

A photograph of a turtle with a dark brown shell featuring prominent yellow and orange markings. The turtle is positioned on a light-colored concrete ledge, with its head and front legs visible. The background consists of dark, textured stone or concrete blocks.

CURRENTS

Dan River Basin Association

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**An Online Farewell to Robin Light
River Otters Given a Home
Celebrations on the Rivers and Trails
Environmental Education in a Virtual World**

Currents • Volume 19 • Issue 4 Dan River Basin Association

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Cover Photo: Tiffany Haworth



Otters are Welcomed to Eden

The City of Eden is welcoming otters to the Smith River by installing a habitat, called an Otter Holt, in the bank on the river. On August 27, a celebration of the holt and a life-sized bronze sculpture of an otter family was held at Island Ford Landing at the Smith River Greenway.

DRBA’s Brian Williams described otters as “gregarious, friendly, and fun to watch. They work well together and don’t cause any trouble.” He reported seeing otter tracks and fish scales from otters’ meals on the nearby island. The city’s municipal services department built and installed the holt a short distance downriver. Williams noted that newborn otters need to stay dry until they’re old enough to learn to swim. The holt provides a cozy abode with two entrances and space for a growing family. With luck, otters will soon discover the holt and decide “that’s a great spot,” he said.

Named “Dan E. Smith” in honor of Eden’s two rivers, the otter has been the mascot for the city’s annual RiverFest since 2007. Cindy Adams, Coordinator of Tourism, Special Events & Projects, stated, “We believe Eden’s otter holt is the only one of its kind in the United States.” Because otters are sensitive to pollution, she added, “they are also an excellent indicator species for healthy habitat and water quality.” This location was chosen because of the ample food supply and a need for suitable homes for otters. The NC Wildlife Resources Commission may use the area to rehabilitate injured or abandoned otters in the future.

Video cameras placed in the holt will eventually enable viewers to watch the resident otters through a link at ExploreEdenNC.com. The otter sculpture was funded by the Eden Strategic Planning Commission, while funding for the otter holt was provided by a Water Resources/Duke Energy Foundation grant.

Eco Ambassador Council

In an effort to expand support for environmental protection and preservation opportunities in the Dan River Basin, Carter Bank & Trust is leading the formation of the Eco Ambassador Council (EAC) and inviting its partners in the region to join as Founding Members in 2020. The EAC is a coalition of businesses in the basin who wish to combine their community investment to support environmental projects that increase tourism and economic development now and preservation of these precious resources for future generations. Together, the EAC will choose the impact they want to make and see immediate results of their investment.



Carter Bank & Trust is hosting a virtual, by invitation only, breakfast meeting on November 10, 2020 for interested businesses in the area. Guests will learn more about the EAC, hear from corporate leaders who have already become founding members, and have an opportunity to learn more about how they can incorporate sustainability initiatives at their business. Businesses who wish to join the EAC as Founding members donate a minimum of \$5,000.

To become an EAC Founding Member and/or request an invitation to the breakfast event on November 2nd, please contact:

Tyler Carter, Carter Bank & Trust

Tyler.Carter@CBTcares.com ~ 540.493.0582

Robin Light Retires from DRBA

On January 20, 2009, Robin Light started employment with the Dan River Basin Association as its Office & Finance Manager. Over the next 11 years, Robin dedicated herself to ensuring DRBA's financial resources were accurately accounted for and the offices ran efficiently.

"Robin really filled a much broader position in the organization than her title suggests," said Tiffany Haworth, Executive Director. "Robin was the main person all of the staff counted on for everything from office supplies, to budgeting assistance, to financial reports, to keeping track of T-shirt inventory. She was always available to all of us when we needed to complain on bad days and celebrate with us on good days."

"Robin will truly be missed at DRBA. Her happy disposition and her strong dedication to the organization will certainly be hard to replace."

Tiffany Haworth, Executive Director

Robin started her career in the corporate world handling accounting and office work for textile companies. She observed, "After dealing with the negativity of the corporate world, it was a blessing to work with an organization that made such a positive difference for so many people in our region."

Robin will truly be missed at DRBA. Her happy disposition and her strong dedication to the organization will certainly be hard to replace.

On September 21, her last day at work, staff and board members greeted her via Zoom and wished her a happy, fulfilling retirement. "I will miss DRBA, but I am looking forward to the new adventure called retirement," she declared. "I have never met a harder working group of people in my life – who don't do it for money, but believe passionately in DRBA's mission. I will miss everyone at work, but I plan to keep in touch!"



Honey often served as a greeter to the DRBA Office

Stewardship

Madison Fish Habitat Project Begins Construction

For the next several months the Lindsey Bridge River access in Madison will be closed as engineers construct stream restoration structures and dam improvements. When completed, the project will provide exciting new recreational opportunities, as there will be a smooth water flow at the dam site, making a new safe passage for paddlers. A primary goal is to create upstream passage for the federally-endangered Roanoke Logperch and James River spiny mussel.

Reporter Joe Dexter quotes engineer Kris Bass, whose firm designed the concept, "What we are looking at is basically building a staircase from the dam down

to the riverbed." Giant boulders will form the staircase, with step pools between the boulders. "What those pools do is allow fish to hop up through the steps and swim into the pool and rest, until they can build up enough energy to go into another step."

In addition to opening the upper river to the endangered fish and mussels, Dexter reports that the project will improve water intake and quality for the town, and it comes with a lower price tag than rebuilding a traditional dam. It also helps provide long-term bank stabilization at the access site.

The project has been made possible through a collaboration among eight partners—the Town of Madison, DRBA, the NC Wildlife Resources Commission, U.S. Fish & Wildlife, The Conservation Fund, Rockingham County Education Foundation, Kris Bass Engineering, and LKC Engineering.

Paddlers may still use Madison's NC 704 Access. The Town of Madison provides information on the latest in construction and road detours on Facebook or at www.townofmadison.org.



July 6 Ribbon cutting at Lake Reidsville

Although a large gathering was curtailed by COVID-19, a ribbon cutting celebrated the opening of one mile of trail at Lake Reidsville in Rockingham County, with another 1.5 miles under construction. Speakers included DRBA staff, Mayor Jay Donecker; Fred Thompson, superintendent of Parks and Recreation; Dianne Sawyer, president of Reidsville Chamber of Commerce; and Donna Setliff, manager of Community Development. This celebrates completion of another portion of the perimeter trail planned for the lake.

July 18 Dan River Cleanup

Continuing a long tradition, DRBA did a river cleanup in July to prepare for Madison's 2.5-mile Dan River Race in August from Lindsey Bridge Access to NC 704 Access. Six energetic volunteers collected nearly 300 pounds of trash, although they were stymied by three large items. A wide tire was mostly buried in sand with a root ball impaling it, while a section of hard plastic culvert was buried vertically in sand in a log jam. Most frustrating was a heavy jet-ski sitting in shallow water on the lower end of the sandbar at Lindsey Bridge access.

DRBA thanks the volunteers, as well as the Town of Madison, which provided a truck at the take-out to receive the trash. The long-term partnership between DRBA and the Town continues, and we look forward to more successes in the future.

July 25 Spencer Penn Trail Upgrade

On a sweltering hot and humid morning, volunteers Wayne Kirkpatrick, Jim Tobin, and Conrad Kreager joined DRBA staff Tiffany and Anna at the Spencer Penn Trail. Working for almost 2 ½ hours, the group pulled several hundred pounds of metal debris and trash off the trail, cut down over a dozen dead trees that posed safety hazards, and even built a fence along the entrance to the trail. Although tired, the group was deservedly pleased with their results. DRBA thanks these five amazing volunteers for making such a great beginning. Now that cooler weather is here, DRBA will schedule another work day in the next few weeks.

August 8 Smith River Clean up

The Smith River has been a welcome distraction as we get through lock-downs and cabin fever. But our beloved treasure has felt the impact of increased visitation as the pandemic has brought more users to the outdoors and with it some unfortunate consequences.

Many paddlers, hikers and fishermen are always helping clean up the river each time they visit and every little bit helps but this year's Smith River Clean-up was a chance for over 30 of our river warriors to get together safely and give back at the same time.

The Dan River Basin Association partnered with The Smith River Sports Complex, Henry County and Smith River Outfitters to sponsor this annual event. From Martinsville to Mitchell Bridge volunteers worked to clean up the river, its banks and the roadways nearby.

DRBA volunteers Patty Williams and Lisa Perez helped DRBA staff to register participants and later provided lunch! Door prizes were provided by Smith River Outfitters and over 900 lbs of trash was collected. Many thanks to all who participated!



Learning and Staying Connected via DRBA Webinars

Since April, 2020, DRBA has presented free webinars via Zoom that cover a wide variety of topics. DRBA staff and volunteers have shared their expertise on water safety, Tub of Bugs, and snakes, as well as ways to be engaged in protecting our water, creating rain barrels, and participating in planning new trails, river accesses, and the Mayo River State Park Master Plan. Virtual tours of special places have taken viewers to Philpott Lake and to trails in both Virginia and North Carolina, while experts have introduced us to pollinators, aquatic species, and birds in our basin. Most recently, Biologist Kelsey Roberts with the NC Wildlife Resources Commission, provided an overview of the aquatic critters, including mussels, crayfish, and fish, you can expect to find throughout the Dan River Basin. Learn about what endangered or threatened species live in this system as well as what invasive species are present and how they affect aquatic ecosystems. More webinars are planned for the fall.



Did you miss something? No problem! See the recorded sessions at DRBA’s website:

<https://www.danriver.org/programs/environmental-education/webinars>

*Fight for the things that you care about. But
do it in a way that will lead others to join you.*

*~ Ruth Bader Ginsburg
1933 – 2020*

Surprise Visitors at Albert Harris Elementary Butterfly Garden

Laurie Witt, STEM Teacher at Albert Harris Elementary, and Krista Hodges, Education Manager, were working in the butterfly garden this week and noticed a Monarch caterpillar on one of the milkweed plants. They were excited to see the one caterpillar munching on the leaves of the milkweed, but as they were taking pictures of the visitor and looking around in the garden, they noticed at least a dozen Monarch caterpillars in the garden. They were all eating on the leaves of the milkweed varieties, and were in different stages of growth. After some inspection, they even found some egg casings on the milkweeds from where the butterflies had laid their eggs.

Mrs. Witt and Mrs. Hodges took the surprise as a wonderful, educational opportunity and created a short video that has been shared on DRBA’s Facebook page and website, along with Martinsville City Public School’s Facebook page.



“It was exciting to see the caterpillars because it shows that all of the students’ and teacher’s hard work has paid off and the Monarch butterflies have found the waystation,” said Krista Hodges, Education Manager. “I’m glad we were able to make the video to share with the students since they are unable to be at school right now.”



If you would like to see more, check out the
Green Schoolyard Monarch Waystation project at Albert Harris Elementary School

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UXQ_9KO_Gbk&feature=youtu.be

Just so you know . . .

The 2020 Art in Nature Online Auction starts at 12:00a.m. on Monday, October 26! At the week-long *Art in Nature Auction* you'll have the opportunity to bid on dozens of one-of-a-kind nature-inspired, made from nature, and upcycled items right from your phone, tablet or computer. 100% of proceeds will help DRBA protect our local rivers & streams and provide environmental education and outdoor experiences for thousands of youngsters. Start here! <https://www.charityauctionstoday.com/auctions/2020-art-in-nature-auction-9372>

Atlantic Coast Pipeline Cancelled Nearly six years in planning, with short sections constructed, the Atlantic Coast Pipeline (ACP) project was cancelled on July 5. Duke Energy and Dominion Energy were building the natural gas line from West Virginia through Virginia and North Carolina. However, a ruling by a US District Court in Montana overturned federal permit authority for waterbody and wetland crossings, creating ACP delays and increasing cost uncertainty that fatally threatened the project's economic viability.

Although the ACP would not have gone through the Dan River Basin, companies may rethink the Mountain Valley Pipeline planned for our area.

Smith River Outfitter Recognition Blue Ridge Country magazine ranks Smith River Outfitter as the Best Virginia River and Fishing Outfitter. Located in Bassett and owned by Brian Williams, DRBA's Virginia Program Manager, Smith River Outfitter's accolade is not unexpected by all who know Brian. His knowledge and experience in all things related to rivers is encyclopedic, and his enthusiasm for fishing, paddling, and caring for the health of the ecosystem is boundless. Congratulations, Brian!!

2020 Virginia Association of Science Teachers (VAST) Professional Development Institute will feature Krista Hodges, DRBA's Education Manager with Laurie Witt, Teacher at Albert Harris Elementary in Martinsville. In the November virtual institute for VAST, teacher Laurie Witt and DRBA's Krista Hodges, partners in the Albert Harris Elementary School Green Schoolyard project, will present "Environmental Education Impacts Students' Future Careers."

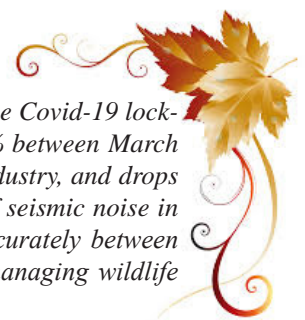
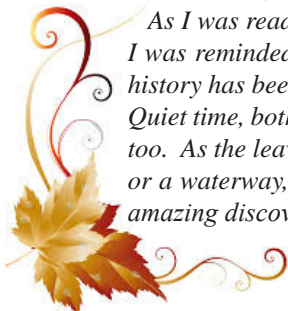
The writeup of their session states: "Today's students enter the classroom with the mindset that they can change their world. Science and STEM teachers have the opportunity to equip students to be environmental stewards while teaching Science Standards of Learning. Learn to create a Green Schoolyard that provides real-world applications for students, as well as meaningful hands-on learning opportunities. Students will enjoy trying on the roles of agricultural scientists, environmentalists, engineers, botanists, and meteorologists."

From the Director

An article in Science Daily reports that the reduction of human activity during the Covid-19 lockdown caused human-linked vibrations in the Earth to drop by an average of 50% between March and May 2020. Worldwide social distancing measures, closure of services and industry, and drops in tourism and travel resulted in the longest and most pronounced quiet period of seismic noise in recorded history, which allowed researchers for the first time to differentiate accurately between human and natural noise. Benefits of this global quieting could include better managing wildlife conservation, helping plants grow stronger, and foretelling earthquakes.

As I was reading the article, I noticed a turtle making his way slowly and quietly across my patio. I was reminded of the story of the hare and the tortoise. I know that this unique period in human history has been hard for so many, but slow and steady sometimes can help you reach a goal sooner. Quiet time, both personally and globally, might be good for our souls and, apparently, for our planet, too. As the leaves start falling and weather cools, please take your time, enjoy the quiet of the forest or a waterway, and remember that reduced human sound and slow but steady progress can lead to amazing discoveries.

Tiffany Haworth, Executive Director



July 4 on Beaver Creek Reservoir

The July 4 First Saturday Outing on Beaver Creek Reservoir began with a warm sun and over 30 paddlers ready to get on the water. A survey of the crowd showed more than half were new to a DRBA event, so we were on task to show everyone a good time!

First on the agenda was the recognition of our veterans and their family members, to whom was expressed sincere appreciation for their service and their sacrifice. Group leader Betty Kirkpatrick provided a short history of the reservoir, along with important safety guidelines.

With the donning of masks, Mark Bishopric and Wayne Kirkpatrick safely launched both the skilled and amateur paddlers. The group gathered and headed to the day's destination—the Beaver Creek confluence.

Newcomers to both DRBA and to kayaking, Doug and Wanda Layman reported, "I really enjoyed the experience on the Reservoir. The weather was perfect and I am liking kayaking more each time I go out. We are looking forward to doing more in the near future, and hoping to get our own kayaks someday."

August 1 on Banister Lake

Braving high humidity and overcast skies, fifteen paddlers set out from the impressive Banister Lake Boat Landing just north of Halifax.. Two canoes accompanied the many kayakers as we meandered toward the "Rock House" – an outcropping of rocks with an enticing cave, three miles away on the west bank of the Banister.

The drift was slow and lazy, giving time for safe-distanced conversation and bird-watching (a great blue heron followed us for part of the trip up-river). By the time of our break at the great bank of sand, the sun had broken through, the heat had intensified, and our break was welcomed, complete with refreshments, and quiet wanderings about the sand-clogged canal that had once served the Banister as a small inlet.

As we floated past the "Stone House" – site of a famous 1903 photograph of a similar (though differently dressed!) excursion—the hot sun was high in the sky. Many of the group took off back down the river at "break-neck" speed, far ahead of the few stragglers who returned to the landing in the same desultory manner in which they had left a few

hours earlier.

All agreed as to the value of such a day: life on the water allowing for more relaxed and organic socially distanced fellowship than our awkward stances on land could ever afford. It was a glimpse of normal life that will return one day, we all trust. Until that day comes, we always have the river, the blue heron, the Stone House, our kayaks and canoes, as well as each other to soothe our COVID-weary souls and refresh our kindred spirits.

Rick and Elsabe Dixon



September 5 on Philpott Lake

When I saw the article about DRBA's kayak trip to Calico Rock, I immediately called Mark with Three Rivers and inquired about the excursion. He assured me that even though I was a complete novice, and so were my son and nephew, we would not only learn to kayak in minutes but enjoy it! Well, we were definitely not disappointed. Mark chose kay-



aks based on our weight, height, and ability level, assuring our success. Then Robin Davis gave us a quick paddle lesson which proved invaluable: turn the paddle so that you could read the name inscribed, which proved essential. Mark carefully instructed us on how to get on the kayak from the put in so that we would not turn over.

The moment I got on the kayak and started skimming across Philpott Lake I was in love with the experience. The lake was smooth without any wake at all. Never did I feel like I would turn over. The sheer beauty of the pristine water and the way Robin presented the purpose of DRBA to protect this very important organization. My boys had an absolutely fantastic time riding their kayaks to Calico Rock and fished



the entire way there and back. Never was there a concern about the Covid because everyone wore masks at the put in and then social distancing was obviously just a part of the normal kayaking experience. Great conversations with all the kayakers took place during the entire trip, as well as mentoring about kayaking.

I immediately called friends who I thought would enjoy the experience when I got home and have already scheduled another excursion on Philpott to show them the way to Calico Rock. Many thanks to DRBA and all those who protect this precious natural resource.

Lisa Allen

Memberships 6/16/2020 – 9/15/2020

Sponsor Membership

River Legacy Circle
Graham Park

Steward Membership
James & Peyton Cherry
Martin Hundley

Family Membership
Greg and Phyllis Gendron
Paul Lowry
Jennifer Reis
Steve Robertson
Charles J Whittle Jr.

Individual Membership
Melissa Billins
Steve Ferring
Elizabeth & Lawrence Hulett
Josephine & Ben G. Lackey
Norma Reed
Robert Yeatts Jr.

Corporate Membership
Three Rivers Outfitters, LLC

Municipality Membership
City of Eden
City of Reidsville
Rockingham County
Town of Madison
Town of Mayodan (Customer)
Town of Stoneville
Town Of Wentworth

Donations 6/16/2020 – 9/15/2020

Chinqua Penn Trail Donations
Lindley and T Butler
Tom and Gloria Butler
Stephen and Patricia Crist
Jennifer J. Edwards
Patricia Foeller
Wayne and Betty Kirkpatrick
Teresa Lea
Lee Templeton
Town of Wentworth

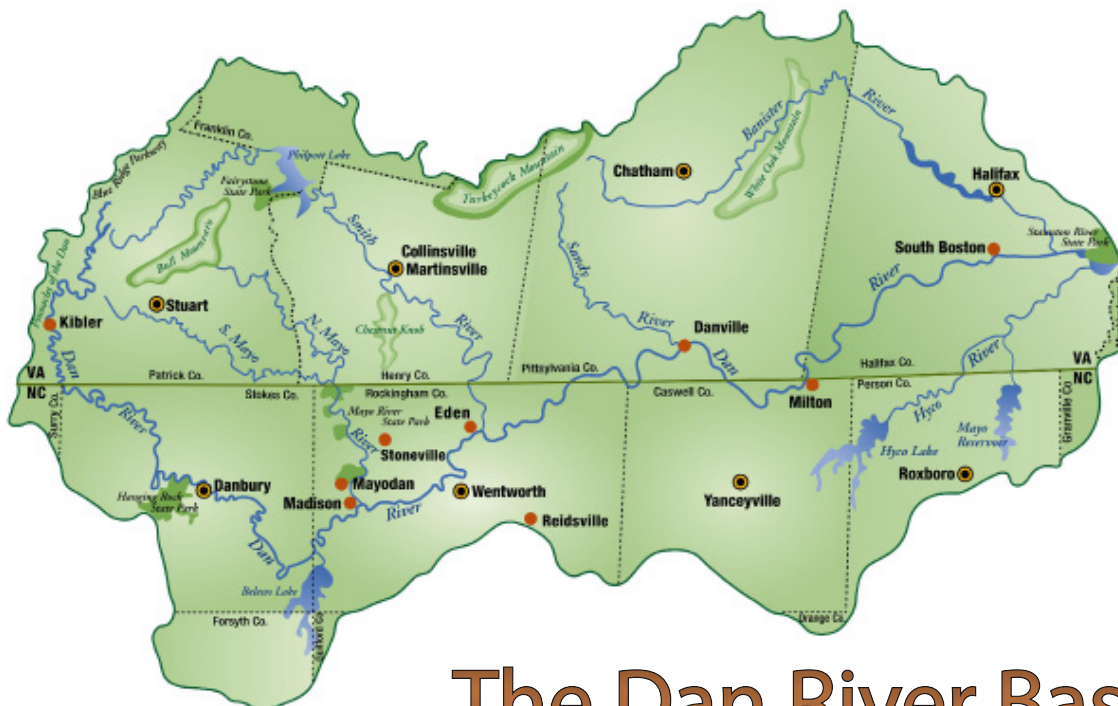
Fletcher and Ginger Waynick
Samuel and Nancy Wheatley

HC Canoe Access Improvements
James L. Franklin Jr.

Donation for Otter Holt
Kim and Andy Ingram

2020 Annual EOY Appeal
Lindley and T Butler
Wayne and Betty Kirkpatrick
Graham Park

**Help make a
Difference
Join
DRBA
today!**



The Dan River Basin

UPCOMING FIRST SATURDAY OUTINGS

OCTOBER 3: PADDLE ON LAKE REIDSVILLE

NOVEMBER 7: HIKE ON COOK'S WALL TRAIL,
HANGING ROCK STATE PARK

DECEMBER 5: HIKE ON NEW LAKE REIDSVILLE TRAIL

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