

THE SOUTHSIDER



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

Never Seen In Our Backyard Until This Spring

In our backyard this spring, we have seen a few birds we have not seen before. They are the Northern Flicker, Yellow Rumped Warbler, Eastern or Rufous-Sided Towhee, and the Pine Warbler. A short description and a picture from Audubon.org/field-guide/bird is below.



The Northern Flicker is a brown woodpecker that flashes bright colors under the wings and tail when it flies. Its ringing calls and short bursts of drumming can be heard in spring almost throughout North America. It was seen feeding on the ground, under a crepe myrtle tree in our backyard. Its habitat includes open forests, woodlots, groves, towns, and semi-open country.



The Yellow Rumped Warbler is a small bird with some pretty patches of yellow on his head, rump, and right below his wings. It has been feeding at our suet feeder. Its habitat includes conifer forests and in winter its habitat can be open woods, brush, thickets, gardens, even beaches.



The Eastern Towhee has been seen feeding on the ground under our sunflower seed feeder. It

prefers to live in open woods, undergrowth, and brushy edges. Habitat varies with region, but always is in brushy areas. It forages mostly on the ground, frequently scratching in the leaf-litter.



The pine warbler is another pretty yellow bird that has been feeding on our suet feeder. This well-named bird is not often seen away from pine trees, especially during the breeding season. Unlike most warblers, it regularly comes to bird feeders for suet or for other soft foods.

Della Carrico

Be On The Lookout For The Rattlesnake Orchid

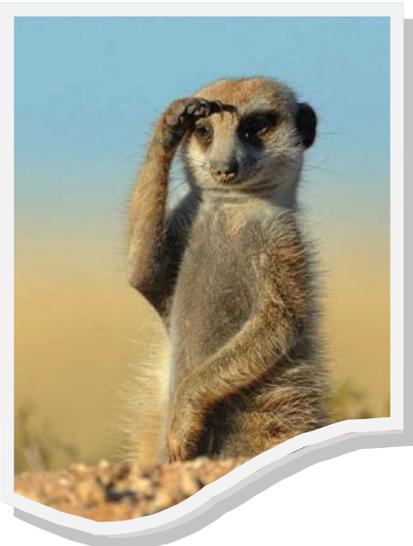


Photo courtesy of John Bunch

The little Downy Rattlesnake Plantain Orchid is an evergreen and easier to spot this time of year lurking about usually in drier pine areas, always in the shade. It blooms in the summer.





Post ²/₆ CARD



Eye-popping poppy, fragrant lupine and douglas fir in the San Yenez mountains north of Santa Barbara. The west coast is in step with our spring display in the east.

From Bev R.

on the road in California.

Alton's Keep Wildbird Rehabilitation Center

Eagles, Rejoice!

Eagles in Virginia, and the folks who love them, have great reason to rejoice this week.

Tommy White, a wildlife rehabilitator and co-founder of Alton's Keep Wildbird Rescue and Rehabilitation Center in Suffolk with his wife, Robin Alton-White, recently received a federal permit from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and a state permit from Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries. The permits will allow him to keep and care for bald and golden eagles.

White has been working on getting these permits for the past five years. In that time, he has helped nurse many wetland birds and owls back to health, but his main love has been eagles.

Eagles face a number of dangers, including lead poisoning from ingesting ammunition that hunters shoot at deer and other game. Occasionally they also suffer car strikes or other trauma.

The need in this area is great; White has already handled five bald eagle cases since his recent licensing.

Until receiving these permits, White has had to transport injured eagles to the Wildlife Center of Virginia in Waynesboro, about 180 miles away. It's a long drive, and some of the sick and injured eagles don't make it the whole way.

The number of eagles arriving at the Wildlife Center of Virginia has increased in recent years, and having White licensed to care for them will relieve the burden of eagles coming from this area. That will allow eagles statewide to get better care, no matter where they end up. Hampton Roads eagles will be able to rehabilitate without the stress of a long vehicle trip.

White is a caring and dedicated advocate for the birds that wind up in his care, and he has spent many years improving his Suffolk facility to better rehabilitate birds. He deserved the chance to care for bald and golden eagles himself, rather than just rescuing them and driving them to Waynesboro.



Tommy White with a rescued Kestrel. The Kestrel is his newest Education Ambassador as it was hit by a car and will never fly again. A name will be chosen for the Kestrel on June 1st. You are invited to make a donation and suggest a name:

Atlantic Wildfowl Heritage Museum

www.awhm.org/name-the-kestrel.html



Tommy has been building a large rehabilitation enclosure for birds such as Eagles and Osprey. This enclosure will contain a small pond so he can make sure they are able to hunt fish before he releases them. This photo was taken in February when I went to visit Alton's Keep.

Photo Courtesy of Wayne Jones



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Tommy's Education



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The Article *'Eagle's, Rejoice!'* was published in the Suffolk News Herald. Photo's were taken by Wayne Jones and from the Alton's Keep Wildbrid Rehabilitation Center Website.



May 19 - inaturalist walk at Hoffler Creek or Chippoakes from 9-11 (12noon) with cohort 7 for their final.

June 2 - Concrete Leaf class, 9-11 at extension Agency...must RSVP to Beth

June 23 - Pocohontas State Park to join that chapter for hiking and fun times. 10:00 am to 3:00 pm. Details to follow soon.

July 14 - Kayaking and canoeing on the Nottaway River, Courtland. 9:00 am until ?. Mark your calendars and details to follow soon.

August 4 - Butterfly Festival, Willaimsburg, 10:00 am to 12 noon then lunch at Surry Seafood Restaurant.

September 7-9 - VMN State Convention, Fredericksburg. See web site for details.

Vernal Pools Monitoring at Chub Sandhill NAP

We have performed the activity of monitoring Vernal Pools at Chub Sandhill NAP since February 2014. Our primary purpose was to determine which pools the salamanders were using for breeding, but as Anne Wright has pointed out to me, these pools should be monitored over time to better understand both the ecology and hydrology surrounding them. Ron Stephens and I monitored these pools up until recently, when he found it necessary to move from our area. Rachael (Peabody) Maulorico from last year's Cohort class has stepped in to take Ron's place with me and she and I together visited these pools twice this season. A third visit was recently done by myself as Rachael wasn't able to come along. When Rachael and I made our visits, Anne's words rang in our ears for the reason of continued monitoring. There have normally been 14 pools that we check for amphibian and insect usage, but much to our surprise there were only 5 of them that contained any water at all this time, and 2 of those were mere puddles. This was due to the lack of heavy rains during this past fall and winter. As we have learned, these pools do not collect water from run-off, but rather from a rising water table.

There are 2 salamanders that we monitor, the Marbled and the Spotted, both Mole type salamanders, in that spend the bulk of their life under ground. For most of us, the breeding season is when we get to be able to observe whether they even exist or not. The Marbled breed and lay their eggs in mid to late fall with the females choosing a depression to lay their eggs prior to the oncoming seasonal rains. She'll sit with those eggs until the rains come and then swims out leaving them alone to hatch. At Chub during our surveys we normally find 6 or 8 pools with Marbled larvae in them. With the lack of rain to create those pools, unfortunately this leaves us with no larvae for this breeding season as the pools they normally use had no water. The Spotted on the other hand breed in the depth of winter on warm rainy nights, of which we've had a few this year. When Rachael and I visited the few available pools on Feb. 3rd, we were fortunate enough to find 12 Spotted egg masses in our historically most interesting pool. Between then and the most recent visit on March 3rd, there were a few warm rainy evenings which brought out the Spotted for breeding. So much so that I counted 134 egg masses! Boy, were they busy! as I've never seen so many! Because in the past, this particular pool has shown no egg masses at all, it shows the importance of continued monitoring. Now let's hope the rains continue to keep plenty of water in that pool.

John Bunch

What is a VERNAL POOL?

Vernal pools, also called vernal ponds or ephemeral pools, are temporary pools of water that provide habitat for distinctive plants and animals.





Egg masses

Photo Courtesy of John Bunch

Clean the Bay Day

June 2nd 9am to noon

Register MEOW!

cbf.org/clean

- Lake Meade Park (Park Cleanup)
- Constant's Wharf Park (River and Downtown Cleanup)
- Bennett's Creek Park (Creek and Park Cleanup)
- Lake Prince Boat Ramp (Roadside Cleanup)
- Western Branch Boat Ramp (Roadside Cleanup)

More info:
littercontrol@suffolkva.us 514-7604

Keep Suffolk Beautiful
KEEP AMERICA BEAUTIFUL AFFILIATE

Cohort VII Joins Chapter

On May 22 thirteen members of Cohort VII join our Historic Southside Chapter as part of their graduation from basic training. We welcome Jeff Jacobs, Lynne Abbott-Adams, Karyn Cook, Ken Dugan, Kathy D'Andria, Cynthia Edwards, Annette Harris, Mike Kelly, Grant Knight, Henry McBurney, Christian Prohaska, and Doug and Sandy Vance. They have engaged the varied information given in the training program with intense interest, and during their field trips have been privileged to see several natural wonders reserved for the very few, most notably observing mating otters at the Dismal Swamp. The class has also distinguished itself as having more men than women in its composition which the state coordinator indicated was a first. The cohort has already put feet on the ground as volunteers by becoming involved in important environmental efforts such as blue bird box monitoring, pollinator garden activities, and outreach through public events. We look forward to their contributions in the further development and success of our chapter as they apply their distinct interests and skills to our environmental efforts.



Geology field trip to Chippokes

Photo Courtesy of Bev Ruegsegger



Earth and Arts Fest, Westminster Church, April 21st

Well done Gail Bernacki, our Outreach Coordinator!!!

Spring is a very busy time of year for Outreach Events.

Thank-you for doing an awesome job!!!



Arbor Day, Sleepyhole Park, April 22nd



Airfield 4H Center Enhancements

February 25th Trail Blazing

Photos courtesy of Wayne Jones

On a Sunday afternoon in February a group of us completed blazing a new trail at the 4H Center in Wakefield.



Pond Pollinator Program



On May 10th ten volunteers drove to a retention pond on Turlington Road in Suffolk and planted 108 native pollinator plants. The project is part of a Keep Suffolk Beautiful initiative and brought together members of our chapter and members of the Suffolk Master Gardeners. The initiative started in Spring 2017 with the planting of Swamp Weed at the pond. We wanted to create a natural pollinator haven with no maintenance. So we planted, walked away and visited monthly. The Swamp Weed took root and grew throughout 2017 and then returned again this Spring.

This Spring we wanted to add more plants and more diversity so I asked our chapter and the Suffolk Master Gardeners to donate native pollinator plants to the program. We received 108 plants, which was amazing and very kind. All of them were planted and we hope they will thrive. The program will continue next Spring and we will continue to expand the area and maybe start an additional pond.

Wayne Jones



WE PLANTED:

- Bee Balm
- Coneflower (purple)
- Sawtooth Sunflowers
- Stonecrop Sedum
- Creeping Phlox (white)
- Creeping Phlox (pink)
- Butterflyweed

Coreopsis

- Bearded Tongue
- Green Conflower
- Black Eyed Susan
- Obedient Plant
- Yarrow
- Golden Rod
- Swamp Weed



2017



Fishing Line Recycling



***We collected a total of 17.85 ozs. of line from the Suffolk bins in 2017. Wohoo!!!
Claud***

BLUEBIRD BOX MONITORING PROJECT

Spring is in the air and so are the bluebirds! As the weather starts warming up, eastern bluebirds start looking for mates and searching for homes to lay their eggs. Fortunately for the birds, we have plenty of custom-built bluebird boxes just waiting for them. The bluebird box project has expanded this year. Instead of three trails and 52 boxes, a fourth trail with 17 more boxes has now been added at Nike Park, totaling 69 boxes. In addition to that, two of our members are putting up trails on their private property, adding another 11 boxes in our neighborhoods. That's a grand total of 80 nest boxes. The bluebirds will be thrilled, and so are those of us who are eager to check on them.

I'd like to give a special thank you to those of you who volunteered to help install the new boxes at Nike Park -- Della Carrico, Randy Dove, Andy Wilson (our box builder), Claudia Lee, Sandra Holloway, and Barbara Lyon. Nike Park provides a perfect habitat for the birds, and we saw several while we were there. In fact, one watched from a nearby lamp while we were putting up the last box (photo courtesy of Randy Dove).

I'd also like to thank all of the volunteers who continue to support this project. Because of you, it continues to grow, and the numbers of bluebirds in our area continue to increase. From 2015 when we embarked on this project until 2017, the number of bluebirds that have fledged from our boxes has increased a whopping 81%. Our results are visual and measurable and even people living in our communities have noticed the increase of these native birds in our area. It's obvious that your efforts are really making a difference.

Linda Langdon, Project Leader



New Home Bluebird Trails in 2018

Members of the Bluebird nesting box monitoring project provide training each spring to VMN members that want to participate in monitoring bluebird boxes. Besides the four trails monitored by our chapter, individuals can setup a trail of their own, if they have as many as five bluebird boxes. If you are interested in building a trail of your own, the Virginia Bluebird Society provides information about bluebird box specifications, distance between boxes, recommended locations for boxes, and other criteria for creating the best environment for raising bluebirds. Monitoring begins April 1 each year, so there is plenty of time to build a trail before next season, if you like.

Joe and Kathy D'Andria live on Raynor Road in Isle of Wight County and have five bluebird boxes at their home so far, but hope to be adding a few more next year. As of April 6, there was one complete bluebird nest, one partial bluebird nest, two empty boxes, and one partial tree swallow nest. The box with the partial tree swallow nest is pretty interesting. The box can be seen from their back window and there have been about five or six tree swallows fighting over this box for about a week! A picture shows one of their boxes that has a complete bluebird nest in it.



Della and Bob Carrico live on Mill Swamp Road near Smithfield and have seven bluebird boxes. Five boxes have been up for a few years. Two more boxes were added this year, and one that had been unused for the past few years was moved to a new location. As of April 6, there were four full bluebird nests. Two did not have any eggs yet, but two others had one egg each. Two boxes had partial nests, and the last one had just a few pieces of pine straw, so hopefully it will have a nest next week. A picture shows box #3 in the forefront, and box #6 way in the background, across the pond, by the power line pole.



Randy and Teresa Dove live on Hog Island Road in Surry and have 7 boxes as well on their trail. One box has been up for several years and it has been used every year. As of April 8, Box #7 had a full nest with five eggs and #3 (old box) had a full nest. Bluebirds were seen going in and out, so hopefully there will be eggs there soon. Randy is thinking about adding some pine straw to two of the boxes that are not being used, to encourage the bluebirds to build a nest. He provided a picture of a full nest of eggs, and one of his boxes.



Please document anything you do with our Chapter and PLEASE send it to me so I can include it in our newsletter. Pictures are the best!

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