



# Rivanna Naturalist News

A newsletter for Master Naturalists of Albemarle and surrounding Virginia counties.

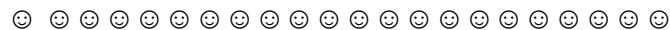
Volume 2 No. 2

Jun-Aug 2009

The majority of you can access the internet. Some of the information is on the following websites. Actually, I didn't use much from these sources. Too much elsewhere!

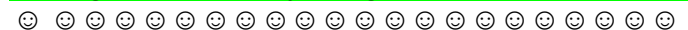
- Our web site [vmn-rivanna.org/index.html](http://vmn-rivanna.org/index.html)
- Va Naturalists [Va Naturalists](#)
- Va Native Plants [Virginia Native Plant Society](#).
- Monticello Bird Club link from vmn web site above
- ICNA [ivycreekfoundation.org/](http://ivycreekfoundation.org/)

The auto links may not work for you, particularly when using Firefox. Right click on the site name and select Edit. Copy the web address into your browsers address line.



## Volunteer Opportunities

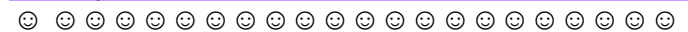
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### Upcoming Meetings

- General Meeting - June 28
- Statewide Conf. - Oct 30 – Nov 1

Weekly RMN hikes - See below



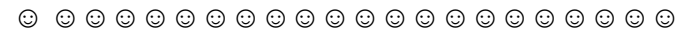
### Upcoming Education Opportunities

First Saturday bird walks @ ICNA, 7:30 am. Beginners always welcome. Meet in parking lot.

Va Native Plant Soc. - Normally no educational meetings in the summer

Monticello Bird Club - Normally no educational meetings in the summer.

Third Thursdays Brown Bag Lunch Forums  
 Bring your lunch to the forum and learn about a variety of topics important to the Rivanna River.  
 When: Third Thursday of each month @ 12:00PM - 1:00PM  
 Where: Jefferson-Madison Regional Library [\(MAP\)](#), 201 E. Market Street



## Congratulations to the Class of 2009!

I don't have a picture. We took off for Ohio to celebrate our daughter's getting her masters degree & couldn't stick around for this graduation. Look for a picture on our web site soon, hopefully. The other classes have pictures there, in the members' password-protected section.

- President: Susan Pleiss [pleiss3@gmail.com](mailto:pleiss3@gmail.com)
- President Elect: Ida Swenson [idathefriz@gmail.com](mailto:idathefriz@gmail.com)
- Recording Secretary: Tana Herndon [tberndon@earthlink.net](mailto:tberndon@earthlink.net)
- Corresponding Secretary: Jackie Heath (written) [jackieheath@comcast.net](mailto:jackieheath@comcast.net)
- Corresponding Secretary: Ralph Hall (newsletter) [ralphhall@embarqmail.com](mailto:ralphhall@embarqmail.com)
- Treasurer: Mary Lee Epps [mse5e@virginia.edu](mailto:mse5e@virginia.edu)
- Timekeeper: TBA [rivannamn.hours@gmail.com](mailto:rivannamn.hours@gmail.com)
- Historian: Terri Keffert [tkeffert@yahoo.com](mailto:tkeffert@yahoo.com)
- Generic email address: [rivannamn.info@gmail.com](mailto:rivannamn.info@gmail.com)  
 website: <http://www.vmn-rivanna.org>

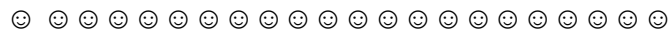


Chapter Advisors: Peter Warren & LoriAnne Barnett

- Committee Chairs:
- Volunteer Service Projects: Dorothy Tompkins [rivannamn.info@gmail.com](mailto:rivannamn.info@gmail.com)
- Programs: Rose Brown and Tina Strealy-Colom
- Recruitment Committee: Dede Smith
- Curriculum: Tony Russell
- Hospitality: Rachel Bush

This class is already an active one. You'll see mentions of quite a few of their names below.

Ralph Hall, RMN 2007



**Bluebird Boxes**

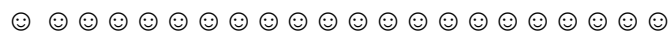
This Spring brought an increased number of bluebirds to Albemarle County thanks to the bluebird trails established over 20 years ago. Located throughout the county, boxes are monitored weekly by community volunteers, including at least five VMN. Records are kept on such things as number of eggs, hatchlings, fledgings and box damage. Last year there were 922 fledgings (including other cavity nesters). If interested in participating, please contact Ann Dunn at 296-3496 or Janet Paisley at 989-3857.

Here's Ann Dunn (RMN 2007) checking a box.



(Ed. note: Many of these bluebird boxes were made and maintained by Dr. Bob Hammond up until just after his retirement to Colonnades. You may hear more about this later.)

Jackie Heath, RMN 2007



**RMN Adventures**

General Meeting: Sunday, June 28, 3-6 pm at Ivy Creek Natural Area. New members are encouraged to attend!! Here's a run down of the meeting activities:

- Awarding certificates and nametags to all members who have completed their certification/recertification requirements in the past 6 months.

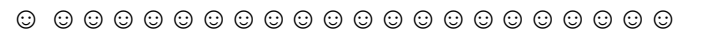
- Interpretive walk in the woods with perennial favorite, Tom Dierauf. You won't want to miss this!!
- Potluck of fingerfoods -- Each person please bring a fingerfood along with your own dishes/silverware and plan to take away your own dishes and garbage (to save on cleanup and reduce waste/garbage)
- Live music!
- A slide show of photos from master naturalist activities and work done over the past year!

To see more information on other volunteer and educational events, view the RMN calendar of activities for the month: [http://www.vmn-rivanna.org/calendar\\_June\\_2009.html](http://www.vmn-rivanna.org/calendar_June_2009.html)

Sneak Preview of June/July events:

- Nuisance Wildlife Class, June 6, 1 pm
- RMN General Meeting, June 28, 3-6 pm, some info above.
- Fern Walk @ Wintergreen, July 11, 10 am – 1 pm
- Camping Trip. Since the general meeting is in June and the state-wide conference is in October, we want the trip to be in July or August. We've narrowed down to 2 possible weekends: July 25/26 or August 1/2. Please fill out this doodle poll if you'd like to let us know your preference: [doodle.com/epvzkmc69n5kr9d](http://doodle.com/epvzkmc69n5kr9d). Doodle by July 1<sup>st</sup>, please.

Rose Brown email: [rose@streamwatch.org](mailto:rose@streamwatch.org) or phone 434-962-3527  
Tina Colom email: [ronceverte\\_63@yahoo.com](mailto:ronceverte_63@yahoo.com) or phone 434-297-1765



**Statewide Conference**

Virginia Master Naturalist Statewide Volunteer Conference and Training, October 30-November 1, Leesburg, Virginia.

I've just posted our 2008 annual program report and newsletter. You can download it at <http://www.virginiamasternaturalist.org/documents.html> (look under publicity). It's a lengthy document, but worth a read to learn about all the great things you all accomplished in 2008. I've also posted there a 1-page report for 2008 that might be handy if you need to give something short and sweet to one of your partner organizations.

I would really like for the annual report/newsletter to be available (and hopefully read) by \*all\* of our

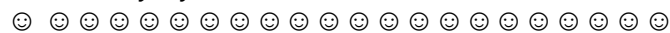
Master Naturalist volunteers, so if you could please share the link with your chapter members, I would be grateful. Also, I am willing to have some copies printed, so if you would like me to mail a stack of them to your chapter, please let me know and be sure to tell me how many you need.

If you read the report, you'll see that we (finally) have dates and a location for our 2009 Virginia Master Naturalist Statewide Volunteer Conference and Training. This event was a real hit last fall in Wytheville. This year, the Banshee Reeks Chapter in Loudoun County will be our host chapter, and our meeting location will be a hotel in Leesburg. The dates are October 30-November 1, 2009. I'm sure some folks will not be able to participate due to Halloween-related family activities, but I will guarantee a fun and spooky time for those who can be there. Please put these dates on your calendars (particularly those of you planning fall courses...try not to have a field trip planned for that Saturday!) and I will let you know when we have more information and registration available.

Finally, thank you so very much for all of the hard work that you put into your chapter annual reports for 2008. As you will see, I relied on them extensively for the annual program report, and I was extremely impressed by all that you have accomplished.

Thanks, everyone!

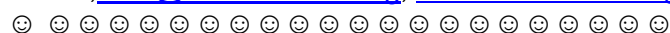
Michelle Prysby



**Streamwatch Training**

StreamWatch is hosting a volunteer stream monitor training workshop on Saturday, June 13, from 10am until 4pm at Ivy Creek. The session will cover the fundamentals of stream biological sampling - catching and identifying aquatic invertebrates for the purpose of evaluating water quality and stream health. The training is free, but class size is limited. To reserve a space, or for further information about becoming a StreamWatch volunteer, contact Rose:

Rose Brown, Program Manager  
StreamWatch, 434.962.3527, P.O. Box 181, Ivy, VA 22945, [rose@streamwatch.org](mailto:rose@streamwatch.org), [www.streamwatch.org](http://www.streamwatch.org)



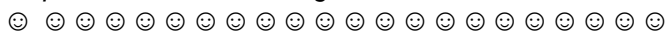
**Wildlife Habitat  
"Train-the-Trainer" Advanced Workshop for  
Master Naturalists**

Workshop locations/dates:  
June 20—Wytheville, Wythe County (southwest VA) (Deadline: registration must be received on or before June 10)  
July 8—Lovingston, Nelson County (central VA) (Deadline: registration must be received on or before June 29)

WHO'S INVITED: This workshop is being offered to Virginia Master Naturalists who have already received their first year of "basic training" and are ready to move on to more specific course work. It is intended that upon completion of the training, participants agree to be part of an active facilitator list who will be called upon by DGIF to conduct habitat programs and/or workshops for schools, community organizations or other educational venues in their local area, as the need arises. Ideally, such programs and workshops will create opportunities for future habitat plantings or restoration projects that your Chapter helps to coordinate in its respective region.

WORKSHOP CONTENT: Because habitat improvement projects necessitate many "layers" of involvement and coordination among community partners, Master Naturalists need to feel comfortable with many audiences, including teachers, youth group leaders, Master Gardeners and the general public. Our goal is to give you the tools to: 1) understand how to work effectively with these audiences and answer commonly asked questions; 2) be able to identify habitat elements on a site that need improvement and recommend solutions; and 3) plan and conduct your own habitat program or workshop. This training will therefore include techniques for outdoor instruction, habitat mapping, and planning an agenda for different audiences.

*Ralph Hall, from Ruth Douglas forward*



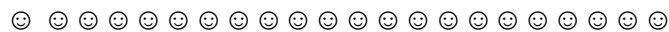
**Wet Stewardship**

**June 12, 2009; 9:00 am – 3:00 pm**  
**Three Lakes Nature Center**  
What makes wetlands different from streams and rivers? The Department of Environmental Quality in partnership with the Department of Game and

Inland Fisheries will offer a 6-hour workshop for educators highlighting the biological and physical characteristics of wetlands. Participants will receive training in the Wonders of Wetlands (WOW!) curriculum and the statewide Wildlife Mapping program. This workshop will be held at the Three Lakes Nature Center in Henrico County. Dress appropriately for the weather and please bring rubber boots or hip waders if you have them available. Email [Stephanie Feaser](mailto:Stephanie.Feaser@va.gov) by June 5, 2009 to register for this workshop.

Virginia Office of Environmental Education  
Department of Environmental Quality  
P.O. Box 1105, 629 E. Main Street  
Richmond, VA 23218  
804-698-4039  
804-698-4533 fax  
[www.deq.virginia.gov/education](http://www.deq.virginia.gov/education)

David Ruble, contact info above



**Geocaching**

The new high-tech treasure hunting game that is sweeping the country. Fun for adults, kids and families!

SATURDAY, JUNE 20, 2009 10:00-12 NOON  
at the SCHEIER NATURAL AREA  
917 LONG ACRE ROAD, Palmyra, VA 22963  
Call RCS at (434) 97-RIVER for more information  
Sponsored by: Friends of Scheier

FROM CHARLOTTESVILLE  
Take Rt. 64 East to Exit 136. Take Rt. 15 South toward Palmyra and Fork Union Go through the town of Palmyra and go over the bridge that spans the Rivanna River.

Continue on Rt. 15. Turn right on Rt. 640 (Haden Martin). Turn right onto Rt. 639 Long Acre Road (approximately 5 miles to Scheier Natural Area on the right). OR

FROM CHARLOTTESVILLE  
Take Rt. 20 South. Turn left onto Rt. 53 East (past Monticello). Bear right onto Rt.795 (past Ashlawn) Sharp left curve onto Rolling Road. Follow Rolling Road through Albemarle County into Fluvanna County. When signs indicate that you have entered Fluvanna County, continue approximately 4 miles. Turn left onto 639 Long Acre Road. Scheier Natural Area is about 1 mile on left.



**National Trails Day & Clean The Bay Day, June 6<sup>th</sup>, 9-noon**

Can you please pass this along to the Master Naturalists? We are looking for general volunteers to help out at Riverview Park (up to 30 people!) and an already established group of folks (like the Master Naturalists) to help us at McIntire Park. If you are interested in taking on the project at McIntire Park we need to delegate someone as the zone captain leader. (who is the on-site leader for the clean up day)

Here are the sites and leaders we have so far:  
Riverview Park- need 30-50 volunteers! - Liz Spellman (OVA student)  
Quarry Park - C-vile Sports and Social Club (Chad Day site leader)  
Jordan Park - Hope Community Center (Joshua Bare site leader)  
McIntire Park- Need ~25 volunteers- no zone captain leader identified

Clean the Bay Day (CTBD) is the big Chesapeake Bay Watershed-wide cleanup. Last year was a record-breaking year with 7,020 volunteers and 120 tons of debris removed from 434 miles of waterways! This year the Chesapeake Bay Foundation and partners are aiming for even higher numbers, but we need your help! If you are interested in volunteering with us for the first ever CHARLOTTESVILLE area Clean the Bay Day on Saturday, June 6 from 9:00 a.m. to noon at RIVERVIEW PARK please contact Jen Rich, volunteer coordinator, at 434-951-0572 or [jrich@tnc.org](mailto:jrich@tnc.org). You can find more information and also sign up through the Clean the Bay Day website: [www.cbf.org/clean](http://www.cbf.org/clean). Other locations around the commonwealth need volunteers too!

Jen Rich, contact details above



**Eco Fair 2009**

This was my first year at the Eco Fair. I learned in Singapore to stay home when there was a holiday or special event going on because one (at least I) couldn't get around the way I wanted, and I hate crowds. Well, C'ville is different, but I still couldn't get out of my area until around 10-11 o'clock in the morning due to the Marathon doing a turnaround (at the 13 mile point) at Barracks Farm Road, my only way out to town. The Marathon was concluding when CJ dropped me at the County



These plant invaders alter habitats and reduce biodiversity. They cause ecological and economic harm. Experts consider these plants to be the second most serious threat to the quality of our natural areas and their ability to support wildlife. Scientists estimate that 14 million acres of land (about half the size of Virginia) in the U.S. are newly infested each year!

This year (2009), we're declaring an Invasive Plant Removal Day all over the state of Virginia. Invasives have taken a firm foothold in many parts of the state and everyone's help is needed to reclaim our natural areas. Removing invasive plants and sowing native flora is a fantastic way to restore water quality and wildlife habitat in any biome."

I've been fighting, primarily, Autumn Olive and Oriental Bittersweet on my property by cutting these back mainly in the winter time when it's easy to see and to get at them. I was getting ahead until the fine rains of this spring brought a totally new crop up from seeds and old roots. Garlic Mustard was very evident but doesn't seem to have become invasive in our woods. Here's a picture of my early rain garden construction that replaced a huge autumn olive that was serving as a step ladder for oriental bittersweet to get into native cedar and Va pine trees.



You can see old bittersweet vines hanging from the trees in the background (behind that miserable haze in my picture).

Another invasive just coming in AGAIN this year is Japanese Stiltgrass. This stuff HATES grass whips. Easy to pull up, too.

Ralph Hall, RMN 2007



### Bird Walk, April 22

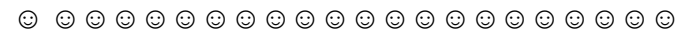
I have been on lots of bird walks and I just want to say that Peter did an outstanding job. He also made some very informative comments about migration, flight patterns, etc. that were very helpful for our class.

The following were some of the birds that I recorded that were identified on our April 22 bird walk led By Peter. I am certain there were more.

Blue Jay , Cardinal, Carolina Wren, Flicker , Hawk (Red Shouldered & possibly the hawk's nest), Heron (Great Blue), Kinglet (Ruby-crowned), Nuthatch, Sparrow (White Throated), Starling (nesting in barn), Warbler (Common Yellow Throated), Titmouse, Eastern Towhee, Turkey Vulture, Blue headed Vireo

Also, Devon spotted two soaring red tail hawks, but I did not see them.

Jim Lawson, RMN 2009



### Toe-biter, Mr. Mom of insect World

(submitted by Devin Floyd, RMN 2009, author noted below)

The evolution of parental care in males- or "Mr. Mom" of the animal world

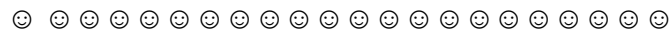


One of the more interesting and highly predaceous invertebrates that you will encounter in fresh water habitats is a large water bug or hemipteran in the genus Belostoma . They are commonly found when dipnetting in ponds and I came across several both in FL and VA ponds I have sampled recently. These bugs deserve a lot of respect that is

indicated by their common name of "toe biter." They get this name since if you step on them they will bite your foot; they have a sucking proboscis and a secretion that when injected causes severe pain. Even more fascinating is the reproductive habits by which the females glue the fertilized eggs to the back of the males for brooding (see photo). This process by which the male protects the eggs attached to or in his immediate care is quite rare; other examples are sea horses (eggs in pouch) and the Surinam toad (eggs glued to and absorbed into back skin). A theory for this unusual circumstance is that it is one way in which the male can be assured of his paternity of the eggs. This is believed to be a major factor involved in development of parental care by males.

So pick up a net and do a few scoops in the nearest freshwater pond and you may be surprised by what you find! Here is a case of advanced behavior in a lowly insect.

*Bill Dunson, Galax, VA/Englewood, FL*



**Another Mom Story**

When hurricane Hannah separated two white tiger cubs from their mother, Anjana came to the Rescue.



Anjana, a chimp at TIGERS in South Carolina, became surrogate mom and playmate to the cubs, even helping with bottle feeding, (according to The Sun). But here's the truly amazing part:

This is something Anjana does all the time, having helped raised leopard and lion cubs on several occasions.

*From Virginia Grenier, LSU*



**The Flora of Virginia: A Resource for Naturalists**

Virginia plant people have needed their own flora for a long time. After all, the last reference on our plant life, *Flora Virginica*, was published in 1762, based on the collections and descriptions of Gloucester County naturalist John Clayton. The call

for a flora remained alive for decades, thanks especially to the Virginia Academy of Science, but meanwhile, everyone has had to make do. Sadly, floras created for other states or regions don't cut it for Virginia. We have more species than other states our size, thanks to the diverse topography between the ocean and mountains and to the convergence of ranges of northern and southern plants.

At last, in 2001, the Flora of Virginia Project was founded with a fourfold mission: a) produce a comprehensive manual on the plants of Virginia; b) provide a tool for plant identification and study by professional and avocational users, from academia, government, industry, and the public; c) incorporate the latest genetics-based information on evolutionary relationships, along with the best traditional taxonomic approaches; and d) increase interest in the appreciation and conservation of Virginia's diverse and unique botanical heritage.

As naturalists, you're going to find the Flora of Virginia helpful in many ways. For starters, a flora is more accurate and inclusive than other guides. The detailed, Virginia-specific descriptions will include notes on habitat, bloom time, range in the state, and, for 1,400 of our 3,600 species, botanically accurate illustrations to aid in plant identification. Taxonomic names will reflect the latest advances in genetics and be the most up-to-date available in one volume. In addition, as so many of you strive to incorporate more native plants in your own landscapes, the Flora will be especially useful, but it will also help you find relatives of your favorite cultivars and identify weeds-depending, of course, on what you consider a weed!

Slated for publication in 2012, the Flora of Virginia will be a 1,400-page volume covering plants native to Virginia or naturalized here. The authors are Chris Ludwig, chief biologist with the Division of Natural Heritage in the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation; Alan Weakley, curator of the University of North Carolina Herbarium; and Johnny Townsend, botanist with Natural Heritage.

Much of the writing of taxonomic descriptions is behind us, as is much of the illustrating, and the plan is to have a complete manuscript by the end of 2010. We have begun to turn some attention to perfecting what we've done, fine-tuning ecological



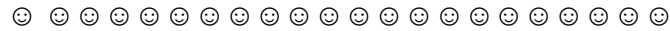




attend for a day as an 'assistant' to also get and idea of what to do and where you might fit in. (I started that way!).

This is a wonderful volunteer activity. The kids are excited, but generally VERY well behaved. It is wonderful to see their excitement and involvement in learning about our watershed and the environment. If you have more questions, feel free to contact me.

*Ida Swenson, RMN 2006*



**Green Car, Clean or Earthy?**

You've just bought a Toyota Prius or Honda Insight (they're 4 door now) and think you've reached the pinnacle for fuel economy. Does that mean that your car should look earthy or showroom clean? Suppose it's earthy: covered in dirt and maybe having some hanging from each wheel well. Is that good? Consider the extra weight you're toting around. Weight needs energy to get up to speed and to climb hills. True, the hybrid system may allow you to capture some of that energy in going back down the hills and before each stop, but there's always some loss. Also added "stuff" on the paint and hanging from underneath adds to aerodynamic drag. You can't get that back from your hybrid system.

I did a web search looking for fuel efficiency numbers for keeping one's car clean. Some said 2-4%; another said 2%; still another quoted 7%. I tend to believe it's closer to 2%, by eliminating the dirt weight and making it more aerodynamic. The higher 7% says "combined with waxing". This could have been true on older finishes that would oxidize when let go but probably not now true for modern, slick finishes. Let's say it's 2% and your Prius gets 50 mpg average, and you drive 12,000 miles/yr. You'll be buying 240 gallons of gas/yr. Keeping it clean would save 4.8 gallons, not enough to take it through a car wash once/month. However, most Prius drivers will likely want to get that extra 2% economy, another 1 mpg!

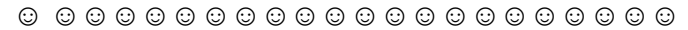
But is that car wash very efficient? I lived in Singapore from 1990-1994. It's illegal to wash one's car there with a hose, and there are no commercial car washes. I did it about once a week with 2 buckets, a sponge and a little bit of car wash soap. If the car was really dirty, I'd sometimes need a 2<sup>nd</sup> bucket of clean water to get the soapy water and extra dirt off. A plain old towel worked to dry it off, maybe aided with a little squeegeeing with my hand or with a real squeegee beforehand. I had to do it in the basement car park of our condo. Best way to do it to conserve resources is to do it on your lawn or on a gravel surface.

You can further improve efficiency by using a hose with a nice spray nozzle on the end. Just use it to spray off the soapy water. Only takes seconds of spray to do so. You can probably make do with as little as 3 gallons of total water usage: 1 ½ to 2 gallons of mild soapy and another 1 to 1 ½ gallons of spray rinse. A heavier spray can be used to clean those wheel wells to remove weighty dirt from them, or wash with a sponge, mitt or limber brush.

How much does a commercial car wash use? LOTS more than 3 or 4 gallons. Again, my searches on the web revealed 20-43 gallons/vehicle. The lowest figure quoted was 15 gallons if you use one of those pressure washers at the commercial car wash and do it yourself (and these really don't work that well in my experience). NONE of this water is useful to help our your poor starving-for-water grass or ground water tables either.

Another bit of weight that accumulates is brake dust on the inside of your vehicle's wheels. It's a good idea to wash this off each time you rotate your tires (usually every 5-7,000 miles).

*Ralph Hall, RMN 2007*



**Parting Shots**

Here are some parting shots for you.

Let's all vow to get more exercise.



Some of us get pretty tired doing it though.



Others get bad hair hours doing it.



*Ralph Hall, RMN 2007*

Deadline for items to be included in the newsletter is the **26<sup>th</sup> of the month before the next quarter (August)**. Please submit any announcements or articles of interest to be included in the next issue to *Rivanna Naturalist Notes* Editor, Ralph Hall, preferably by [e-mail](#), by facsimile 434-297-1962 or by USPS mail to 420 Ivy Farm Drive, Charlottesville, VA 22901-8841.



