

BUG BYTES

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

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President's Message

By Brian Meyerriecks

Hello naturalists, a lot is happening. First, we have a new communications chair, Leslie Ashman and two new training co-chairs, Alysoun Mahoney and Sue Robinson. Please congratulate them and support them as best you can.

Our annual picnic is 14 August which we will celebrate our chapters 10 year anniversary, I hope to see you all there. The VMN state conference is 26 to 28 August if you have not attended our state conference yet, I highly recommend you do so. This issues member spotlight is Bryan Henson a recent class graduate and certified naturalist who not only helps with the newsletter and revitalized our Facebook page. He has turned our website into a dynamic state of the art online destination for all things related to our chapter. Please visit it at vmnbansheereeks.org and feel free to post articles and events to it. Bryan can help you with that. Finally, we are all deeply saddened by the passing away of Frank Good, an enthusiastic naturalist, a member of our first class in 2006. He also taught geology by bringing in his personal lifelong collection of rock specimens. Fair winds and following seas Frank.

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

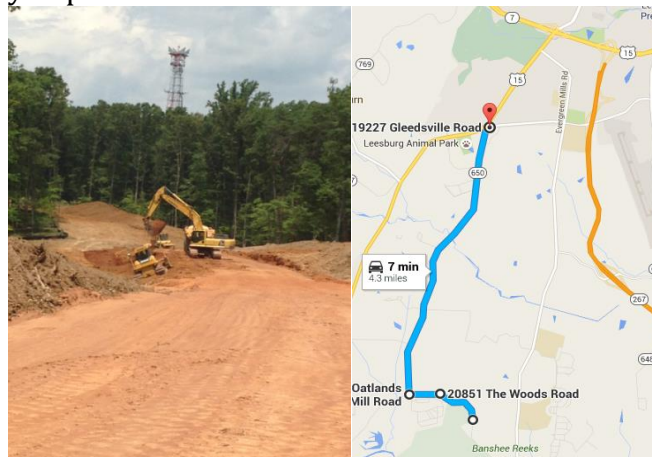
Virginia Outdoors Foundation
50th Anniversary Festival
Saturday, October 8th

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Road Construction Update

Beginning on Wednesday, July 27, there will be **NO** access to BRNP via Evergreen Mills Rd. **ALL** access will be via Gleedsville Road. Road signs indicate a re-open date of Nov. 1, but we will keep you posted.



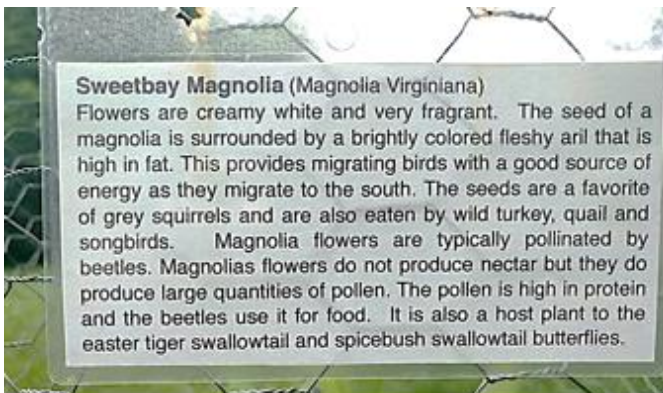
Get your free trees! - Stream buffer planting

By Bryan Henson

One of the places that we visit frequently is a private 370 acre park, called [Horsepen Run](#) which contains a watershed that runs into the Potomac. A little over a year ago, the [HOA took advantage](#) of a fantastic program to do a [riparian buffer](#) planting. Allison presented her learnings from a [seminar](#) to the HOA, and after some deliberation and meeting with the [Loudoun Soil and Water Conservation District](#) experts, a plan was put together. In the late spring of 2015, the HOA paid a landscaping company (and was fully reimbursed by the county through the stream buffer program) to come in and plant 156 trees:

- 19 Hackberry
- 24 Black Gum
- 24 River Birch
- 18 Sweet Bay Magnolia
- 12 American Hophornbeam
- 12 American Hornbeam
- 12 Redbud
- 12 Blackhaw Viburnum
- 13 Loblolly Pine
- 10 Eastern Red Cedar

The trees are all native to our area and as such provide a lot of [value](#) in terms of wildlife. Allison added labels to some trees, describing the species and what benefits they provide to wildlife.



Sign for the Sweetbay Magnolia

Because the summer of 2015 was very hot, watering needed to be done to help the trees through their first year. A pump and a very long

hose allowed us to bring up stream water to tend to the trees' needs.

With the [big snow](#) last winter, we worried that the trees wouldn't handle the weight, but they did fine. We greatly exceeded the program's 75% first year survival rate requirement, with a rate of 95% (!), and were able to add a few new species (Chestnut Oak, Pin Oak and Tulip Poplar) to our burgeoning forest using the vendor's warranty.

As summer approached, some of the trees were out-growing their deer fencing and needed weeding; and some volunteers have pitched in to assist. Fortunately, there has been good rain for the spring and early summer, so watering hasn't been needed. We're hoping that by the end of the summer, we won't have to do much more maintenance at all.



We're very excited about the benefits to water quality and to local wildlife of converting what was once just a field of turf grass into a forest of beautiful native trees! *It is likely that the program will be offered next. For more information, visit [Loudoun Soil and Water Conservation](#).*



Official sign for the project!

Member Spotlight – Bryan Henson

With Sheila Montalvan

One of our busiest members is **Bryan Henson**.

1. How long have you been involved with the Virginia Master Naturalist Program, and what is your capacity now?

I've been involved with the VMN program for just about a year. Allison, my wife, and I completed the initial certification in May. All things for me related to VMN start with Allison. She'd been interested in participating in VMN for a few years and we finally signed up last year. It's been a fantastic year so far. I feel like I've learned so much and met so many great people, it's amazing. I've participated in a number of fun projects including bluebird monitoring, the Christmas bird count (CBC), the native plant sale, Audubon at Home, and milkweed planting. I've also participated in the Communications and Newsletter committee. We've produced a few newsletters where I've written articles and I've revamped the website (<http://vmnbansheereeks.org>) to make it easier for everyone to participate and share information. On that note, if anyone is interested in writing some articles for the website or newsletter, please contact us on the communications



Bryan posing as a Galapagos Tortoise (in a real shell!) several years back.

committee – it is a flexible and fun way to get

some volunteer hours and I, at least, find it pretty fun to research and dig deeper into a topic.

2. Can you tell us more about your family and background?

Allison and I have 4 spoiled cats. Growing up, I was always interested in critters and the outdoors – until I found computers and then I probably focused way too much on computers – leading me to a career in software development. Allison is actually the inspiration that got me back involved with nature. She had a vacation to the Galapagos and Ecuadorian amazon rainforest planned and her traveling companion backed out. Being in a particularly adventurous mood, I said I'd go. It turned into a 3 week long first date – we actually didn't know each other before that except as acquaintances – we were very lucky that it worked out! With that, she re-introduced me to nature and the outdoors. She got me interesting in birding and we started to garden for butterflies and wildlife - our backyard is an Audubon at Home Wildlife Sanctuary and Monarch Waystation.

3. What aspects of being a naturalist are your favorite?

I just love the learning. With my education in Electrical Engineering, I didn't get really any college classes in geology, dendrology, ecology, zoology, climate, ornithology, or any of the other education aspects of VMN. So the initial program really helped me to get my arms around all the many things that I'd like to learn. I love the interconnectedness of all of nature – it's cool to think that all these little insects and their relationship with plants is so complicated and specialized and that all the larger fauna depend upon the smaller organisms and then all that depends on the geology and climate. It's both beautiful and so incredibly intricate.

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

The best part about being a naturalist is the people. There is tons of sharing of excitement and knowledge with other folks. Every time we are out birding or volunteering, we always learn new things. I worked at the spring native plant sale

giving away Tuscarora Landscaper's Choice (TLC) – I can't tell you how many people told me about similar programs in their hometown or their experiences with TLC. And if you can share some knowledge and excitement with others, I think that brings the best dividends. Helping someone spot an Indigo Bunting and getting them excited about birds or showing them a Monarch and talking about the amazing Monarch migration can really change someone's outlook on nature.

5. Any words of encouragement for the new VMN students enrolled in this years' class?

Enjoy it! It's a fun class; getting out and seeing all these different topics in Banshee Reeks is great – it really helps solidify the concepts. I'd also recommend getting involved early – in your committee, investigating CE and volunteer opportunities and getting to know other members. There are lots of cool things to do and lots of smart people to meet.

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



Sunflower fields at McKee Beshers Wildlife Management



Baltimore Oriole breeding at Morven Park

Virginia Breeding Bird Atlas Workshop

By Bryan Henson

We recently attended a [workshop](#) at Riverbend Park, sponsored by the [Audubon Society of Northern Virginia](#), that trained us on survey techniques for the [Breeding Bird Atlas](#) project. The breeding bird survey is a 5-year survey of all bird species breeding in the Commonwealth. Data collected will help map the "distribution and status of Virginia's breeding bird community in order to better inform our natural resource and conservation decisions." The last Virginia breeding atlas was done 25 years ago; this new one will help us understand how birds' behavior and their environment has changed in that time.



Eastern Kingbird on nest at Morven Park

Participation is super easy - get out and watch birds! Watch them to see if they are exhibiting breeding behaviors and then report the results. There are many more details to the protocol as shown on their [website](#), but here are some useful things to know:

- Pay attention to your location and report which block you observed the behavior in
- Special [codes](#) describe behaviors
- Data is entered into a specialization of eBird website called the [Virginia Breeding Bird Atlas Portal](#)
- Goal is to upgrade birds to 'Confirmed'
- Anyone can contribute during breeding season over next 5 years.

During the workshop walk, we spotted breeding behaviors on dozens of bird species (including the lovely [Louisiana Waterthrush](#)) and it gave participants an opportunity to learn more about some of the more subtle behaviors like counter-singing and territorial defense.

The workshop will be offered again during the [2016 Virginia Master Naturalist conference](#).

Ovenbird (*Seiurus aurocapilla*)

By Sheila Montalvan

If you are walking quietly in the forest this summer, you may hear a bird call that sounds like teach-er, teach-er, teach-er. Chances are, it is the ovenbird, a small, sparrow-like bird that forages on the forest floor for their food. Ovenbirds are from the warbler family, and are olive green with stripes on their chest. *They have a "jaunty tail"* and pink legs that actually walk along the ground – not hop like a robin or other birds.

On the forest floor, ovenbirds will feed on a wide variety of insects, including beetles, larvae, worms, snails, spiders, caterpillars, etc.



Photo courtesy of Wikipedia

The ovenbird gets its name from the way it constructs its nest. Constructed of leaf matter or grasses and lined with animal hair, it is shaped like a domed oven. The nests are

constructed on the ground by the female, and contain a small entrance hole. The nests may be near the base of a tree, and are fairly well hidden by leaf matter. The young birds leave the nest only about a week to ten days after hatching, and are watched over by their parents until they can manage on their own.

Ovenbirds reside primarily in the central to eastern part of the U. S. and Canada. They migrate in the fall to the deep southern U. S., Caribbean, Central America, or Mexico.

Sources:

<https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Ovenbird/id>
<http://www.audubon.org/field-guide/bird/ovenbird>
<http://www.birdnature.com/ovenbird.html>

The Ovenbird

By Robert Frost

*There is a singer everyone has heard,
 Loud, a mid-summer and a mid-wood bird,
 Who makes the solid tree trunks sound again.
 He says that leaves are old and that for flowers
 Mid-summer is to spring as one to ten.
 He says the early petal-fall is past,
 When pear and cherry bloom went down in showers
 On sunny days a moment overcast;
 And comes that other fall we name the fall.
 He says the highway dust is over all.
 The bird would cease and be as other birds
 But that he knows in singing not to sing.
 The question that he frames in all but words
 Is what to make of a diminished thing.*

In Memoriam, Frank Good

We were saddened to hear of the passing of Frank Good on July 7, 2016 in Leesburg, Virginia. Frank was in the very first VMN Banshee Reeks Chapter class; and was an active member of the Training Committee, volunteering countless hours at Banshee Reeks. An avid bird watcher, and a collector of coins, stamps, rocks and minerals, Frank led many classes on geology, astronomy, wildflowers and bird banding with MAPPS. He was always welcoming to new members and so helpful wherever there was a need.

Beloved husband of the late Emma Good, Frank was a member of Leesburg United Methodist Church. He was honorably discharged from the Army where he was a radar equipment foreman and worked 22 years for Xerox as a trainer in computer technology. Frank's career had taken him from his native Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, to Texas, California, Alaska and finally Leesburg, Virginia. He was a very kind, gentle and intelligent man with an absolutely wonderful sense of humor. He will be missed by those who had the pleasure of meeting and volunteering with him.

Nature on My Mind

By Leslie Ashman

Have you ever wondered why it feels so great to be out in Nature – I mean, other than that you're typically not working or doing chores, and you're likely doing something fun? I'd always thought it was simply exposure to higher levels of oxygen when we're outside that elevates our mood. Turns out, [that's part of it](#), but there's SO much more to it than that!

National Geographic's article, "[This is Your Brain on Nature](#)" presents compelling, science-based information about how being in nature destresses us and New York State's Dept. of Environmental Conservation references numerous studies, listing the following benefits derived from simply [walking through a forest](#):

- Boosts immune system
- Lowers blood pressure
- Reduces stress
- Improves mood
- Increases ability to focus, even in children with attention deficit
- Accelerates recovery from surgery or illness
- Increases energy level
- Improves sleep¹

Just *looking* at a picture of nature has positive effect. Indeed, science is showing that looking at urban scenes increases blood flow to the amygdala, which processes fear and anxiety, while natural scenes light up the anterior cingulate and the insula – areas associated with empathy and altruism³. Exposure to nature has been shown to be so profound, that some countries have begun integrating it into their medical practices and factoring human well-being into national forest plans.

Educators have seen very positive results on learning retention, grades and behavior where curriculums have incorporated nature into studies and experiences – and classes needn't travel far from home. One educator noted how visits to local environs -- with accompanying materials – enhanced her classes' sense of community². Virginia's [Project WILD](#), sponsored

by the Dept. of Game and Inland Fisheries, and National Park Service's [Good Character, Good Stewards](#) program are great resources for enhancing K-12 curricula with nature, along with the programming that our very own Outreach Committee can deliver to classrooms.

So give your brain a rest, and get out there!

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 (and a CD in the works) for use at various events when there is a VMN table/booth. Suzanne asks that any VMNer participating in a program in which you are receiving volunteer credit, to submit photos as email attachment (or zip file) to her at: sumatkai@yahoo.com. If any questions, contact her at this email address.

Membership Committee

Chair: Frank McLaughlin

We have eighteen students enrolled so far in the 2016/17 class. Many of those students were those that expressed interest last year. Local papers published our press release this past week so it is likely that there will be more students registering and calling with questions over the next several days.

We have eight members who have achieved certification since the beginning of the year! They are: Leslie Ashman, George Birsic, Dave Delmonte, Allison Gallo, Bryan Henson, Tess McAllister, Sandra Miller, Rita Smith and Carolyn Whisman. Congratulations to all for achieving this milestone!!

Volunteer Service Projects Committee

Chair: Britta Hart

Our members have logged 1,516 volunteer hours so far in 2016. We are just a tad into the second half of the year, don't forget to log those hours! Take a stroll down the projects list and see what's new. Speaking of which:

Recently approved projects include the Leave No Trace training program with a purpose to train folks how to teach principles of Leave No Trace to community members. For more information: <https://lnt.org/get-involved/state/va>

Another project is the Keep Loudoun Beautiful Watershed Cleanup project. The event is held twice a year. Refer to <http://keeploudounbeautiful.org/KLBcanoe.html> for more information.

Remember to log travel time separately from the project you are working on!

Communications/Newsletter Committee

Chair: Leslie Ashman

We hope that you're enjoying our new and improved website, www.bansheereeks.org. This past quarter, we've re-invigorated our [VMN-Banshee Reeks Chapter Facebook group](#). If you haven't yet joined, please do! We're seeing some great pics and articles posted to keep you up-to-date on volunteer and members' outdoor activities, BRNP goings-on and general natural science news. We're always looking for article contributions to the website, so *remember that writing and research time count as VMN Volunteer Hours!*

Outreach Committee

Chair: Zoe Irwin

Amanda Rose Newton and Renee Kitt will present our Animal Fear Factor program at Sterling Library on Tuesday, July 21st from 2:00-3:00 p.m. The program is for elementary school-aged children, and it is free and open to the public. Information presented will cover animals that commonly scare people, their roles in ecosystems, and local potentially dangerous animals.

Did you know that the Banshee Reeks Chapter Outreach Committee offers free educational programs to the community? If you know a local scout group, school, or other organization that would be interested in having a VMN presentation, please have them email vmnbansheereeks@gmail.com. We have a list of prepared children's programs for multiple ages, and can also create custom programs!

Host Committee

Save the Date! Sunday, August 14 is the annual VMN Summer Picnic at Banshee Reeks Nature Preserve. We are collecting donation items and services for the picnic raffle and silent auction. Fun for family, friends and future naturalists! More information to come!

Training Committee

Co-Chairs: Alysoun Mahoney and Sue Robinson

Training committee is in the planning stages with the new committee co-chairs, Alysoun Mahoney and Sue Robinson. Working sessions are being held to plan for the new class that starts on Sept 17, for 22 students. New members to the committee were welcomed and transition from the past chair are on-going with separate meetings. Finalization of the information and speakers is in progress.

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. In addition to classes that the chapter itself offers, we post listings of CE opportunities with other chapters and with organizations such as Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy, the Audubon Naturalist Society, the Virginia Native Plant Society, etc. If you have a class that you would like to offer for the chapter, or you see an event that you think would be a CE opportunity, or there is a topic on which you would really like the chapter to present a class, contact Bill Cour (wmkcour@gmail.com) or Ron (ron.circe@loudoun.gov).

LOCAL AND STATE

From the Banshee Reeks Office

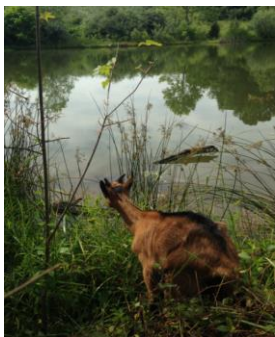


Tagged butterflies: Loudoun County Public Schools had a science teachers' Monarch workshop here in June during pollinator week. As part of the workshop, the group tagged (see green sticker in photo) and released 10 newly metamorphosed monarch

butterflies. Keep your eye out and let us know if you happen to spot one.

Bee research: UVA PhD and MS students are researching native bumblebee colonies at Banshee Reeks, looking at the effect of parasites on individual colonies of the common eastern bumblebee (*Bombus impatiens*) as well as declines in colonization and species ranges due to climate change.

The honey bee observation hive has been populated with indoor/ outdoor access on the pollinator garden side of the Visitor Center at BRNP.



Baby Hank enjoying the view by the pond

Goats are being moved. We are renewing our contract with Willowsford Farm for continuation of our goat grazing partnership. We will be moving the herd to a new browsing spot next week.

Tick app: Passing info along about a great new CDC tick app for your smart phone.



Screenshot of Tick app for smartphones

Other Happenings

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.vmnbancheereeks.org/> or email us at vmnbansheereeks@gmail.com.

And join our Facebook group: [Virginia Master Naturalist-Banshee Reeks Chapter](#)