



# Chesapeake Chat

SUMMER 2018

## Director's Matters

It's been a very busy and wet summer for most our region with many states getting a year, or more, worth of rainfall by the end of July. While this may have dampened many programs, your Region 2 and National Boards have been forging on with great plans for trainings, workshops and conferences, celebrating 30 years of NAI and working to pay off the mortgage on the NAI headquarters building.

NAI 2018 national conference will be in New Orleans November 27-Dec 1. About 30 Region 2 members are signed up to attend so far. I'm looking forward to seeing all those shining faces. The Conference's Region 2 gathering will be on Thursday afternoon and the location will be in your program.

With the help of a great planning team, Region 2 Deputy Director Sammy Zambon has been hard at work building our region's spring workshop. Save the date for March 12, 2019 to attend a one-day workshop at the John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge in Philadelphia for "Interpretation in Urban Parks". More to come as we get closer. Keep up with new happenings on our facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/NAI2Chesapeake>

Yes the National Association for Interpretation is now 30 years old. Part of the celebration is recognizing 30 Shining Stars, three interpreters from each of the 10 regions. Congratulations to our Region 2 awardees, Teresa Pierce, Historical Interpreter, First State Heritage Park; Rachel Tolman, Park Naturalist, Long Branch Nature Center, and Suzanne Holland, Visitor Services Manager, Hidden Pond Nature Center. In addition to receiving national level recognition, each Region 2 awardee received \$100 from the region to be used toward regional or national trainings or conferences. Thank you to all who donated and or bought items in our many scholarship auctions. For a full write up on these and all the NAI Shining stars see <https://www.interpnet.com/30for30>

Can't travel for training? Check out the many webinars offered through the NAI National Office at [https://www.interpnet.com/NAI/interp/Certification/Other\\_Training/Webinars/nai/\\_certification/Webinars.aspx?hkey=7c32c73e-3c21-4540-998e-45c82a050a96](https://www.interpnet.com/NAI/interp/Certification/Other_Training/Webinars/nai/_certification/Webinars.aspx?hkey=7c32c73e-3c21-4540-998e-45c82a050a96)

Our National Board is working hard to pay off the mortgage on our headquarters building. You may be asking yourself, that's all well and good but how will that effect the members? A significant portion of the funds now directed to mortgage payments will come back the regions and members in the form of more scholarships and training funds. Click here to learn more [https://www.interpnet.com/NAI/nai/\\_membership/Donations/Legacy\\_Fund\\_2018.aspx](https://www.interpnet.com/NAI/nai/_membership/Donations/Legacy_Fund_2018.aspx)

Many thanks go out to our new web designer Jackie Raiford. She did a top to bottom rework on our webpage. Check out the fruits of her labor at <http://www.nairegion2.org/>

Yvonne Johnson  
Director  
NAI Chesapeake Region 2

### Region 2 Leadership: Executive Committee

- **Director**  
Yvonne Johnson  
Manager  
Frying Pan Farm Park  
(703) 473-9101  
[Yvonne.Johnson@fairfaxcounty.gov](mailto:Yvonne.Johnson@fairfaxcounty.gov)
- **Deputy Director**  
Sammy Zambon  
VA State Parks  
(804) 624-7064  
[sammy.zambon@dcr.virginia.gov](mailto:sammy.zambon@dcr.virginia.gov)
- **Secretary**  
Ned Reddrop  
The Design Minds, Inc.  
(703) 246-9241  
[ned@thedesignminds.com](mailto:ned@thedesignminds.com)
- **Treasurer**  
Ken Rosenthal  
Park Naturalist  
Gulf Branch Nature Center  
(703) 228-3403  
[krosenthal@arlingtonva.us](mailto:krosenthal@arlingtonva.us)

## Region 2 Leadership continued

### Committee Chairs

- **Awards Chair**

Dodie Lewis  
Manager  
Claude Moore Park  
(571) 258-3704  
dodie.lewis@loudoun.gov

- **Outreach Chair**

Patricia Dietly  
Green Spring Gardens  
Alexandria, Virginia  
(703) 624-0128  
patricia.dietly@fairfaxcounty.gov

- **Scholarship Chair**

Christopher Kemmerer  
DCNR-Bureau of State Parks  
(717) 425-5330  
chkemmerer@pa.gov

### Media

- **Region 2 Webmaster**

Jackie Raiford  
Locust Grove Nature Center  
(301) 765-8661  
jacqueline.raiford@montgomeryparks.org

- **Newsletter Editor**

Cynthia Rabbers  
Assistant Director for Campus Rec  
Penn State University  
(814) 360-0763  
c\_rabbers@yahoo.com

### Chapter Representatives

- **Beltway Chapter Co-Chairs**

Mona Enquist-Johnston  
Retired Manager  
Fairfax County Park Authority  
mogar@cox.net

Alonso Abugattas

Natural Resources Manager  
Long Branch Nature Center  
AAbugattas@arlingtonva.us



Juvenile in a pine snag, courtesy of Mary McLean

## Arlington Discovery

### Screech Owls Make a Home in Suburbia.

Mary McLean recounts a series of fascinating encounters with a family of Eastern Screech Owls (*Megascops asio*) in early May at Tuckahoe Park in North Arlington. Mary and fellow master naturalists, park experts, and even animal welfare professionals provided thoughts and assistance to protect the offspring and everyone learned something new about these (usually) nocturnal creatures along the way.

Early on May 6<sup>th</sup>, fellow ARMN member, Melanie La Force, contacted me with a wonderful find: baby gray Screech Owls roosting in Tuckahoe Park very close to the park's trail. I arrived in a hurry, and we found three owlets at various levels on trees and on the ground; some without cover.

Not long after finding the babies, we looked straight up overhead from the trail to see, almost silhouetted, the singularly tiny, adult Screech Owl.

The adult kept a close eye on the scene. While we stayed with the owls, the adult's eyes went from person to person the entire time.

Screech Owls are rare to spot but. Both adults and juveniles would be very special bird identifications anywhere, especially in an urban park! They are small—only 7 to 9 inches on average, and while mostly nocturnal, they can appear in twilight and during the day, as we witnessed here. They are also surprisingly comfortable in urban and suburban situations.

We conferred with fellow master naturalist, David Howell, as well as Alonso Abugattas, Arlington's Natural Resource Manager, who agreed that the little ones were likely fledglings.

Red morph adult, courtesy of Kevin McLean



Fledgling owls, known as “branchlets” or “branched out owls,” move from branch to branch once out of their usually high nest and before they can fly. At night they follow a parent's call to get food, practicing locating prey by sound. Down on the ground they can get familiar with where they'll find their prey and learn to walk. During the day, a parent will watch over them. On hearing about the two near the ground Alonso suggested that maybe they were still learning. David Farmer, Chief Naturalist and Manager at Fort C.F. Smith Park and also a well-known bird resource, added that if they accidentally fell to the ground they would figure out how to eventually jump up higher. With practice, the ones we saw will climb their way back up to a perch safely above the ground like one of the owlets had done.

Melanie and I worried that since two of the juvenile owls were perched so low they could be at risk from dogs. We both had regularly seen dogs running around the park off-leash. On Alonso's recommendation, Melanie called the Animal Welfare League of Arlington where volunteers connect concerned individuals to Arlington County's Animal Control for an animal emergency like a potentially

## Region 2 Leadership continued

### State Representatives

- **Delaware**  
Kara Okonewski  
(302) 535-1501  
karaoko507@gmail.com
- **Maryland**  
Amy Stahler Henry  
Conservation Education Specialist  
Maryland DNR  
(410) 260-8828  
amy.henry@maryland.gov
- **New Jersey**  
Kathi Saxton Granato  
(856) 697-9536  
ksaxtongranato@hotmail.com
- **Pennsylvania**  
Christopher Kemmerer  
DCNR-Bureau of State Parks  
(717) 425-5330  
chkemmerer@pa.gov
- **Virginia**  
Catie Drew  
Education Coordinator  
DEA Museum & Visitors Center  
(202) 353-1362  
catie.drew@deamuseum.org
- **Washington DC**  
Vacant
- **West Virginia**  
Rich Wolffe  
West Virginia University  
(681)285-7628  
rich.j.wolff@gmail.com



Owl family, three juveniles and adult, courtesy of David Howell

injured owl or off-leash animal. They came in 10 minutes! Officer Karina Swetnam and Officer Cliff Ballena told us they'd gotten a call about the owls earlier in the day and had already checked on them and they looked fine. When we told them about our concern regarding off-leash dogs, Officer Katrina contacted a raptor rehabilitator who took the two owlets from lower branches to keep them safe. Now, the parent would just have one to watch.

The other Animal Control Officer, Cliff, went over to where a group of people were playing in the park. There were two dogs off-leash, whose owner's the officer gave a warning to. The officer said, "While your dog may come when you call it, you may not be able to control its response to an unfamiliar animal like a baby owl, not to mention the danger to your dog from an owl's talons! The protection of wild animals is yet one more reason to obey the law and keep dogs on a leash at all times in a public park."

The next day, Melanie said she'd spotted an owlet up in the canopy, and I was both happy that it was safe and exasperated I'd missed it yet again during my dog walk. But I did see a white pickup parked on the trail, with part of the trail on either side of the truck roped off. There was a special crew to take down dead trees (snags) that could fall on pedestrians who were on sidewalks and trails. We had seen the juveniles earlier in a pine snag that was marked with a white X for removal because it could fall on the trail.

So, I called the park manager, Kevin Stalica, who knew of the pine snag. He contacted the contractors to delay cutting it down. Kevin also contacted Alonso Abugattas about the situation and reported that Alonso said, "Once juvenile owls leave the nest they stay out." So, if the nest was in this or another snag, the juveniles would be safe. We also learned that they perch on branches during the day as they snooze and grow more flight feathers, stronger muscles, and practice their flight skills.

Rufous morph adult, courtesy of David Howell

White morph adult, courtesy of David Howell



A couple days later, we learned that Animal Control returned the two owlets to the park to let the fledglings learn from their parents and nature. At that point, David Howell saw them and was able to take some amazing photos, including both owl parents and all three of the owlets, safely up in the tree canopy together. Naturalist David Farner noted that while hunting is mainly done at night, with three hungry mouths to feed, both parents might hunt both day and night!

David Howell also showed me his photos from Gulf Branch's Migratory Bird Day Festival that was run by naturalists Jen Soles





Upside-down adult, courtesy of Kevin McLean

and Ken Rosenthal at Lacey Woods Park on May 12<sup>th</sup>. David captured photos of Screech Owl parents and they were not the same colors! One is a grey morph. The other is called a rufous (red) morph.

At Cornell Lab of Ornithology's wonderful online guide "[All About Birds](#)", I learned that there is also a Brown Morph for the (Northern) Eastern Screech Owl. It's amazing how adaptable the owls are to different habitats! Here is a [link to Cornell's video](#) of two Screech Owls during the day.

About a month after our first encounter, my "spice" Kevin and I took our dog, Declan, for his walk in the Tuckahoe Park woods early in the afternoon. There was a ruckus on the side of the trail. It was a mobbing of birds—and not the more familiar murder of crows badgering a hawk while escorting it around cawing incessantly in warning of the predator. Instead, a Blue Jay led a mixed flock of Robins, Cardinals, and Chickadees in protest of a Screech Owl! While we weren't sure whether it was an adult or juvenile, the owl perched on a branch looked cool during the mobbing. Naturalist David Farmer later explained that Screech Owls are a real threat to smaller song-birds, even as large as mockingbirds and thrushes, but not so much to Blue Jays.

Interestingly, the Screech Owl stretched its wings out again and again as if to say, "I'm bigger than I look." Or maybe it was considering making a break for it. Ken Rosenthal noted that Screech Owls normally weigh twice as much as a Robin or a Blue Jay—the biggest in the mob—so maybe it stretched its wings to make sure they'd work. We later surmised it must have been one of the owlets still learning how to be a predator.

While we wondered what it was doing awake at 1:00 in the afternoon or how it threatened the flock, a female Cardinal suddenly rushed towards the owl. It looked as if the owl fell from the branch but did not fly away. Instead, it hung upside down from the branch!

The owl hung long enough for us to notice an odd angle of one wing. Concerned that its wing was injured, I called Animal Control with the report of an injured animal, to which they are known to respond promptly. But as I waited for Animal Control personnel to arrive, the owl suddenly flew off with the birds in pursuit into the upper canopy and out of sight. Shortly afterward the forest quieted down. So, whatever it did, the owl was no longer seen as a threat to the smaller-sized birds.

I contacted Animal Control to explain that the owl was evidently o.k. and the Animal Control Officer said she'd never heard of such behavior. Neither had Alonso, David Farmer, or Ken Rosenthal. David did allow that,

The inverted owl is odd, but you watch birds a while and you'll end up seeing all sorts of odd behavior that isn't described. My guess would be that the owl got itself into a position it had never been in before and it took a bit of processing to figure out how to extricate itself. When I used to do hawk banding we would sometimes lay a bird on the ground on its back when we released. It would then take awhile for the bird to realize it was free and roll on its side or flip up so that it could fly away.

We all have more to learn about our Arlington birds!

It was a wonderful learning adventure with Screech Owls, for which I thank Melanie La Force (who credits the assistance of her friend's dog, on leash!), as well as the experts, Alonso Abugattas, David Farmer, Ken Rosenthal, and David Howell (including his priceless photos!). Finally, Arlington's very helpful Animal Control Officers Karina Swetnam and Officer Cliff Ballena, for whom Arlington animals and people are forever in your debt. Also, special thanks to my "spice", Kevin McLean, for his help, photographs, and eternal patience.

# Flash Mob Programming



Would you like to add a little flash to your interpretive programming schedule? You can make it sparkle with flash mob programming. Let's explore this concept along with some of the pros and cons of doing this type of programming and some of our results.

A flash mob is defined as: "a group of people who assemble in a public place, perform an unusual and seemingly pointless act for a brief time, then quickly disperse, often for the purposes of entertainment, satire and artistic expression. Flash mobs are organized via telecommunications, social media or viral emails" --Wikipedia.

This definition does share a few common features with interpretive programming such as using a public space and a brief entertainment event.

Have you ever seen a flash mob in action? Most of us have only seen them on the internet. One of the pleasures of watching a flash mob video is noticing the surprised expressions of passersby's. They almost always smile and many stop and watch. Their smiles reveal a wistful wishing that they be the dancers on a city street instead of the rushers to work. Many observers clap, sing along or take video of the experience to share and enjoy later. It is something that makes people slow down for a moment and rediscover the joy of life. This is a perfect way to think about interpretive programming.

Presque Isle State Park education staff has experimented with the flash mob concept by simply putting a new twist on the old idea of impromptu programs. We advertise the experience without using all our typical media strategies, using social media only or even an old-style signboard on site. The program is only advertised at the last minute, usually a day in advance or less. We choose an extremely desirable or limited experience, such as a tour to a lighthouse that is not open to the public, a special kayaking trip or a rare natural history event. It must be an unusual offering not normally available as programming. This will create high demand and excitement among your community. The combination of a rare opportunity with last minute advertising creates the buzz.

There are pros and cons to this approach. Some of the positives are: real excitement from your audience, opportunity to choose the perfect conditions with little public commitment in advance, gives attendees the feeling of winning a contest, it makes your audience pay very close attention to what you are doing so they don't miss the next opportunity, and creates media excitement and gets you publicity. Negatives are: creates winners and losers (who may not get into the program) and makes some people unhappy, it can incite complaints or feelings of being left out and it can produce overwhelming numbers of participants that need to be managed.

We used this concept at Presque Isle to provide an exclusive historical tour inside a lighthouse that was not open to the public. Advertising on social media 24 hours in advance produced hundreds of people, some of which had to be turned away. Some people even drove from cities 100 miles away or more for this experience, calling off from their jobs as it was scheduled on a weekday. The media covered the event which gave us increased visibility for our future programming.

Other parks in our region chose to do flash mob train station programs, luminary cross-country ski programs and last-minute kayak blitzes. We encourage others to choose just the right experience and experiment with Flash Mob programming.

Anne Desarro/Environmental Education Specialist Supervisor  
Presque Isle State Park, Erie, PA.



## Take Note



**Why documenting your work is well worth the time.**

by Kara Okonewski

In 2016, I found myself holding a 7-pound 15-ounce baby girl and at the same time having to say good-bye to my amazing position as an Interpretive Specialist at Delaware State Parks. Since then, I have been putting myself out there volunteering with multiple organizations, attending the NAI Region 2 conference, trying to keep myself in the loop. And I am writing everything down. Something I wish I would have done during my time at state parks.

As a person who currently doesn't work (for pay) as an interpreter, let me tell you what the other side looks like. I have been on numerous interviews. As a person who has no fear of public speaking, interviewing is painful for me. It is a train wreck to hear my scattered thoughts about myself. It is difficult to maintain modesty and, yet, explain how awesome I am and that their park isn't complete without me. Let the eye-rolling begin. What has been a success is bringing a tangible portfolio. I cannot tell you how important it is that you write everything down, make extra copies for your records, keep your program list ideas and save newspaper clippings. Don't forget to add reviews and testimonials and put the date on everything. Make a journal of what worked and didn't work, goals and inspirations. As an interpreter, we wear many hats on top of our friendly smiles. If you were to write every task you have ever done on your resume, how many pages would it be? Well that is why a portfolio is so important. Not only does it serve as a reminder for all your achievements, but as a visual representation for future and current employers to see your hard work in place. It doesn't have to be paid work either. It can be anything and everything that relates to your field and/or reflects your work ethic. It displays passion and character, something resumes often lack.

Another bonus is that this professional journal will serve as a positive reminder of why we do what we do. In a field that is under attack by lack of resources and funding, false information and high competition, it can be easy to be swept up in negative energy. Like a virus, negative energy can spread quickly from one person to another and before you know it, it can become a toxic environment. But you can also create a barrier, an immunity, to these toxins. You can create a representation of your great work of changing minds and hearts of the public for the preservation and conservation of natural resources and history. And in those times when you can't remember why you do what you do, pull out your professional journal and remember that what you do makes a difference. So what are you going to do? Write it down. When are you going to start writing it down? Now.

## Acting Deputy Director

**Sammy Zambon.**

Hello everyone! I was asked to write a short bio to introduce myself to the region as our Acting Deputy Director. So here goes...

I was born in a van down by the river. No wait that isn't right. Actually I grew up around the NY City area, living for a time both in northern NJ and in Greenwood Lake, NY. We didn't have AC so my choices as a kid were to either be hot inside or outside and there were no parents outside. While in NJ an old celery farm provided an ideal playground where I caught my first fish, built tree houses, and learned to ride a motorcycle. In NY the woods surrounding the Appalachian Trail became my refuge and hangout. I'm a graduate of the NYS Ranger School and the College of Environmental Science and Forestry and hold a MPS in Forest Ecology.

After graduation in 2000 my wife and I moved to VA. While looking for a job conducting Environmental Studies I took a summer position as a park interpreter at Westmoreland State Park. I was hooked. I spent 12.5 years as a Chief Ranger at Caledon and Mason Neck State Parks. In Sept of 2014 I became both a CIG and CIT having attended a train the trainer workshop in Yellowstone. In Nov of that year I transferred to my current position as Visitor Experience Specialist in our park headquarters. My job includes training new and seasoned interpretive staff, training paddle guides, creating interpretive signs and exhibits, and a slew of other duties as assigned. This May was my 17<sup>th</sup> Spring Interpretive Workshop, 16<sup>th</sup> in my role as an instructor for new interpreters. In addition to my training through NAI I am also a certified canoe and kayak instructor with American Canoe Association.

Outside of work, I am both a husband and a father. Margie and I have been married for 20 years. We have one daughter, Lydia, who just turned 13. Collectively we have a beagle named Millie who works very hard to train her humans. I enjoy canoeing and kayaking equally depending on my mood and where I'm going. I also enjoy wildlife and landscape photography. Lately I haven't spent enough time doing either hobby. I post some of my adventures on Instagram as Ranger.Sam.

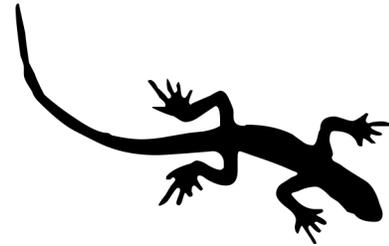
All joking aside, I love interpretation. We, as interpreters, have the opportunity and obligation to share our sites with visitors, to help them discover for themselves their connections to the resources. We are the keepers of history, the chroniclers of nature, and the tellers of stories. That is a job worth doing and worth doing well.



# Beltway Chapter Chatter



Charles Smith (green shirt) shared insights and information. Photo by Alonso Abugattas



On May 9<sup>th</sup> local interpreters explored and learned about magnolia bogs. Rod Simmons and Charles Smith, local naturalists and bog experts, led the Beltway Chapter's Magnolia Bog Walk.

Rod Simmons (white shirt) readily answered questions. Photos by Mary Farrah



# Conservation Discovery Day!

Smithsonian's National Zoo & Conservation Biology Institute



On Saturday, October 6 from 9:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m., the Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute in Front Royal will open its gates for Conservation Discovery Day to showcase conservation science and career opportunities. Designed for high school and college students, this day will include hands-on activities, research demonstrations and career panel discussions with conservation biologists, field ecologists, research scientists, veterinarians, and animal keepers. It's the one day of the year the facility is open to the public, so don't miss your chance to learn how you can join the conservation ranks, and make a difference for wildlife and conservation. Please note: that this event takes place at the central campus and does not include any tours to see the animal collection at SCBI. Visit the [event website](#) for more details!

There are no individual tickets for Conservation Discovery Day attendance. Pricing is based on vehicle size. A standard car pass is \$30. A small bus/van is \$50. A standard school bus or chartered bus is \$100. Parking passes are on sale now and can be purchased on the [event website](#).



## NAI REGION 2:

Delaware

District of Columbia

Maryland

New Jersey

Pennsylvania

Virginia

West Virginia



### We're on the Web!

See us at:

[www.interpnet.com/2/](http://www.interpnet.com/2/)



Find us on:  
**facebook®**

National Association for  
Interpretation Region 2  
Chesapeake

## Submission Guidelines

Each edition will be theme-based so if you have something to contribute short or long refer to the table below for upcoming deadlines and themes. Submissions for other sections can be sent at any time but if it fits in with a particular theme send it by that edition's deadline otherwise it will be used for a future edition.

Recommended lengths for submissions: 500-600 words for articles  
100 words for each tip or trick

Pictures should be submitted as an attachment to your email. Other materials may be sent in the body of your email or as an attachment.

If you have any suggestions for a theme for future newsletters, please send your suggestions or requests. Themes can be anything related to interpretation that would be of interest to the region.

Newsletter submissions including calendar items should be sent to:  
[ChesapeakeChat@gmail.com](mailto:ChesapeakeChat@gmail.com)

	Deadline	Theme
Winter Newsletter	January 15	
Spring Newsletter	April 15	
Summer Newsletter	July 15	
Fall Newsletter	October 15	Combining Nature and History (Birding on Battlefields) Engaging Diverse Audiences, Home School Programs