DiscoverEE:
Elementary Students Learn Outside With Simple Activities
Submitted by Hali Plourde Rogers, Virginia Eastern Shore Land Trust

This past spring, school closures isolated students from their teachers, friends, and typical learning environment. Students encountered a very different and much more challenging learning experience. Internet connectivity on the Eastern Shore is intermittent at best for many families, and some do not have service or a laptop. Schools distributed printed lessons with meals. However, teachers reported only 20% participation as the school year ended.

This fall, parents chose between hybrid learning (in-person plus virtual) or all-virtual learning. To comply with social distancing requirements, schools also decided not to allow field trips. Students are not only struggling with new learning norms, they are also missing critical educational experiences outside of the classroom.

Informal educators saw a need to lend teachers a hand, meet students where they are, and provide printed educational activities. Teacher professional development leverages school yards as a safe learning environment. Printed activities address the internet connectivity challenge and the digital burnout that so many are experiencing in the age of endless Zoom classes and meetings. The activities also “support place-based, student-centered, and outdoor learning, all of which have been found to positively impact all learners,” said Cora Johnston Baird, Site Director at the University of Virginia’s Virginia Coast Reserve/Long-Term Ecological Research Center (VCR/LTER).

Environmental Education Pre-Coronavirus

Before the coronavirus pandemic, informal educators supported environmental education through teacher professional development and student field trips. Field trips offer a safe way for students to explore the outdoors. Kids are more motivated, focused, and curious learning outside. They remember more of what they learn, are more creative, and are better problem-solvers.

VCR/LTER offered a paid immersive summer research experience for local teachers. “The goal,” said Johnston Baird, “is to give teachers authentic investigations and build their identity as scientists to bring those elements into their classrooms.” Ms. Stevens of Kegotank Elementary participated in the program in 2019. Since her experience, students participate more in her class and different students participate throughout class.

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) held Meaningful Watershed Educational Experiences (MWEE) for 5th- and 7th-graders at Brownsville Preserve and 10th-graders on Parramore Island. Students in 5th and 7th grades focused on how humans impact the environment.

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Dear Supporters and Friends of CBES,

As I write this to you, I am sitting on my deck looking out on a perfect fall day. But while enjoying the view, I am thinking about the present political rancor, which is as raw and angry as it has ever been. We seem to have lost our love of a good debate. Do we all remember using facts and research to convince opponents to support our point of view? When we listened to opposing points of view to find common ground? More frequently today, we hear folks impugning their opponents’ characters, saying that “they” are trying to destroy our way of life, create financial ruin, or threaten our families’ safety. Thankfully, I think we can still agree that life on the Eastern Shore is a wonderful thing.

That spirit highlights how important CBES is for the Eastern Shore. We try to serve a few simple purposes – to keep participants of the debate honest with each other, to provide a trusted source of research on issues that affect the Shore, to enable citizens of the Eastern Shore to work towards making the Shore “better.” It is a surprisingly difficult task in today’s world. Let me say up front that we are a volunteer organization, and we are not perfect. But in all my time with CBES, I cannot think of even one time where there was not great effort to be honest, fair, and accurate. Honesty is sometimes uncomfortable when we are highlighting mistakes. It is frustrating when an organization like ours demands a full debate on both sides of an issue, when many would like it to be decided, buried, and forgotten. Our volunteers are often impassioned activists and their bias and enthusiasm sometimes shine through. We know that debate and fruitful discussion are almost impossible without agreement on credible sources of information, so it is a cornerstone of our approach. We operate by consensus, and welcome diversity of viewpoints. And everything is infused with a love of the Eastern Shore with all its beauty, its resident eccentricities, and its delightful anachronisms.

CBES is sometimes attacked, and some of those anti-CBES feelings are quite ferocious. When the Black Lives Matter movement rose up, we saw it as a great opportunity to re-visit some of the Shore issues we have raised before, such as the challenges in our schools, and the resources we dedicate to local law enforcement versus other types of supportive interventions. We almost immediately had push-back because we were “aligning ourselves with that movement.” What did that mean? This is a difficult topic for many of us. How can we best understand the impacts of racism on the Eastern Shore? I do not know what can make our community more “anti-racist,” but I know I will need the help of CBES to build my understanding. And I know CBES will work on that issue even if it is so hard to do.

It is a great example of why I support CBES, and hope for it to stay an important part of the Eastern Shore. CBES has been a consistent source of information in many controversial local issues, striving to provide the research and facts that can inform our members and inspire them to participate in efforts to make the Shore a better place to live for all its citizens.

Which brings me to the main reason for this letter. As most of you know, this has been a simply awful year for most nonprofit organizations, as COVID-19 upended everything. CBES is no exception. I sorely missed our annual picnic at the Wescoat grader shed in June. Breaking bread together in a beautiful spot with a little live music is such a great way to talk to and hear from our members. My memories of Jane Cabarrus dancing still make me smile. It is certainly a great way to be reminded of how blessed we are to be here. Sadly, we cancelled our only fundraising event this year, the CBES Bike Tour, because of the risks to volunteers and participants associated with that type of event on the Shore. We know how big a loss that was for the greater Shore community, too.

And so, like so many, CBES is hurting for resources. Our work – from publishing ShoreLine and co-sponsoring Community Unity Day, to supporting forums, voter information, local planning, and local organizations like the Shore Delivery Corps – depends on your support to our tiny organization. With your help, we hope to get back to doing all the wonderful things we have always done. But we need your help to get there. We have no national structure to support us. We have no endowment that keeps the lights on. Would you please consider us this year in your donation plans? I think the work CBES does is so important. I hope you agree. That CBES exists at all is a testimony to how committed many of you have always been to loving the Eastern Shore and supporting making it “better.” Thank you.

Arthur Upshur, CBES President
DiscoverEE, cont’d from p. 1

land and water systems. Seventh-graders also explored Phillips Creek by kayak. Tenth-graders focused on human impacts on environmental health on the Eastern Shore as well as globally through water quality investigation, distinguishing plant communities across the island, and measuring movement of the beach.

“Our students don’t get a lot of opportunities to explore a salt marsh, kayak, or boat, and so through these activities we are able to hopefully provide them with multiple experiences and resources that will leave a lasting impression on how amazing their Eastern Shore backyard is,” said Jenny Miller, Preserve and Education Manager at TNC’s Volgenau Virginia Coast Reserve.

Second-graders also visited Brownsville Preserve, walking the Birding and Wildlife Trail and virtually exploring different locations, the hope is that any family will be able to identify plant communities across the island, and measuring movement of the beach.

“In the meantime, informal educators are developing alternative experiences and activities in hopes of encouraging outdoor learning from home. Informal educators are also working with teachers to help them take advantage of their school yards as safe places to learn.

**Teacher Professional Development Encourages Outdoor Classrooms as Safe Learning Space**

Based on our current understanding of coronavirus risks, outside is the safest place to be. Teachers and informal educators are reimagining how to bring students outside of the classroom and still meet learning standards. VCR/LTER led and developed “Outdoor Learning 101,” professional development for teachers at Kegotank Elementary. “The session reduces the barriers to accomplishing outdoor instruction by working with teachers to get ahead on logistics, set routines, and identify promising starting points in curriculum,” explained Johnston Baird.

This included a virtual training session led by Johnston Baird; Julie Head, Education Director with Eastern Shore Soil and Water Conservation District; and me, in my role as Executive Director of VES Land Trust. Teachers completed sample activities and planned outdoor activities for their classes.

When asked what they associate with teaching outdoors, Kegotank teachers cited fresh air, low stress conditions, space, and fun. Johnston Baird also organized a volunteer day, with help from Birding Eastern Shore, to revitalize Kegotank’s outdoor garden and make it safe for socially distanced learning. The program is available for schools on the Shore.

**Learn and Explore Outside With Simple Activities**

VCR/LTER, VES Land Trust, and TNC are developing educational activities to encourage outdoor exploration in community spaces and close to home. DiscoverEE aims to encourage kids’ natural curiosity. “Once we can shift their focus outside or into their surroundings, it is easier to pique their interest and keep them engaged in learning,” explained Johnston Baird.

DiscoverEE also addresses the lack of virtual connectivity and virtual burnout by offering printed activities and encouraging students and their families to go outside. Nature is a logical solution to many of the challenges we are facing during the pandemic. Time in nature reduces stress, anxiety, and feelings of isolation; promotes calm; lifts moods; and increases physical activity.

People need to feel safe to realize these mental and physical health benefits. That’s why it’s important to provide activities in accessible and familiar locations. “By providing physical activities that can be picked up at different locations, the hope is that any family will be able to find a spot close to where they are to get outside and learn relevant content in science and beyond,” said Miller.

You don’t have to go to a large park to learn about nature: “Wherever you can find access will work, whether that is a vast field or forest, a tiny backyard, or your grandmother’s garden,” explained Johnston Baird. Hopefully, students who learn outside in a familiar place will be more comfortable in nature.

DiscoverEE activities are simple, geared toward elementary learners. They supplement classroom learning and reinforce learning standards. Students can pick up an activity anytime, with new activities added every other week. Many of the activities are designed to be broad and adaptable so they can be completed more than once. Currently, activities can be found at the Chincoteague Island Trail, ESO, and the libraries in Accomac, Nassawadox, and Cape Charles.

Students are encouraged to share their work with #DiscoverEEonESVA on social media. For more information on the program, please contact Hali Plourde Rogers at director@veslt.org.

Kids are more motivated, focused, and curious learning outside. They remember more of what they learn, are more creative, and are better problem-solvers.
When a 9-year-old’s heart’s desire is one of those country hams hanging from the gables of Margaret’s (or many another rural Virginia roadside stand), and he hasn’t asked for much of anything else since being uprooted from urban northern Virginia and landing on an Eastern Shore farm, what do you say? “Yes,” of course – and carry home 8 pounds of what is now known in the household as “salt with meat attached.”

My 9-year-old neighbor, even though he has very deep roots on the Eastern Shore, was probably unaware that he now owned a significant piece of Virginia culinary history. Since the 17th century, the old process of salt- and air-curing, smoking, and ageing meat to preserve it has kept many Virginians alive through cold winter months. Native Americans showed colonists how to preserve venison, and the same process worked for the plentiful razor-backed hogs – which had migrated north after being brought to Florida by the Spanish. The preserving process was also similar to one used in Europe, and became the regional standard as more hogs were imported into the colony from England. Peanuts became, and still are, a staple crop across southside Virginia, and were an important food for the hogs – and that helped create the noteworthy flavor of Smithfield country hams. Then, as now, hogs are let loose in the harvested peanut fields to forage for the leftovers.

The ham question for my new farmstead neighbors then became – what now? From my fellow local cooks, I was led to believe that preparing a country ham was a long, traditional process, involving hours of prep and a very sharp knife – a process not to be undertaken by the faint-hearted. I encouraged my friend Miranda to get out the biggest pot she had and stick with tradition. I sent her instructions from a much-revered local caterer’s cookbook, Kitty Caters.

I’ll let Miranda take it from there: “I’ll admit I was a bit intimidated by the giant pot of evil-looking water, with this ‘thing’ stewing in it for a full day. We probably should’ve changed the water out, but the prospect of moving it was a bit daunting. Once we wrestled it into the oven, the smell of ham filled the entire house, and the dogs camped out nearby for hours. It took about 2 days for the house to stop smelling like ham!”

“Pulling the bone out proved to be beyond our skill level, and the meat was still so salty we decided it made a better seasoning than main course. We’ve been working it into quiches, spaghetti sauce, scrambled eggs, salads, and pretty much anything else. There’s still a generous hunk sitting in the fridge, despite my best efforts. A recent visitor left with 2 cucumbers, an eggplant, and a wedge of ham. At the rate we’re going, it will be with us another week or 2.”

Country ham is still a favorite holiday meal, often accompanied by Andrew Jackson’s cook’s red-eye gravy – so named for the cook’s red and bleary eyes after a night of moonshine, so the story goes. And it wouldn’t be an Eastern Shore celebration without a big platter of ham biscuits. But for those not used to the strong, salty taste of real country ham, Miss Kitty’s advice is well taken: “It only takes a tiny sliver of ham to really flavor a roll or biscuit.”

How to Cook a Smithfield Ham

Kitty says, “Smithfield Ham, sliced thinly and served on tiny rolls, has been a signature dish at all of my receptions. It only takes a tiny sliver of ham to really flavor a roll or biscuit.”

Soak the ham for several hours (overnight is even better) in cold water. Wipe off mold and pepper the outside of the ham to taste. Wrap the ham in waxed paper and place in a roaster. Pour about 3/4 cup of water into the bottom of the pan. Bake in a 250-degree oven, uncovered, for 20 minutes per pound. Remove paper, cut off fat and skin. Cover the ham with brown sugar and ground cloves. You can even pierce the ham with a few whole cloves for added flavor. Bake for another 30 to 45 minutes.

If you want to remove the bone, you will need to do this while the ham is hot. Make a slit along the bottom side of the ham, cut around the bone, and remove it. (This takes some practice and a very sharp knife.) Fold in all of the loose ham and wrap tightly with plastic wrap. Cover with a dishtowel and refrigerate overnight. When the ham is thoroughly cold, it can be sliced thinly.

Reprinted from Kitty Caters.
Venom Collect:
Taking the Sting Out of Wasp Removal
By Donna Bozza

The breeze is sweet with bird songs as you settle peacefully on your porch swing. Finally, some time to relax and unwind. Til… that ominous buzzing. A look around confirms that wasps are furiously swarming about a nest, and they aren’t thrilled with your company. What to do?

Some of us will risk it and take a stick to it. Others will shoot it with pesticides that can kill honeybees, tree frogs, hummingbirds – and can still put the shooter in danger of some ticked-off insects, who are also locked and loaded. Weenies like me will just get the heck out of Dodge. But here on the Eastern Shore, there is an environmentally safe and free way to be rid of these potential menaces, as well as help those who are deadly allergic to stinging insects.

Who You Gonna Call – Bee Busters!

Actually, no. Shore resident George Waldenmaier renamed his decades-owned business of removing wasps, hornets, yellow jackets, etc. from BeeBusters to Venom Collect. The former sounded too much like bee extermination, which it’s not.

What exactly is it? Here’s the buzz straight from George himself.

How did you get started in this business? Why did you want to pursue such a venture?

I have always been a beekeeper, and when you have bees, many people ask about other stinging insects. Insects have always been an interest of mine, and I took several entomology courses while pursuing my Biology degree at Virginia Tech. Twenty-two years ago, my sister was watching The Discovery Channel and there was a show on about this lab that has collectors catching hornets’ nests so their venom could be used to make allergy medicine. I have been to many historic places, such as a tavern with Davy Crockett’s signature on the wall, had wine and cheese with a retired ballerina from The American Ballet Theater, and had a fascinating talk with a real hero from the War in the Pacific. I have also met a few eccentrics, such as a woman who didn’t want me to collect her yellow jacket nest once she realized that they were going to be killed. She was afraid that in the cosmic consciousness and oneness of the universe, taking their lives would be bad karma. I guess she thought I was going

Have you ever been stung? I take it you are not allergic.

I have a high-quality bee suit and I am careful, but it is impossible to avoid occasional stings. It is just part of the job. Welders get burns, carpenters get splinters and bruises, and people who fool with angry stinging insects get stung. Yellow jackets are the worst. They are relentless, and manage to crawl into every fold and pocket on the suit, and often get me when I take the suit off to get in the truck – or they’re in the truck, or they somehow managed to get in my boot, in a glove, or somewhere in my clothes. They are the insect version of kamikaze pilots.

Do you consider yourself brave for doing this job? [I do]
The job is dangerous enough to keep it interesting.

What are the reasons why people should call your service rather than get out a can of Raid?

There are 3 main reasons why it is a good idea to call me instead of just spraying or pouring gas down a yellow jacket hole. One, the only person likely to get stung is me, and I have the safety gear and equipment to do the job safely. Two, the insects will be used to make a life-saving medication, and three, it’s free. That’s a win, win, win.

How quickly do you have to get the wasps to the lab?
Where is it located? Do they extract the venom by hand?

I can’t imagine it’s an automated process.

Everything I collect is frozen on dry ice and shipped to the lab in Idaho. The technicians there have what may be the world’s worst job. They take each bug and pull out their stinger with a tweezer and magnifying glass. They also must wear a respirator and a protective suit to avoid the microscopic hairs that break off the bug and are very irritating.

Do you have any unusual experiences you can share?
The job is interesting and fun because every job is different, and I rarely meet people who are not nice. It is a real pleasure to help people and play a role in the production of an important medicine. I have been to many historic places, such as a tavern with Davy Crockett’s signature on the wall, had wine and cheese with a retired ballerina from The American Ballet Theater, and had a fascinating talk with a real hero from the War in the Pacific. I have also met a few eccentrics, such as a woman who didn’t want me to collect her yellow jacket nest once she realized that they were going to be killed. She was afraid that in the cosmic consciousness and oneness of the universe, taking their lives would be bad karma. I guess she thought I was going

See Venom Collect, cont’d on page 7
**Bike Trail Update**

The Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) has been working on a planning and engineering study for a 49-mile rail trail from Cape Charles to Hallwood. It has just released a trove of materials related to the online survey conducted in May: plans for the layout of the trail, cost estimates, funding opportunities, and remaining tasks.

To elicit public feedback during the pandemic, VDOT conducted an online survey last spring. Of the 3,400 participants, 40% live on the Eastern Shore, 34% in Hampton Roads, 17% elsewhere in Virginia, and 9% outside Virginia. 90% of respondents would use the trail, and approved of the trail for reasons related to safety, health and wellness, and tourism. Biking and walking would be their primary activities, for recreation and exercise.

Using an interactive mapping tool, respondents marked locations along the trail, noting where they would like to visit and/or have amenities such as restrooms, kiosks, and benches. Trail layout drawings include an optional soft-surface path beside the paved trail that could be used by equestrians or joggers.

The preliminary cost estimate is $43 million. Construction of the trail would be in phases. Initially, VDOT identified 3 segments: a 2.5-mile section in Cape Charles; a 2-mile section in Onley; and a 15-mile stretch extending from the Eastern Shore Community College in Melfa to Bloxom. The plans include off-trail sidewalk improvements and crossings to provide safe access to local destinations. In August, these 3 segments were included in funding request applications through VDOT’s Smart Scale program, which funds transportation infrastructure projects. Funding decisions will be made in July 2021.

A video overview is available at the following URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6erZgaiChPc&feature=youtu.be. A VDOT page with related documents, plus a form for sending additional comments, is found at: http://www.vdot.virginia.gov/projects/hampton_roads/eastern_shore_rail_to_trail_study_virtual_public_information_meeting.asp?

- Use plastic bags as pillow inserts.
- Store a paintbrush or roller in a plastic bag with a rubber band to seal, to keep the paint wet.

Source:
Venom Collect, cont’d from p. 5

to invite them to a commune where we would swap venom for organic baked goods and then maybe sing some folk songs. I eventually convinced her to let me collect them by explaining how, since they are taking territory and attacking people in this life, they were probably Nazis in their last life and if we killed them they may learn a lesson and come back as ladybugs or something else harmless next time. She agreed.

What is the largest amount you have collected in a day?
The most I’ve ever caught is 3 pounds of yellow jackets in one run, with 2,000 yellow jackets to the pound.

More information on Venom Collect can be found at: https://venomcollect.com/ or by calling 757-710-8458.

Broadband Authority Approves Small Business Rates

On October 8, the Eastern Shore of Virginia Broadband Authority (ESVBA) approved a new rate structure for small business internet service. Until now, all businesses, including small businesses and nonprofits, had to pay commercial rates, which start at $112.00 per month (1 Mbps bandwidth, with a 60-month contract). Residential rates start at $39.99 per month (10 Mbps download, 5 Mbps upload, with a 24-month contract).

The small business rates start at $62.49 per month for a 24-month contract (see table). This will include one single dynamic public IP address; a single public static IP address is available for an additional $10 per month.

Comparable commercial rates start at $240 per month for a 24-month contract (or $192 per month for a 60-month contract).

While both the residential and small business rates provide speeds “up to bandwidth based upon best efforts,” the commercial speeds are guaranteed.

For more information, visit the ESVBA website at https://esvba.com/services/. To request service, call 757-709-7080.

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Northampton County, Virginia - Government


Yesterday, a cable was accidentally cut in Chester, Virginia, causing an internet outage for most of the day to critical Virginia Commonwealth agencies – including Voter Registration. Yesterday was also the last day to register to vote ahead of the November 3rd election. But in Northampton County, no disruptions were reported because we have learned from history. Northampton County has the oldest continuous court records [in the country] because during the Civil War, when Richmond asked for counties to send their records to them for safekeeping, Northampton County refused. Richmond burned, and along with it the records from the counties who had sent them there.

A few years ago, our Northampton County General Registrar, Terry Flynn, used this history lesson to head off any future trouble. There was a trend among localities to convert paper voter registration records to digital records, then send the files to the state for safekeeping. When asked to give up the paper files for more digital convenience, Mr. Flynn refused, telling his colleagues the story of our oldest continuous court records, which they thought was very quaint. He asked his colleagues around the state what would happen if somehow the internet went down and the records were inaccessible.

Northampton County uses a hybrid system of digital records backed up with the original paper records. So yesterday, when the internet went down and other localities were unable to access their records, Northampton County kept right on working – the old-fashioned way, paper poll books and paper files. When voters called to check their registration status, staff went to the file cabinet and pulled the voter’s original registration card. Voters, you are in capable hands here in Northampton County!

Reprinted with permission from the author, Jean Flynn, Website Content Coordinator, Northampton County, VA.
Please consider renewing your membership and/or sending a donation now!

Help CBES continue our Mission – and keep ShoreLine going – during this challenging time.

Send to CBES, PO Box 882, Eastville, VA 23347
Join online at www.cbes.org – Thank you!

Community Calendar*

*NOTE: For current status of public meetings, go to the appropriate website or contact by email or phone.

Accomack County
757-787-5700
www.co.accomack.va.us

Northampton County
757-678-0440
www.co.northampton.va.us

1st Wed
Board of Zoning Appeals
10 AM, Accomac

1st Tues
Board of Zoning Appeals
10 AM, Eastville

2nd Wed
Planning Commission (PC)
7 PM, Accomac

1st Tues
Planning Commission (PC)
6 PM, Eastville

3rd Tues
School Board
6:30 PM, Accomac

2nd Tues
Board of Supervisors (BOS)
6 PM, Eastville

3rd Wed
Board of Supervisors (BOS)
5 PM, Accomac

2nd Thurs
School Board Work Session
6 PM, Machipongo

4th Tues
PC Work Session
7 PM, Accomac

3rd Wed
Wetlands Board
5 PM, Accomac

3rd Wed
Wetlands Board
10 AM, Accomac

4th Thur
PC Work Session
6 PM, Eastville

CBES and Other Activities

1st Wed
VIMS Public Seminar
7:30 PM, Wachapreague

3rd Tues
ES Ground Water Committee
10 AM, Accomac

3rd Wed
Board of Supervisors (BOS)
5 PM, Accomac

4th Tues
BOS Work Session
5 PM, Eastville

3rd Tues
CBES Board Meeting
7 PM, Eastville or Belle Haven

4th Thurs
School Board
6 PM, Machipongo

For membership and other CBES information:
www.cbes.org