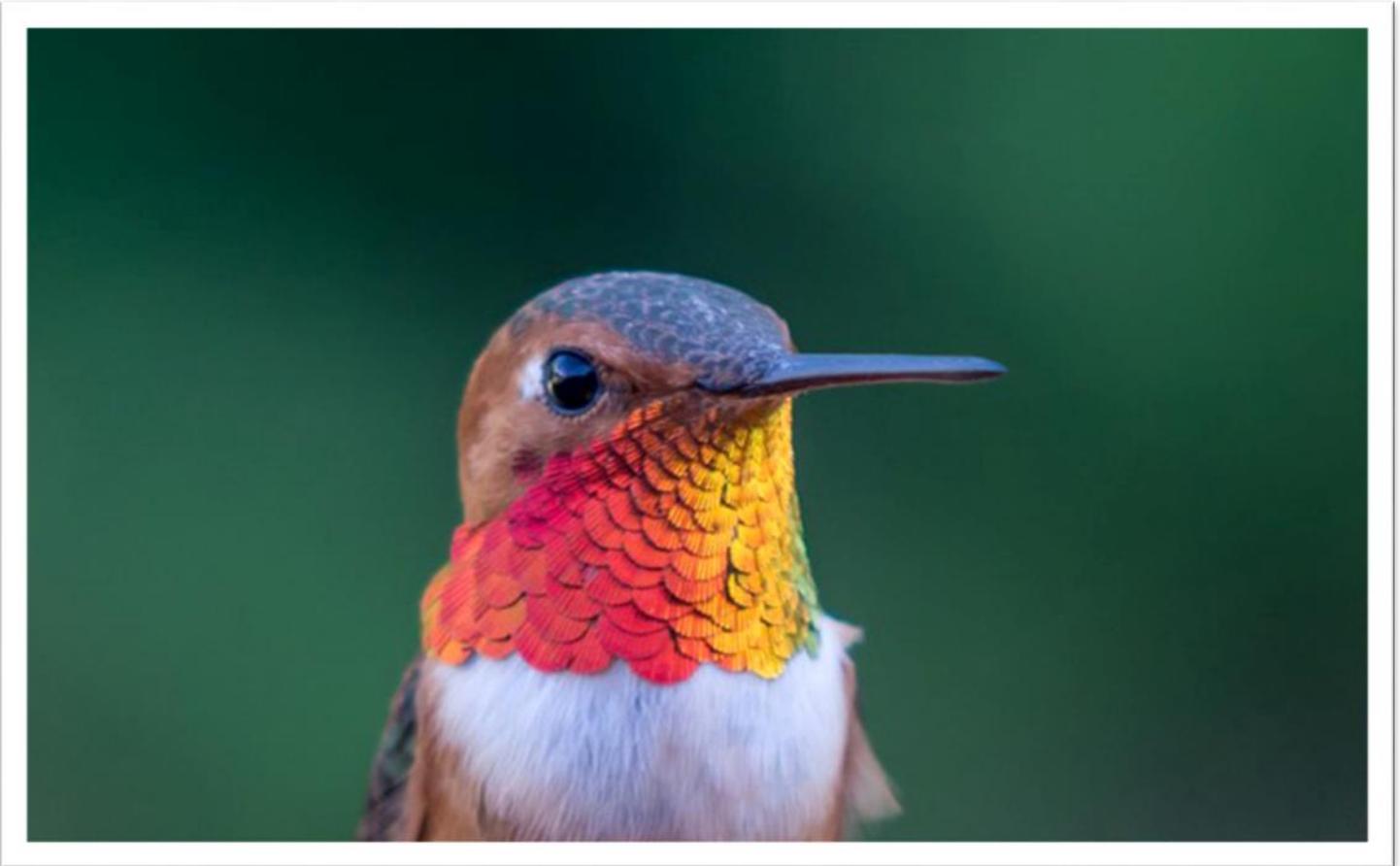


*Photo courtesy of John Bunch*

The quarantine now includes the counties of Brunswick, Greensville, Isle of Wight, James City, Mecklenburg, Southampton and York. It also includes the cities of Chesapeake, Emporia, Franklin, Hampton, Newport News, Norfolk, Poquoson, Portsmouth, Suffolk, Virginia Beach and Williamsburg.

Under the terms of the quarantine, articles that are capable of transporting the imported fire ant are prohibited from moving out of the quarantined area unless certified as free of the ants. These regulated articles include soil, plants with roots with soil attached, grass sod and used soil-moving or farm equipment unless free of non-compacted soil.

People who plan to move regulated articles out of the quarantined areas should contact VDACS' Office of Plant Industry Services.



**Thanks for reading!!!**

**Please send content for the next newsletter to:**

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**Leora Porter    [club1060@gmail.com](mailto:club1060@gmail.com)**