



SHENANDOAH SAW-WHET

Summer Newsletter
2020

A NEWSLETTER OF THE *SHENANDOAH CHAPTER OF THE VIRGINIA MASTER NATURALISTS PROGRAM.*

OUR NEWSLETTER IS NAMED IN HONOR OF THE NORTHERN SAW-WHET OWL — A SPECIES OF GREATEST CONSERVATION NEED IN THE SHENANDOAH VALLEY.

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UPCOMING EVENTS

June 16th – Chapter Mtg Canceled

June 20th - Invasive Plant Online
Workshop by Blue Ridge PRISM

June 20th - Sky Meadows &
Thompson Butterfly count
North American Butterfly
Association (NABA)

Sept 20th - Chapter Picnic

FROM THE EDITOR

BY TIM KOPPENHAVER

Thanks to all who provided feedback regarding our inaugural spring edition of the Shenandoah Saw-whet newsletter released in March. The goal is to provide pertinent and useful information to Shenandoah Chapter members as well as to a general readership, so please don't hesitate to keep the feedback and suggestions coming.

One of the most delightful attributes of the Shenandoah Valley is its equal distribution of the four seasons. We essentially have three months each of spring, summer, fall and winter. Judged from the perspective of a naturalist, each season has incredible interest making it hard to truly determine which season is a favorite. The movement of salamanders to vernal pools under cover of snow is as fascinating as hawks migrating north along the Blue Ridge Mountains in fall. As summer arrives in the valley, we can look forward to the arrival of Indigo Bunting, tree fruits, and unfortunately, the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th instar of the spotted lanternfly.

What do you most look forward to in each season in the Shenandoah Valley?

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE BY KELLY MACOY

What a change we've seen in our lives since the inaugural issue of Saw-whet newsletter in March. Our world has been dramatically reshaped by COVID-19. Several of our favorite spring volunteer events like the Mother's Day Garden Fair at Blandy were cancelled and new opportunities like the grand opening of Seven Bends State Park were delayed.

During this time of uncertainty, nature and the great outdoors continues to be our comforting companion. Springtime flourished with the sustained cooler temperatures. The Shenandoah Chapter is exceptionally fortunate to have several natural resources within our borders. We are able to stay near home and explore within our own "backyard." Many of us literally did stay in our own backyards. Did anyone else find as many invasives as I did?

Despite the changing world and challenging times we are facing, our chapter will carry on by volunteering where we can and being good stewards of our natural world.

FAMOUS NATURALISTS

Bernd Heinrich is a modern day Renaissance man – an energetic professor, author, illustrator, and ultra-marathon runner. Born in Germany, Heinrich attended University of Maine and earned a Ph.D. from the UCLA. In 1971, he accepted a position at the University of California, Berkeley where he became a professor of entomology. Between 1976 and 1977 he was a Guggenheim and Harvard Fellow. In 1980 Heinrich accepted a position as a professor of zoology & biology at the University of Vermont.

Heinrich's most popular books range from biologic detective stories (Ravens in Winter) to scientific specialties (The Hot-blooded Insects) to biography (A Year in the Maine Woods) to human evolution (Why We Run). In 2011, PBS released a film titled *An Uncommon Curiosity* which follows Heinrich over the course of a year as he reflects on his past and shares his ideas about nature, science, art, beauty, writing, and running. His energy and dedication to running are most-reflected in the American record he set for running 156 miles in 24 hours – essentially to distance from Winchester to Roanoke in one day!

A few reviews about Heinrich' writing:

"Bernd Heinrich is not just a great naturalist writer; he's a great writer, period."
—Bill McKibben

"He richly deserves the comparison to Thoreau."
—Washington Post Book World

MEMBER PROFILE

So what prompted **Tammy Batcha** (class of 2018) to join the Shenandoah Chapter of the Virginia Master Naturalist program? Having no formal science education but having developed a strong desire to learn more about her local area, she found the Virginia Master Naturalist program the ideal platform from which to gain the knowledge she was hoping for.

As a newly graduated VMN, Tammy became involved and fully committed to existing bluebird trail projects at Sky Meadows and Blandy Farm. Tammy had an interest in putting her VMN stewardship responsibilities to work by doing something meaningful for Middletown where she lived. With the help of **Kaycee Lichliter**, they approached nearby Belle Grove Historic Plantation who agreed to allow the installation of a new bluebird trail. Kaycee is a class of 2014 VMN and also is on the board with the Northern Shenandoah Valley Audubon Society (NSVAS). Kaycee was able to secure funds from NSVAS to build six boxes, which was a great win and provided the momentum to establish the bluebird trail at Belle Grove. Before the coronavirus pandemic, the plans were to continue expanding the trail, but that's temporarily been paused. Ideally, Tammy's vision is for a more-expansive trail connecting Belle Grove to downtown Middletown. What better way to bring awareness to our natural world?



*L to R: Tammy Batcha, Tom Batcha,
Kaycee Lichliter, & Glenn Comer*

Tammy claims one of her favorite places is her own back yard where she is working to re-wild the space and remove the lawn. The VMN program has shown her that even small places like our own yards are full of wonder. Beyond her yard though, she acknowledges the Shenandoah Valley is chock full of splendor – especially with gems like Shenandoah National Park and the George Washington National Forest. In addition to gardening and her involvement with the bluebird trail, she has a passion for photographing birds and butterflies and loves learning about native plants in our area.

Tammy feels very strongly that the VMN program is a wonderful resource; not just for her but for our entire community. She's optimistic about our chapter's future and hopes more citizens discover just how special and important the program is.

FLORA & FAUNA CALENDAR

Some regularly recurring events and resources of interest for our chapter's territory

Time of Year	Event
June	Mountain Laurel (<i>Kalmia latifolia</i>) blooms along Skyline Drive in Shenandoah National Park
July	Common Milkweed (<i>Asclepias syriaca</i>) blooms in various locations attracting Monarch Butterflies (<i>Danaus plexippus</i>) and other pollinators.
Summer	Fireflies! (family <i>Lampyridae</i>) Join the Mass Audubon Firefly Watch program at: https://www.massaudubon.org/get-involved/citizen-science/firefly-watch

Other Resources

WILDFLOWER CALENDAR - Shenandoah Nat'l Park:
www.nps.gov/shen/learn/nature/upload/WildflowerCalendar_Web.pdf

WHAT'S BLOOMING NOW - State Arboretum of Virginia:
blandy.virginia.edu/arboretum/what-s-blooming-now

VIRGINIA BIRDING AND WILDLIFE TRAIL:
vafwis.dgif.virginia.gov/FindWildlifeVA/#/findWildlife

WILDLIFE VIEWING TIPS - Virginia Department of Game & Inland Fisheries:
www.dgif.virginia.gov/wildlife-watching/respect-wildlife/

“What was stirring in me was curiosity, and it sprang from a desire to understand a little more of nature so that I might better determine my own place in it. Here I am, creeping about on a little spinning pill that revolves around a star in an unthinkable immensity of space and sharing its surface with a myriad of life forms, comparatively few of which happen to be of my own kind.”

From **Two-Moon Pond** by Paul Koepke

PHOTO STORIES

IMAGES CAPTURED BY SHENANDOAH CHAPTER VMNS ALONG WITH DESCRIPTIONS OF THE SPECIES, PHOTO TECHNIQUES, AND OTHER USEFUL TIPS & INFO.



PHOTOGRAPHER:
Alex Newhart

SUBJECT SPECIES:
Eastern milksnake (*Lampropeltis triangulum*)

NOTES/TIP:

This Milksnake lived under the front walkway to my home for many years. I would see it every February or March on the first warm day as it would come out and sun itself on the warm cement of the walkway. The picture was taken in March 2019. The snake was moving very slowly which allowed me to get very close using a macro lens.

LOCATION:
White Post, Virginia

CAMERA:
Nikon D750, Nikon AF-S VR Micro-NIKKOR 105mm (macro lens)



PHOTOGRAPHER:
Alex Newhart

SUBJECT SPECIES:
House finch (*Haemorhous mexicanus*), male

NOTES/TIP:

I had my camera/lens on a tripod and used a fast shutter speed to capture the quick movements of the bird. Just fast enough of a shutter speed to freeze the head of the bird while allowing for some movement of the wings. I also used a flash with flash extender to provide additional light on the subject.

LOCATION:
White Post, Virginia

CAMERA:
Nikon D750, Nikon AF-S NIKKOR 200 - 500mm @ 500 mm



FROM THE JOURNAL OF:
Dennis Wert, Class of 2019

SUBJECT SPECIES:

Mallard
(*Anas platyrhynchos*)

Blue Jay
(*Cyanocitta cristata*)

Wild Violet
(*Viola sororia*)

Dogwood
(*Cornus florida*)

Eastern Red Bud
(*Cercis canadensis*)

PLACES OF NOTE

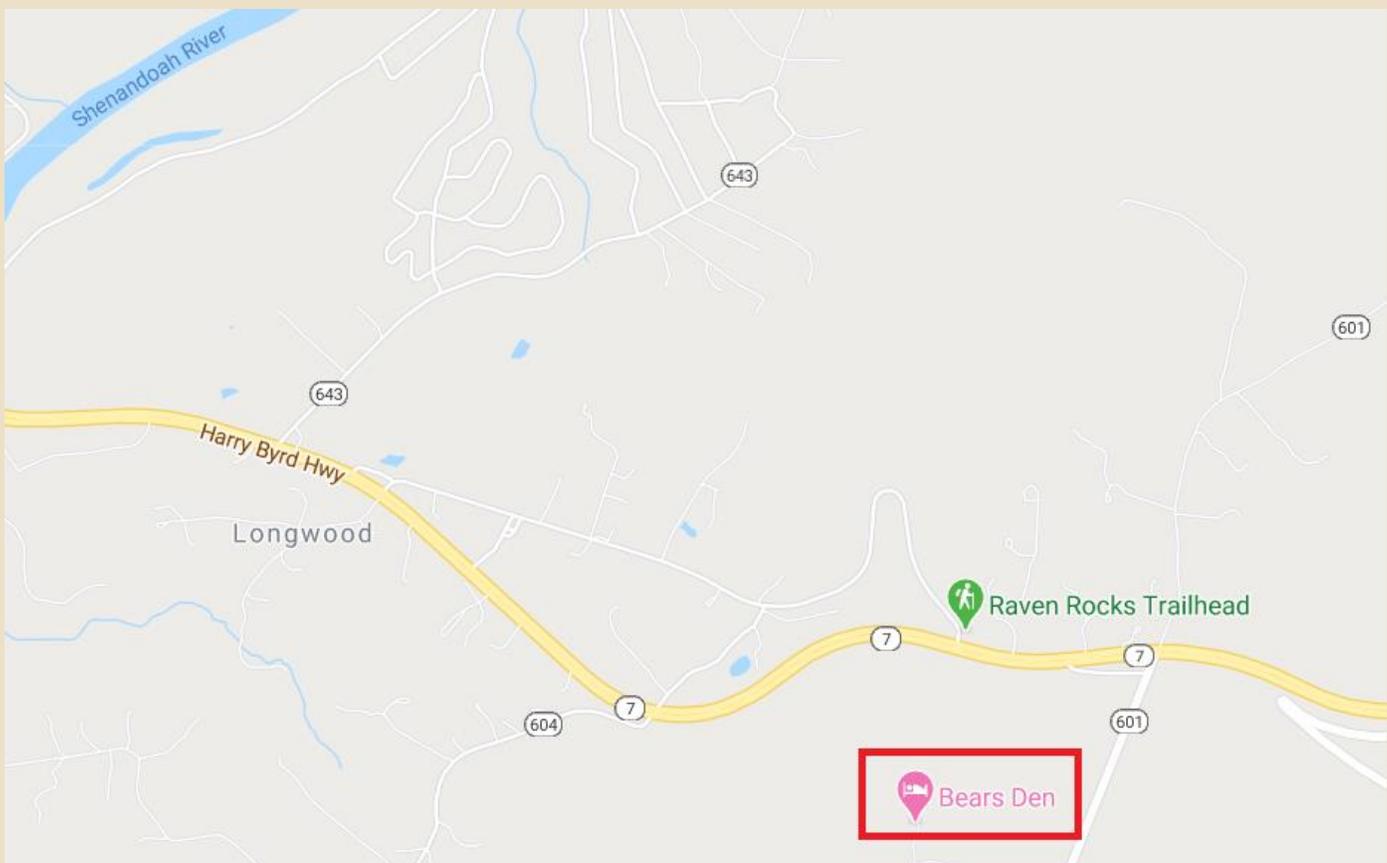
INTERESTING LOCATIONS TO VISIT IN OUR SHENANDOAH CHAPTER TERRITORY

BEARS DEN

Overview

A beautiful outcropping facing westward over the Shenandoah Valley and great for watching migrating hawks in fall. Accessible by short hike from Snicker's Gap or even a shorter walk from the Bears Den Hostel parking lot. *Added bonus:* Bear Chase Brewery is very nearby!

Location





The Virginia Master Naturalist program and the Shenandoah Chapter are open to all, regardless of age, color, disability, gender, gender identity, gender expression, national origin, political affiliation, race, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, veteran status, or any other basis protected by law. An equal opportunity/affirmative action employer.

CONTACT US

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