

Dan River Basin Association

CURRENTS

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BIOBLITZ!
TRAILS, TRAILS AND MORE TRAILS!
EARTH DAY CELEBRATED ACROSS
THE BASIN

Currents • Volume 16 • Issue 3

Dan River Basin Association

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Cover: Students enjoy Bioblitz Day with Krista Hodges

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Bioblitz Fun

Krista Hodges, DRBA's Education Outreach Coordinator, recently visited a fifth grade classroom in North Carolina to hold a micro-bioblitz for the students. When she arrived, the teacher warned her that most of the students had never done anything like that before.

Hodges reports, "The students were very excited when I got there and a little on the loud side. I didn't think they were listening when I gave instructions, but let me tell you, they were listening and they dug right into the activity. They found all kinds of bugs and recorded their finds beautifully, even drawing little pictures with their notes.

"The students were particularly interested in my supplies, like magnifying glasses and ID books. They wanted to keep them and asked numerous times. When we finished the activity outside, we went inside and charted everything we found, and the variety of insects and critters they found was fantastic."

She adds, "This was exciting because we didn't get to go on the original trail that we had planned for because a tree had fallen over the entrance. When I was getting ready to leave, the students asked if I could come back and be their substitute teacher sometime."

Activities like this, in which lessons are learned and lives are enriched, are made possible by funding from the Reidsville Area Foundation and DRBA members and donors. Thank you!



These students got a closer look at the diversity of life found in undergrowth.

Earth Day: Bugs at VMNH

DRBA's Tub of Bugs participated in VMNH's Earth Day celebration, where some 265 students from pre-K and 1st Grade at Drewry Mason, Rich Acres, and Stanleytown schools visited the DRBA station. Crayfish, Mayflies, Snails and other macroinvertebrates shared their stream story about needing clean, litter-free water to live happily among the stones and gravel on the bottom.

"What do the bugs eat? How did you catch them? Do fish really eat bugs, I thought they ate worms?" came from all sides, along with "Ohs! and Ahs! and Eeks! Do they bite? Can I hold a crayfish?" The students learned that properly disposing of trash helps care for the bugs.

DRBA and the VMNH enjoy a great working partnership, sharing lessons about the natural world, not just on Earth Day, but all year round. Wayne Kirkpatrick



Kirkpatrick helps students to understand the importance of clean water

DRBA Club at Patrick County High School

PCHS DRBA Club activities for the 2016-2017 school year included a tour of VA Tech's campus and College of Natural Resources and Environment, water quality monitoring on the South Mayo River in Stuart and on Stroubles Creek, and a Virginia Water Radio recording session doing a shout-out of macroinvertebrate species. The radio episode can be heard at <http://www.virginiawaterradio.org/2017/05/episode-367-5-8-17-high-school-call-for.html>.

Faculty mentor, Stephen Henderson, was recognized by the club. Henderson, who has retired from PCHS, transported students to Club activities, willingly participated in storm drain marking and water quality monitoring, and successfully recruited students for the DRBA Club each school year. Thank you, Stephen, for all you do for DRBA and for our youth! Wayne Kirkpatrick



Stephen Henderson is presented a DRBA shirt by Rebecca Gibson, DRBA Board Member

Earth Day Cleanup on Blackberry Creek

While some across the nation celebrated Earth Day marching for science, others were marching down Blackberry Creek near Bassett, hauling canoes full of trash. DRBA and Smith River Outfitters provided canoes, bags, and litter pickers for a doughty group of volunteers who waded and canoed down 1.5 miles toward the Smith River. Blackberry Creek is an important tributary of the Smith with a high biodiversity, including over 23 species of fish.

Friday afternoon Pat and Tina Sharpe, who own property along the creek, and their son Jake helped prepare for Saturday's cleanup by wading down the stream cutting out logs and trimming. On Saturday veteran cleanup volunteers Lisa Perez and her children, Dillon, Aidan, and Anna, led the pack down the creek most of the way! Daniel Reynolds from Henry County Parks and Rec joined in on Saturday. Along with other volunteers who cleaned up along the Smith near Fieldale, we collected roughly 300 lbs of debris. Our ten volunteers in the two areas were veterans of past cleanups and really knew how to get to the trash and load the canoes. We even beat the impending rain, making it back to the shop just as the afternoon storm hit.

Our haul included the usual trash, from bottles and cans to plastic and discarded junk like garden hoses, assorted metal and tires, and we even found a trampoline and a weed-eater. You don't realize how beautiful the creek is until you actually wade down it, but it also breaks your heart to see the trash. Thanks to Henry County Refuse Department for disposing of the piles of trash we collected. Brian Williams



A cooperative effort with volunteers, DRBA and Henry County

Blackberry Creek Sewer Line Break

Editor's Note: DRBA's Brian Williams brings many types of expertise to his job, as this story illustrates.

On April 19 while checking for access to our cleanup sites on Blackberry Creek, I noticed the creek flowing under instead of over a sewer line pipe. When the line was installed in the early 60's it was 3 feet below the creek bed. Years of erosion and the floods of 2010 exposed the concrete pipe, creating a solid dam across the creek that stopped fish passage and caused more erosion. Soon thereafter, I worked with Henry County PSA to recover the pipe and create a natural fish ladder. (No costly Log Perch study was required, since I had done an elector fishing study with Fish and Game months earlier, which proved the endangered Roanoke Log Perch



Blackberry Creek after the repair

did not live in this creek.)

The repair worked fine for several years, but erosion continued, working a new hole under the entire structure. When I went down in the creek, I could smell it and found that erosion had caused a break in the line. I collected water samples from upstream, at the break, and at our CWQM site downstream to determine the level of pollution level. I photographed the break and sent the info to Tim Pace that evening, the engineer in charge of water and sewer for the county. He immediately responded and said they would be out first thing in the morning, which they did.

I spent some time at the site that morning discussing the repairs with Mike Ward and Steve Clary, deciding how we could make it even more conducive to fish passage. They repaired the line and added concrete to create a nice slope for the creek to flow over and allow fish passage, and no more sewage in the creek. This will need a better fix one day, possibly lowering the pipe, but for now it's good.

This kind of quick response and cooperation represents the good working relationship between DRBA and our municipalities. Brian M. Williams

*Water is life.
It's the briny
broth of our
origins,
The pound-
ing circulatory
system of the
world,
The precarious
molecular edge
on which we
survive.*

Barbara Kingsolver

Eden Rivers & Trails Debuts

A new Rockingham County group, Eden Rivers & Trails, has been organized by DRBA and Eden's Office of Tourism and Special Events. The group is dedicated to advancing rivers and trails accessibility and fostering a culture of outdoor recreation in Eden, "the small town with a big outdoors." It is open to the public, and no membership dues are required.

Already the group has hosted a cleanup of sections of the Smith and Dan rivers; this project made possible with support from Duke Energy, City of Eden, and DRBA members. The City of Eden should be proud—there wasn't much trash visible in the river! Two more Dan River cleanups are scheduled for July 8, hosted by Mayo River State Park, and July 15, hosted by DRBA.

For more information on how to join, contact Cindy Adams, City of Eden at (336) 612-8049 or Jenny Edwards, DRBA at (336) 339-6169. Visit the Facebook page at: facebook.com/edenriversandtrails/ Jenny Edwards



L-R: DRBA intern, Shyquam Martin; McMichael High School biology teacher, Cayln Wall; McMichael High School student, Karina Alamiri; Director of Occupational Extension (RCC), Mara Apple O'Neil and her daughter, Avery; and Eden Director of Economic Development, Mike Dougherty.

Duke Energy TRAILS at RCC

TRAILS, an acronym for "Trail Recreation and Adventure Institute for Leadership and Service," is an exciting new program at Rockingham Community College designed to teach valuable hands-on skills for the fast-growing industry of outdoor recreation and education. Funded by a \$700,000 gift from Duke Energy, TRAILS will provide practical training for conservation scientists, forest fire specialists, recreational therapists, social & community service managers, teachers of recreation studies and fitness, and grounds maintenance and landscaping workers.

Mara O'Neil, Director of Occupational Extension for RCC, notes that the wide-ranging program "can benefit those seeking to enter outdoor-related professions, students enrolled in four-year schools, and professionals already working in the field." Classes proposed for this year include First Aid/CPR, Introduction to Wildlife, Kayaking/Canoeing, and Introduction to Trail-building.

TRAILS will begin as a continuing education program, with plans to apply for an associate's degree program in the third year. At that time, Duke Energy's grant will defray the out-of-state tuition difference for Virginia students.

For more information, including offerings for July and August, visit www.rockinghamcc.edu



Matrimony Creek Trail Coming to Eden

Duke Energy's Water Resources Fund has awarded \$100,000 to the City of Eden to create a mile-long nature trail along Matrimony Creek. Beginning on Washington Street at Hampton Heights Baptist Church, the trail will extend north to Price Road. Mayor Tuggle is eager to begin the project "so that we can continue our efforts to provide more walkable areas for our citizens." The picturesque stream features waterfalls and rock formations, which likely contributed to its name. William Byrd II, the colorful Virginia leader of the survey team determining the boundary between Virginia and North Carolina in 1728, named it Matrimony Creek because it was noisy, like his own marriage.

Duke Energy has been a vital partner in our trail projects . . .

Wayne Tuggle, Mayor,
City of Eden

From the Executive Director

Researchers from the University of Pittsburgh's Mind-Body Center have confirmed what most of us already know: leisure and vacation engender more positive emotions and decrease depression.

Summer is the traditional season for a holiday, and there's no better place to spend those vacation days than right here in the Dan River Basin where you will find 3,300 square miles in 16 counties to explore, which promise lifetime memories. So why not have your adventure right here in the DRB? Visit our website and click on the interactive map to see what awaits you!

Tiffany Haworth

April Fools Day FSO

After overnight storms, DRBA's April 1 outing met an April Fools Day reception at the put-in. As one paddler commented, "Heavy rains made for a rowdy river on Saturday, so plans changed and we headed to Farmer Lake for a day afloat. Beautiful day, excellent friends and lots of laughter made it easy!"

Definitely "rowdy," the Dan River rose more than three feet, roiling with fast, tumbling water, which made the decision to move the outing easy. The downside of moving the paddle was delaying DRBA's plan to join the Roanoke River Basin Association and Duke Energy in celebrating the new Dan River access at Leggett's Bottom. Created through a Community Foundation of the Dan River grant, the access was established as part of Duke Energy's investment in creating opportunities for people to better enjoy the Dan River basin's resources. DRBA plans to reschedule a float on this section of the Dan in the future.

With the help of DRBA director Mark Bishopric, twenty paddlers caravanned to Farmer Lake near Yanceyville, which offered a safe, clear water venue. Patricia Anderson, Farmer Lake Board member, escorted the flotilla about the lake, describing the lake's features, including an old mill that once stood along Country Line Creek and now lies somewhere beneath the surface.

DRBA's ability to host a safe, friendly April Fools Day outing was possible because of partnerships that DRBA develops and maintains – a cornerstone of DRBA's foundation. Wayne Kirkpatrick

May 6 on the Chinqua-Penn Trail

For the second month in a row, the Dan River rose to unsafe levels for DRBA's planned First Saturday Outing. Fortunately, the beautiful Chinqua-Penn Walking Trail (CPWT) in central Rockingham County was in fine shape

and welcomed those who had planned to paddle from Draper Landing to Berry Hill Bridge.

Newly refurbished over much of its surface, the 1.7-mile trail winds through mature forests, skirts two ponds, and meanders alongside pastures and fields. Located on the state's Upper Piedmont Research Station, the trail is supported by DRBA's affiliate, Friends of CPWT. Secretary-

Treasurer T Butler pointed out historic structures and plantings installed by Betsy and Jeff Penn in the 1920s, as well as quarries for stone used to build the massive rock dam, graceful Summer House, elegant Spring House, and other features.

The prized Black Angus cattle, descendants of the Penns' herd established in the 1940s, comprise the largest research project at the station, supplemented by a variety of field crops. After completing the circuit, the half dozen participants adjourned to a nearby restaurant for lunch. T Butler

On the River at Last!

After the rain-soaked spring swelled the Dan River to levels unsafe for paddling, on June 3 DRBA enjoyed an easy 5.75-mile float on the Dan from a private put-in to Abreu Grogan Park in Danville. Twenty-six paddlers guided twenty-four craft, including two paddleboards, on a beautiful day. A soaring Bald Eagle graced our start,

with several ducks and a Great Blue Heron accompanying us along the way.

A medium current gave way to slower water backed up by the Schoolfield Dam. The group enjoyed a leisurely pace, with gentle chatter and laughter floating over the water, stopping on a mid-stream sandbar for lunch before continuing on to the take-out.

Access to this stretch of the Dan River, the first time for a DRBA outing, was made possible through the gracious hospitality of a private landowner. DRBA is proud of the support received from individual landowners who allow access to portions of basin streams for a public-invited outing. Partnerships such as these are an essential part of DRBA's success. Wayne Kirkpatrick

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River Legacy Circle

More than forty members and their guests joined together at Jones Lake, recently, to participate in fun, food, games while learning what the Dan River Basin Association is all about. Joe and Ellen Jesse served as hosts to DRBA's first River Legacy Circle (RLC) event for 2017. DRBA enthusiasts, both old and new, learned about the many aspects of DRBA and the work being done across the basin. After a wonderful meal, many joined in games of croquet, interesting conversation and paddling on the lake.

Several times throughout the year, River Legacy Circle members are invited to explore the area's natural and cultural resources that aren't available to the public, attend unique social events and become intimately involved in DRBA's operations. To become a River Legacy Circle Member, donate a monthly gift of \$100 through DRBA's Sustainer program.

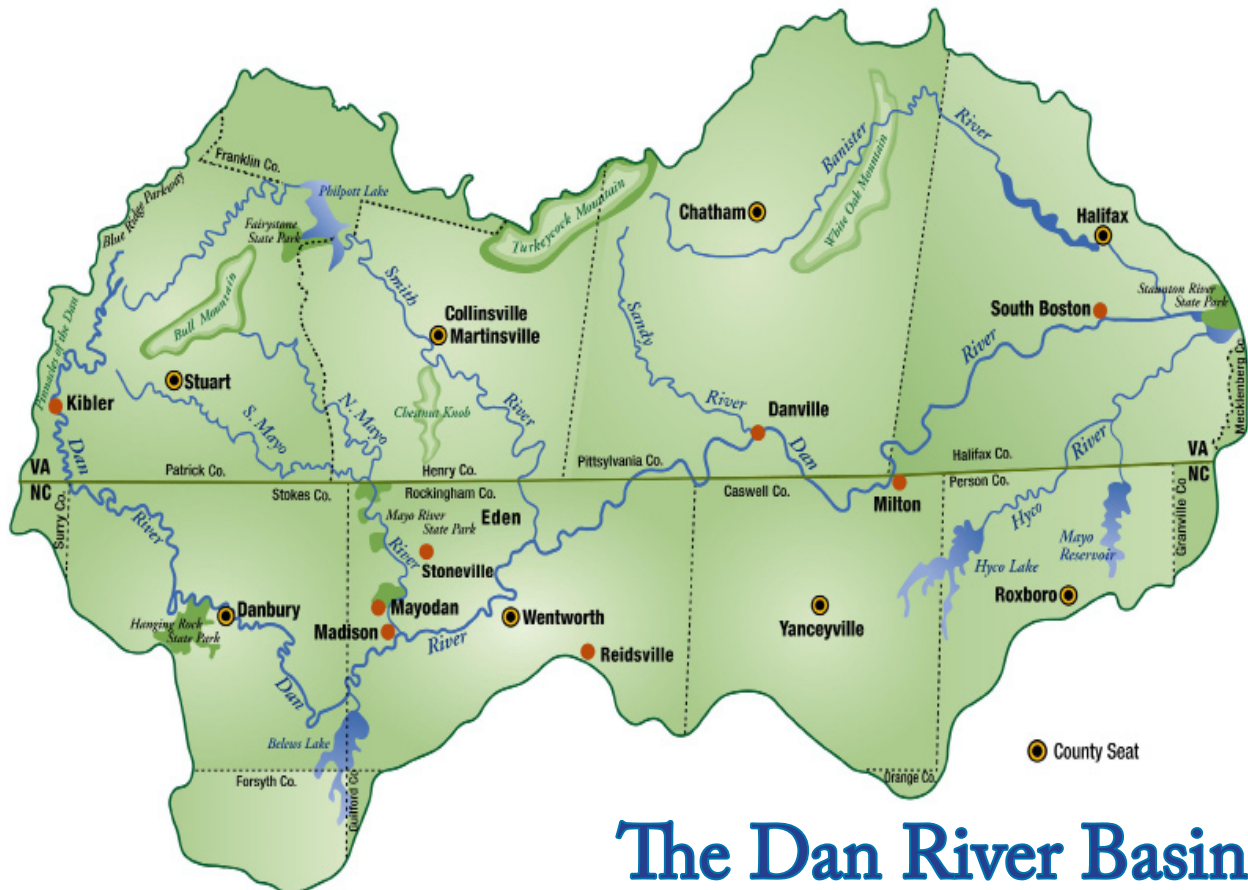


T Butler and Wayne Kirkpatrick shared the many aspects of DRBA.

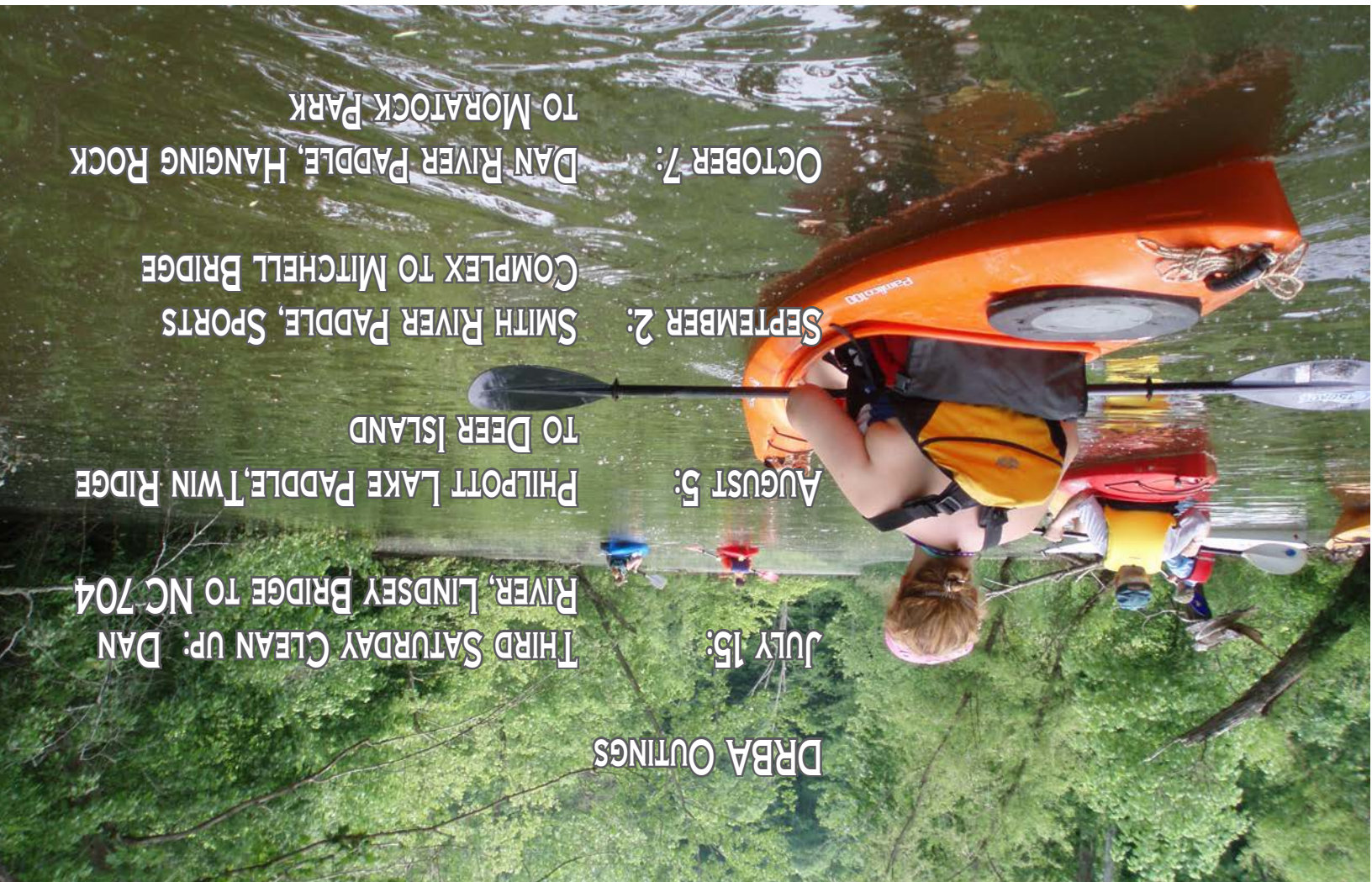
Many took the opportunity to paddle the waters of Jones Lake.



A catered meal was provided and enjoyed by many.



The Dan River Basin



DRBA OUTINGS

JULY 15:

THIRD SATURDAY CLEAN UP: DAN RIVER, LINDSEY BRIDGE TO NC 704

AUGUST 5:

PHILPOTT LAKE PADDLE, TWIN RIDGE TO DEER ISLAND

SEPTEMBER 2:

SMITH RIVER PADDLE, SPORTS COMPLEX TO MITCHELL BRIDGE

OCTOBER 7:

DAN RIVER PADDLE, HANGING ROCK TO MORATOCK PARK

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