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Look who made the lists this year!

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Let’s Grow Native • Photo Tips
Restore the Wild • Fare Game
am one of the first people to admit that when asked, what is it that you love the most about the outdoors, it would have to be the fact that, “I was born to fish, but like most folks forced to work.” That might explain why when I started my career at DGIF almost 44 years ago as a fisheries biologist, and now as the department’s acting director, that I have been “hooked” on the outdoors, hunting, fishing, and most im­
portantly conserving, connecting, and protecting all of Virginia’s wildlife and natural resources.
That passion especially holds true when the month of May finally rolls around each year. As a hunter, angler, boater, or wildlife watcher, the month of May packs a “boataload” of out­
door fun. How about turkey a gobblin’, wild flowers a bloomin’, trout a jumpin’, and cool, clear water a callin’ to name just a few. You can rest assured that the primal urge to get outdoors and participate is alive and well across the state.
Getting outdoors more frequently is not only beneficial for improving your health but also the quality of your life. In today’s competitive work environment and with the growing demands of home and family life, where spending all day indoors is now the norm and not the exception, many of us are missing the restorative power that nature has to offer. Nature can be looked at as the proverbial reset-button for our minds, bodies, and spirits.
May is also when it is all hands on deck at DGIF. Biologists are deep into managing the Commonwealth’s vast wildlife and fisheries programs. Lands and facilities specialists are busy maintaining over 225,000 acres of wildlife management areas and lots of boating access to endless miles of waterways. Our conservation police officers are out in full force with boats on the ground and boats on the water. No matter what time of year it is, safety in the outdoors remains a key factor of DGIF’s mission, whether through education programs or public awareness efforts. You can rest assured that we are all working hard toward making your outdoor experience memorable.
As we approach the Memorial Day holiday we recognize National Safe Boating Week, May 18–24, and Free Fishing Days, June 7–9. We would like to remind all boaters and anglers to stay involved in the selection, they are more likely to wear one without a fuss. Inflatable life jackets make it easy for adults to “Wear It” while enjoying their time on the water, and being a good role model for young people on their boats.
Remember, everyone wants to have a safe, enjoyable day in the outdoors and that especially holds true on the water, whether you are boating or wetting a fishing line. Do your part by wearing your life jacket and taking a boating safety education course.

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wildlife­related activities. Protect people and property by promoting safe outdoor experiences and managing human­wildlife conflicts.

GARY MARVAL
Acting Executive Director

P icture perfect! Front and center, the cover of the January 2019 issue of Retriever News focuses on one stellar, black, male Labrador retriever, registered as NFC-AFC. I’m Ur Search Engine or “Google” for short. A very clever name for an even cleverer dog, who is the winner of the 2018 National Open Championship held last November in Paducah, Kentucky aka The Triple Crown, Daytona 500, or Super Bowl of retriever field trials.

What is a field trial? Tina Styan, Managing Editor of Re­
triever News explains it, “A field trial is an outdoor competition event for performance dogs, in which champion­ship points are awarded to only AKC registered retrievers. These dogs compete against each other showing their ability to mark, retrieve, and retrieve to hand ducks or pheasants.”

Leon Stephanie started participating in field trials in the early 1970s and credits trainer Bachman Doar for his early successes qualifying for five Nationals. However, as Stephanie’s young children grew older and became involved in Boy Scouts and sports, he backed away from trialing and took a “30-year sabbatical.” When Leon eventually returned to field trialing, he did so in a big way. He acquired a farm in Cumberland County and turned it into a training ground for retrievers, with help from his assistants, Len Pack, Ronnie Bowden, and Pack’s grandniece, Cameron.
When asked what it takes to win the National Open Championship, Stepanian replied, “Two key components—obviously, a very good dog—and a very good trainer. As in any business, it helps if you can build a good team around you and I believe I have that. As a trainer and handler, Alan Pleasant is fantastic.” Alan and his wife, Gwen, run Black River Retrievers in Angier, North Carolina.

The relationship between Stepanian and Pleasant began in 2014 when Google’s breeders, James and Kristi Roberts, agreed to send Google to Stepanian for observation before he would agree to purchase the retriever. Stepanian was impressed but wanted a known professional trainer’s opinion and sent Google to Pleasant. “After two weeks Alan called me to say, ‘I believe we have a very nice dog here…if you leave him with me for the next two to three years, I may be able to produce a nice dog for you.’” Given the list of titles Google has won at 5 ½ years of age that was certainly an understatement. “Without a doubt,” Stepanian is quoted as saying in the January 2019 issue of Retriever News, “Choosing Alan Pleasant to train Google was one of the best decisions I have ever made.”

You cannot participate in the National Open each November unless you qualify. To do that, per the National Retriever Club website, you must win “A 1st place carrying five Championship points plus two additional Championship points in Open, Limited, Special, or Restricted All-Age Stakes in AKC Member or Licensed Trials in the current qualification year (within the year preceding the National Championship Stake). Winners of the previous year’s National Championship, current year’s Canadian National, current year’s National Amateur, and the current year’s Canadian National Amateur Championship Stake are automatic qualifiers—but the last two named must be handled by an Amateur in the National.” To comprehend just how special Google is, Styan noted that, “…1,433 dogs participated in Open Stakes field trials throughout 2018 and 106 qualified dogs participated in the National Open.”

To achieve enough qualifying points Pleasant and/or Stepanian will have to travel to multiple field trials throughout the year. Some trials may be as close as a couple of hours away or longer than a 15 hour drive from your state, requiring trainers/handlers to leave on Thursday to be able to run their dogs on the weekend. Often, field trials are held in remote locations. Convenient restaurants and motels may be limited. Stepanian drives an average of 25,000 miles a year, traveling to his training grounds in Cumberland County and field trials throughout the country. Pleasant attends a field trial 22 weekends a year in
every time zone—except the Pacific Time zone, which he runs every 4 years. “The lifestyle is not the easiest on loved ones,” stated Pleasant. “I am blessed with a great wife and family.”

Professional field trialing at the National level requires the fortitude of a long-haul trucker as well as considerable resources to participate in this very competitive sport. The owners of field trial dogs pay for the training of the dog and usually all entry fees to field trials throughout the year. Typical entry fees run $80-$95 per dog. The entry fee for the 2018 National Open Championship was $400 and usually all entry fees to field trials and that dog could have a bad day—and those tendencies. “To win the National Open is extraordinarily difficult, because you can have a great dog, and that dog could have a bad day—and some of the best dogs can have a bad day. One bad day during the trial and your dog could be eliminated,” said Opseth. “These dogs must keep it together for eight days, which is extremely difficult. Ideally, each test is more difficult than the preceding day and a major fault or an accumulation of a number of small faults causes the elimination.”

The 10th test on the last day was the most difficult test of the week. Opseth continued, “What made it the most difficult was a combination of the lengths of the four retrieves run, and the dog having to mark and remember the location of each downed bird, and the cover changes and obstacles it has to circumvent or pass through. In the 10th test there was a ‘short’ 160-yard retrieve, taking it through tall cover, then a 370-yard retrieve (almost four football fields long), where the dog had to run a straight line through changing cover to the mark, without guidance. Then two more retrieves, one at 215 yards and another at 195 yards in difficult cover.” As Stepanian had correctly pointed out, “On any given day at the Nationals, any one of those qualified dogs in the trial could have won. There were a lot of good dogs in the championship.”

As Stepanian had correctly pointed out, “On any given day at the Nationals, any one of those qualified dogs in the trial could have won. There were a lot of good dogs in the championship.”

Above: Google’s proud owner, Leon Stepanian of Manakin-Sabot, Virginia stands behind Google and three impressive trophies. Flanking Stepanian are nationally known field trial trainer and handler, Alan Pleasant, and the three National Open Judges who selected the new champion.

Back in Virginia, the always alert Google awaits a command from his owner.
The Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries maintains 44 management areas totaling more than 225,000 acres for a variety of outdoor recreational opportunities. For more information on how you can visit our wildlife management areas, go to: www.dgif.virginia.gov/wma.
For both the casual angler and the dedicated panfish fan, Virginia poses a rich dilemma: it offers almost too many of these intriguing quarries to try for on any given day on the water. And the challenge of choosing from this bounty of species is at its most difficult now, as summer swings in with vacation time and sun-drenched weekends beckoning. Which species will I try for today among the multitude of panfish available?

Shall it be the reliable, widely available bluegill? Or the closely-related shellcrackers and pumpkinseeds? How about the little known flier finning in the state's tannin-stained tidewater lakes. What about the redbreasts that thrive in our Piedmont and rocky western rivers? Or maybe the brassy-hued rock bass that shares those waters. On big lakes like Smith Mountain and Claytor, white bass beckon. On smaller waters white and yellow perch may get the nod. (We'll skip crappies in this roundup, since they have a revered status almost like trout and bass among Old Dominion anglers and deserve a whole piece to themselves.)

Not only are a myriad of panfish species available, they can be caught with a wide variety of tactics to suit any angler's tastes. From simple cane poling to fly fishing, casting to vertical jigging, take your pick. For the most enriching outing, bring several types of tackle and try different approaches, making for a mixed catch and varied day on the water.

The name “panfish” also gives away another attraction of these fish: they’re scrumptious when scaled and fried, filleted and broiled, or cut in strips and sautéed gently in lemon, butter, and garlic. Since virtually all these species are prolific breeders, there’s no need to feel guilty about keeping a few for the skillet. And if you learn several different tactics, chances are you’ll catch at least a few fish virtually every day on the water.

Here are a few tips to help get you started:

- Try to do the bulk of your late spring and summer fishing for bluegills, shellcrackers, and pumpkinseeds during the new and full moon periods. Sunfish often spawn at these times. Even if they don’t, they tend to feed aggressively during those moon phases.
- If the legs on your sponge-rubber spider flies are long, trim them back so they only extend 1/4 to 1/2 inch out the sides. Longer legs tend to tangle on the hook and often result in fish just grabbing the legs and missing the hook.
- If you see white bass breaking on the surface but they stop before you can get to them, try vertical jigging. The fish are probably still there but feeding at a lower level. Drop a 1/4 to 1/2-ounce slab spoon such as a Hopkins down 10-20 feet, then lift it up and down with sharp 1-2 foot twitches of the rod tip. Watch carefully for the line to move sideways or stop falling, indicating a strike. Fish will usually nail the spoon as it flutters down like a wounded minnow.
- If action is slow, try slapping and splashing the water raucously with your paddle. This commotion duplicates the sound of feeding fish and will often attract nearby panfish to your offerings. This is especially effective on white bass.

Shellcracker is another name for the redear sunfish. The nickname comes from this panfish’s fondness for eating mollusks, particularly snails. Look for redears around submerged stumps, where they root for these mollusks, which form an important part of their diet. Best bait is red wrigglers or earthworms on a size 6 or 8 hook.

Rock bass are a great quarry to turn to when smallmouth bass prove hard to catch. They often inhabit the same western or Piedmont rivers and some rocky lakes. Try stone piles, points, logjams, and the edges of weeds using silver and gold
spinners, grubs, spoons, and spinnerbaits. Fly rodders do very well using popping bugs, nymphs, dark-colored wet flies and compact streamers. Keep retrieves slow. These brassy-olive fish don't like to move too fast.

After the spawn, search for bluegills and other sunfish in water 8-20 feet deep. Areas with sunken brush, weed beds, or sharp bottom contours such as a drop-off or point can produce some fast-paced action in this post-spawn period. Probe these spots with a stubby-tailed 1/16 or 1/32-ounce plastic grub in purple, brown, lime, or pumpkinseed. Cast out, let the grub sink, and retrieve it ever so slowly, just above the bottom. If strikes are slow in coming, add occasional pauses so the jig drops to the bottom. And watch out! You might latch onto a 5-pound large-mouth instead of a 5-ounce "bream."

Try chumming to improve your pan-fishing. Anchor out over likely structure and sprinkle cornmeal, crumbled up eggshells, or oatmeal around the boat every few minutes. Soon minnows will begin to gather to feed on the chum, and they in turn will attract a variety of panfish, particularly bluegills and perch.

Bluegills spawn several times during late spring and summer. If you miss the first breeding period, but the water one month later and search for the bedding fish in 1-5 foot depths in protected coves and bays. Look for circular depressions in the sandy or gravel bottoms which they prefer over mud.

A good way to produce double hookups on white bass is to have one angler keep a lure or streamer ready to put into action when the other person in the boat hooks into a fish. As the bass struggles against the hook, the second angler should cast as close to fighting the fish as possible. Since whites are schooling fish, several other bass will often be swimming close to the hooked one and grab the lure or fly when it’s pulled past them.

Look for redbreasts in rivers where the current eases into eddies and pools and near slow undercut banks, rather than out in faster riffles and rapids. They’re particularly fond of spinners and traditional in-line spinners crawled back slow and deep. They’ll also nab wet flies, poppers, and sponge-rubber spiders on a fly rod. Bait fishermen do well with crickets and worms on these spots.

A great way to take white bass is fishing at night under lantern lights. The illumination attracts small insects and they in turn draw in minnows which en- tice white bass to feed. You can use live minnows, slab spoons, small grubs, or spinnerbaits to catch these fish.

When you’re not sure whether to fish for white or yellow perch, try this trick. Slice a thin tapered strip about 1-2 inches long and 1/2-inch wide out of the belly of a fish you’ve previously caught and keep on ice. This offering has real fish scent and the appearance of a minnow.

Try small, silver-colored crankbaits that dive 8-14 feet for white bass and white perch. Work points, bars, submerged islands, and sharp river channel drop-offs. Cast and retrieve slowly. Also watch for white bass breaking on the surface crashing into schools of shiners or shad at the same time. Keep another outfit rigged with a plastic shad-bodied or small topwater popper to try for those surface-feeders.

Fly fishing tackle for bluegills and other panfish typically means a 6 or 7 weight outfit. For even more fun, scale down to a 3-5 weight rod. Those light outfits will make even catching a 1/2-pound bluegill a real thrill.

This summer enjoy catching and eating a smorgasbord of panfish! ♦

Gerald Almy lives in the Shenandoah Valley but travels widely for his work as an outdoors writer. He is currently a columnist for Sports Afield and a contributing editor to Field & Stream.
Bob Biersack spent two years exploring the Goshen Wildlife Management Area for the second Virginia Breeding Bird Atlas. The experience was both unexpected and profound.

Biersack was hooked. Within months, he was contributing to newsletters and had been elected secretary. With the help of veterans like Neale and Rowe, his birding improved at breakneck pace.

Approaching the VABBA2's launch in 2016, the club was rife with excitement. "This is the largest and most comprehensive avian survey undertaken in state history," says atlas coordinator, Ashley Peele. "Its importance cannot be underestimated."

Accordingly, the RBC encouraged volunteers to participate. Though interested, Biersack worried his skills were inadequate. Neale, then the group's vice president, disagreed. "If you enjoy watching birds, you're qualified to participate," she asserts. With her encouragement, Biersack attended a training session. The event proved revelatory.

"Atlassing offers a profoundly intimate wildlife experience," Biersack explains. Furthermore, it was fun. "You're observing how birds interact with habitat. It's like you're eavesdropping on an ecosystem and they're your guide."

In early 2017, Biersack signed up to bird in the GWMA—one of the project's hardest to reach survey areas. The protected lands would offer a glimpse of birds interacting in undisturbed natural habitats. Contrasting Biersack's findings with surrounding areas, the data would provide valuable feedback for the effects of land-use and development on avian distribution and breeding.

Far from urban centers, the GWMA is bordered by steep cliffs and dense forests; access is limited to footpaths and service roads. Beyond hunting season, the latter are closed to the public. Reaching the interior from the barriers requires 6-8 miles of hiking, roundtrip.

To conduct a comprehensive avian breeding survey, Biersack needed a key. Knowing he was a dedicated volunteer, Peele worked with DGIF to make it happen.

"It was an atypical situation," says DGIF bird conservation biologist, Sergio Harding. "But the VABBA2 is one of our primary initiatives. And we wanted to ensure Bob had the tools he needed to succeed."

Biersack started out birding alone and was astonished by what he found.

"You have to drive 4 miles up a mountain along a windy dirt road just to reach the access gates," he says. "It's another 2 miles to the walking trails that carry you deep into the 33,000-acre tract. A mile in, he parks. Killing the engine, Biersack steps into the cold and listens for about 10 minutes. Silence. Retrieving an audio device from the car, he plays a series of owl calls. Echoing through the moonlit trees, the sounds are haunting. Isolation amplifies the effect—Biersack has locked himself in one of the state's biggest and most rarely visited wilderness areas. Why would he do such a thing?"

"This is the time of year when owls look for their mates," he explains with a laugh. Males vocalize to communicate territorial boundaries and attract females. Females respond to the calls of males. "If there's an owl in the area, it's likely to respond."

As a volunteer for the second Virginia Breeding Bird Atlas (VABBA2), Biersack hopes to confirm breeding. A project of the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries and various other conservation organizations—including the Virginia Society of Ornithology and Virginia Tech's Conservation Management Institute—the Atlas relies on citizen volunteers to collect information about avian populations, distribution, and breeding activity throughout the Commonwealth. Upon the Atlas's conclusion in the winter of 2020, the data will be used to adapt better—and more targeted—avian conservation strategies.

Pursuing backroads for nearly 30 miles into the mountains, Biersack arrives at Guys Run Road. Unlocking then closing its gate behind him, he follows the gravel access along a forested ridgeline for comfortable nocturnal viewing. "If there's an owl in the area, it's likely to respond," he says. "It's tough on an old guy like me, but worth the price of admission," Biersack jokes. "On one hand, I'm contributing to an important conservation effort. On the other, I'm out in the woods in the middle of nowhere with the moon and stars overhead, listening to these primordial animal sounds." When asked to describe the experience, "words like 'eerie' and 'magical' come to mind."

Though Biersack may sound like a veteran, he's been birding just 7 years. Following a 30-year career in Washington D.C. as spokesperson for the Federal Elections Commission, he and his wife retired to the outskirts of Lexington in 2012. Hopping to "make friends" and "learn more about the area's natural landscape," Biersack attended a Rockbridge Bird Club (RBC) meeting. As one of the oldest ornithological groups in the state, the RBC's roster was studded with fascinating members. There was Rhodes scholar, Bob Baxton. Virginia Military Institute biology professor, Dick Rowe. Former Virginia Wilderness Committee president, Laura Neale. And the list went on.

"Everyone was just so welcoming," says Biersack. "Their knowledge about birds was immense—yet, they went..."
into the deep interior. For Virginia, the isolation is incredible. The landscape is so wild and pristine—it’s like you’re in a place where different rules apply.”

Throughout the spring, summer and fall, Biersack visited about once a week. “I met with the Atlas five times, set out around dawn on a hike, he stopped in a clearing. In a distraction display, it pretended to "In the 20th century, to stop rushing around, to sit quietly on the grass, to switch off the world and come back to the earth, to allow the eye to see a willow, a bush, a cloud, a leaf… I have learned that what I have not drawn I have never really seen.” — Frederick Franck, The Zen of Seeing

“There have been numerous studies on the effects of technology on sleep and eye health, as well as the impact of social media on mental health. The goal of nature journaling is to help people reconnect with nature and develop a deeper appreciation for the beauty and wonder of the natural world.”

According to noted naturalist John Muir Law, “Keeping a journal of your observations, questions, and reflections will enrich your experiences and develop gratitude, reverence, and the skills of a naturalist.”

The veery is a shy, migratory woodland warbler that nests in Virginia and is known for its beautiful spiraling song.

The veery is a shy, migratory woodland warbler that nests in Virginia and is known for its beautiful spiraling song.
A weekend nature journaling class in Shenandoah National Park offered peaceful enjoyment and comradery in the great outdoors.

Many Look But Do Not See
What does it mean to really SEE something? When wandering through the countryside really seeing it is more than just glancing at a flower or watching a bird fly by. Seeing is about slowing down. Seeing is about studying a subject by recording its details, color, lighting, perspective, and behaviors. There are several ways to learn how to see and for me, one of them is photography.

Nature journaling came to my attention when I spotted a class on Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden’s (LGBG) website. It was being taught by well-known nature journaling instructor, Susie Kowalik, a master of the process. My nature loving mom and I immediately signed up.

Susie has created over 10 years of nature journals since she started and has used them as a way to observe and enjoy the outdoors. The journals became historic time lines of weather and changes in the environment, and today, she enjoys looking back at them to see those changes and how her work had progressed.

During our class, Susie placed examples of her gorgeous journals on tables for us to browse through. Breathtaking is a word that comes to mind. She spoke with us about how journals are personal journeys but also how important they are to share with others. She discussed a methodology we could use to create our journals, demonstrated how to use various medium, and had us practice using the tools. Then, it was out into the garden where a wealth of subject matter awaited.

Needless to say, it was a fun and relaxing day of being outdoors, learning how to see, creating art, and sharing what

previous page: A weekend nature journaling class in Shenandoah National Park offered peaceful enjoyment and comradery in the great outdoors.

Above: With the aid of binoculars, I watched my bird feeders and sketched a few of the birds that came to feed. Moving subjects are very difficult to sketch but patience will pay off in the end.
Judy Thomas uses colored pencils to illustrate subjects for the Plants of the James River Project.

My 80+-year-old mom, Linda, studies a plant she was sketching in her journal.

© Lynda Richardson

A formal study of hibiscus reveals the approach of botanical artist Paula Blair.

The Art

While learning about various drawing implements for journaling from Susie, I decided that colored pencils were my favorite. (You can even get water color pencils.) Again, I turned to LGBG where I saw a class on colored pencils taught by talented botanical artist, Judy Thomas. Judy started a group called Chickahominy Colored Pencil Artists as well as co-founding Plants of the James River Project with another botanical artist, Paula Blair. Though Judy’s artwork is geared towards realistic renditions of her subject matter, the art of observation and basic ideas of nature journaling are still the same. (Botanical art is just more refined with specific “must follow” rules in place.) In Judy’s class, which both my mom and I attended, we were taught more in-depth skills for using colored pencils making our illustrations even better.

We were hooked! Suddenly, we found ourselves looking for more classes and that’s how we discovered Betty Gatewood and Rhonda Reebuck. A weekend nature journaling class was being offered at Big Meadows in Shenandoah National Park and my mom and I got the last two spaces. Thank goodness because it was a blast! Betty and Rhonda made a great team teaching us new ideas and methods for making our journals special. Of course, we hiked out into the beautiful, wide-open spaces of Big Meadows and there, we learned even more.

If you are interested in a new way to connect with the environment, I recommend giving nature journaling a try. Who knows…maybe it will become a piece of history that can be shared, remembered, and read for years to come.

RESOURCES:

◆ “Keeping a Nature Journal,” by Clare Walker Leslie and Charles E. Roth
◆ Betty Gatewood, www.gatewoodgraphics.com, bgatewood@gmail.com
◆ Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden, www.lewisginter.org/learn/adult-classes
◆ Plants of the James River Project, https://enrichmond.org/partners/plants-of-the-james-river-project, PJPRiver@gmail.com
◆ Rhonda Reebuck, up-coming class - www.twnf.org/nature-events/spring-wildflower-symposium, Rhondaroebuck@mac.com
◆ Shenandoah Nature Journal Club, www.facebook.com/groups/Shenandoahnjc, shenandoahnaturejournalclub@gmail.com
◆ Smithsonian Institute, for teachers, https://diyhomeschooler.com/2014/09/15/smithsonian-nature-journal-instruction-free

A former career photojournalist for 30+ years, Lynda is now the art director of this magazine.
s growing human populations move closer to natural areas, some wildlife populations habituate to human-modified environments, often increasing proximity and unwanted interactions between humans and wildlife. These unwanted interactions are known as human-wildlife conflicts. Rockingham County, home to Massanutten Village, a four-season resort that receives approximately 2 million visitors per year and is located in an area with a dense black bear population. The proximity of a major tourist attraction, along with a sizable population of bears creates potential for human-bear conflicts. The Village encompasses an area of over 9,000 acres at the southernmost tip of Massanutten Mountain, bordered to the north by national forest land. Within the Village, three ownerships have developed approximately 6,000 acres for recreational and residential use. Massanutten Resort owns approximately 2,200 condominiums and provides a variety of recreational opportunities including snow sports, golf, and a year-round water park. Mountainside Villas manages an additional 175 condominiums, and the Homeowners Association, which oversees approximately 1,100 private homes. Organized hunting of any species is prohibited in the Village.

Rockingham County’s bear population consistently leads the commonwealth and accounts for 5-10% of the annual statewide bear harvest. The bottom line is that plenty of bears exist in proximity to the Village. Development of the Village began in the early 1970s during the time that conflict bears were often trapped and moved to other parts of the Commonwealth to supplement low and recovering populations elsewhere in Virginia. Generally, DGIF stopped moving bears in such situations in 2002 when its first 10-year Black Bear Management Plan was completed. Managing bears in place became the focus by dealing directly with the human food issues (garbage) that often lure bears around people.

In 2003, DGIF passed a regulation making it illegal to intentionally or unintentionally feed black bears on private lands to complement a similar provision for public lands which was passed in 1999. Since 2003, DGIF has been working with the resort to minimize conflicts between people and bears. In 2007, DGIF produced an educational video about black bears that highlighted garbage management, including Massanutten, and it was added to the report’s information cable channel. Despite numerous meetings between DGIF and resort staff, it took two years for the resort to retrofit old dumpsters to make them bear-resistant, an investment of approximately $50,000. From 2003-2009, DGIF received an average of 60-70 bear-related conflict calls annually from the Village, mostly associated with the resort. After replacing dumpsters with bear-resistant models, the average number of calls decreased to 10-15 per year (>75% reduction). Bears continue to investigate residential areas for accessible garbage, bringing them into proximity with humans, a challenge that requires ongoing work and education of visitors and residents.

Building partnerships, such as the one between DGIF and the Resort, may provide the most successful long-term mitigation of human-bear conflicts. This situation underscores the importance of cooperation and shared responsibility between wildlife agencies and their constituents in maintaining healthy wildlife populations and encouraging coexistence specifically between humans and bears. What started as an adversarial relationship between DGIF and the resort has become a partnership. Such a good relationship exists that both DGIF and the resort helped sponsor the 5th International Human-Bear Conflicts Workshop in March 2018, a testament to both entities working cooperatively.

For more information on bears, go to the department’s website: www.dgif.virginia.gov/wildlife/bear.

Once bears become habituated to an easy meal they never ends well for the bear. Please help keep bears wild and safe from human conflict.
"Eye" Want You To Know!

By Marie Majarov

Ongoing learning in outdoor safety

Two issues of outdoor safety are prominent for me as summer arrives: sunshine and ticks. I share because I want all readers to be strongly aware and practice sensible precautions when enjoying our magnificent Virginia outdoors.

First let’s talk about EYES and the Sun. As an avid naturalist, a nature photographer, a retired clinical psychologist with some medical savvy and a septuagenarian I had never heard of eyelid cancer. Neither have most people I’ve talked with. I am a photographer you know!!! All went smoothly and was not as onerous as the images that had swirled in my head. My vision, initially impaired by the trauma, is fully restored.

Long story short it was not a sty. My doctor feared squamous cell carcinoma (BCC) or worse, melanoma. I was lucky; it was basal cell carcinoma (BCC) which had probably been slowly growing unseen for years. An immediate referral to an outstanding ophthalmic plastic and reconstruction surgeon, surgery to remove the growth along with most of my eyelid area slathering up with sunscreen is a crucial preventative measure in most skin cancer, but for the eyelid area it is even more critical, vulnerable, and even the perilously close brain.

The eyelid area is one of the most common sites for nonmelanoma skin cancers; BCC, SCC, and melanoma together account for five to ten percent of all skin cancers. Staggering statistics, I had no idea! Prompt treatment is crucial to good outcomes. While BCC, my cancer, does not spread to other organs and is not usually life threatening, it does spread in the area of origin. If left untreated cancer cells can infiltrate to nearby vital ocular structures and even the perilously close brain.

“Eye” Want You To Know!

Sunlight appears to be a major culprit in this type of cancer, although much remains unknown about skin cancers. I grew up in a generation where we were encouraged to get as much sunshine as possible with little understanding of the need for protection or the problems that could lie ahead.

The eyelid area is one of the most common sites for nonmelanoma skin cancers; BCC, SCC, and melanoma together account for five to ten percent of all skin cancers. Staggering statistics, I had no idea! Prompt treatment is crucial to good outcomes. While BCC, my cancer, does not spread to other organs and is not usually life threatening, it does spread in the area of origin. If left untreated cancer cells can infiltrate to nearby vital ocular structures and even the perilously close brain.

Sunscreen is a crucial preventative measure in most skin cancer, but for the eyelid area it is even more critical. Ultraviolet protection in glasses and sunglasses must be your sunblock. This is essential! Broad-brimmed hats that have a darker underside to the brim also help significantly reduce sun glare and water reflection.

Now that you are armed with sunglasses and proper hats let’s turn our attention to TICKS. After a personal battle with a black-legged tick and writing about Lyme disease, prevention, and the natural history of deer ticks (Virginia Wildlife, May 2006) I take every chance I get to educate about the dangers of tick-borne illnesses and how to prevent bites.

This is now more important than ever! In December 2018, the Virginia Department of Health (VDH) announced that a new-to-the-U.S. invasive tick, first identified 2017 in New Jersey, has been identified in eighteen locations in Virginia: the Asian longhorned tick, Haemaphysalis longicornis.

VDH reports that this tiny non-descript longhorned tick is found both in and forested habitat, has a wide range of hosts and quickly reproduces without mating (“parthenogenic” reproduction like aphids) thus explaining its rapid spread. Native to East Asia it is known to carry a variety of serious diseases that can threaten cattle, wildlife, pets, and people. Alarmingly, yes, but note well that the CDC reports here in the U.S., as of October 2018, no harmful pathogens have been identified in collected ticks. Research into what possible pathogens these ticks might be capable of acquiring and transmitting is in the very early stages. I will be keeping tabs on the developments for future updates.

Now is the time to renew your commitment to tick-bite prevention methods, a precaution not just for this new tick on the block but the black-legged, lone star and American dog ticks which we know can carry Lyme and other grave infections. Be sure to use EPA-registered insect repellents and follow label instructions; wear tightly woven, light colored, permethrin-treated clothing (treat that clothing before putting in the laundry; inspect your pets during outdoor activities and tweezers to pull straight up then save it in a plastic bag for ID if needed). Sunlight and ticks are not to be trifled with; lives and eyesight can be on the line. Know the dangers, be aware, and make precautions a regular part of your outdoor activities. Please educate others, most especially your children.

RESOURCES:
CDC Factsheet Asian Longhorned Tick: https://www.cdc.gov/ticks/longhorned-tick/index.html
Eyelid Cancer Information & Statistics: https://www.columbiaeye.org/eye-library/eyelid-cancer
Lyme Disease: https://www.dgif.virginia.gov/wildlife/diseases/lyme-disease
Preventing Tick Bites: https://www.cdc.gov/ticks/advice/on_people.html

By Marie Majarov (marieemilanmajarov@gmail.com) is a Shenandoah Chapter Virginia Master Naturalist and photographer whose work is frequently featured in Virginia Wildlife.
You don’t need a boat to have a successful day of fishing in Virginia. All you need is a rod and reel, a few lures or some bait and a pair of comfortable shoes and you can enjoy the bounty of Virginia’s lakes, rivers, and streams. There are hundreds of places throughout the state that offer easy access to bass, sunfish, catfish, and even trout. None of them require a boat.

For a three-day weekend in June, you don’t even need a fishing license. June 7, 8 and 9 are free fishing days. That’s right. No license required.

Spend a few hours fishing anywhere in Virginia and you’ll find something else free: You. There is nothing more relaxing than spending a mild spring day on the shore of a lake as you wait for the next bite. No clock, no pressure, no worries.

Here’s a look at ten great bank fishing destinations.

**Briery Creek Lake, Prince Edward County**

All of this 845-acre lake’s shoreline is managed by the DGIF and is open to bank fishing. Two parking areas, plus a network of trails, offer an endless amount of places to cast a line. Be warned, though. Aquatic vegetation rings much of the lake’s edge and trees and shrubs surround the lake itself. That can make casting and working a lure tricky in some places, but all that cover is exactly why this lake is such a first-rate fishery.

Largemouth bass are abundant. So are redear sunfish, crappie, and catfish. Bank-bound anglers who don’t want to bushwhack have several options. There is a large open area near the dam that has three fishing platforms plus lots of clear banks. A smaller section of open shoreline can be found at the lake’s upper boat ramp and on the dam.

**Burke Lake, Fairfax County**

Burke Lake is an oasis in the fast-paced atmosphere of Fairfax County. The tree-lined shore hides the lake from the surrounding development, which lies just beyond the park boundaries. It is also a first-rate fishery with lots of bank-fishing opportunities.

The land surrounding the lake is managed by the Fairfax County Park Authority and includes a gentle trail that runs all the way around the water.

“Night fishing is pretty popular here. That’s probably the best time to catch catfish and hybrids,” says Owens. “The bass population is good, too.”

**Hungry Mother Lake, Smyth County**

The clear water of Hungry Mother Lake is brimming with a variety of fish, including largemouth bass, sunfish, crappie, channel catfish, walleyes and hybrid striped bass.

The lake is situated in a narrow valley, so some banks are fairly steep. But thanks to four fishing piers and a trail that runs around the entire reservoir, that cover can take you to places that rarely get fished from the bank.

“The hybrids are pretty easy to catch. A lot of people catch them when fishing for channel catfish, which are also accessible to bank fishermen,” says Steve Owens.

**Bear Creek Lake, Cumberland County**

Sitting within the boundaries of Bear Creek Lake State Park, this 52-acre reservoir has ample shore fishing opportunities thanks to four fishing piers and a trail that runs along the water.

“The water willow along much of the shoreline is fantastic habitat,” says fisheries biologist John Odenkirk. “That’s a real good place to fish for largemouth bass. The muskies will even use that cover from time to time and crappie will spawn around it in the spring.”

**Smyth County**

Hungry Mother Lake, Smyth County

The clear water of Hungry Mother Lake is brimming with a variety of fish, including largemouth bass, sunfish, crappie, channel catfish, walleyes and hybrid striped bass.

The lake is situated in a narrow valley, so some banks are fairly steep. However, there are numerous places that provide easy access to the water, including benches and even posts for hanging lanterns. A trail circles the lake, offering countless spots to cast a lure.

“Night fishing is pretty popular here. That’s probably the best time to catch catfish and hybrids,” says Owens. “The bass population is good, too.”

There is a small fee to enter the park.

**Dorey Lake, Henrico County**

At just five acres, Dorey Lake may seem too small for a few hours of bank fishing, but thanks to the DGIF’s Urban Fishing Program, Dorey always has something to catch. This suburban pond is stocked several times in the winter with trout and once in the late spring with catfish.

“We put about 1,750 pounds of catfish
in the lake, usually around mid-May,” says district biologist Scott Herrmann. “They average about a pound. Dorey also has a lot of smaller bluegills and green sunfish, which makes this a great place to take kids. There might also be a few trout left in May, as well.”

The park adjacent to the lake has playgrounds and picnic areas, making this a great family destination.

Lake Witten, Tazewell County
At just 52 acres, this Tazewell County lake is the ideal bank fishing destination. And it’s loaded with big bass.

“Trout are stocked from October until the end of May, so it offers good opportunities to catch trout during the colder months,” says Owens. “However, it has some really big bass, which feed on the trout. Some are in excess of ten pounds. It’s also a very good bluegill lake.”

The lake is part of Cavitt’s Creek Park and has abundant bank fishing opportunities at the main park, at the dam, and at the upper end of Cavitt’s Creek.

Rockbridge County

Lake A. Willis Robertson, Rockbridge County
This scenic 31-acre impoundment is just a short drive from Lexington and is situated in the foothills of the Allegheny Mountains.

“Robertson has a very good population of largemouth bass. Most are less than 15 inches, but the lake does produce some lunkers,” says DGIF biologist Steve Reeser. “It has an outstanding bluegill and redear sunfish population, too, along with crappie and channel catfish.”

Robertson’s shoreline is forested and it provides good cover for the lake’s fish, especially largemouth bass.

There is a good trail that circles the lake, offering good access to areas farther away from the parking area and the fishing pier.

Oak Grove Lake, Augusta County

Deep in the mountains of Augusta County sits a picturesque lake surrounded by national forest land. One side of this 54-acre Elkhorn Lake is flat and offers abundant bank fishing opportunities, including three fishing platforms.

“The potential for catching a citation crappie is good, too. There are decent numbers of two to four-pounders available and it has a good crappie and yellow perch population,” says Herrmann. “The largemouth bass fishery is pretty good. There are some big ones in Beaverdam.”

The catfish population is also high, with abundant three to six-pounders, but Herrmann says few people actually target them.

Elkhorn Lake, Augusta County

Finding a secluded spot to fish is as simple as walking away from the parking area at Beaverdam Swamp Reservoir. A gentle trail runs along about half this 635-acre reservoir. Anglers can stop anywhere that looks good and cast to a variety of fish.

“The largemouth bass fishery is pretty good. There are some big ones in Beaverdam,” adds Boyce. “There is also a park adjacent to the lake, so it’s a great place to spend a day with kids.”

Beaverdam Swamp Reservoir, Gloucester County

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Picnic areas, playgrounds, and other amenities make Beaverdam the perfect family fishing destination.

Elkhorn Lake, Augusta County

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Elkhorn is stocked with trout during the colder months; a trout license is required to fish here from October 1 through June 15 and a national forest stamp is always required to fish.

Some of those trout are still available in May and June, but Elkhorn has a good population of largemouth bass, channel catfish, and bluegills, says Reeser, making it a good spring and summer destination.

“Most of the bass tend to be 12 inches or less, but there are some big ones in the lake,” he adds.

Oak Grove has abundant bluegills and a fair bass population.

“The catfishing is really good. We started stocking it five years ago and there are good numbers of catchable-sized catfish,” adds Boyce. “There is also a park adjacent to the lake, so it’s a great place to spend a day with kids.”

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David Hart has been writing and photography for over 20 years about the outdoors. Contact him at hartfish1@gmail.com.

For more information on fishing, go to the department’s website: www.dgif.virginia.gov/fishing.
T he Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries’ Hall of Fame list is a compilation of all the freshwater anglers who qualified for advanced awards in the Angler Recognition Program.

To achieve the status of Master Angler I, five trophy fish of different species must be caught and registered with the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries. For Master II, 10 trophy fish of different species must be caught, and so on for the Master III, IV, or V level. Expert anglers must catch and register 10 trophy fish of the same species.

Each angler that accomplishes this feat receives a Master Angler or Expert Angler certificate and patch. Expert patches include the species on the patch. There is no fee or application for Master or Expert.

The Crel of the Year Award recognizes the angler who accounts for the most trophy-size fish caught and registered in the Angler Recognition Program from January 1 through December 31, annually.

2018 ANGLER

2018 Anglers of the Year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ANGLER’S NAME/HOME</th>
<th>BODY OF WATER</th>
<th>DATE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jonathan Huffman, NewCastle</td>
<td>James River</td>
<td>10/30/2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eric Berlin, Chesapeake</td>
<td>Lake Prince</td>
<td>05/25/2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kelly Straughen, Sr., Port Republic</td>
<td>All Other Waters</td>
<td>03/25/2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zachary Chittum, Covington</td>
<td>Jackson River</td>
<td>02/17/2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christopher Wells, Woodbridge</td>
<td>Potomac River</td>
<td>04/27/2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brayden Huffman, Covington</td>
<td>Lake Manassas</td>
<td>06/22/2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hunter Suprynowicz, Fredericksburg</td>
<td>Rappahanock River</td>
<td>04/18/2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lynwood Miles, Jr., Powhatan</td>
<td>Private Pond</td>
<td>04/15/2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stephen Mikkland, Chesterfield</td>
<td>James River</td>
<td>05/08/2018</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bryan Upton, South Hill</td>
<td>Lake Gaston</td>
<td>04/14/2018</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bryan Miles, Chesapeake</td>
<td>Northwest River</td>
<td>01/21/2018</td>
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<tr>
<td>Joseph Owens, Haysi</td>
<td>Flannigan River</td>
<td>05/11/2018</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rodney Stubbs, Mechanicsville</td>
<td>All Other Waters</td>
<td>12/27/2018</td>
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<tr>
<td>James Gray, Jr., Thaxton</td>
<td>New River</td>
<td>01/21/2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jason Lumsden, Glade Hill</td>
<td>Runnet Bag Creek</td>
<td>05/10/2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roger Willbourn, North Chesterfield</td>
<td>Nottoway River</td>
<td>04/23/2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gregory Anderson, Charlotteville</td>
<td>New River</td>
<td>04/24/2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William Griffith, Sr., Beckley, WV</td>
<td>Smith Mountain Lake</td>
<td>03/23/2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timothy Leary, South Mills, NC</td>
<td>Lake Meade</td>
<td>12/29/2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David Thomas, Jr., Roanoke</td>
<td>New River</td>
<td>02/10/2018</td>
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<td>Stephen Mikkland, Chesterfield</td>
<td>Hyco River</td>
<td>03/30/2018</td>
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<tr>
<td>Christopher Powley, Virginia Beach</td>
<td>Private Pond</td>
<td>11/25/2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Larry Scarborough, Sr., Locust Grove</td>
<td>Lake of the Woods</td>
<td>01/20/2018</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Find out all you need to know about the Trophy Fish Program at www.dgif.virginia.gov/fishing/trophyfish or call 804-367-1000.
CONGRATULATIONS to all of the participants and winners of the Virginia National Archery in the Schools Program!

1st Place Bullseye Elementary School: Elon Elementary, Amherst County

1st Place Bullseye High School & Overall State Champions: Atlee High School, Hanover County

1st Place Bullseye Middle School: Ronald Reagan Middle School, Prince William County

1st Place 3D Middle School: Ronald Reagan Middle School, Prince William County

1st Place 3D Elementary School: Amelon Elementary, Madison Heights

1st Place 3D High School: Liberty Christian Academy, Lynchburg

Overall Individual State Champions: Nancy Stephenson, Battlefield High, Prince William County, and James Eshleman, Liberty Christian Academy, Lynchburg, with DGIF Outreach Director Lee Walker.
Sawyer also reveals that the Virginia Algonquians deemed waterfowl so essential to their way of life, that they marked their new year by the return of migratory geese in early winter. In North Carolina, around 1910, one observer noted that red-head ducks were so numerous, and were massed on the water in such a way that their formation looked, from a distance, like an island. But it didn’t take long for European settlers to start compromising waterfowl habitat, and Sawyer writes that it was ultimately waterfowl that led to the championing of habitat preservation, and the creation of the first wildlife refuges in the region in the 1930s.

The environmental and cultural fortunes of the tidewater regions of southeastern Virginia and northeastern North Carolina are inextricably linked by the adjacencies of each state’s important wetlands. The author refers to the entire area as the ‘Albermarle region’ because the majority of the wetland ultimately flows from Virginia south into the Albemarle and Pamlico sounds of North Carolina. But once natives of Virginia get used to this terminological slight, things get interesting as there’s an intriguing backstory attached to almost every square mile of the tidewater involving alligators, hurricanes, civil war blockades, underground railroads, pest fires, earthquakes, dams, dugouts, shipwrecked hogs, and importantly, the environmental imprint humans have left over thousands of years.

Sawyer writes of the noteworthy wildlife species that inhabit the tidewaters: “with the notable exceptions of the bison, Carolina parakeet, passenger pigeon, and ivory-billed woodpecker, nearly all of the colonial fauna of the Albemarle wetland have (just) survived humans’ impact.” It can take a long time for legislation to catch up with nature’s conservation advocates, so it’s fitting that Sawyer gives us the backstory on how some of the region’s wildlife refuges came into existence, and how concerned citizens, working in concert with organizations like the Isaac Walton League can propel real change.

The creation of the Dismal Swamp Act of 1974 set the stage for the formation of the Great Dismal Swamp Wildlife Refuge that we know and love today. If you’ve fished for crappie in Lake Drummond, explored the natural riches of Back Bay and the Great Dismal Swamp, hunted waterfowl, or dangled a chicken neck off a backyard pier to net a blue crab, you’ll find your next adventure enriched by Sawyer’s wide-ranging regional history of one of our nation’s most precious ecosystems.

2018 CPO OF THE YEAR

Congratulations to Officer Mark Shaw, who is assigned to Craig County. He received seven commendations through our Office of Professional Standards, participated in four newspaper and television public service campaigns, initiated or responded to 560 calls for service, made 118 arrests, participated in 26 educational events, investigated a fatal boating accident, instructed at the 10th Basic Academy, worked with the Wildlife Division in obtaining training on bear deterrents as well as a bear attack and nuisance bear complaints, worked with the CWF Section and taught volunteers on the issuance of kill permits, participated in Hunter Education Advanced Training, represented the DGIF at the Virginia State Fair, assisted the Fisheries Division in stocking trout, and found time to take the necessary courses to maintain his EMS certification and his Arson Investigator certification.

Mark is an avid hunter and angler and uses his knowledge and passion for the outdoors to not only aid him in his enforcement efforts, but to educate those he encounters while afield. Mark’s ability to find commonalities with those he meets and the enthusiasm he demonstrates leaves lasting impressions.
Virginia’s premier event designed to help new and developing hunters is back for 2019! During this weekend-long event, attendees will learn a variety of hunting skills while also participating in hands-on live fire, a guided squirrel hunt, and many more hunting activities. Cost is $120 if you register before August 2 and includes lodging, meals (Friday dinner – Sunday lunch) and all instruction. Cost increases to $130 after August 2. Ages 11 to adult are welcome but children under 18 must attend with a parent. For more information visit: https://www.holidaylake4h.com/virginia-hunter-skills-weekend.

When Does My Subscription Expire?
If you are uncertain when your subscription expires, look for the expiration date on your label in the circled location on the sample here.

PICS FROM THE FIELD

Congratulations to Cliff Hitchcock of Colonial Heights for his photograph of a raccoon hunting for food under pickered weed. This image was captured with a Canon EOS-1D DSLR camera, Canon EF70-200mm f/2.8L IS II lens, ISO 3200, 1/100, f/2.8. Good spotting Cliff!

You are invited to submit up to five of your best photographs for possible publication in PICS from the Field. Please include contact information and send only high-resolution (300ppi, 8X10 min size) jpeg, tiff, or raw files on a CD, DVD, or flash drive and mail to: PICS from the Field, Virginia Wildlife magazine, P.O. Box 90778, Henrico, VA 23228-0778. We look forward to seeing and sharing your work!

KIDS ‘n FISHING Photo Contest
DEADLINE: SEPT 7, 2019
For rules and requirements go to: www.dgif.virginia.gov/kidsnfishing

A Walk in the Woods

Column and photograph by Mike Roberts

...As a naturalist I truly enjoy commun...
If you are a regular reader of my column, you have come to understand that Doc Morrissette is the best shot in the nation. He not only excels as an individual, but also as a team member. He has learned from his father—a great hand/eye coordination—which confers upon Doc the skill as an excellent clay shooter. He also learned from his father that having the repetition as one who knows his way around a shotgun alerted young sportsmen interested in his pretty daughters to approach with caution and serious intentions.

When he is not making hospital rounds or seeing patients in his office, the good doctor can be found on a sporting clay range somewhere in Virginia. Turns out these ranges have become excellent venues to raise funds for various charities. One of his favorite events is the Boy Scout Camp 7: Brady Saunders Richmond Area Sporting Clays Classic in Goodwyn, where not only he, but also his brother-in-law, Eric Nost, participate each year.

“Last year marked the 16th year for this event and there were over 50 corporate and individual sponsors with 216 shooters from all over Virginia participating in the shoot,” stated Nost. Sponsors included Woodfin Oil, EMC, Mechanical Services, Luck Stone, and Virginia Commonwealth Bank to name a few. The event included a hot buffet breakfast, a BBQ lunch, and an afternoon reception serving oysters, cigars, and adult beverages! The 2019 event will be held on Thursday October 10, 2019. According to Nost, total income raised over the 16 years of this fall event has been over $1 million. Your company can become a sponsor by contacting Event Coordinator Todd Martin, Director of Support Services, BSA Heart of Virginia Council at (804) 204-2613 or by email at Todd.Martin@scouting.org.

Central Virginia Sporting Clays, at 422 Middle Fork Road in Palmyra, is owned and operated by NSCA Instructor Brad Lansedale. This sporting clay range gets rave reviews from clay shooters—not just about the course—but about Brad himself. Central VA Sporting Clays hosts a number of charitable events including the 4-H Club, Reach Out For Life, Children’s Miracle Network, and various church organizations. Each charity handles all registrations, donations, prizes and fees. If you want to know more about holding a charitable event at Central Virginia Sporting Clays, call Brad Lansedale at (434) 591-0215 or email brad@centralva sportingclays.com.

Vulcan Materials will again be sponsoring their charitable clay shoot at Old Forging Sporting Clays in Providence Forge. Vulcan Materials presented a check for $40,000 to the FEED MORE program in October of 2018. Vulcan Materials and their supporting sponsors plan another shoot in 2019. The Old Forging Sporting Clays Range has been a venue for numerous charity shoots. To learn how to participate as a shooter or sponsor phone Vulcan Materials’ Glenn Cobb at (202) 281-8483 or email him at Gcobb@vcmnncal.com.

Although there’s no picking up for me to do, sporting clay ranges may offer a unique opportunity for your charity to raise funds for or you to have fun while contributing to a worthwhile cause. This website, www.claytargetsonline.com/vsrga, might help you find a sporting clay range in your area.

Keep a leg up,

Luke

Lake post many a sunrise hunting up good stories with Clarke C. Jones, and thankfully, left us a cache of colorful tales. You can learn more about Clarke and Luke at www.clarkiecjones.com.
Planning for Panoramics

Sometimes, one picture is just not wide enough. Fortunately, Photoshop has a process that will allow you to stitch together multiple photographs to create a wide angle panoramic of a scene. A feature in Photoshop called Photomerge will then allow you to combine several photographs into one continuous image. There are two steps necessary to creating a panoramic image. A feature in Photoshop called Photo merge will then allow you to combine several photographs into one continuous image. By combining seven horizontal images in Photoshop’s Photomerge, this panoramic was created revealing the power of a powerful rainstorm.

Stitching your photos together:

• Open Photoshop and select File > Automate > Photomerge.
• A menu will open. Select the source files that will be merged by clicking on the Browse button, locating the files, highlighting those files, and then clicking OK. The files should show up in your Source Files list.
• Note: You can use as many photos as you like from three to twenty or more. Just remember that the more you use, the larger the file will become, the more system resources it will require, and the longer it will take to build.
• On the left you will see a Layout option to merge the photos. For most situations, Auto will work fine. With this option, Photoshop will analyze the source images and apply a layout that produces the best photo merge.
• Below the Source Files box make sure you have 'Blend Images Together' selected. You have other options available that include Vignette Removal, Distortion Correction, and Content Aware Fill. You can try these as well for different merged results.
• Photoshop will now use all of the attached files, your layout selections and settings, and create your panorama. Click OK.
• Once the merge is complete, Photoshop will show you your new multi-layer image with layer masks on each layer to help blend the file where the images overlapped. There may be some distortion depending on how you shot the photo. You will have each of your photos as a layer and that will give you the ability to edit each photo.
• Save your file as a PSD (Photoshop) extension so you can return to it for editing, if necessary.
• Select Layer> Flatten Image. (You can also select all the layers in the layer panel, choose Layer > Smart Objects > Convert to Smart Object to create a merged copy that will allow modifications later, if needed.)
• Make your final edits, apply your cropping, and complete your merged photo.

Congratulations! You have now created a super cool and dramatic Photomerge panoramic! Enjoy!

Barbara Houston is in her fifth year as President of the Colonial Nature Photography Club in Williamsburg where she shares her love for photography. She makes sure to spend as much time as possible out in nature, where she enjoys photographing birds, wildlife, and landscapes. Visit her website at www.barbarahoustonphotography.com or on Facebook.
The Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (DGIF) is thrilled to share big news for a federally endangered species in Virginia; a pair of red-cockaded woodpeckers has moved into Big Woods Wildlife Management Area (WMA) in Sussex County. This is the first documented occurrence of red-cockaded woodpeckers residing on the WMA. The woodpecker species gets its name from a rarely visible small streak of red, called a “cockade” found on each side of the male’s head. The woodpeckers have built roosting cavities in one of the pine trees at Big Woods WMA, a process that takes the birds several months to years to accomplish because they excavate their roosting and nesting cavities strictly in living pine trees, as opposed to dead or decaying trees like other woodpeckers. The woodpeckers’ time invested in settling in at Big Woods WMA indicates that they are here to stay. Both the male and female woodpecker are banded and originated from The Nature Conservancy’s Piney Grove Preserve, which neighbors Big Woods WMA. The Preserve has long harbored the sole remaining population of red-cockaded woodpeckers in Virginia (a second population is being re-established in the Great Dismal Swamp National Wildlife Refuge by DGIF and partners since 2015).

The arrival of these woodpeckers at the WMA marks a major landmark in DGIF’s conservation efforts for this endangered species. Under the Endangered Species Act, DGIF has a Cooperative Agreement with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to serve as the lead agency for the conservation of protected animal species in Virginia, including red-cockaded woodpeckers. DGIF has also supported the Center for Conservation Biology’s (CCB) intensive red-cockaded woodpecker population monitoring at Piney Grove Preserve. According to CCB’s surveys, from 2002-2017, the woodpeckers’ population at the Preserve increased from 20 to 84 individuals and the number of family groups increased from 3 to 13 (individual red-cockaded woodpeckers live in family groups consisting of one breeding pair and one or more helpers). This population growth and increase in family groups marked major milestones in Virginia’s red-cockaded woodpecker recovery efforts. However, as the woodpecker population has grown at the Preserve, the birds have begun to run out of space.

With this in mind, DGIF acquired Big Woods WMA in 2010 in order to facilitate the expansion of the neighboring Piney Grove Preserve population. Since then, DGIF has been working hard to restore the WMA to the habitat required by red-cockaded woodpeckers, called a pine savanna. Pine savannas are open woodlands containing widely spaced pine trees and a lush groundcover of diverse grasses and wildflowers. This restoration has been preparation for the hopeful, eventual arrival of the endangered woodpeckers, but in the meantime, it has also benefited numerous other bird species such as Northern bobwhite and wild turkey.

One of the most critical restoration efforts by DGIF has been reintroducing fire to this forest, which historically played an essential role in shaping pine savannas. The agency burns units on the WMA every two to three years. To further aid in the restoration process at Big Woods WMA, DGIF has also strategically thinned trees and planted longleaf pines, the pine species preferred by red-cockaded woodpeckers and the historically dominant tree of Virginia’s pine savannas.

The arrival of these woodpeckers in Big Woods WMA demonstrates that DGIF’s “Restore the Wild” efforts are making a difference and Piney Grove Preserve’s woodpeckers are finding the expanded habitat they need.

Controlled burns play an essential role in habitat management for shaping pine savannas and bringing back the red-cockaded woodpecker.

The Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (DGIF) invites all Virginians to join us in our conservation mission by purchasing a Restore the Wild membership. By becoming a Restore the Wild member, you will help support and promote conservation of the Commonwealth’s wildlife habitats. DGIF is Virginia’s lead agency of wildlife conservation. For decades, DGIF has served healthy wildlife habitats, but now more than ever we need your help to address the increasing needs of declining wildlife populations. From the mountains to the sea, DGIF’s restoration work benefits a wide variety of wildlife species. From the historic recovery of the American bald eagle to working towards the recovery of open pine woodlands for endangered red-cockaded woodpecker, Restore the Wild members can invest in the continuation of these efforts and help to expand our work to benefit even more wildlife rich habitat. Monies from Restore the Wild members will help provide the additional support needed to continue and expand DGIF’s efforts to restore the wild. www.dgif.virginia.gov/restore-the-wild
**Sunfish Cakes**

Recipe by Emily George  ●  Photo by Meghan Marchetti

If you fish freshwater in Virginia, you’ve probably caught a sunfish or two, and you might’ve thrown them back. What could you possibly make with bait fish, anyway? Well, fish cakes are a perfect solution. The key to this recipe is flaking the fish and mixing it with the other flavorful ingredients. Then all that’s left is frying them. They’re very simple, and it’s easier if you have leftover cooked fish to flake-up and throw in a bowl with the other ingredients. But, cooking and flaking them fresh is easy, too. This recipe can be used with any white fish. The next time you might throw that bait fish back, remember this recipe and toss him in the bucket.

See more of our fare game recipes in each issue of *Virginia Wildlife*, or visit dfg.virginia.gov/faregame for more ways to bring your fishing experience full circle.

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### INGREDIENTS

- 2 cups flaked Sunfish (or any leftover white fish)
- ¼ cup mayonnaise
- 2 tbsp. scallions, finely chopped
- 2 tbsp. parsley, finely chopped
- 2 tbsp. Dijon mustard
- 1 large egg
- 1 tbsp butter
- ¼ cup breadcrumbs
- 2 tbsp. lemon juice
- Scallions to garnish

Homemade tartar sauce recipe can be found on fare game website.

### DIRECTIONS

1. In a skillet, heat olive oil on medium heat. Add the fish fillets and cook until white all the way through.
2. Remove from skillet and break fish apart into flakes.
3. In a large bowl, combine the fish with remaining ingredients. Combine well.
4. In the skillet, heat olive oil and butter over medium heat until you see small bubbles.
5. Pat out the fish mixture into small cakes. Add to the oil and fry until golden brown. Flip cakes until golden brown on both sides.
6. Remove from skillet and place on paper towel to soak-up additional oils.
7. Garnish with chopped scallions.
8. Serve with tartar sauce on a toasted potato roll or by itself.

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**THE VIRGINIA WILDLIFE GRANT PROGRAM**

Getting kids involved in outdoor activities and educating them about nature are the only ways that many of our favorite hobbies and pastimes will continue to exist. That’s why the Virginia Wildlife Grant Program was founded—to provide a funding source to local non-profits, schools, and government agencies with a focus on connecting youth to the outdoors through activities such as wildlife viewing, fishing, archery, and more.

What we’ve already accomplished since 2014:

- 162 projects funded
- 44,740 youth reached
- $249k total funding

**Why we need you!**

The Wildlife Grant has been growing in scope and reach every year since its inception. However, the requests from programs across Virginia have significantly exceeded our amount of available support. We want to assist as many of these programs as possible. That’s why your support is crucial! And don’t forget your donation is also tax-deductible.

Your support today will make all the difference.

We want to do everything in our power to ensure that youth all across Virginia have the opportunity to explore and learn about everything the outdoors has to offer. That’s why we are reaching out to you today. If you feel a connection with our mission and want to contribute, we are here to help you participate in a way that is both meaningful and appropriate for you. Together, we work better and do better!

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Programs funded since the Virginia Wildlife Grant was founded in 2014:

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