

Summer 2021

THE SOUTHSIDER



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

On Saturday, April 17, 2021, Members of Historic Southside Chapter met at the Barlow's farm, Castle Farm, to pot 200 Longleaf Pine Seedlings.

Eleven members showed up at 9:00 am on a cool, sunny day to plant the seedlings into 3 gallon pots. The work went very quickly as the volunteers worked well together, enjoying each other's company, as well as being outdoors on such a pretty morning. The pines will remain in the Barlows' orchard where they can be cared for until this fall.



The pine seedlings were given to the Chapter by the Garland Gray Nursery of Courtland, Virginia Department of Forestry. The nursery also donated a large bin of potting soil. Henry McBurney bought the 3 gallon pots and more bags of potting soil. The Barlows provided the tools and Chapter volunteers provided the labor.

Hopefully, this fall, the Longleaf Pine seedlings will be offered for sale to the general public through a sale held in Windsor Castle Park near the current Longleaf Pine plot.

Potting soil and water were mixed in the front bucket of the Barlow's tractor, then placed in the pots. Volunteers moved the dirt-filled pots to the ground tarp and then one seedling was planted in each pot. More dirt was added as needed.

All seedlings were watered and the Barlows will continue to water them as needed.

Members attending: Wayne Arrington, Karen and Stanley Barlow, Cindy Edwards, Henry McBurney, Penny and Don Owings, Leora and Don Porter, Dennis Pytash, and Beverley Ruegsegger.



Garland Gray Forestry Center

Visit myvaforest.org for more information

Do you know how seedlings are grown in nurseries?

Selection of the best seed is the most important part of nursery production. Seeds are collected from fast-growing, straight and disease-resistant trees. In southeast Virginia, the best time for seed sowing is spring. Regular watering and application of fertilizer is required for growth and development of the seedlings. In addition, treatment techniques to protect seedlings from various insects, diseases and weeds are used.

During the production of seedlings, shoot and root pruning practices are used. These techniques help to increase crop uniformity, control height, and prepare the seedlings for shipping.

Most bare root seedlings are taken out from the seedbed in the winter. Seedling lifters and transporters are used for lifting and transporting the plants from the field to the grading building.

During packing, seedlings are graded separately based on size and quality. Packed seedlings are then stored in cool temperatures. Stored seedlings go dormant for shipping. Fully dormant seedlings survive better during shipment, and after planting than non-dormant seedling.

Landowners can expect excellent survival rates on our seedlings. Our young trees can be expected to grow fast and have good form for timber production.



Seedling transporter



Full bed belt lifter



*Garland Gray Forestry Center, Courtland Virginia. Photo Credit:
myvaforest.org*

The VMN State Conference is October 1-3, 2021.

We are optimistic that we are going to have this conference this year at the Wyndham Virginia Beach Oceanfront hotel. So, mark your calendars and plan on taking advantage of this wonderful opportunity so close to home.

Cindy Edwards and Beth Aberth are on the State Committee to help plan and carry out the conference. One of our responsibilities is to provide door prizes and our goal is to have nice quality prizes. Fortunately, our chapter has many talented members to solicit prizes from.

We are asking our members to consider donating an item that could be used as a door prize.

For those of you who enjoy wood working, please consider making a bird house or feeder. A piece of stain glass for those of you who do stain glass work. Several of you are photographers. Consider donating your favorite 8 x 10 photo and we'll take care of matt/frame. The list is endless so be thinking of what you can make to show off your talents. Please send Cindy and Beth an email with a description or picture of your donation. Unfortunately, we can not accept any food items such as honey, canned goods from your garden, etc.

We are also looking for books that can be used for door prizes. If you have any gently used or new books that would interest a Master Naturalist, please email Cindy or Beth and we'll arrange to pick them up.

Many thanks for considering. **Cindy Edwards and Beth Aberth**



The Wyndham Virginia Beach Oceanfront will be our home base for the 2021 VMN Conference

(Photo credit: Wyndham Virginia Beach Oceanfront.)



Get to know a fellow Southsider

An interview with Della Carrico

Joined February 2014. Retired Systems Analyst. Enjoy spending time with my grandchildren every week, playing the piano, playing tennis, and being involved with many aspects of my church.



What attracted you to HSC VMN?

I have always loved being outdoors and had read an article about the Virginia Master Naturalist organization when it was first being created. When I saw the notice in the paper about a local chapter, I thought it sounded like a good way to be outdoors, learn new things, and do something useful while meeting new people.

Your favorite place in Nature?

My most favorite place is where I live. I have lived on the same small farm all my life. It is quiet and peaceful. I have woods to explore, paths to walk, a small farm pond, birds, and other wildlife to watch and enjoy. I also love seeing the crops, flowers, and my garden grow each spring and summer here. We have plenty of open space for my grandchildren to walk, run, play, and ride around. They are always spotting and pointing out to me a lizard, or a turtle, a butterfly, a heron, or some new bug they have not seen before. And I can point out to them birds, or names of trees, or some other animal they may not have noticed. We have a spot at the back of the big field with a deep ditch and a little waterfall that feeds into a stream, and an old bridge over it. That is one of my favorite places to explore with my grandchildren – jumping over the stream, walking in the water with boots on, catching tadpoles, building forts – all things that I did as a kid, my sons did as kids, and now I get to do again with little ones.

Your favorite place in Southside Virginia?

Other than my home and church, I love checking the bluebird trail at Chippokes State Park because it is so peaceful, green, and quiet. I also like walking the trails at Windsor Castle Park, early in the morning when it is quiet.

Best part of being a Naturalist?

The best part of being a Naturalist is all the things I have learned from the Basic Training and the continuing education classes. I have always loved school and loved learning new things. Being a naturalist combines learning with doing useful things outdoors with other folks that enjoy the same things.

What do you think about when on long walks in Nature?

It really depends on what is going on in my life at the time. Sometimes, I use the time to work out solutions to problems I am dealing with. Sometimes, I think over enjoyable times I have had lately – either a day trip or a vacation, or fun times with my grandchildren. Sometimes, I make plans for what I am going to do for the day, since I usually walk in the mornings. Other times, I pray and thank God for the beautiful day and the many blessings in my life. Many times, I try not to think at all and just listen, look around, and relax.

Name a couple of places or adventures still on your bucket list.

I want to snow ski in the Rocky Mountains. I want to hike in Canyonlands and Yellowstone. I want to visit Italy – not the cities so much, but the villages and countryside and mountains.

What is the greatest gift we can give each other?

I think the greatest gift we can give each other is our time. Taking time to do things with each other, even if it is just listening, or riding in the car with someone to the store, is important and shows that you value the other person.

Who is your hero? Why?

My mom is my hero and always has been. She was the kindest, most generous, and happy person I have ever known. To everyone that knew her, she was a good friend. She never had an unkind word to say about anyone. She always put others before herself and she was content and at peace, no matter the circumstances or the difficulties she faced. She had a strong faith in God and shared that faith by the way she lived, and the way she treated other people with kindness, respect, and concern. She was dependable and hard-working but would drop anything she was doing to make time to visit with someone or play with a child. She loved to cook and loved to give homemade food to neighbors and friends, on special occasions, or for no reason at all.

Why do you care about HSC VMN Chapter?

From the very first basic training class, all the people involved in the HSC VMN chapter have been welcoming, friendly, and easy to get along with. I think our chapter spends time on worthwhile projects and everyone that belongs can find things they can enjoy doing in the great outdoors and can feel like they are contributing in some small way to making our world a better place. I have met so many smart, nice, interesting, and fun people that I otherwise would not have known.

Surry Purple Martin House

Installation Day - May 2, 2021

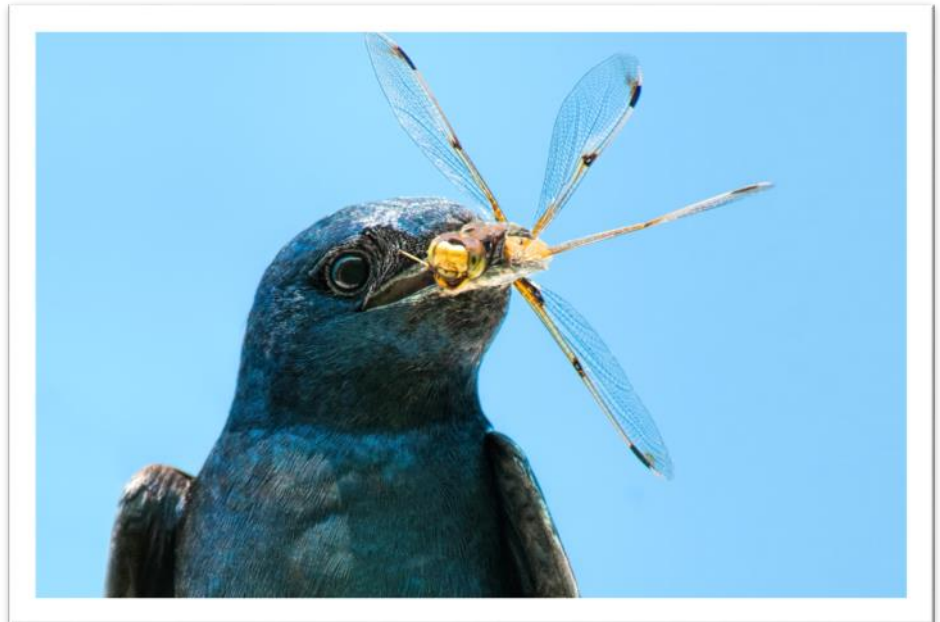


Feeding Behavior

Forages almost entirely in the air. May forage very low over water, or quite high at times. Occasionally walks about on ground to pick up insects, perhaps mostly in harsh weather.

Eggs

4-5, sometimes 3-8. White. Incubation is by female, 15-18 days. Young: Both parents feed nestlings. Young leave nest about 26-31 days after hatching.



Purple Martin. John-Alexander Kay/Audubon Photography Awards

Young

Both parents feed nestlings. Young leave nest about 26-31 days after hatching.

Diet

Insects. Feeds on a wide variety of flying insects, including many wasps and winged ants, and some bees; also many true bugs, flies (including house flies and crane flies), beetles, moths, and butterflies. Dragonflies may be an important part of diet. Also eats some spiders. The old claim of martins eating "2,000 mosquitoes a day" apparently has no basis in fact.

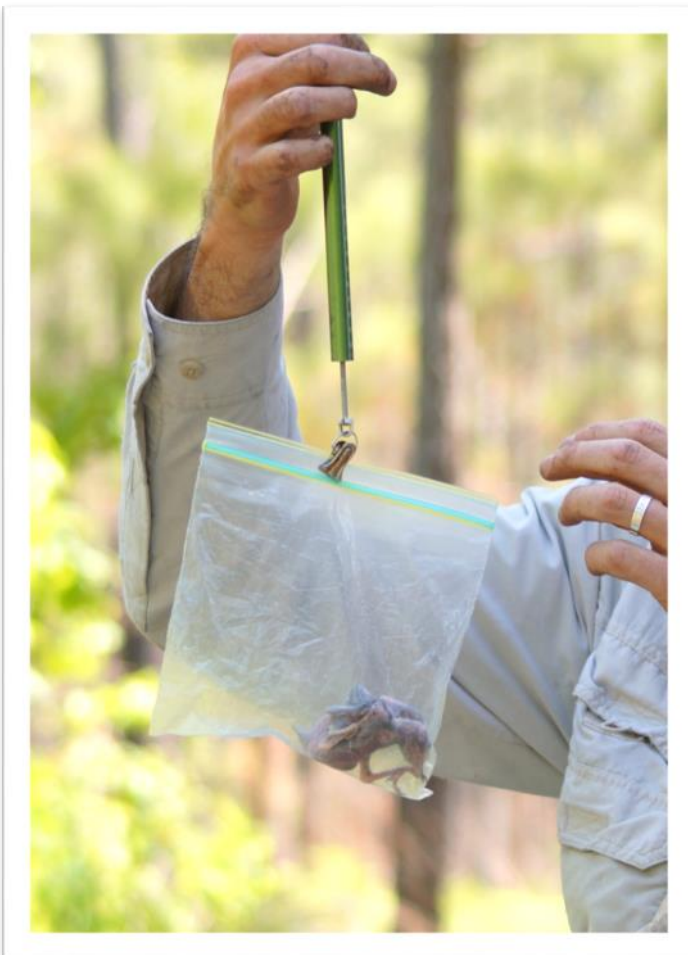
Nesting

Males return to nesting areas first in spring, establish nesting territories. Usually nests in colonies, especially in east, where almost all are in multiple-roomed nest boxes put up for them. Western martins may nest in looser colonies or as isolated pairs. Male will sometimes have more than one mate. Nest: Natural sites are in cavities, mostly old woodpecker holes, in trees (or in giant cactus in southwest). In the east, most martins now use nest boxes. Sometimes nests in holes in buildings or cliffs. Nest (built by both sexes) is cup of leaves, grass, twigs, debris, and usually mud. Nest may have raised dirt rim in front to help keep eggs from rolling out.

From audubon.org/field-guide

Red-cockaded Woodpecker Banding

When Bobby Clontz asked me on short notice if I would like to see the banding of the Red-cockaded Woodpecker chicks, I jumped at the chance. The birds' active nesting locations had been scoped out ahead of time and watched to see when the breeding pairs were feeding their young, i.e. the eggs had hatched. Time to band. When I arrived, Chance Hines, of Center for Conservation Biology, was coming down the ladder at the first location carrying the chicks he had retrieved from the nest. The chicks were then carried over to a little nearby staging area that the banders had set up for banding and the taking of measurements. I didn't get to see much of the details of this particular session because I was busy trying to get photos of the elusive adults which were flitting about way up in the pines.

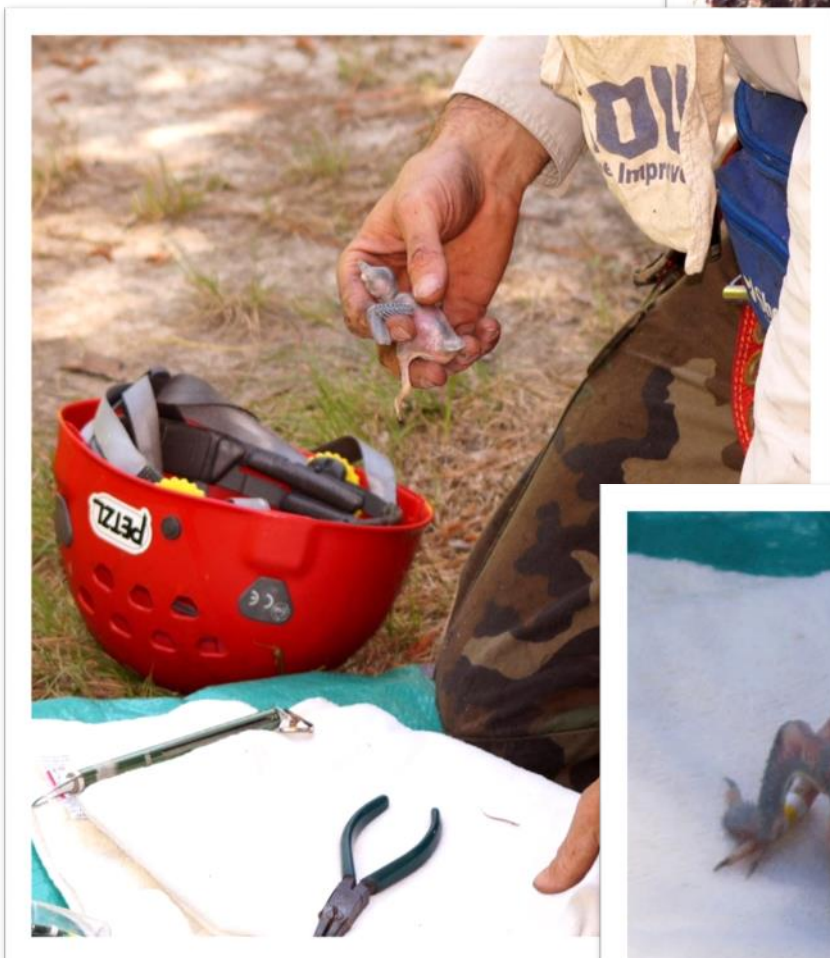


At the second nest location, I was able to witness the entire process. The three piece ladder was strapped to the tree, Chance reached into the cavity and was easily able to remove the chicks one at a time and placed into a little pouch to keep them safe and warm. Once at the staging area, only yards away from the ladder, I watched as each bird was gently removed from the pouch, weighed, banded with unique identifiers, and then placed back into the pouch. Once he had finished with all four, he put them together to be photographed before climbing back up the ladder to return them to their nest. The whole process with the birds occurred in about a half an hour.

To add to this, the first nest had 3 chicks in it, the second, 4. By using a photographic sheet showing the different ages of chicks, he was able to determine the first set to be 9 days old, the second set, 5 days. The weights of all the chicks ranged from 28 grams to 35. And in addition to the color coded leg bands, each chick received a band with a unique serial number.

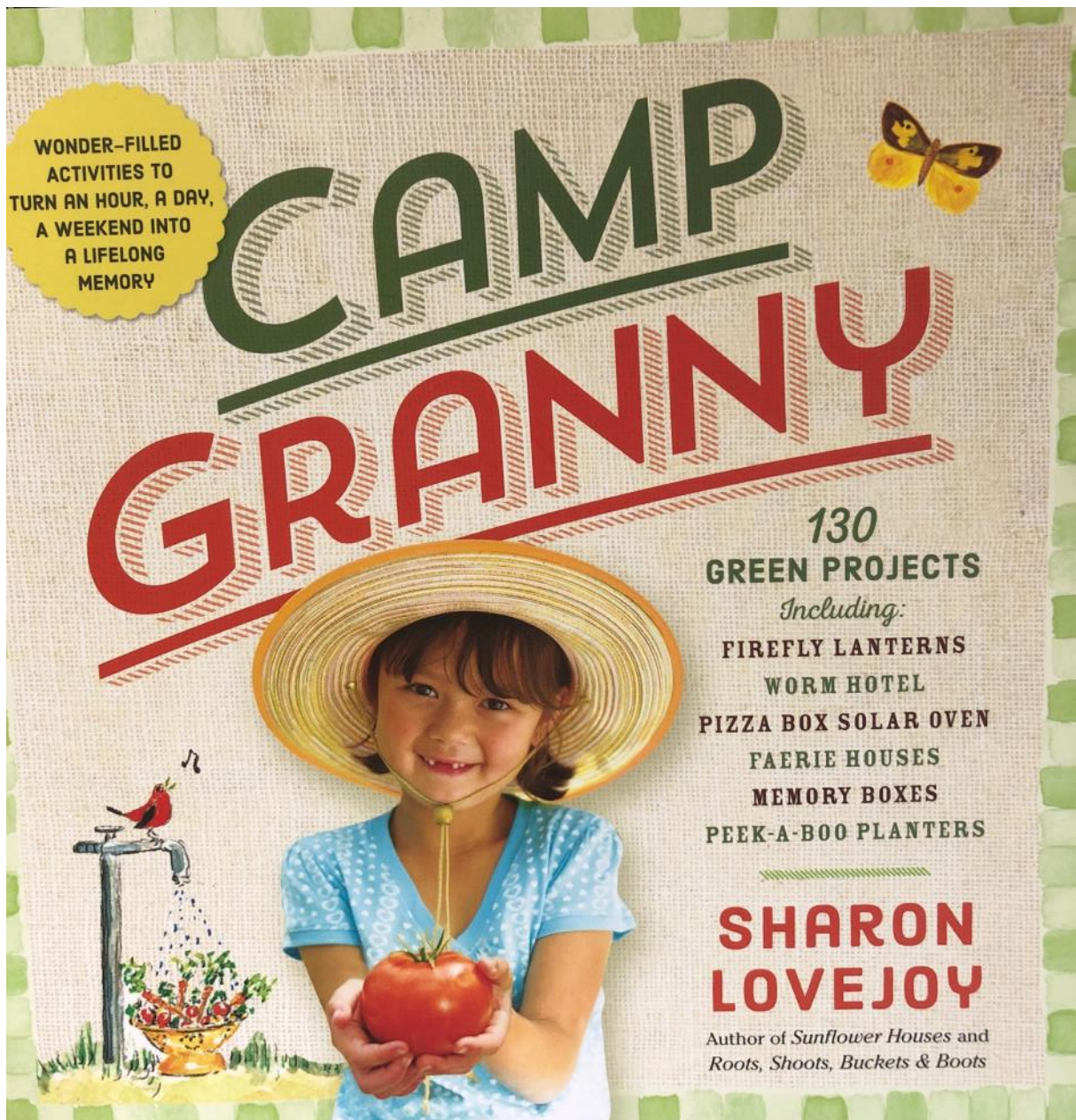
At the end of it all, we mused that the babies, now back in their nest, were each telling the other of their own story about being abducted and analyzed by aliens.

By John Bunch



A Recommended Read

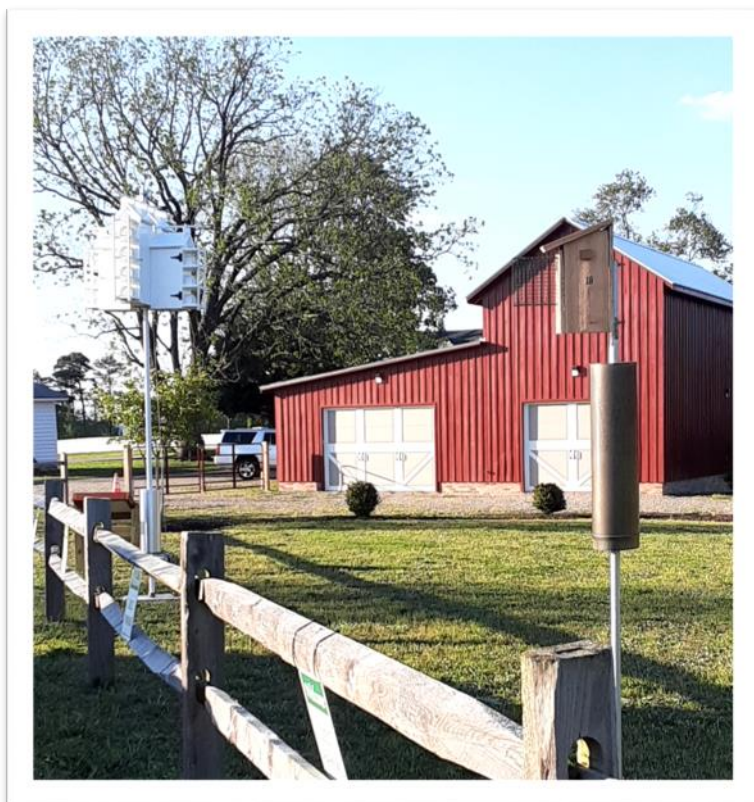
Camp Granny, by Sharon Lovejoy, and available through Amazon, is a wonderful book of ideas to get children involved in the outdoor world around them. It is packed with ideas that require few materials you don't already have. To build life-long memories with the children in your life, this book will jumpstart your new adventures!



Bluebird Monitoring Project

The bluebirds are back -- and with great gusto! This season started out with many boxes on our trails being occupied with bluebird nests by the end of March. Although the Virginia Bluebird Society's "official" monitoring start date is April 1st, with the warm spring weather and the volunteers eager to re-engage with nature, we decided to begin monitoring the last weekend in March. It is pretty typical for us to find occupants this early, so there were really no surprises.

The bluebirds seemed to be eager to get started too. The five trails that we monitor have 90 nest boxes. After only seven weeks of monitoring, our volunteers have counted a potential of almost 300 new bluebirds, 19 tree swallows, and 5 Carolina chickadees. This includes a combination of all phases of growth -- from eggs, to hatchlings, to fledglings so far. And many of our bluebirds are already working on their second brood. Who knows? It could be a banner year! Some of our volunteers may recall that last season, a hot and dry spell from mid July to August really impacted the birds' egg laying, with only about one-third the normal production during that time. So, maybe the bluebirds are making up for lost time. Only time will tell.

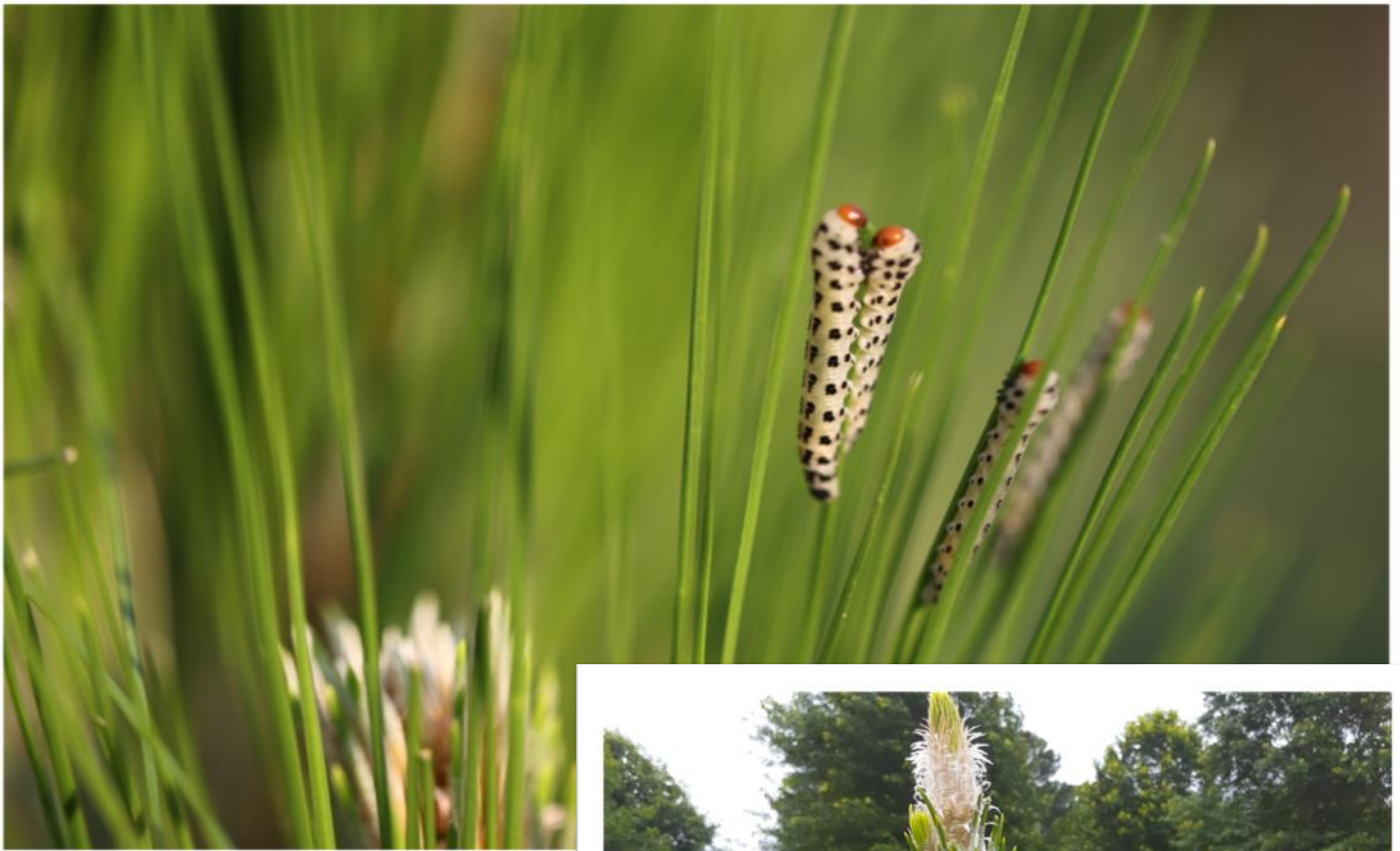


An example of just how eager the bluebirds were to get started can be seen from what occurred at Windsor Castle Park. Many of you know that a new purple martin house was constructed and erected at the park the end of February this year. Well, the purple martins weren't fast enough and the house was commandeered by a pair of bluebirds who promptly built their nest in one of the cavities. Since bluebirds are territorial, their presence would have precluded the rightful owners from occupying the house. So, what to do? Why, put a nest box about 30 feet from the purple martin house so the bluebirds have their own cozy home. The purple martins have their house back, and the territorial bluebirds will keep others of their kind away. Win! Win! So how long did it take the bluebirds to find their new home? Well Della & Bob Carrico installed the box on April 20th, with the bluebirds investigating before they left. Only six days later on April 26th, there was a complete bluebird nest in the box!

For any of you who would like to coax bluebirds to your yard, just put up a box -- they will come!

To all the wonderful volunteers who help with this project, I would be remiss if I didn't express my thanks AGAIN to all of you. There certainly are a whole lot more bluebirds around because of you.

Linda Langdon, Project Leader



Several of the longleaf pines our chapter planted in Windsor Castle Park have become infested with common pine sawfly larva. See attached photos for just how efficient these caterpillars are in defoliating new growth. The DOF is unconcerned as it will not kill these trees but may effect growth somewhat while providing food for our feathered friends.

Henry



**KEEP
CALM
THIS IS
INFORMATION
TECHNOLOGY**

Better Impact Is Here!

The new volunteer management application replacing the old University of California Agriculture and Natural Resources management system affectionately known as “the VMS” has been launched and is now in use. With it, you will be able to sign up for projects, view your schedule, and report hours.

By the time you read this, the old VMS will most likely have been decommissioned and is offline.



For those of you who have not yet logged in, please search your emails (including "spam" folders) for one sent by **Stephanie Collins with the subject "Welcome Better Impact Master Volunteers" dated March 4th.**

Once logged in you will be required to change your password and may change your username if you wish. Detailed information is included as an attachment with Stephanie’s email. Here are a few tips and things to remember:

The login URL for volunteers is app.betterimpact.com/Login/Login

The login URL for administrators is app.betterimpact.com/Login/Admin

Please review and update your profile. Click on “My Profile” at the right end of the tab bar. You can find scheduled activities by clicking on the “Opportunities” tab and selecting either Calendar or List.

Please use the Opportunities calendar or list to sign up for activities as much as possible. This really helps the project leads to know how many people to expect.

When entering hours

For entering time, Better Impact has two fields – hours and minutes. Please enter time in hours and minutes, not in decimal hours. Example 1hr 30 mins NOT 1.5 hours.

You cannot edit a saved hours entry. If you find a mistake in an entry after saving, delete the entry and re-enter it.

You have 24 hours in which an hours entry can be deleted and/or re-entered. After 24 hours, only an administrator can fix hours problems.

Please enter hours as soon after the activity as possible. This really helps the Membership Chair keeping track of milestones and certification requirements.

Emailing

Better Impact emailing capabilities for volunteers is somewhat limited, however we have been able to accommodate most needs for volunteers to email from within the system.

Click on the "Contact" tab on your BI home page.

In the "TO" box, you will see a list of available contacts. To email all chapter members, select "General Membership" from the list. Several other key contacts are listed including the chapter board, project leads and key officers.

Full and Limited Role Administrators have a much more flexible emailing capability. To access, on your administrator home page, click the bull horn icon at the top, then click the "Send Email" link in the left-hand function pane.

Documents: We have stored key chapter documents within the Better Impact system. On your BI homepage there is a box labelled "Files" with shortcuts listed for several key documents. To access all available documents, click the "See All Files" button.

We encourage everyone to log in to the new Better Impact system and begin to use it. As always, if there are any questions, problems or suggestions, please contact the Historic Southside Better Impact Administrator Chris Peters. With regard to suggestions, we are limited in what we can do within the BI platform so some suggestions or ideas will not be possible to implement, but we are glad to entertain them non-the-less!

3-20-2021 Hog Island WMA. American White Pelicans. "In early breeding season, bill and legs bright orange, head with white plumes and laterally flattened "horn" on upper mandible (beak); post-breeding, leg color fades, head darkens, plumes and horn lost." Information from Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Thought that was an interesting tidbit!

Penny Owings

Posted Facebook March 13th



I was able to find a Spring Coralroot Orchid in bloom this afternoon. These guys are considered to be either saprophytic or parasitic on roots of other plants, so have no leaves nor chlorophyll.

John Bunch

Posted on Facebook April 15th

Hello members, here is an update on our Fishing Line Recycling project.

I am very happy to report that we collected 3.7 lbs. of fishing line in 2020! This is over a 1 pound increase from what we collected last year (2019).

Why the increase? Perhaps it is due to the fact that fishing has been one of the allowed activities during the Covid-19 time period and as a result, anglers were out in force.

Our collection bins are located in the Suffolk parks of Bennett's Creek, Lone Star Lakes, and Sleepy Hole Park. We also have a bin at Windsor Castle Park in Smithfield. They are the white tubes usually attached to a pier or tree. The line we collect is sent to Berkley Recycling in Iowa and made into park benches and fish habitat crates that can be installed under piers. Berkley has been recycling line since 1990 and have collected over 9 million miles of line. Way to go, Berkley! So let's keep adding to their total and keep that line out of the environment!!

Claudia Lee, Lynn Wehner, Bev Ruegsegger, and Andy Wilson



Ken Dugan and I visited Chub Sandhills Vernal Pools recently and found our first Crangonyx Scud. We have seen many of the Gammarus Scuds, but never one that looked like this. Thanks to Anne Wright and DCR for coming up with the ID for this little guy.

John Bunch

Posted on Facebook March 16th

You may be aware from the media that there is a current situation with unexplained bird sickness and mortality in the Northern Virginia area. Reports of large numbers of birds appearing to be sick or found dead have been expanding. The National Wildlife Health Center issued a statement on this developing situation and has offered guidance.



Our Extension Wildlife Specialist has let us in VCE know that scientists do not yet have an explanation, but efforts to determine the cause have been ramped up. Representatives from the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources are asking for help in detecting any cases of sickness or mortality in birds anywhere in Virginia. If you observe birds in Virginia that appear sick or have recently died, please report them to the DWR reporting form online.

The four recommendations from the National Wildlife Health Center are for people in the outbreak area to:

- **Cease feeding birds until this wildlife mortality event has concluded;**
- **Clean feeders and bird baths with a 10% bleach solution;**
- **Avoid handling birds, but wear disposable gloves if handling is necessary; and**
- **Keep pets away from sick or dead birds as a standard precaution.**

If you are in a position to answer questions from the public about what they can/should do, you are asked to pass along all four of those recommendations as presented, so that it is a unified and consistent message. You can also refer people to the full interagency statement and encourage them to use that DWR reporting form. Although the focal area is the greater D.C. and Northern Virginia area, the situation is evolving, so following these recommendations anywhere in the state makes good sense.

There is no need to panic. These recommendations are simple precautions to take at this time while we wait for information about what is causing the deaths and what threats it may present.

The reporting of sick or dying birds is not part of a monitoring protocol for volunteers, but rather just an ad hoc activity that is only relevant if you actually happen to observe them. For that reason, we aren't setting this up as a separate VMN project statewide, but I do want to get the word out to VMNs. You all are great eyes and ears on nature, and you are also people who could be asked questions on this topic by the public, so I want you to have the information that I have. Please share the info with others in your chapters.

Thank you!

Michelle Prysby

Virginia Master Naturalist Program Director

Shoreline Reclamation at Windsor Castle Park

(North of Kayak launch)



Oyster Castle March 11th



Shoreline Planting May

Photos courtesy of Karen Barlow





Thanks for reading!!!

Please send content for the next newsletter to:

Wayne Jones wjones@suffolkva.us

Leora Porter club1060@gmail.com