

November 2022 Newsletter

Falls of the James Group



FOJG members had a great hike on the Lower Appomattox River Trail from Ferndale Park in Petersburg on October 8th. Participants picked up a lot of trash along the way. Photo courtesy of Shavon Peacock.



Veronica Hayes enjoying life during our beautiful fall season in Virginia. Photo courtesy of Veronica Hayes.

Thank You to Veronica Hayes, Former FOJG Newsletter Editor!

Our FOJG newsletter editor, Veronica Hayes, has resigned from her volunteer position after doing a great job for the last two years. We appreciate her time, energy and willingness to help keep you all informed on the latest programs, outings, and advocacy news.

Veronica is now working at Scents of Serenity Organic Spa. Veronica says, "I'm so grateful for the opportunity to serve the FOJG Chapter and work with many brilliant, dedicated environmentalists. Being a newsletter editor gave me many great skills and allowed me the opportunity to become aware of interesting happenings in the community. I look forward to volunteering with FOJG in the time to come."

If anyone is interested in taking over the important volunteer role of FOJG newsletter editor, please contact Shavon Peacock at shavonandrew@verizon.net.

Newsletters typically are sent out monthly from August-April. Marketing Cloud is the program under the Salesforce cloud-based software company used to send emails and newsletters for the Sierra Club. In the meantime, I will try, with lots of help from Paige Wesselink, the VA Chapter Digital Coordinator, in keeping the monthly newsletters going!

Shavon Peacock
FOJG Membership Engagement Committee Chair

Register for our Upcoming Programs



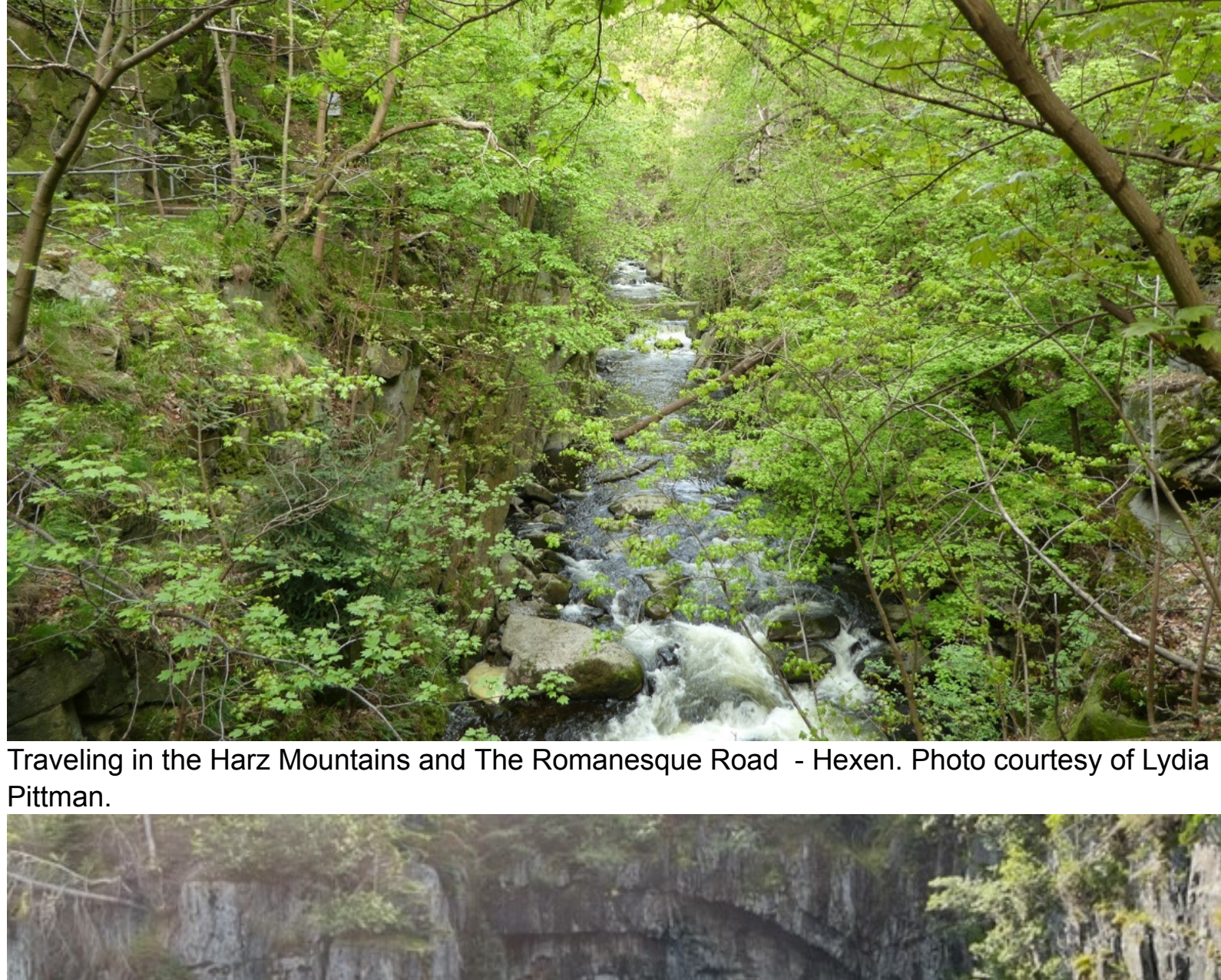
Devin Jefferson
Photo Credit: The Science Museum of Virginia

11/15/2022 7:00 pm – 8:00 pm BioBlitzes and Community Science at the Science Museum with **Devin Jefferson**, Community Science Catalyst at the Science Museum of Virginia. **FOJG Green Giant Awards will also be presented to Barry O'Keefe, Claudia Spurrill, and Mary Finley Brook.** This will be an in-person/Zoom hybrid program. **The in-person meeting place will be at the Varina Library Meeting Room. Masks are required.** Register [here](#) for the Zoom link.

In this presentation, Devin Jefferson, Community Science Catalyst at the Science Museum of Virginia, will talk about biodiversity observations during community science events such as BioBlitzes and City Nature Challenges. We will also talk about ways to get involved in the Richmond area and how that data can be used to support community-driven learning and priorities.



Ralph Grove hiking the Lycean Way in Turkey. Photo courtesy of Ralph Grove.



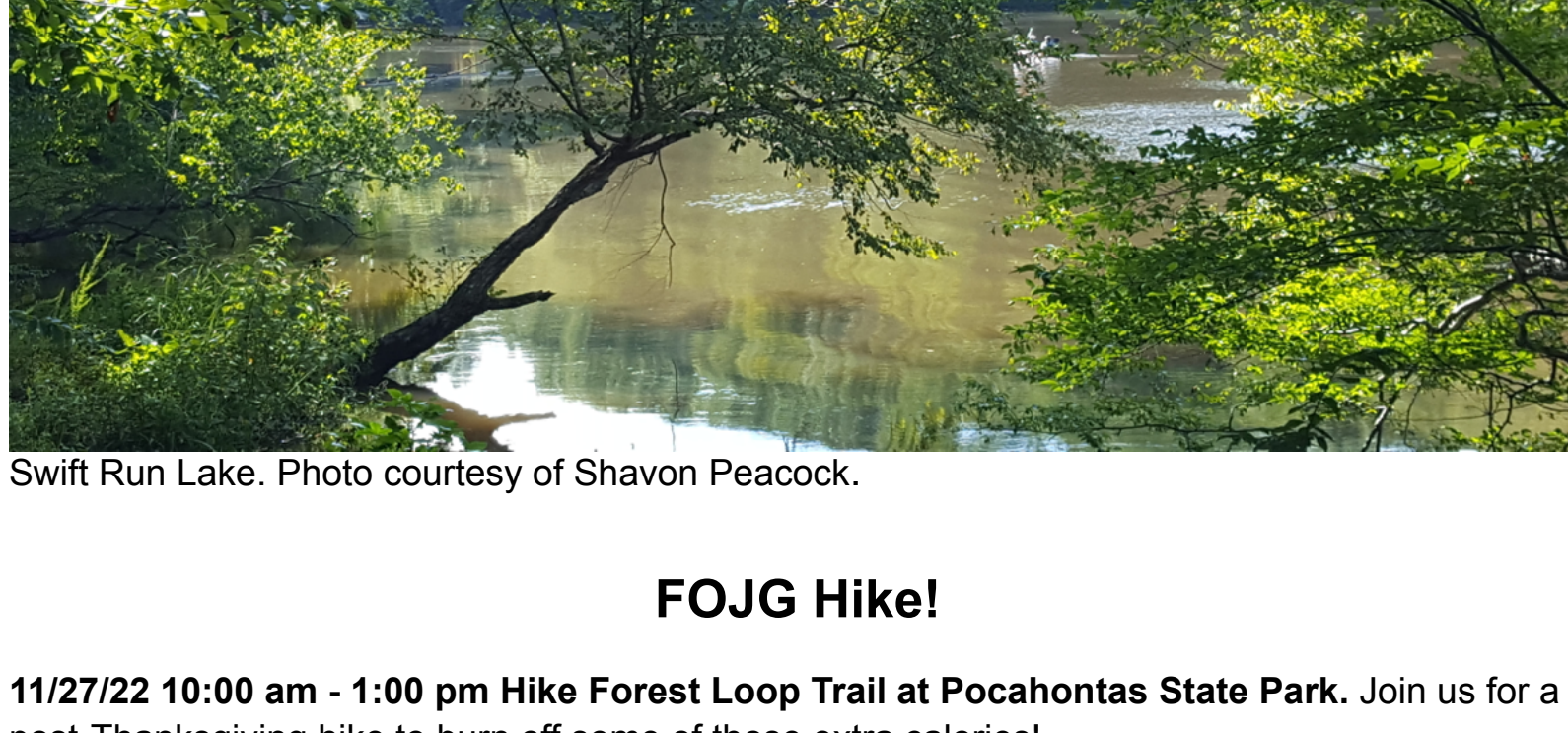
Traveling in the Harz Mountains and The Romanesque Road - Hexen. Photo courtesy of Lydia Pittman.



Padding in Newfoundland Canada. Photo courtesy of Glen Besa.

12/13/2022 7 pm – 8 pm FOJG Virtual Program: Hiking the Lycean Way in Turkey with Ralph Grove, Travelling in the Harz Mountains and the Romanesque Road of Germany with Lydia Pittman, and Camping and Hazzling the Natural Wonders of Newfoundland Canada with Glen Besa. Register here [FOJG Virtual Program: Adventures in Turkey, Germany, and Newfoundland](#) (sierraclub.org) for the Zoom link to this virtual program.

Check out the [FOJG Calendar](#) for more environmental events in the Richmond area.



Swift Run Lake. Photo courtesy of Shavon Peacock.

FOJG Hike!

11/27/22 10:00 am - 1:00 pm Hike Forest Loop Trail at Pocahontas State Park. Join us for a post-Thanksgiving hike to burn off some of those extra calories!

This is an in and out hike from the Courthouse Rd parking area to the lake. We'll follow the Forest Loop and Co-op Trails to Swift Run Lake, where we'll take a break for a snack or lunch before heading back.

Total distance will be about five miles, total hiking time about three hours. The trail is mostly flat, but we'll walk gradually uphill on the way back. Well-behaved dogs are welcome but must remain on-leash the entire time. Register here for the hike. [Forest Loop Trail - Pocahontas State Park](#).

Green Giant Awardees for 2022

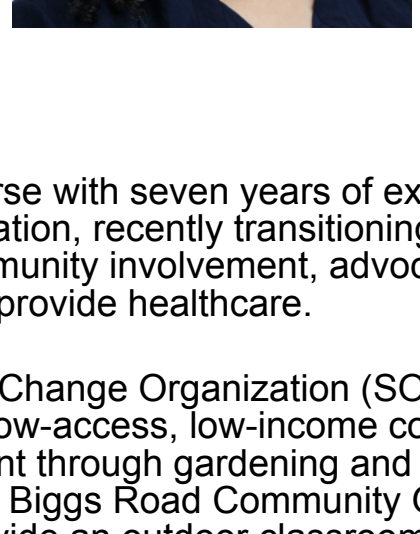


Photo Credit: Sheri Shannon

Claudia Spurrill is a Registered Nurse with seven years of experience working in inpatient spinal cord injury and brain injury rehabilitation, recently transitioning to outpatient family medicine. Claudia brings her passion for community involvement, advocacy, and justice into the clinic and uses it to create change in how we provide healthcare.

In 2013, Claudia founded Seeds of Change Organization (SOCO) while living in Newport News, VA. SOCO empowers residents in low-access, low-income communities to pursue health, self-reliance, and community involvement through gardening and other urban agricultural practices. Currently, Claudia is developing the Biggs Road Community Garden in Southside Richmond to increase access to fresh foods, provide an outdoor classroom for youth, and bring residents together through green space.

In addition to serving on the board of SOCO, Claudia is a master gardener and serves as the 8th District Clean City Commissioner. She hosts monthly cleanups, volunteers with numerous organizations in the community, and advocates for her neighbors in the district.

Claudia is a visionary and environmental champion improving the quality of life for people in the City of Richmond. You can find out more about SOCO at [Seeds Of Change Organization](http://SeedsOfChange.OrganiZation) (socogrows.org) and can contact Claudia at claudia.spurrill@socogrows.org.

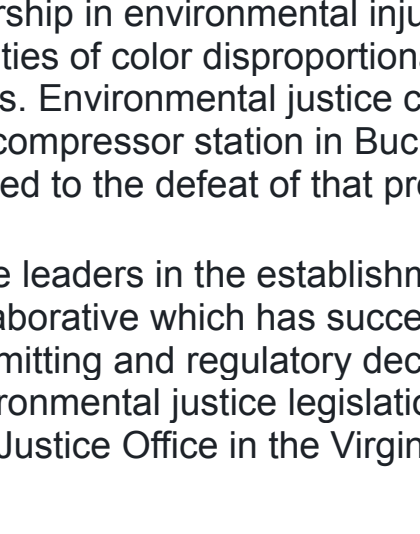


Photo Credit: University of Richmond

Mary Finley-Brook is an Associate Professor of Geography at University of Richmond. As she notes on her Twitter profile, she is a "teacher-scholar-activist-mom". In her role as a teacher and scholar she has brought public attention to environmental injustices in Virginia and beyond. As an activist she has used her scholarship in environmental justice to become an effective advocate for marginalized communities of color disproportionately impacted by both the Atlantic Coast and Mountain Valley Pipelines. Environmental justice concerns with the Atlantic Coast Pipeline, specifically the Union Hill compressor station in Buckingham County, resulted in a key permit being denied which contributed to the defeat of that project.

Dr. Finley-Brook was also one of the leaders in the establishment of the Virginia Environmental Justice Collaborative which has successfully elevated environmental justice concerns in a number of permitting and regulatory decisions beyond the cracked gas pipelines. VECA advocated for environmental justice legislation which resulted in the establishment of an Environmental Justice Office in the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality.

Mary would be the first to acknowledge that these victories are the result of front-line communities giving voice to historic injustices. But as a fierce and passionate advocate against injustice in Virginia and our world, she helped to amplify those voices. We are fortunate to benefit from Mary's activism in Richmond and Virginia, and the Falls of the James Group is pleased to recognize Dr. Finley-Brook as a 2022 Green Giant.

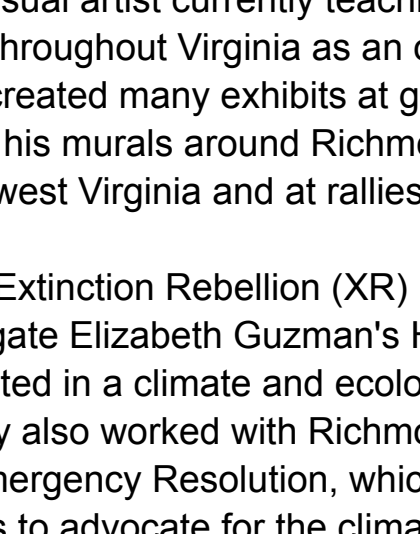


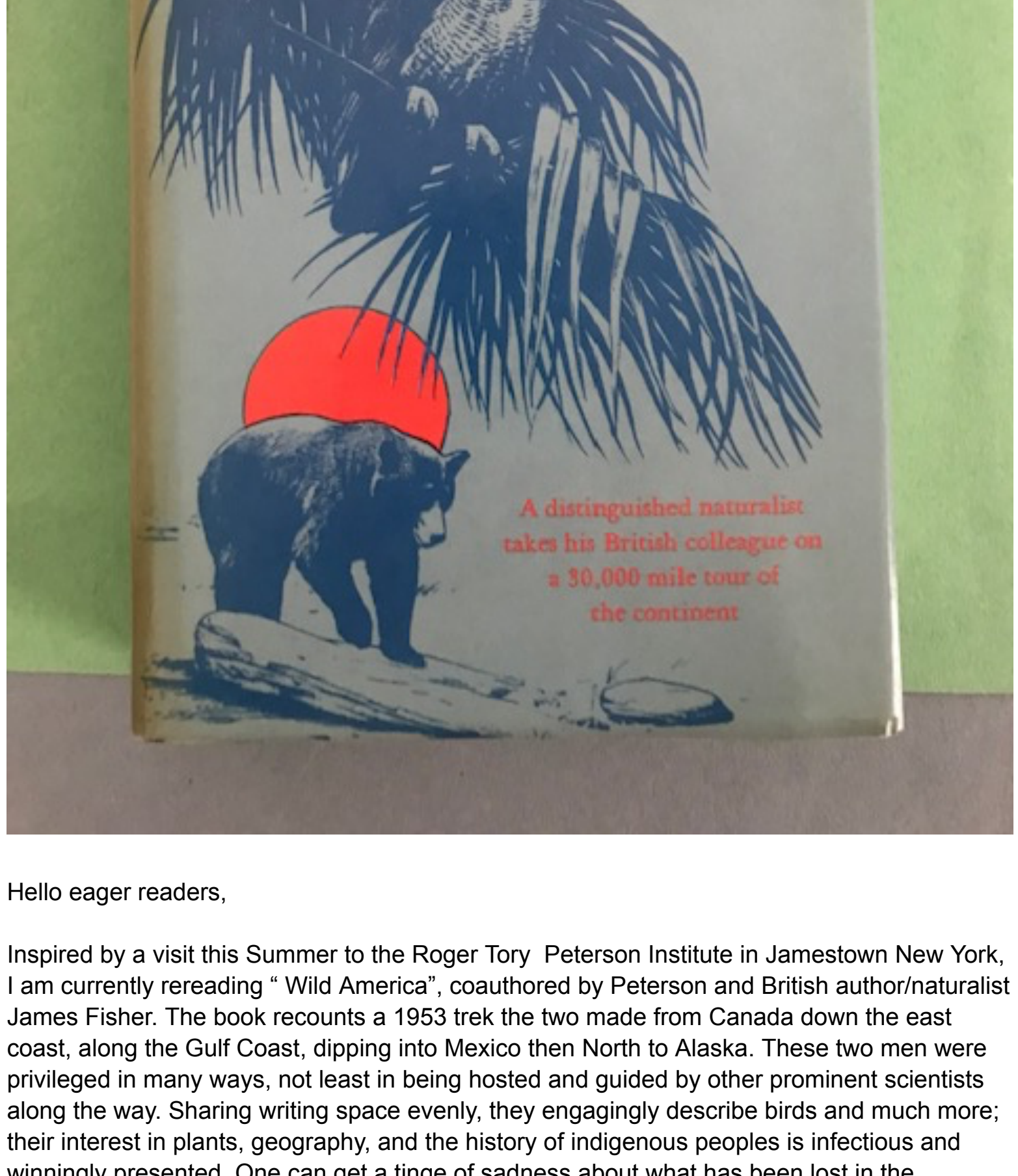
Photo credit: Virginia Commonwealth University

Barry O'Keefe is a multi-talented visual artist currently teaching at Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) Arts and working throughout Virginia as an organizer who centers on social and environmental justice issues. He's created many exhibits at galleries and at light installations, and you may have spotted some of his murals around Richmond as well as large pieces of his work - a pipeline blockade in Southwest Virginia and at rallies in both Richmond and DC.

Barry was the founding member of Extinction Rebellion (XR) Richmond. Barry was involved in the advocacy work behind VA Delegate Elizabeth Guzman's HJ Resolution: Global warming; caused by human activity, has resulted in a climate and ecological emergency. This resolution passed the VA House in 2020. Barry also worked with Richmond Councilmember Katherine Jordan's Climate and Ecological Emergency Resolution, which passed City Council unanimously in September 2021. Barry continues to advocate for the climate initiatives housed within that Resolution with his students and Richmond policy makers.

Barry was born and raised in Richmond, Virginia. He received a BA in English and Russian Studies from the College of William and Mary in 2010 and earned a degree in Printmaking at Ohio University.

Joe's Book Nook



Hello eager readers,

Inspired by a visit this Summer to the Roger Tory Peterson Institute in Jamestown New York, I am currently rereading " Wild America", coauthored by Peterson and British author/naturalist James Fisher. The book recounts a 1953 trek the two made from Canada down the east coast, along the Gulf Coast, dipping into Mexico then North to Alaska. These two men were privileged in many ways, not least in being hosted and guided by other prominent scientists along the way. Sharing writing space evenly, they engagingly describe birds and much more, their interest in plants, geography, and the history of indigenous peoples is infectious and winningly presented. One can get a tinge of sadness about what has been lost in the intervening seventy years, but some things have improved. For instance, they describe the flock of whooping cranes in Texas as numbering 21 birds, whereas now over 500 migrate between there and Canada.

Take a humorous and informative trip around our continent with these authors, and please support your local independent bookseller as you do so,

Thank you,

Joe Brancoli
FOJG Chair

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