

BUG BYTES

Newsletter for the Banshee Reeks Chapter of the Virginia Master Naturalist Program

Website: www.vmnbancheereeks.org Email: vmnbansheereeks@gmail.com

President's Message

By Brian Meyerriecks

A lot has happened since our last newsletter. First, I want to congratulate our 2015/2016 graduating class. Excellent job to each and every one of you! It was bittersweet for me when I graduated. Bitter in that I always looked forward to every other Saturday and the great classes and subjects I was being exposed to. Graduating signaled an end. Sweet in that no more juggling around my weekend activities over the 15 week period, and now armed with new knowledge, I could focus on certification activities tailored to my interests and do my part in supporting the chapter. I look forward to following the courses of action each of you take enroute to certification and chapter support.

We say goodbye to a dear, long-standing Virginia Master Naturalist, Casey Crichton. We will miss your enthusiasm, compassion and love of nature.

We say hello and welcome to Julie Paul. A graduate of our 2014/2015 class, she is now the BRNP liaison to our VMN Chapter. We are extremely excited for you in this position and look forward to all the great things we will accomplish together.

We say thank you to Zoe Irwin by highlighting her in this issue's Member Spotlight. A role model in her commitment to our chapter, plus an incredible baker, she has been steadfast in her support and involvement in all things VMN.

Our new website is live; check it out at www.vmnbancheereeks.org. Instruction on how to submit information to it will be sent out to the chapter shortly.

Save the date for our annual picnic on Sunday, August 14 at Banshee Reeks Nature Preserve. More info to come. And don't forget the VMN Statewide Conference, August 26-28. Registration begins in June; refer to www.regonline.com/vmn2016conference.

In This Issue

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE.....	1
WOODS ROAD RELO & BEARS AT BRNP	1
IN MEMORIAM - CASEY CRICHTON	2
INTRODUCING JULIE PAUL,	3
MEMBER SPOTLIGHT- ZOE IRWIN	4
NEW YORK IRONWEED	5
WEB-LESS WONDER HUNTS ITS PREY	6
COMMITTEE CORNER	7
NATIONAL AND STATE	8
ABOUT BANSHEE REEKS VMN	9

Woods Road Relo & Bears at BRNP

You may have noticed some changes as you arrive at BRNP recently. The Woods Road is being relocated and widened. It will be a paved 2-lane road. Underpinning these improvements was the need for a buffer for the landfill, precipitating an easement revision. So, while 10.5 acres were used for the planned road, a new easement will allow the entire acreage of the Preserve to be protected (only 500 of original 700+ acres were previously covered), thereby keeping it development-free in perpetuity. At an estimated cost of \$6.3 million, the road is scheduled to be open to traffic late this year, with completion targeted for April, 2017.

No fisher photos yet, but a Black Bear (*Ursus americanus*) sow and her two cubs have been photographed in the northern part of the Mountain Piedmont basic Seepage Swamp.



In Memoriam - Casey Crichton

Ann Garvey, a volunteer with the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy and close friend of Casey, wrote a moving tribute for the LWC blog, and allowed "Bug Bytes" to share it with the following post script:

Casey and Ann met at Banshee Reeks eight plus years ago when they were in the same Master Naturalist class. Since then, Ann had the pleasure of working with Casey at Banshee Reeks, Rust Nature Sanctuary and on projects with the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy. Along with fellow Master Naturalist, Sally Snidow, and all spouses, last September-October they all traveled to the Pantanal in Brazil - something they had been talking and dreaming about for years together. Strong friendships grow from our Master Naturalist ties.

Casey Crichton was an active volunteer for Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy and other organizations over the past eight years. Casey passed away on March 19 after a brief, but brave, struggle with brain cancer. He was 66.

Casey's love of nature was evident from his enthusiasm for helping to educate, restore habitat and work on citizen science projects for the environment. One of his passions was trees, not only identifying them but realizing all they provide to the animals and to humans.

He was the "bird man" at the Native Plant sales. Along with fellow Virginia Master Naturalist, Dori Rhodes, he helped people learn about the native plants that support native birds in our community. In the Audubon at Home program, he served as an Ambassador for clients, pulling from his background as a land developer and property manager. For several of our ambassadors, he served as an excellent mentor.

He loved to tell the story of being at Allegheny College and having Doug Tallamy, noted entomologist and author of "Bringing Nature Home," as one of his classmates. Like Tallamy,

Casey liked to recommend the white oak as a tree to plant for the animals.

Every August, Casey and his wife, Candi, could be found participating in the butterfly count and in December they took part in the Christmas Bird Count. Helping with the Civics program for 7th grade students at Morven was another of his activities. Along with all his days volunteering for Loudoun Wildlife, he also was president of the Friends of Banshee Reeks for four years and an active member with the Master Naturalist chapter.

A ready smile on his face, Casey's frequent greeting was "Hello, sunshine," which is exactly what he provided for so many people. He will be missed by so many of us and certainly by the animals and habitats he loved working to support.

- Ann Garvey

So many wonderful memories. Where to start? I first met Casey several years ago at a vernal pool program, where, as we hiked the woods, his enthusiasm for the natural world became obvious. Over the years, our friendship grew as we worked together on various environmental and citizen science projects, education outreaches and habitat restoration days. In all of these, Casey's hard work, knowledge, enthusiasm and humor never failed. And just last fall, Don and I spent time birding in Brazil with the Crichtons and the Garveys, an unforgettable trip filled with beauty, great memories, fun and laughter. Casey was one of those special people who leaves the world a little better for their having been in it. I shall truly miss him.

- Sally Snidow

Casey Crichton



Introducing Julie Paul,

BRNP's New Naturalist

I am so pleased to be working as the Naturalist at Banshee Reeks Nature Preserve. I quickly realized my passion for BRNP while participating in the Virginia Master Naturalist program in 2014/15. The Banshee Reeks chapter is preeminent in the state and I am so pleased to have obtained my certification here.

I was born and raised in Northern VA and have a Bachelor of Science degree in Education from the University of Maryland. I quickly headed west to Northern California after UMD, fell in love with the west coast territories, and decided wildlife biology was my true passion. I obtained a Master of Science degree from California State University, Chico, in Biology with a concentration in herpetology and ornithology. I have worked various research positions on the Sacramento National Wildlife Refuge complex, throughout the Sierra and Stanislaus National Forests, as well as in Yosemite National Park. My husband, Keith, is a biologist with the US Fish and Wildlife Service and works in the Endangered Species branch. We moved back east in 2011 and have since made our way to Loudoun County. We live in Lovettsville, VA with our two young boys where we love to garden, hike, backpack and live a life immersed in nature!

One of my roles as Naturalist is to serve as the liaison between BRNP and the Banshee Reeks Chapter of VMN, meaning I will be coordinating VMN programs, special events, and volunteer activities for the preserve. I will also be creating and managing educational and interpretive programs, visitor center displays/kiosks, and special events for various age-levels. I am also very interested in helping to coordinate and manage some of the research we have here at BRNP. This is an amazing place, with incredible research potential, and this is where my love for biology can really shine. Management of a 725-acre nature preserve takes a lot of time and teamwork. I don't hesitate jumping on the tractor mower, picking up a chainsaw, or performing any type of maintenance requirements it takes to keep this place functioning at a high level.

I am honored to be on board at Banshee Reeks Nature Preserve. This is a beautiful work environment and I am very much looking forward to life in the Reeks! See you on the trail!

Julie Paul



Editor's comment: And we love having you here, Julie! Thank you for sharing and best wishes in your new role!



Dutchman's Breeches
Dicentra cucullaria



Dwarf Larkspur
Delphinium tricorne

Photos from
Botany class walk.

Member Spotlight- Zoe Irwin

With Sheila Montalvan

One of our busiest members is Zoe Irwin. She may be a familiar face and name to many of you, and her presence at the Visitor Center, Committee meetings and classes has been beneficial to all of us in many ways. Zoe agreed to share some thoughts with us, and her passion for the VMN program is evident with all she has done since discovering Banshee Reeks.

1. How long have you been involved with the Virginia Master Naturalist Program, and what is your capacity (title?) now? How did you hear about the program? What projects have you worked on, i.e., guides, training, etc., etc.



I was in the VMN class of 2009-2010. The first time I visited Banshee Reeks, I was working at the Parks, Recreation, and Community Services main office and my administrative team took a team-building field trip. We had beautiful weather and Ron Circé took us all on a hayride tour, making stops over most of the preserve and telling us about the projects and programs there (including VMN!). The rest of my co-workers were thrilled and mildly horrified when I held a snake that Ron caught by Goose Creek. It's hard to imagine now, but at the time I hadn't really spent much time in nature since my days of Girl Scouts. I had kind of forgotten that I ever liked it, but after that day I couldn't wait to sign up. I did actually have to wait though, because it was early spring and the next class wasn't starting until September. Mine was probably Frank McLaughlin's first application that year.

Currently, I'm a chapter board member and the chair of the Outreach Committee. I'm also a member of the Training, Continuing Education, and Host committees. I have probably started more projects than I've finished at Banshee Reeks over the years...I get really excited about new ideas! Natalie Pien and I painted those animal tracks in the Visitor Center, and you can blame me for the green bathroom – the plan was to get native leaves stenciled. The bat boxes on some of the buildings were part of a bat survey I tried to do when I was in the class, but the echolocation methodology failed and no bats ever took up residence in the boxes. In recent years, I put together a team to design free programs for children and adults that we could offer by request in the community. We developed a bunch of great curricula, and we've given a few presentations here and there. Eventually, we want to get kits and training put together for members so the programs can be listed on our website for organizations like libraries, schools and scouting groups.

2. Family: do you have a spouse and children, grand-children? Pets? What is your background, besides the VMN program? When did your interest in nature begin?

I am happily single. I have two cats and dream of the day when I have a yard for a dog. I have a B.A. in Interdisciplinary Studies: Reviewing Literature, Theatre, and Cinema from VCU in Richmond. Now I wish I'd known that I want to be a scientist when I grow up. I am currently finishing my first semester in the online M.S. of Natural Resource and Environmental Sciences through University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. You can't really tell from reading that sentence, but it still makes me want to jump up and down a little bit when I say or type it. In retrospect, I had a lot of memorable, enjoyable outdoor experiences with my family, especially with my dad, when I was a kid. Somehow I just never realized that I had a deep interest in it until I started visiting Banshee Reeks and went through VMN. That's why I am such a huge supporter and proponent of this program. It really, truly, honestly, 100% changed the direction of my life.

3. What aspects of being a naturalist are your favorites? Is there a particular area that you enjoy (or are more knowledgeable about) than another; i.e., geology, birds, insects, etc.?

I like the creepy, crawly, slimy stuff. My favorites are definitely the arthropods, except for roaches. Lately I'm getting really into beetles with some of my school projects. *Coleoptera* is such an incredible order, and there are some fantastic [Bananagrams](#) vocabulary words associated with them! I'm also pretty fond of plants, as they are generally willing to sit very still while you identify or photograph them.

4. Feel free to philosophize about a favorite aspect of being a naturalist if you like.

A day where I come home muddy and grass-stained is a day that has been well-spent. Also, I am endlessly overjoyed in the field when an appropriate method of scientific inquiry involves poking something with a stick.

5. Any words of encouragement for the new VMN students graduating in this year's class?

Every year since I took the class and I've helped with the new classes, all of the volunteers just say over and over, "This is such a good class!" We say it every year, because every year it's true, and every year the volunteers on the board and committees are reinvigorated by the enthusiasm and passion of the new class members. This graduating class is a great class. Every one of their classes that I've attended as the teaching assistant has been filled with such contagious energy and happiness. I hope that they continue to experience that as they go out and begin volunteering in the community, and I hope that many of them become involved in the chapter and find out what it's like to welcome new classes to the program.

Thank you, Zoe, for telling us more about yourself and for all of the work you do for VMN!

New York Ironweed

By Bryan Henson

In our yard, we have a "Let It Live" policy for plants we can't identify. It isn't uncommon for the birds to leave a plant behind that we didn't plant. So we let it grow until we can figure out if it fits into our yard - native plants that are good for wildlife. Sometimes we end up with a giant weed that we have to pull and by letting it grow we have made it a hundred times harder to pull, but sometimes we end up with a great additional to our yard.

About 5 years ago, we noticed a single plant growing up in the corner of the backyard and it was growing fast. It must have liked its location a lot, because it kept growing. First, it grew higher than the fence and then it grew taller than me. The stalk was thick, allowing it to grow to this extraordinary height. And it started to show beautiful purple flowers.

We struggled to identify the plant; for a while, we just called it the 'giant plant in the corner'. Finally on a well-timed trip to Meadowlark Gardens we found the plant in bloom and an identification sign nearby! New York Ironweed (*Vernonia noveboracensis*) is a wonderful native perennial from the Aster family. It blooms in late summer to fall. It loves full sun and significant water. It is



also a very strong self seeder – our yard now contains dozens of New York Ironweed plants. Butterflies love finding the late source of nectar and we love the color and variety it adds to our yard.

Web-less Wonder Hunts Its Prey

Green Lynx Spider (*Peucetia viridans*)

By Sheila Montalvan

What creature has eight eyes, can spit venom, has spikes on its legs, and mates in mid-air on a silk thread?!? A Green Lynx Spider, of course!

The Green Lynx Spider is fairly common throughout the southern United States, including Virginia, and lives in shrubs and bushes. This spider does not build a web to catch its prey; it does, however, release a silk dragline as they move about. The Green Lynx Spider, like its feline namesake, may wait for its prey or jump, chase, and pursue its meal. According to an article on Wild-Facts.com, "As insects fly by these spiders, they leap into the air to catch their meal. These clever spiders are known to camp near beautiful



Green Lynx Spider
Wikipedia Commons

Mating occurs while hanging from a strand of silk. Gravid (pregnant) females create a silk-like egg sac for their eggs and attach it to vegetation. The egg sac may have pointed spikes around it. The female will wrap her legs around the egg sac or sit on top of it, similar to many other spiders. She may also change colors to match her surroundings and protect herself while watching her eggs. Female Green Lynx Spiders aggressively

flowers. As insects arrive to pollinate the flower, the Green Lynx Spider uses its speed and agility to pounce on the unsuspecting prey." The spider eats many types of insects, and is favored by some because they can help control crop pests. They do however, eat beneficial insects as well, including bees and butterflies. The Galveston County Master Gardeners website states that, "... Green Lynx Spiders have been observed feeding on many species of crop pest moths, even capturing the larvae of these species. However, their usefulness in the control of insect pests is counteracted by their willingness to prey upon beneficial insects and important predators of crop pests. Consequently, the possible use of Green Lynx Spiders in the control of crop pests will largely depend on when, where and what crops, as well as for the control of which pests they are to be used." Female Lynx spiders are great mothers.

protect their egg sacs, and can spit venom at threats. The venom is not dangerous to humans. The spiderlings hatch inside the egg sac after 11 days or so, and then emerge about 16 days later. Female spiders may help the spiderlings hatch by tearing a hole in the egg sac, if needed. The young spiderlings are bright orange when they first emerge, usually in the early fall.

Green Lynx Spiders generally live for only one year.

Sources:

http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston/beneficials/beneficial-48_green_lynx_spider.htm

http://entnemdept.ufl.edu/creatures/beneficial/green_lynx_spider.htm

<http://www.spiders.us/species/filter/virginia/>
<http://www.wild-facts.com/2013/green-lynx-spider/>



Eastern Redbud,
harbinger of Spring
Cercis canadensis L.

COMMITTEE CORNER

Historian Committee

Chair: Suzanne DeSaix

The History Committee is responsible for compiling photos and articles that document our Chapter's participation in relevant programs and activities (e.g., citizen science, educational outreach, administrative support). We keep a hard-copy scrapbook for use at various events when there is a VMN table/booth. Suzanne is organizing photos for CDs that can be kept in the office at BRNP and used for events also. She asks that any VMNer participating in a program in which you are receiving volunteer credit, please submit photos to her at: sumatkai@yahoo.com. Just send photos as an email attachment, or if too large, send in a zip file. If any questions, contact her at this email address.

Membership Committee

Chair: Frank McLaughlin

We are now beginning recruitment for the class of 2017. With a carefully timed outreach and advertising program, the plan is to have all 22 students confirmed by the end of August. Once they are on board as new trainees, there will be a system in place to ensure they have the information and tools needed to provide a successful experience ... leading to improved retention rates for the chapter overall.

Volunteer Service Projects Committee

Chair: Britta Hart

Our members have logged 998 volunteer hours so far this year through the end of April. Please remember to log your hours regularly.

We have had some fantastic proposals approved in 2016! The Journey Through Hallowed Ground tree planting, The Loudoun County HOA Forum, and an individual project for Suzanne DeSaix with Journal Sketching (members can partake in the classes for CE credit), a one-time only project called Bio-Blitz which takes place this month in the DC/Metro region (May 20th and 21st; only VA

locations are countable hours), and the George Mason University Greenhouse Volunteer project.

Communications/Newsletter Committee

Chair: Sheila Montalvan

We just recently went live with the new website – still at the same address www.bansheereeks.org. Let us know what you think about the website and if you have interest in writing some posts, contact us and we'll provide instructions and create an account for you. We are always looking for people to write articles for Bug Bytes too. *Remember that writing and research time count as VMN Volunteer Hours!*

Keep watch for press releases on our Chapter activities and a Facebook rollout to come as our committee grows and gains momentum!

Outreach Committee

Chair: Zoe Irwin

Deb Crew represented VMN at the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy's Native Plant Sale in April. She had information about our chapter and invasive species. In spite of the rain, she spoke with several prospective new students. Big thanks to Deb for taking on the booth!

I am currently seeking volunteers for an elementary school age children's program at Sterling Library on July 21st at 2:00 p.m. called Animal Fear Factor. The program is about animals that commonly scare people, their roles in ecosystems, and local potentially dangerous animals. Please email meggin.irwin@gmail.com for more details if you are interested.

Host Committee

The Host Committee is looking for a new chair. If you are interested, please contact the Board of Directors. The Host Committee's most recent event was providing a celebratory graduation lunch for the 2016 VMN Banshee Reeks class! *From the class: Many thanks for the great food and the opportunity to celebrate this milestone!*

Training Committee



Congratulations, Class of 2016!

Pictured: Masa Endo, Yoko Endo, Leslie Ashman, Barbara Ryan, Kara Pascale, Reets Smith, Tess McAllister, Susan Sims, Paul Kreingold, David Lussier, Diana McMillion, Bryan Henson, Angie Bommersbach, Paul Thibodeau, Jonathan Kauffman, Danielle Dillion. *Missing:* Allison Gallo, Iris Gestram.

Graduation was held on April 30th at Banshee Reeks for the 2015-2016 class! This is a milestone, as it is the 10th graduating class of the Banshee Reeks chapter. A great celebratory taco luncheon was provided by the host committee. Special thanks to Deb Crew and Zoe Irwin of the host committee. Reminder to those classmates who've fulfilled their volunteer and CE hour requirements, be sure to submit your Certification Application, which you can find [here](#). It includes instructions on how to submit.

The training committee has already started gearing up for the next Fall class with a calendar of classes in place. Jane Yocom has stepped down as chair and we are currently seeking a new chair. A big "thank you" to Jane for all her hard work and coordination of the training committee. She was instrumental in developing the on-line version of the course notebook which has been such a success this year. Thank you also to Dori Rhodes and Susan McMunn, who are retiring from this committee, for their dedication and many hours.

Continuing Education Committee

Chair: Bill Cour

The Continuing Education (CE) Committee works to identify and provide opportunities for chapter members to earn the CE hours they need to achieve/maintain certification. The most frequent activity is monitoring the websites of organizations that offer activities that could be counted towards

CE hours; LWC lectures, ANS classes, VNPS presentations, etc. We post these in the chapter calendar. If anyone spots something that isn't on the calendar that they think might be a good candidate, they can email:

Bill Cour (wmkcour@gmail.com) or

Ron (ron.circe@loudoun.gov).

The CE Committee also coordinates our own CE classes, either as extensions of the Basic Training sessions or as independent events. Again, if you either have a class you would consider offering or a topic on which you would like to see us offer training, contact Bill or Ron.

SAVE THE DATE!
Chapter Picnic at Banshee Reeks
Sunday, August 14th

NATIONAL AND STATE

2016 VMN Certification Pin



Original drawing of a Leopard Frog by Stephanie Schmuck

In 2015, we experienced the exciting discovery of a new frog species in Virginia, the Atlantic Coast Leopard Frog (*Lithobates kauffeldi*). This frog looks similar to its relative, the Southern Leopard Frog, but has a quack-like call similar to a Wood Frog. Thus far in VA, it has been found in forested wetlands in four watersheds, but it most likely ranges throughout the Coastal Plain. VMN volunteers can listen and watch for this frog to help document its occurrence.

For more information on the Leopard Frog, check out the [DGIF](#) page or their [blog](#).

Other Happenings



[BioBlitz](#) for National Park Service. Other BioBlitz locations are in the area as well.

The VA Dept. of Conservation and Recreation sponsors [Stewardship Virginia](#), whose Spring session runs through May 31 and many projects have already been set up. This season's particular focus is to restore habitat for pollinators.

Mark your calendars for the [2016 VMN Conference](#) to be hosted by the Blue Ridge Foothills and Lakes Chapter at the Skelton 4-H Educational Conference Center at Smith Mountain Lake in Wirtz, VA from Fri, Aug 26 through Sun, Aug 28. More info to come.

About Banshee Reeks VMN

The Banshee Reeks chapter of the Virginia Master Naturalist program is a volunteer corps focused on education, outreach, conservation, and management of the natural resources in Virginia. The chapter was founded in 2006 and focuses on Loudoun County and hosts many events at Banshee Reeks Nature Preserve. We are always looking for new members and like-minded organizations.

To find out more, visit our website at <http://www.vmnbansheereeks.org/> or email us at vmnbansheereeks@gmail.com.