The majority of you can access the internet. Some of the information is on the following websites. I’ve put some of the Ivy Creek stuff into this newsletter.

Our web site:  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/

If the auto links don’t work, copy and paste the URL into your browser.

Rivanna Master Naturalists Annual Holiday Gathering
Sunday, December 4th 5th Street County Office Building, Room A (that glassed in one in front)

1:30 pm  Pot Luck, Drinks provided
          Awards Ceremony Including Recognitions and Class Spirit Award
          (The class with the most attendance)
          Book and Naturalist Gadget Exchange
2:30  Presentation by Marshal Faintich Author of the book "Birds of Wintergreen ", A visual journey among the wildlife and birds of Central Virginia
3:00  Presentation by Marshal Faintich Author of the book "Birds of Wintergreen ", A visual journey among the wildlife and birds of Central Virginia

Please bring your own dish/utensils & drink holders.

Questions: Call John 973-9179

Treasurer:  Ann Dunn  
ad7k@VIRGINIA.EDU
Timekeeper:  Diane Lewis  
rivannamn.hours@gmail.com
Historian  Terri Keffer
  tkeffert@yahoo.com
Webmaster:  Eric Johnson  
ericdmjohnson@gmail.com
Chapter email address: rivannamn.info@gmail.com
  website: http://www.vmn-rivanna.org

Chapter Advisors:  Jenny Thompson  
  jthompson05@vt.edu
Committee Chairs:
Volunteer Projects:  Bitsy Waters  
rivannamn.info@gmail.com
Programs/Hospitality:  John Holden/Linda Goodling
Curriculum:  Laura Seale
PR Committee:  Cass Cannon/Mary Spear
Diversity Committee:  Tony Russell

Volunteer Opportunities
  Designated below by this green color

Upcoming Meetings
  Designated below by this purple color

Upcoming Advanced Training Opportunities
  Designated by this burnt yellow color.

Pay Your Dues/Make Donation

Your 2012 dues ($10) to Rivanna Master Naturalist are now due and should be paid before our General Meeting on December 4. This notice, however, does NOT apply to the 2011 class as your tuition fee included dues for both 2011 and 2012. For the 2010 class this is a first time request. The dues are used to cover administrative costs such as mailings, PO box rental, the web page and refreshments at our twice yearly gatherings.
We would also like to request that you consider making a donation to our VMN chapter. We established a scholarship fund in 2008. This year we gave $400 toward tuitions for several children in the 4-H summer camp program and gave partial scholarships to members of this year’s training class. We also gave a $200 donation to Ivy Creek Conservation Area in recognition of our use of the facility. The latter came out of our general account. As we currently do not have IRS status as a non-profit organization, contributions are not tax deductible.

Please mail your check, made out to Rivanna Master Naturalist to P.O. Box 8284, Charlottesville, VA 22906. If you are including a donation please indicate if you would like it to be placed into the scholarship fund or the general account.

Ann Dunn

Officer Slate for 2012

It is the duty of the Past President to chair a nominating committee to seek out qualified candidates for the Board of Directors. There will be an election at the Annual meeting on December 4. The floor will be open for other nominations, but it gives me great pleasure to submit the following nominees for offices on the Rivanna Master Naturalist Board of Directors:

President-elect: Laura Seale (This is a one year term to be followed by one year as president and then one year as past president)

Corresponding Secretary: Keggie Mallet for a full two year term of office. Keggie was elected last year to replace Carol Lawson who resigned in the middle of her term of office.

Recording Secretary: Mary Tillman for a one year term of office. Mary has been filling in for Marianne O’Brien whose shift in job responsibilities has made attending the Board meetings impossible.

Treasurer: Ann Dunn for her second two year term of office. Ann has done a wonderful job as treasurer for the past two years and I am thrilled that she is willing to do it for two more years.

If there are more than two nominees for any one position, we will do a secret paper ballot. If there are none, Dorothy will entertain a motion to elect these nominees by acclamation.

Thanks to all who helped me brainstorm names and encouraged me. I am really excited about these fine candidates and know they will serve us with their best. Do be thinking about how YOU would like to help in the running of our organization. I know there are openings on every committee as well.

And thanks for all you do to keep our natural world in tip top shape.

Ida Swenson

New 4-H Agent & (Maybe) Secretary (not same person)

I’m happy to announce that our new 4-H Agent, Robbie Morrison, will be starting with us on November 28th! She comes to us from Taylor County Georgia, where she has been the 4-H Director for the past 6 years. Robbie impressed everyone on our interview committee with her experience and her passion for 4-H. Please feel free to stop in and introduce yourself to Robbie, once she gets settled!

More good news! We have gotten permission from the County to fill our Office Associate position (Lottie Dudley’s old job). Advertising started today online and will run in all the local papers for the next two weeks. Closing date is November 30th. This position is part-time (32 hrs/week) with benefits. If you know anyone who may be interested, the full position description and application are on the Albemarle County website: www.albemarle.org/jobs

Carrie Swanson

Logging Onto Timekeeper Site

Several people have had difficulty accessing the Master Naturalist timekeeping system. Below are step-by-step instructions for updating your password so you can access the system.

1. Log into http://www.vmn-rivanna.org/ (User name: member; Password: rivanna)
2. Click "Members Only" in blue bar on right side of screen.
3. Under "Hours Submission," click "Report Your Volunteer and Advanced Training Hours (Timekeeping System)."

4. In 2nd sentence, click "Volunteer Management System." (The Virginia Master Naturalist Volunteer Management System login page will display.)

5. Enter your email address and password. (If you are unable to access the system with your email address and password, scroll down and click "Password Problems.") 

6. Enter email address field then click "Receive email to access portal." You will receive a message advising you that an email has been sent to you which will enable you to access the portal and change your password.

7. Go to your email account to retrieve the new message from mprysby@vt.edu.

8. Click "Access Master Naturalist Volunteer Management System" (bold blue text). This will take you to the VMS welcome screen.

9. Click "Edit Your Profile" in the "Your Information" box in upper left corner.

10. Scroll down to "Change Password box; enter password.

11. Scroll down and click "Save Information."

12. Click "Add New Hours" to add your hours.

Diane Lewis

Assessing Urban Forests

Here is a photo of chapter members, tree stewards and faculty and students from Virginia Tech getting ready to go out and assess the health and diversity of Charlottesville's urban forest.

Bitsy Waters

Spotlight on Volunteering: 2011 Highlights

Congratulations to all. As of November 19th, Rivanna Master Naturalists had contributed over 3,000 volunteer hours to advance natural science knowledge, education and stewardship in our area! Thanks to the terrific work of our timekeeper Diane Lewis, we know that we logged over 1,000 hours doing citizen science, over 1,000 hours educating others about our wonderful natural resources, and over 400 hours tending trails, controlling invasive plants, and cleaning our rivers and streams, and the year isn’t over yet. These numbers will surely grow as the final tallies are done for our annual report. Great job everyone!

Activities RMN members invested the most time in over the past year include leading Ivy Creek Foundation walks and programs, Streamwatch monitoring and lab work, Bluebird Nest Box Monitoring, Albemarle County Parks Planning and Wildlife Mapping and our own RMN education activities such as public speaking, writing articles, and manning tables at events. We worked with our state partners on a host of projects including the 4-H Junior Naturalist Program at Ivy Creek, the Game and Inland Fisheries Frog and Toad Calling Survey, and an Urban Forest Assessment with the VA Department of Forestry and Virginia Tech. And we were steadfast in our support of stewardship activities with the Ivy Creek Foundation, the Nature Conservancy, and many other partners on invasive plant removal, tree planting and trail maintenance.

This was an exciting year for new projects as well. Members initiated ten new projects, including our chapter’s first participation in the North American Butterfly Association annual survey and creation of a butterfly garden at Ivy Creek. We added new opportunities to educate young people through the Blue Ridge Discovery Center Education Programs and Blue Ridge School Ecology classes.

One highlight of the past year was the completion of the first vascular plant survey at Ivy Creek in fifteen years, with leadership and many volunteer hours contributed by members of RMN. This survey provides up-to-date knowledge about what plants currently grow at Ivy Creek and also what plants have come in or been lost since the first survey in 1980. An outgrowth of the survey has been the collection of Ivy Creek plants for a permanent herbarium, which will be a valuable resource for Ivy Creek’s educational programming. 2011 also saw the completion of a comprehensive study of the Landmark Forest at James Madison’s Montpelier, which several RMN members participated in, and helping Shenandoah National Park Celebrate its 75th anniversary.

This year our chapter hosted the statewide Virginia Master Naturalist conference at Camp Friendship.
Thirty-three chapter members volunteered time to make this a success and lots more attended. Post conference evaluations were extremely positive and none of us will forget the spectacular array of mushrooms nature gave us that weekend. Special applause goes to our leader Michelle Prysby and to our chapter’s conference committee for all their hard work.

It’s been a very productive year for RMN volunteering. We had a lot of fun and have a lot to be proud of. With a great group of new volunteers added to the team after last spring’s class, we’re poised for another banner year in 2012. Thanks to everyone, and let’s all work together to make 2012 our best year ever.

_Bitsy Waters, Volunteer Projects coordinator_

**Work Day @ Byrom Forest**

This is just a reminder that we will be hosting another trail workday at Byrom Forest on Saturday (12/3) from 9am-12noon. Hope everyone had a great Thanksgiving! Feel free to contact me with any questions and please forward this email to anyone that might interested in volunteer trail work. Directions below.

Byrom Forest Preserve Park
6610 Blackwells Hollow Road
Crozet, VA 22932

Directions from town (takes approximately 45 minutes):
1. Follow Garth Road to the Piedmont Store
2. Go around the curve to the right onto Rt. 810 (do not go straight up to Sugar Hollow)
3. Follow Rt. 810 for 7.8 miles and parking area is on the left

_Tucker J. Rollins_

**Master Naturalist Property Tours**

Rachel Bush is looking for RMNs who would be willing to share their gardens and/or woods with their fellow master naturalists on a Saturday in September or October.

She will have a sign up sheet at the annual holiday meeting on December 4th, or you can e-mail her at bush.rachelterese@gmail.com.

**Master Naturalist Hikes in 2012**

Save the dates for these fabulous hikes!

Saturday March 3 - The Salamanders of Maple Flat Meet at BRMS at 9 am.

Saturday April 14 - Virginia's tallest tree! Meet at BRMS at 9 am.

Saturday April 28 - Wildflowers of the AT and White Rock Gap Meet at BRMS at 9 am.

Saturday and Sunday June 9/10 – First Master Naturalist Overnight. Canaan Valley and the Dolly Sods, West Virginia

Saturday June 16 - Birding along the Rockfish Valley Trail Meet at BRMS at 9 am.

Saturday August 11 - Our 3rd annual fantastic Butterfly Adventure The Butterflies and Ferns of Big Meadows Meet at BRMS at 10 am. Must RSVP John 434-973-9179 or runningwithantlers@gmail.com

**Piedmont Garden Club’s Butterfly Garden Blossoms at Ivy Creek**

The butterfly garden at Ivy Creek Natural Area is in repose for the winter. Most of the flowering plants have shed their leaves and are waiting for a few warm spring days to poke their heads up from the ground. This year Piedmont Garden Club made much progress on the garden. We were fortunate that we were able to have help from our dedicated Master Naturalist and Master Gardener volunteers who planted, watered, weeded and kept the garden looking good and inviting to butterflies. During the winter months, we will be working on paper and online brochures that will encourage visitors to plant butterfly gardens in their yards. The brochure will identify host and nectar plants that attract butterflies. We will also be ordering the all-weather plant markers to be installed next spring. Many thanks go to our volunteers for their hard work this year. We encourage other volunteers to help out in the spring of 2012 as the garden continues to be a work in progress!

**Advanced Training Meetings @ Ivy Creek**

(@ Ed. Center)

December

8 Monticello Bird Club Meeting
Thursday, December 8, 7:00 pm
Listen as John Spahr speaks on “Owls, Birds of Mystery and Majesty.”

14 Virginia Native Plant Society Meeting
Wednesday, December 14, 7:30 pm
Visit with friends old and new in a relaxed festive setting. Enjoy a native plant/seed exchange and informal holiday gathering

January

11 Virginia Native Plant Society Meeting
Wednesday, January 11, 7:30 pm
Jane Taylor, retired biology professor, Northern Virginia Community College will present “Native and Naturalized Plants Used In American Medicine, Past and Present”

12 Monticello Bird Club Meeting
Thursday, January 12, 7:00 pm
Listen to one of our speakers on birds. Beginners welcome.

23 Natural History of Virginia First Meeting
Monday, January 23, 7:00 pm
First meeting of Natural History of Virginia. Join Dan Bieker for the first class of Piedmont Virginia Community College’s Natural History of Virginia. You must register with PVCC. See description on Ivy Creek web site for more information.

February

8 Virginia Native Plant Society Meeting
Wednesday, February 8, 7:30 pm

9 Monticello Bird Club Meeting
Thursday, February 9, 7:00 pm
Listen to one of our speakers on birds. Beginners welcome. Free and open to the public. Meet in the Education Center.

19 Learning the Native Trees of Virginia
Sunday, February 19, 2:00 pm
Learn to identify trees in the dead of winter using bark, branching, seed, and other distinguishing characteristics. Join Ellen Powell of the Virginia Department of Forestry on a Winter Walk in the Ragged Mountain Natural Area. Meet in the RMNA parking lot.

The Piedmont Landscape Association 29th Annual Seminar

The Paramount Theater, 215 East Main Street
Thursday, February 16

Speakers:
William McShea, White tail deer specialist with the Smithsonian Institute

Catherine Zimmerman, Author and Consultant on native and warm season meadows.

Bill Cullina, Author and Curator of the Coastal Maine Botanical Gardens.

Gordon Hayward, Author of Stone in the Garden and contributing editor for Fine Gardening.

For more information: www.piedmontlandscape.org

Project Underground Workshop

February 23, 2012, 9:00am – 4:00pm
Grand Caverns, Grottoes, VA

In the morning participate in and learn Project Underground activities. The Project Underground program offers an interdisciplinary approach to understanding the unique karst environment (a land area that includes sinkholes, springs, sinking streams and caves). The lessons in the guide can be used to teach citizens of all ages about karst topography and the management needs of the karst resources. Use these materials with students in classrooms and in outreach programs with citizens and agency staff.

In the afternoon participate in a Cave and Sink Hole experience at Grand Caverns. Enjoy a hike up cave hill to see sinkholes and natural cave entrances and then explore the underground in Grand Caverns.

Please bring your own lunch, snacks and beverages for this workshop.

To learn more about Grand Caverns go to grandcaverns.com/v.php?pg=15

To register for this workshop go to www.surveymonkey.com/s/projectunderground

Carol Zokaites at carol.zokaites@dcr.virginia.gov & Page Hutchinson at page.hutchinson@deq.virginia.gov The Watershed Educators Institute
Heritage Harvest Festival

I had a hard time locating the RMN table this year. I worked an early shift at the master gardener table more or less “center court”. The RMN table was tucked away to the far left side of Monticello house.

Here’s Dede providing doing some education.

Keggie Mallet is to the rear. Below is a closer shot of her at work.

As usual, Ida was incognito. This lady accused me of using some newfangled modern device to catch this picture.

Educational Program on Snakes Draws Crowd

Bill Feeney, a master naturalist, addressed a room full of nearly 100 adults and children at an educational program on snake identification presented by the Lake Monticello Wildlife Committee on Wednesday, (Oct. 26) at the Lake Monticello clubhouse.

The purpose of these programs is to educate the public in humane ways of understanding wildlife. The committee is focused on a gentle approach to dealing with the various aspects of wildlife rather than using lethal means. Education is the key component.

Before the program, flyers had originally had photos of venomous and non-venomous snakes. Some felt seeing these flyers would upset their children. The committee agreed that this why education is essential and that wildlife does not need to be feared but understood. Understanding the characteristics and the habitats of a variety of wildlife in our area will help adults and children to better informed and less fearful.

Feeney, with 35 years experience as a biologist, focuses on amphibians, mostly snakes and frogs.

“Snakes are ectoderms, covered with dry scales. They have no ability to hear but feel vibrations through their body and have a strong sense of smell,” said Feeney.

“They do not stalk humans. All snakes are carnivores; you will not find a plant eating snake.”

“Non-venomous snakes are gentle. Venomous snakes in our area are mostly the copperhead, some timber rattlers and the cottonmouth, though that is found mostly is south-eastern Virginia.”

Speaking about their habitats, Feeney stated, "They like grassy gardens, rocky outcrops, aquatic areas, buildings, particularly old barns. Farmers like the black snakes, they patrol the barn and get rid of rodents. Threats to their habitats include habitat loss and
fragmentation, roads, intentional destruction, collection, pesticides and herbicides, disease, cats and dogs."

He added that under The Virginia Wildlife Action Plan, there is protection for snakes and their habitats. Snake Force One with the Virginia Herpetological Society is another group studying snakes and sharing a wealth of information on various species and habitats.

Feeney identified some common snakes in Virginia and among the non-venomous were the Worm snake. "This snake is harmless but it is often mistaken for a copperhead but it is small. Some keep it as a pet. The same is true of the Corn Snake, which is also mistaken for a Copperhead because of its colors. The rough green snake is also harmless as is the Queen snake, which likes aquatic areas."

"There are some non-venomous snakes that will bite if caught. They include the Northern Black Racer, Eastern Rattlesnake, and the Eastern King Snake. The Eastern King Snake is immune to venom and that's why it is the king. It also uses a constrictor action and the Rattler will lift itself up to allow the King underneath then pound on him with his body before the King can wrap himself around the Rattler."

The Eastern Garter Snake got its name because their pattern resembled men's garters.

He also discussed the more venomous snakes. "An Eastern Hog Nose may strike out and hiss but not bite. It also likes to play dead. The Northern Water Snake will bite repeatedly, the Eastern Cottonmouth floats high in the water. The Northern Copperhead has hourglass bands on his back and the young have a yellow tipped tail, the same as the young Cottonmouth. A Timber Rattler is not usually found near human habitation."

He summed up the identification by stating that those identifying or interested in snakes should learn more about the habitat and location, color, pattern and body shape, pupils and hear sensing pits on the head and defensive behavior.

"Discourage fears about snakes, learn more about them through wildlife programs and teach children to observe not to capture," he said.

Those that lived on the Lake, had questions on prevention. Later, Feeney shared the following with the Wildlife Committee regarding snake management suggestions for the home and grounds:

- Eliminate excess prey attractants (spilled bird seed, pet food, etc.).
- "Repellents" (sulfur, moth balls, Dr.T's, etc) have very little or no value.
- No legal toxicants or fumigants are registered.
- Snake-proof fencing can work for some situations but this is fairly expensive.

To remove snakes from inside the home:
- "Glue traps" can catch the snake (release outside with vegetable oil).
- Pile of damp burlap sacks may attract the snake, then use large scoop to take pile outside.
- Put your arm in pillow case, grab the snake, pull case around the snake, tie or knot the bag.
- Shooting or axing the snake is not recommended. This can be messy.

For information on Virginia snakes the following sites are recommended:

Virginia Herpetological Society
www.virginiaherpetologicalsociety.com/

VDGIF - Reptile information pages
www.dgif.virginia.gov/WILDLIFE/information/?t=3

NC Co-op Extension
www.ces.ncsu.edu/gaston/Pests/reptiles/snakecontrol.htm

MD Co-op Extension
www.hgic.umd.edu/_media/documents/SnakesHG64PFV_000.pdf

Wildlife Damage Control (commercial)
www.wildlifedamagecontrol.net/

VDGIF Snake Guide ($5)
www3.dgif.virginia.gov/estore/proddetail.asp?prod=VW220

Snakes of Virginia*
www.upress.virginia.edu/books/linzey.html

Page Gifford from

Creature ID

Attached are photos of the cutest little creature Connie found yesterday while walking the puppies. She fell in love with him and wanted to keep him... He's adorable... an Alice-In-Wonderland like quality to him. He was very interested in us - a little over an inch long. Anybody know what he is?
Clark Walter & Connie (sent by Allen Hard)

I think this is a eastern tiger swallowtail about to pupate. They are normally green but just before they pupate, they turn brown.

Nancy Weiss

I’ll offer a big hint and say that it is our state butterfly and the logo of the VMN program!

Usually they are green, but they turn brown when they are about to pupate. See www.butterflygardeningandconservation.com/butterfly/st/tiger.php for some good pictures.

Here’s one from the web site – Ralph

Michelle Prysby☺☺☺☺☺☺☺☺☺☺☺☺☺☺☺☺☺☺☺☺☺

What Is It (Animal)?

These are some photos that Clark Walter sent. Think the consensus was that it is a rat snake. These guys are harmless and control the mouse and rat population. Master gardeners have had one on display in a cage for a couple of years at the county fair.

Still, I’d prefer not to find one in my bathroom (above). He can stay in our crawl space and the pool equipment areas where they keep leaving skins. Clark later released it to the outside, shown below.

They are quite docile unless they feel threatened. Then, they often will coil up like a rattle snake and shake their tail in foliage to simulate a rattle snake. Just leave them alone, and they’ll calm down and crawl away.

Margie Siegel via friend Clark Walter, text by your editor☺☺☺☺☺☺☺☺☺☺☺☺☺☺☺☺☺☺☺☺☺

What the Heck Is It?

I put this in the master gardener newsletter and haven’t had a solution yet. Maybe some of you will be smarter. Actually, I Googled various insect nests and looked at gobs of them. None like this.

Our breakfast room always has had a cold floor. The previous owner had installed electric baseboard heaters in there to help out. I ripped these out as I despise straight electric heaters as whole room heaters for their wastefulness.

So, we had our handyman rip out the ceiling to the pool equipment area that’s directly below the breakfast room. We found the answer. The joist space was filled only half way with insulation, and some AC ducts were severely restricted by improper hangers. They even had insulation BETWEEN the AC ducts and the floor (none below, where the cold pool equipment area is). What were they thinking? HOWEVER, some insects found their way in there and filled some of the voids with this.
There're the obvious dirt dobber nests against the back area, but what's that beautiful nest in the right foreground?

*Ralph Hall*

☺☺☺☺☺☺☺☺☺☺☺☺☺☺☺☺☺☺☺☺☺

**Now a Partner**

We're now listed as a partner with Virginia Naturally News a DEQ organization newsletter on line at www.vanaturally.com/

*Ida Swenson*

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| Deadline for items to be included in the newsletter is the **25th of the month before the next quarter (March)**. 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 434-297-1963 or by USPS mail to 420 Ivy Farm Drive, Charlottesville, VA 22901-8841. |