April 2023 Newsletter Falls of the James Group



A native Azalea blooming in spring. Photo courtesy of Andrew Peacock.

Advocacy Updates from Lee Williams, FOJG Advocacy Chair and Glen Besa





Falls of the James Group

Photo courtesy of Lee Williams.

## Fighting Climate Change by Fixing a Leaky Richmond Gas Works

Electrification powered by clean renewable energy is critical if we are to cut greenhouse gas emissions and avoid the worst impacts of climate change. We can make personal choices in the cars we drive, how we heat and cool our houses and even what we eat. As helpful as our personal choices may be, it is essential that we push government and industry to move aggressively toward electrification.

Case in point, Richmond Gas Works. The city of Richmond is in the gas business, supplying fracked gas (or methane) to businesses and residents. City Council did pass a resolution declaring a Climate Emergency, but thus far not yet begun planning for a transition from methane.

Worse yet, Richmond Gas Works (RGW) has a serious gas leak problem. Recent data from RGW indicates a lost gas rate of 5%. Methane is a potent greenhouse gas, and losses of 4% or more make gas worse than coal from a climate impact standpoint.

Replicating efforts by the DC Sierra Club Chapter, our Falls of the James Group has acquired a methane detector to help us identify the location of those gas leaks (funding for the "sniffer" was provided by Sierra Club's Grassroots Network Team). Working with partners, like the University of Richmond, we will be mapping these leaks so residents can see where those leaks are, and we can foster a discussion about RGW maintenance and our move toward electrification. In response to a Freedom of Information request we already know that RGW is aware of more than 900 known leaks in their system.

In the near future, we'll have a website set up with more information and mapping of the leaks. In the meantime, if you detect a rotten egg smell, you probably are near a gas leak. First, you will want to call Richmond Gas Works at (804) 646-4646 or call 911. Also, please give us a call or text us with the location and we'll get out there to test it and map it. Call or text Glen Besa at 804-387-6001.

If you'd like to volunteer to join our Electrify RVA and Beyond Methane RVA Teams, contact Lee Williams at <u>lee.sierraclub.greennewdealva@gmail.com</u>.

# Local Environmental Events and FOJG Outings and Programs



Photo courtesy of Aileen Rivera.

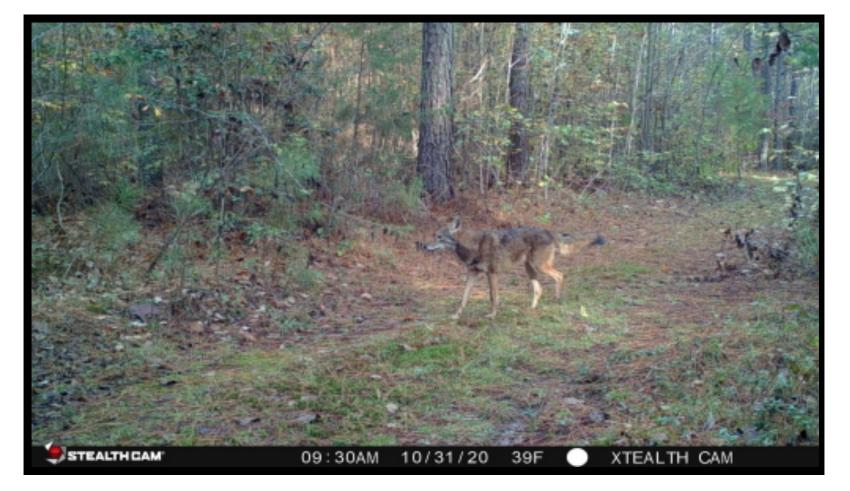
**4/5/23 6:00 pm - 7:30 pm** *Climate Justice for Puerto Rico Intervention*, a theatrical procession co-created by University of Richmond (UR) students, faculty, guest artists, and community partners. We will begin at the Eco-Corridor and walk to the International Center Commons, where there will be student presentations, a community altar, and a Toque de Bomba–Afro-Puerto Rican community music and dance.

**4/6/23 6:30 pm - 8:30 pm Reception and Panel on Decolonial Environmental Justice with Yarimar Bonilla and Ruth Santiago** in the International Center Commons at UR. They will discuss decolonizing, climate justice activist practices in Puerto Rico and beyond. Ruth is a community and environmental lawyer serving on President Biden's White House Environmental Justice Council. Ruth will be speaking about AES Corporation, a partner on Spider Solar LLC. Ruth lives in Puerto Rico and defends the impacted community surrounding the AES Guayama facility, a coal plant that is slated to close in 2025, after two decades of contamination with coal combustion residuals. In 2021 Ruth <u>testified in front of US Congress</u> on the topic.

Yarimar Bonilla is director of Center for Puerto Rican Studies at Hunter College and prominent public intellectual on Caribbean and Latinx politics. https://storymaps.arcqis.com/stories/6a663905fbe74787a58ab4b4cc9c9d84 For more info: https://as.richmond.edu/tucker-boatwright/2022-2023

**4/6/23 4:00 pm - 7:00 pm Virginia Clean Cities Rally** The Rally at Main Street Station is Virginia's premier alternative fuel and advanced vehicle technology event, supporting Virginia Clean Cities' mission to improve Virginia's air quality and economic security. This event is a VCC fundraiser. A \$50 charge for individual tickets is available for general admission, which includes admission to the Rally events, drink ticket, and hors d'oeuvres. Location: Richmond Main Station | 1500 E. Main St, Richmond, VA 23219 | Link to Google Map www.facebook.com/events/720228163107131

**4/9/23 1:00 pm - 5:00 pm Easter On Parade on Monument Avenue.** Stop by and see Sierrans tabling and sharing what we do at Easter on Parade on Monument Avenue from Davis Avenue and North Allen Avenues.



A coyote captured on an animal camera. Photo courtesy of Richard Groover. 4/11/23 7:00 pm - 8:00 pm FOJG Virtual Program - The Amazing Coyotes are Everywhere with Dr. Richard Groover. The Eastern Coyote has now settled in all of North America and is present in every county and city in Virginia. This presentation will provide information about their behavior, especially in the urban environment. Also included are strategies to mitigate their presence. Register here for the Zoom link. FOJG Virtual Program: The Amazing Coyotes are Everywhere (sierraclub.org)

If you missed our virtual 3/14/24 virtual Sierra Club Falls of the James Group (FOJG) program on The Importance of Habitat Connectivity and Protecting VA's Wildlife Corridors with Courtney Hayes, you can see the program at this YouTube link. https://youtu.be/QxBObZ2Ye3I Check out our other recordings of FOJG programs here. Archive Sierra Club



**4/13/23 7:00 pm - 8:00 pm Let's Talk: Benefits of a Local Climate Action Plan; A Forum For Henrico Citizens.** Libbie Mill - Henrico County Public Library 2100 Libbie Lake East Street Richmond, VA 23230

Localities in Virginia are taking climate action to the all-important local level, including our neighbors in the City of Richmond. What is a Local Climate Action Plan? What are the benefits? What do such plans involve? Do they work? Why should Henrico commit to working with residents on an official plan to prepare for climate impacts and to reduce our collective carbon footprint?

We all have a lot to learn. Please join **HCAN's Climate Action Plan Committee** and the **VCU Institute for Sustainable Energy and Environment** for one of the most important conversations of our time. Our moderated panel of experts is sure to make for an engaging evening. Space is limited, so please register by April 11. <u>https://HenricoClimatePlan.eventbrite.com</u> For more info: <u>http://www.conservehenrico.org</u>

**4/22/23 10:00 am – 1:00 pm Henrico County Earth Day at Deep Run Park** Henrico County's free, family-friendly Earth Day festival will feature live music and activities, including face painting, seed planting, inflatables and a sensory-friendly activity tent. Food trucks will have refreshments available for purchase.

The festival, hosted by the Division of Recreation and Parks and Keep Henrico Beautiful, also will offer opportunities to learn about sustainability initiatives and resources available in Henrico, including energy efficiency, residential solar, electric vehicles, recycling and preserving green space, air quality and more. FOJG members will be tabling here.

Tech For Troops will collect retired technology that will be refurbished to help veterans in need. A list of equipment that will be accepted is at <u>Equipment Donations - Tech for Troops</u> More information: <u>https://henrico.us/calendar/earth-day-festival/</u>

**4/22/23 12:00 pm – 5:00 pm Earth Day at the Science Museum of Virginia (SMV)** Join the SMV for an activity-packed event **exploring sustainability, natural resources and environmental science.** They will also have the Virginia Section of the American Chemical Society onsite with special hands-on activities as part of Chemists Celebrate Earth Week. The Sierra Club VA Chapter and FOJG will be tabling here. Earth Day activities are included with admission.

**4/26/23 12:00 pm - 1:00 pm** Learn to use the iNaturalist app to collect data for the City Nature Challenge (below) from the Nature Conservancy free virtual webinar. <u>Learn How to Observe</u> <u>Nature with iNaturalist Tickets, Wed, Apr 26, 2023 at 12:00 PM | Eventbrite</u>

4/28/23 - 5/1/23 BioBlitz Data Collection for the City Nature Challenge. City Nature Challenge Use the Seek and iNaturalist Apps to collect data on flora and fauna in the Richmond, Petersburg, Charles City, Chesterfield, Hanover, Henrico, King George, Prince Edward Counties and New Kent areas. <u>City Nature Challenge 2023: Greater Richmond Region</u>

iNaturalist Started in 2016 as a competition between Los Angeles and San Francisco, the City Nature Challenge (CNC) has grown into an international event, motivating people around the world to find and document wildlife in their own cities. Run by the Community Science teams at the California Academy of Sciences and the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County (NHM), the CNC is an annual four-day global bioblitz at the end of April, where cities are in a collaboration-meets-friendly-competition to see what can be accomplished when we all work toward a common goal. Go out on your own or join The Science Museum of Virginia, Maymont, Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden, James River Park System, Pocahontas State Park, Virginia Commonwealth University, and Virginia Master Naturalists as they explore metro Richmond and surrounding areas, discovering and documenting the biodiversity of our urban spaces.



South River Falls in the Shenandoah National Park. Photo courtesy of Andrew Peacock.

4/29/23 10:30 am - 2:00 pm Sierra Club VA Chapter South River Falls Hike - Shenandoah National Park with Ralph Grove. The South River in Shenandoah National Park flows down the east side of the mountains, just north of Hwy 33. As it falls in elevation, the river flows over several cascades and one major waterfall - South River Falls. The trail offers scenic views of the cascading river, and the river valley. The hike will start at the South River Falls picnic area and follow the trail down to an overlook. We'll stop there for lunch on the trail, and then hike back uphill via the South River Fire Road, to complete a five- mile loop.

This is a moderately strenuous hike due to the distance and elevation change. You must be in good physical condition and a regular hiker in order to participate. Total distance will be about five miles, with an elevation change of about 1,300 feet. There will be continuous uphill hiking on the way back. Carpooling can be arranged to meet at 8:30 and return around 4:30. Register here. South River Falls Hike - Shenandoah N.P. (sierraclub.org)

**5/6/2023, 6/3/23 and 7/1/23 9 am - 12 pm Volunteer at Bellemeade Park** Join FOJG members at Bellemeade Community Center to help with gardening activities in the park. 1800 Lynnhaven Ave. Richmond, VA and follow signs into the park. <u>Volunteer – Bellemeade Park</u> (bellemeadeparkrva.com)

## The Big Yard Sale at the University of Richmond

**5/8/23 - 5/20/23** The Big Yard Sale is anticipated to take place in May this year, on the schedule of times past (before 2020). We will need volunteers for the Sale weekend of May 19th and 20th, and especially for dates beginning on Monday May 8th through the 20th for sorting and setup.

Please look for an email containing a Signup Genius, and please pitch in on this largest waste diversion and fundraising effort on our calendar. Thank you!



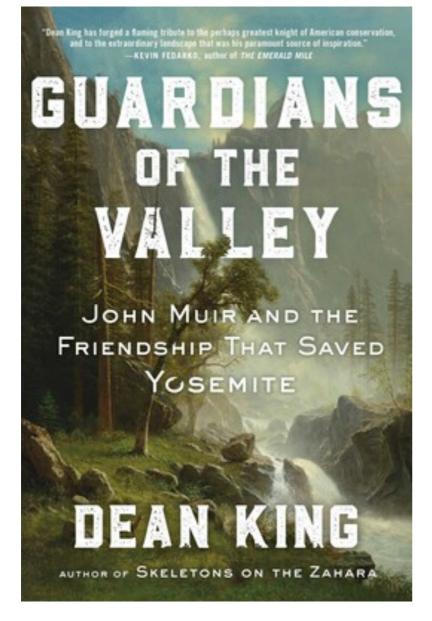
Dr. Groover on a dragonfly catching expedition. Photo courtesy of Richard Groover.

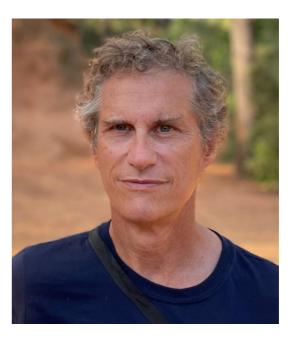
5/27/23 11:00 am - 1:00 pm Sierra Club FOJG Dragonfly Foray at Courthouse Park -Hanover County with Dr. Richard Groover. Richard will have 8 nets for capturing and releasing dragonflies at the pond in Courthouse Park in Hanover VA. He will identify them and talk about the habits and life cycle of dragonflies. Dragonflies become active around 11 am so that is when we start. Rain date is 5/28 from 11 am - 1 pm. Register here. FOJG Dragonfly Foray: Courthouse Park in Hanover County (sierraclub.org)

6/4/23 5:00 pm - 5:30 pm Sierra Club FOJG Picnic and Plant Swap at the Carillon Shelter in William Byrd Park, 600 S Arthur Ashe Blvd, Richmond. Bring a potluck dish to share and extra plants if you are a gardener! Natives preferred but we will take anything! Enjoy in-person fun with fellow Sierrans and environmental supporters. Register here. <u>Richmond - FOJG Members Picnic and Plant Swap (sierraclub.org)</u>

**6/24/23 10:00 am - 2:00 pm Honey Bee Festival at Rockwood Park Nature Center.** 3401 Courthouse Rd, Richmond, VA 23236. Rockwood Park Backyard Beekeepers Association is hosting its 12th Annual Honey Bee Festival with More Space! **Swarm the Park!** More Learning! More Fun! with Live music by the Bee Flats, Children's Activities, Local Honey and Beekeeping supplies for Sale, **Free Bee friendly plants**, Educational Talks, Face Painting, Food Trucks, and MORE! Free for everyone. **Learn about bee keeping and having your own hives in your backyard.** The park also has a great Nature Center and nice walking trails. Check out more at Honey Bee Festivals – Rockwood Park Backyard Beekeepers (rockwoodbeekeepers.com)

September 12, 2023 FOJG Program



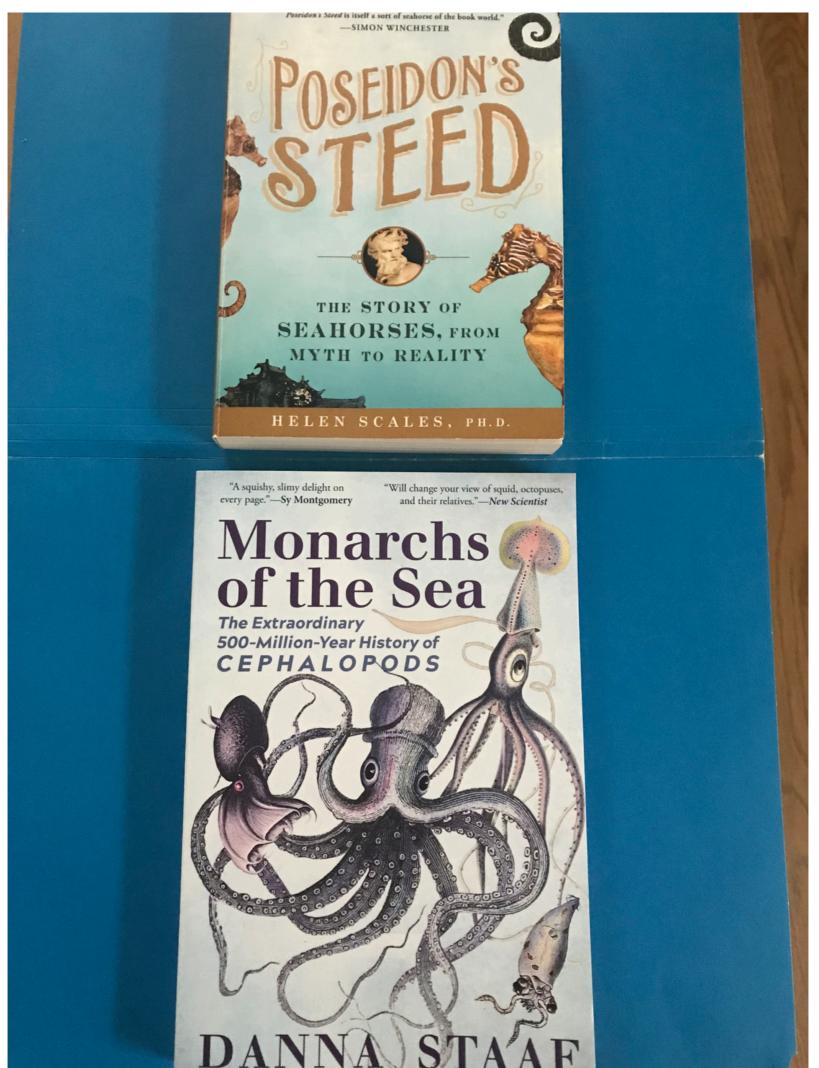


Photos of *Guardians of the Valley* book and of Dean King courtesy of Dean King.

9/12/23 7:00 pm - 8:30 pm FOJG In-Person and Virtual Program: *Guardians of the Valley: John Muir and the Friendship That Saved Yosemite* with Dean King. Richmond author Dean King will talk about his new 2023 book *Guardians of the Valley - John Muir and the Friendship That Saved Yosemite*. Following his presentation, Dean will sign books sold by a local book dealer. This book is the dramatic and uplifting story of legendary outdoorsman and conservationist John Muir's journey to become the man who saved Yosemite — from the author of the bestselling *Skeletons on the Zahara: A True Story of Survival*. The in-person setting will be announced in later. Register here if you want to participate via Zoom. <u>FOJG In-Person and</u> <u>Virtual Program: Guardians of the Valley with Dean King (sierraclub.org)</u>.

You can check out other local free virtual and in-person events at the FOJG calendar here Events/Calendar | Sierra Club

To see what free virtual and in-person Sierra Club events you can attend throughout the state, check out the Virginia Chapter Sierra Club calendar here Events Calendar | Sierra Club



Poseiden's Steed and Monarch's of the Sea book covers courtesy of Joe Brancoli. Joe's Book Nook and RVA Environmental Film Festival Musings

#### Hello,

Something a bit different this time, springing from the RVA Environmental Film Festival, which recently brought a wide variety of films to venues across Richmond, Chesterfield and Henrico. One of the most enjoyable events at the festival was the screening of ' My Octopus Teacher' at Maymont's Nature Center, which recently acquired a petite live octopus. Attendees had full run of the facility during the evening, which gave opportunity to see among other sea creatures, six small sturgeon, sea horses and a snapping turtle, which appeared to be dancing on a rock. I highly recommend that you visit this delightful place. Since this experience, I have delved into two books on specific families of such animals:

**Poseidon's Steed: The Story of Sea Horses, From Myth to Reality** by Helen Scales, and **Monarchs of the Sea: The Extraordinary 500-million-Year History of Cephalopods**, by Danna Staaf. Each of these books gives a more than usually entertaining take on its titular subject and is a fun and informative read.

Another plane of consciousness was tapped by the film 'Mossville, When Great Trees Fall', which was shown at the First Unitarian Universalist Church. Sometimes you encounter such a powerful statement on injustice that you cannot turn away, and 'Mossville' is such. Chronicling the end of an historic African American community in Louisiana whose residents were sickened and displaced by chemical and fossil fuel plants, this film kept me awake at night. Words like "searing", and "heartbreaking" are easy to say, but this film brings awareness of environmental racism vividly alive in a way that I believe only a great film can. These and all the screenings at the Festival were, as always, free and open to the public. Thanks to the RVA EFF volunteers who put the festival on, many of whom are Sierrans!



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Movie poster of Mossville courtesy of Joe Brancoli.

#### Join the Sierra Club

If you are not a member and are interested in joining the oldest, largest grassroots environmental organization in the country, you can join for as little as \$15 here. <u>Join Today. Become a</u> <u>champion. (sierraclub.org)</u> Once you join the national Sierra Club, you are automatically a member of the Virginia Chapter of the Sierra Club and the Falls of the James Group Sierra Club.

Add your voice to the hundreds of thousands of Americans committed to leaving our children a living legacy — clean air, safe drinking water, and natural grandeur. From Yosemite National Park to the Grand Canyon, since 1892 the Sierra Club has been instrumental in preserving nature's most splendid wild places. Thank You!

### Note from the Newsletter Editor

We will take a break for the next 3 months, so the next newsletter will go out August 2. Stay tuned, however, for emails about the Big Yard Sale and other events/updates as needed.

Sierra Club Falls of the James Group Newsletter Editor

Shavon Peacock

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