

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

President's Message

By Barbara Erlandson

The Virginia Tech Foundation provided each of the member chapters money to be used as a scholarship. Because they have asked that we provide a brief summary of the recipient and why they received the scholarship, we decided to reimburse one student from the class that just graduated. Of the 22 students that started the program last September, eight have completed 40 or more volunteer hours to date. The names of those eight students were placed into a container and we drew a name ... the winner of the scholarship. We are grateful to the Foundation for these funds ... and happy to be able to reward one of our recent graduates of the program.

The Bat Monitoring program was launched mid May with a training session at Izaak Walton League of America in Leesburg. Since that session, we have had 22 individuals from both IWLA and VMN going out to three locations on a weekly basis monitoring bats. Twenty-five hundred bats were identified including some species, like the Tricolored Bat, that are known to be afflicted with White Nose Syndrome, a fungal disease that has wiped out millions of bats. The data that is collected by our VMN citizen scientists goes into

the Bat Acoustic Monitoring Portal. This portal provides data to bat researchers that was not available previously.

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SAVE THE DATES!

Native Plant Sale @ Morven
Saturday, September 8th

Banshee Reeks workdays
August 18th and Sept 15th

Bat Night Returns @ Izaak Walton League
August 17th

August Banshee Reeks workday

The upcoming August 18th workday will be the Annex big clean day to help ready the place for the kickoff of the new VMN year. Duties typically include cleaning tables and chairs, vacuuming, kitchen inventory, etc. Possibly the display case can be filled with something too...

Also, the Chestnut Foundation is looking to have a work day in our Chestnut orchard that same day. So, as many hands here we can get (even from then new class possibly) would be awesome!!

Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy Happenings

Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy welcomes Michael Myers as the new Executive Director. Michael's previous experience includes Executive Director of Friends of Black Rock-High Rock in Nevada's Black Rock Desert where he managed all aspects of the organization's conservation, education, and outreach activities since September 2014. Prior to that he spent over a year and a half working as an AmeriCorps member with the same nonprofit. Michael earned a Masters in Nonprofit Management at Regis University in Denver and a BA in Philosophy from Tulane University.

Michael looks forward to learning the flora and fauna of Loudoun County. He plans on attending as many programs and events as he can to become familiar with the area. He looks forward to meeting members of the community in the coming weeks and months. He also looks forward to continuing to partner and collaborate with Banshee Reeks.

Learn more about an exciting conservation project that Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy is working on at <http://loudounnow.com/2018/06/19/kuhn-family-moves-to-protect-ecological-rarity-at-stumptown-woods/>.

Editor's note: I've heard that Michael is applying to join the 2018-2019 VMN class.

Interpretation Volunteer Opportunity

There will be a series of interpretative signs at major points throughout Banshee Reeks. We would like to find individuals that are interested in working with Julie Paul and will research/design the information to be placed on the signs. For more information about this exciting project, please contact Julie at julie.paul@loudoun.gov.

Bat Night Returns!

The Loudoun County Chapter of the Izaak Walton League presents its third annual Bat Night on Friday, August 17th at 7:00 PM. Bat Night will be led by world-renowned bat expert Dr. Susanne

Sterbing, research professor from the Johns Hopkins University's Department of Psychological and Brain Sciences. This event will consist of a Bat-Talk with great Bat-Pictures and Bat-Videos, a Bat-Walk where Bat-Detectors will translate bat echolocation signals to an audible range and a Bat-Gawk as the sun sets on our beautiful pond and these denizens of the night make their ghostly appearance. Be sure to wear sturdy walking shoes and bring bug repellent and flashlights.



Date: Friday, August 17th, 2018 (rain date August 18th)
 Time: 7:00 PM to 9:00 PM
 Place: Izaak Walton League, Loudoun County Chapter
 19237 Mountain Spring Lane
 Leesburg VA 20177
 Who: All ages

Invasive Awareness - Giant Hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*)

Crissy Bellandi

Giant Hogweed is an invasive species that has been found in Virginia including in Clarke County. The sap causes severe dermatitis, burns, scarring and potential blindness. Giant Hogweed, as the name implies, can grow very large, up to 15 feet high with leaves up to 5 feet. Identifying the plant can be tricky as it may resemble cow parsnip, angelica, wild parsnips and poison hemlock¹. The plant is a perennial originally from the Greater Caucasus region and can be found along roadsides and river banks². Removal should be performed carefully and include appropriate attire to cover skin and eyes in case of contact with the sap. It may also be wise to manually remove the plant at night to keep the noxious properties of the sap from being activated by sunlight and care should be taken to contain seeds to prevent further dispersal³. For more information, go to the Virginia Invasive Species website at

<http://www.invasivespecies.org/species/giant-hogweed>.

¹ <https://www.dec.ny.gov/animals/72766.html>

² <https://www.cabi.org/isc/datasheet/26911>

³ <https://wtop.com/virginia/2018/07/how-to-safely-remove-invasive-giant-hogweed-plant/>

Dickcissels In Loudoun

Bryan Henson

This summer, Loudoun is being visited by several Dickcissel (*Spiza americana*). They are known to wander in their breeding range and Loudoun is part of that range some years. We might not see Dickcissel again in Loudoun county for several years. Dickcissel is notable in its breeding behavior for polygynous mating. Only about 2 percent of birds are polygynous and most of those birds are grassland birds like the Dickcissel. The name Dickcissel is onomatopoeic; a common mnemonic for their song is ‘dick, dick, ciss, ciss, ciss’.



Dickcissel (*Spiza Americana*)

The core of the Dickcissel’s range is the prairie lands of the central United States. In our area, they seem to favor the northern grassy areas of the county near Lucketts. Seeds, grasshoppers and spiders make up the bulk of their diet in these

grasslands. You can expect to find some of our other grassland species like Grasshopper Sparrow and Eastern Meadowlark in the same fields. Their plumage is reminiscent of meadowlarks; they have the same yellow on the face and chest with a black ‘V’. Dickcissels are smaller (5 to 6 inches vice 7 to 10), have a more conical and shorter bill, and a proportionally longer tail. The female Dickcissel doesn’t have the black ‘V’ and is a bit more plain.

Dickcissel is a rare find in Loudoun, but the population is generally considered to be a little under 30 million. Their population is at risk to both pesticide use and the decline of grassland habitats in the US for breeding. Unfortunately, their wintering grounds are also at risk. Much of the Dickcissel population spends winter in South America; Venezuela is a core part of this area and Dickcissel are [commonly considered a pest](#) there.

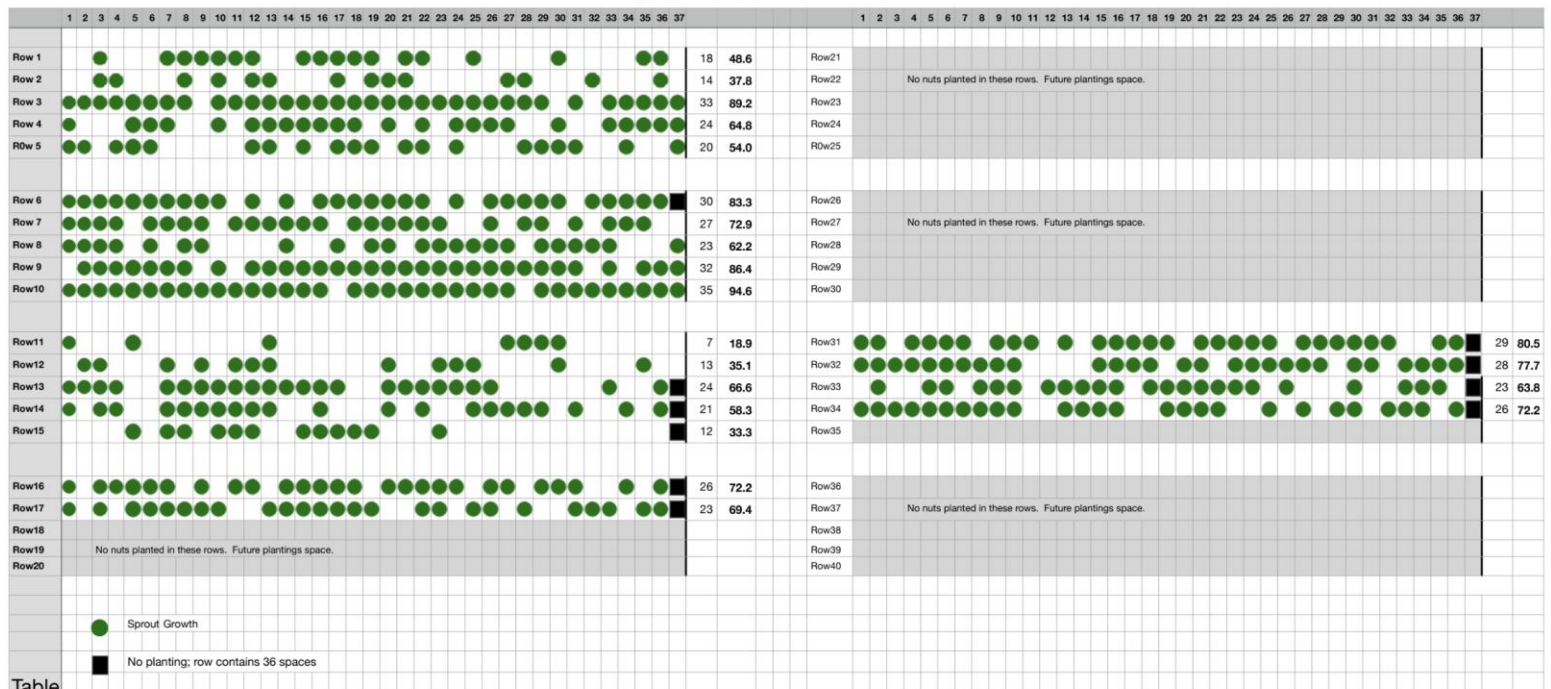
Status of TACF & BRNP Chestnut Partnership 26 May 2018

Larry Johnson, VMN 2017, TACF member

This article is a field survey report of the The American Chestnut Foundation (TACF) program in partnership with Banshee Reeks NP. This is a follow-on report; I suggest readers refer to the Julie Paul article in the BugBytes spring edition to gain context of this program. The program approach and its technique are straight forward: to grow chestnut tree sprouts by directly planting the nuts. Likewise, this survey had a simple objective: identify and record sprout growth of American chestnuts planted in the BRNP plot.

To partner with TACF, BRNP eagerly agreed to host a chestnut orchard plot on a two-acre site. For those unaware of this project, the BRNP two-acre chestnut plot is due north of the visitor’s center in the grassy field just past the overflow parking lot. The American chestnuts were harvested, nurtured, and donated by TACF Virginia Chapter. The chestnuts had been induced into their germination phase and were ready for planting in late spring. Prior to planting, the BRNP staff prepped the field by plowing under the vegetative cover in the area

VA_TACF Plot at Banshee Reeks NP



really well. This site prep is a critical step as it allows the sprouts better growing conditions. As mentioned in the Paul article, 20+ volunteers planted over 500 chestnuts on April 13, 2018. Two weeks later, additional chestnuts were planted.

Guided by veteran Virginia Chapter members, the standard TACF methodology for direct planting of nuts was employed on the BRNP site. Starting in the northeast corner of the acreage, 25 rows aligned in a north/south direction are measured out. Each of these rows contain 36 or 37 holes spaced roughly a foot apart. Each of these ‘spaces’ have a PVC anchor marker with a 16-inch plastic protective sleeve attached. After digging a hole “the size of your fist,” we placed a chestnut in each hole. Then the nut was covered with potting soil, the plastic sleeve centered over the nut, and the PVC hammered into the ground to anchor it. Finally 2-3 inches of wood mulch was distributed around the base of the sleeves. Thus far, plantings on the acreage consist of 22 rows of the 40 that have been scoped out. These 40 rows occupy roughly less than half of the two acres dedicated to the TACF partnership.

Although this is quite early to be surveying (less than 60 days), I must admit my pleasure in seeing significant sprouting in the BRNP plot. Even after

reviewing literature, I have no reference points to compare our growth rate with, but I am confident it is higher than normal. That said, the mortality rate of the sprouts may increase in the ensuing harsh days of summer and the survival rate be reduced. And it is improbable that more sprouting will occur. Just as in farming, success in these endeavors is dependent on many variables, especially climatic ones, that are not under human control.

I decided the best way to provide the survey results was to draw charts, then follow-up with some rudimentary statistical information and brief discussion of supplemental observations detected in the course of the survey. The attached diagram of the rows and spaces depicts the plot described in the paragraph above. I attempted to generate a chart that mimics the actual orchard configuration. Shown is whether a sprout has grown in each space in the planting area and its relative position in the orchard. Therefore, on the charts a green dot indicates a live sprout growing inside the sleeve. Those volunteers who can remember (or not) which rows they helped plant surely will feel a sense of accomplishment. So, how did we do? Following is brief summary of the survey findings—enjoy.

Based on counting the completed sleeves, 767 chestnuts were planted. As of May 26, 2018, 490

sprouts are visually identifiable as chestnuts. This is an average 63.8% successful sprouting rate. Computing each row illustrates a wide range of sprouting rates. The lowest row (#11) shows 18.9 percent. This row has only 7 sprouts out of 37 growing. The highest row (#10) achieves a 94.6 percent rate with 35 of 37 spaces containing sprouts. Row #33 curiously shows 63.8%, the overall plot average, with 23/36 growth ratio. From viewing the charts, no discernible pattern(s) relating to whether or not sprouting happened was detectable. In fact, the best row and the worse row are adjacent. Note in the last two columns of each row I have total the number of sprouts and computed the percentage levels. Hopefully, when viewing the charts these factors are clear.

Another observation that piqued my attention and interest was the range in the size of the sprouts. Specimen sizes varied significantly. Some sprouts are just emerging up through the ground and are less than one-inch high with their typical early dual leaves. At the other end of the spectrum, several large specimens are 9-10 inches high with 6-8 leaves. However, on average, and representing the majority of the sprouts, are specimens ranging in the 2 inch to 5 inch size. Quantification of this size disparity might be worth a secondary survey to determine if vigorous initial growth could be a factor for long-term sprout survival.

My opinion is that inadequate information exists to answer the question, "How did we do?" Yes, the survey provides a very encouraging and positive data point in our project. Clearly better-than-normal sprout growth is exhibited to date in the BRNP plot. Sampling and analyzing their survival rate after the annual planting date (Spring 2019) might present a better measure of success.

Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy's 22nd Annual Butterfly Count

Lisa McKew

Are you a butterfly expert? Are you interested in learning more about butterflies? Loudoun Wildlife

Conservancy welcomes you to join them in their 22nd annual butterfly count on August 4th. All ages and levels of butterfly enthusiasts are welcome – you will be asked your expertise level when you register and will be grouped with experienced leaders. Help count for the just the morning, just the afternoon, or all day if you want. Data that is collected is reported to the North American Butterfly Association which tracks butterfly populations. So, in addition to spending time outdoors in some beautiful parts of Loudoun County, you are helping with this important Citizen Science project!

Click here for more information and to register: <https://loudounwildlife.org/event/lets-count-butterflies-2/>



Clouded Sulphur (*Colias philodice*)



Viceroy (*Limenitis archippus*)

Horned Larks

Bryan and Allison

For the past couple of years, we've been watching Horned Larks (*Eremophila alpestris*) at a local construction field. Horned Larks like open fields with short grasses and a bit of exposed dirt, so it's a natural location for them to congregate. Nevertheless, as we watch the site change and construction start, it's hard not to worry about the larks and where they could breed in future years.

Horned Larks are a sparrow sized and shaped bird with a dramatic yellow and black mask. They can also show their eponymous horns which are just a few feathers that will stick up. Linnaeus original named Horned Lark, *Alauda alpestris*, which meant Lark of the Alps, probably because of experience with their European distribution with populations in high elevations. Humorously, the European's common name for the Horned Lark is actually Shore Lark.



Horned Lark (*Eremophila alpestris*)

Because of their short stature, their preference for grasslands and their coloration, Horned Larks can be difficult to find visually; often, the key to finding them is to look for slight movements on the ground. Their beautiful song can oftentimes be the easiest way to determine if they are around.

Book Review: The Rights of Nature by David R. Boyd

by Crissy Bellandi

The Rights of Nature by David R. Boyd explores the legal framework around the rights of not only elements in nature such as animals and rivers, but

also entire ecosystems. The idea of such entities having legal standing is a provocative one in Western culture, and this book begs the question, can nature and its constituent parts have legal rights akin to those of people? The case for such rights is framed amidst the backdrop of resource exploitation and the present worldwide decline in biodiversity. The book highlights case studies from around the world including the U.S., Canada, New Zealand, Ecuador and Bolivia. One example from the book is that of New Zealand granting legal rights to a river as well as a national park, in which the natural entities become legal owners of themselves rather than being owned by humans. This book invites the reader to suspend their current thinking about which entities should have legal agency and consider the natural world not only in the frame of "resources" but as an entity existing for its own sake, not just for the sake of human utilization.

COMMITTEE CORNER

Volunteer Service Projects Committee

Chair: Jane Yocom

The Butterfly count is a great time to get some late summer volunteer hours in – sign up at the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy website. The Fall Native Plant sale provides a great opportunity to get fall volunteer hours – contact Dori to get involved. Bat monitoring is expected to go into November – contact Barbara to get involved.

Historian

The Historian committee has been disbanded.

If you have good photos, please send them to the chapter at ymnbansheereeks@gmail.com or post them on our [Facebook](#) page.

Communications/Newsletter Committee

Chair: Bryan Henson

We're always looking for article contributions to the website, so remember that writing and research time count as VMN Volunteer Hours! We hope that you're enjoying our website, www.bansheereeks.org. Please also check out our [VMN-Banshee Reeks Chapter Facebook group](#). If you haven't yet joined, please do!

Outreach Committee

Chair: Brian Meyerriecks

Look for a meeting of the committee members in the next few weeks. Anyone interested in helping at the VMN table during the upcoming native plant sale on the 8th September, please contact Brian Meyerriecks at brian@meyerriecks.com.

Host Committee

Chair: EMPTY – PLEASE VOLUNTEER

Join fellow members and guests for our Annual Membership Potluck Picnic on Sunday, August 12th! 12:00-3:00pm at Banshee Reeks in the Education Annex. Try your luck in this year's fundraising raffle and silent auction. Enter for a chance to win gear, gizmos, books, plants, home-made treats, décor, handcrafted jewelry, accessories, kid's gadgets and more! Click on this link for the picnic online sign-up through "Perfect Potluck": www.PerfectPotluck.com/WHLA9501. If you are unable to click on link sign-up, please RSVP through the following website: www.PerfectPotluck.com. In the box that says "Find", enter Coordinator VMN, and Password 2177. Please refer to the detailed information at top of listing about group potluck dish coordination, RSVP/attendee number and (optional) donation of raffle/silent auction items. Kindly RSVP with number of attendees by August 5th!

We ARE CURRENTLY SEEKING anyone interested in hosting (or innovative venue suggestions for) our Annual VMN Holiday Party in December 2018. You provide the home and we provide everything else! Contact the Host Committee (debcrew@comcast.net or thaissa.klim@verizon.net) or send us an email at vmnbansheereeks@gmail.com.

Membership Committee

Chair: Barbara Erlandson

The 2017/18 class is almost full. Our goal is to have 22 students and we currently have 19 applicants ... most of whom are confirmed as members of the upcoming class. This is a wonderful group of individuals that are committed to the local environment and are interested in working as volunteers to make things better. They

will be invited to the annual picnic where you will have a chance to welcome them personally.

Continuing Education Committee

Chair: Bill Cour

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 like the chapter to present a class, contact Bill Cour (wmkcour@gmail.com).

Training Committee

Chair: Sue Robinson

The Virginia Master Naturalist training class will start on Sept 15, 2018. New instructors are being added to add more depth and fresh information for the class. Inventory of materials is complete and books and supplies have been ordered. More hands-on field work is being added where it fits with the subject. If you have friends that are interested, please let them they can still register. A lessons learned session from the revised "walk as a naturalist" practicum was held to further refine what was done for the last class, what worked well and what caused bottle necks, so changes could be made. This is to make it so it what a Naturalist does when they go out in the field.

The class schedule can be found on the VMN Banshee Reeks website at <http://www.vmnbanseereeks.org/home-page/class-schedule/>. The first class is on September 15th, 2018 and the graduation is tentatively set for April 27th, 2019.

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

And join our Facebook group:

[Virginia Master Naturalist-Banshee Reeks Chapter](#)



Summer 2018

BUG BYTES

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

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