**Butterflies**

**Segment for Week of Oct 12, 2020**

HI. This is Barbara O’Hare with the Virginia Master Naturalist program. I’d like to talk to you for a few minutes about butterflies.

Butterflies are beautiful, colorful creatures. They have exotic names like Painted Lady, Pearl Crescent, Red Admiral and Great Spangled Fritillary, or odd names like Snout or Question Mark. There are about 100 species of butterflies in the Coastal Virginia area.

Most butterflies live an average of two weeks but some live many months, like the Monarch butterfly that migrates every September to the same place in a mountain village in central Mexico. The last generation of Monarchs each year can live up to 8 or 9 months in order to make this long trip south. Try looking up Monarch butterflies on Google and read some fascinating bits of information on this amazing creature.

You have probably heard of bird counts, like the annual Christmas Bird Count. We do one here on the Eastern Shore since we have lots of people interested in Birding. Well, we also have butterfly counts here, too. Each year a butterfly count is done in Northampton County in July. Teams of volunteers go out on a specified day and record their butterfly sightings. Butterflies like hot weather so this is a hot job, but an enjoyable one. The Eastern Shore chapter of the Virginia Master Naturalists, which participates in this event, is also training a number of members in butterfly identification, so that we can extend this activity to Accomack County in the near future.

In order to train people, we have a small team of members, led by more experienced butterfly counters, conducting counts on some of the Natural Area Preserves here on the Shore. Because of COVID, we asked these members to work alone this year. During the official count the first week in August, thirty people participated and spent 120 hours on this project, in spite of a swipe from hurricane Isaias that week. They identified 38 species of butterflies, and spotted over 1600 individual butterflies. These volunteers covered an area from Cape Charles to Greenbackville, essentially the entire Eastern Shore of Virginia peninsula.

So next time you see a yellow butterfly (perhaps a Cloudless Sulphur?) or a white one (perhaps a Cabbage White?), you can look it up on Google. Or you can visit the Butterfly Garden at Kiptopeke State Park. Or you can inquire about becoming a Virginia Master Naturalist. Visit our website at masternaturalistesva.com. Have a good week!