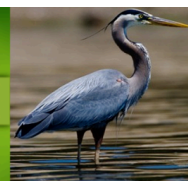




THE IZAAK WALTON LEAGUE OF AMERICA

Suffolk-Nansemond Chapter



The Blue Heron Times May, 2026 Issue

Points of Contact

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IWLA State/National
[IWLA Virginia Division](#)
[IWLA National](#)

Backyard Conservation News
AskHRgreen.org
[Chesapeake Bay Foundation](#)
[Department of Conservation & Recreation](#)
[Division of Wildlife Resources](#)
[Hoffler Creek Wildlife Foundation](#)
[Nansemond River Preservation Alliance](#)
[SCCC - Suffolk Clean Community Commission](#)
[Recycling](#)
[TerraScapes Environmental Consulting](#)
[The Wildlife Society](#)
[Virginia Conservation Network](#)
[Virginia Master Naturalist](#)

Classifieds
[Chuckatuck Trading Post](#)
(757)255-9295 5969 Goodwin Blvd, Suffolk

[Suffolk Radio & TV Service](#)
Radio/Television Repair
(757)539-2110, 536 W. Washington Street, Suffolk

[Appomatox River Company](#)
(757)890-0500, 3009 W. Mercury Blvd, Hampton

[Arzillo Recycling](#) (Scrap Metal)
(757)539-8593, Locations: Suffolk & PTMS Blvd

Meetings

Chapter Board of Directors meetings are held on the second Monday of each month. The Board last met at 7pm on **Monday, May 11th** at the Constantia House behind Baker's Funeral Home. Next month's Board meeting will be at 7pm on **Monday, June 8th** at the same location.

NOTE: There will be NO monthly Members dinner meeting in May! Instead we are having a **Members and Guests picnic lunch at the chapter park on Saturday, May 16th.**

See the flyer later in this newsletter for more information about the picnic.

President's Note

I heard the other day what May stands for. It may be hot; it may be cold. It may rain; it may be dry. We are seeing it all this year.

Nevertheless, it is a good time to go out and enjoy our park. This month we have the members' picnic in lieu of the dinner meeting.

Elections are also coming; consider stepping up to be a board member or officer.

"May, more than any other month of the year, wants us to feel most alive." – Fennel Hudson

Respectfully Yours,

Chris Ferguson,
Chapter President,
Suffolk-Nansemond IWLA

Calendar of Events

You can review our full chapter website calendar online at <https://sniwla.org/sniwla/calendar> for the most recent information about meetings and upcoming events. NOTE: after accessing the Chapter calendar in your web browser using the hyperlink shown above, you may wish to add this calendar to your own personal Google calendar by scrolling down and clicking on "Add to Google Calendar". A courtesy extract through the end of June is shown below.

NOTE: There is no monthly dinner meeting in May, instead we're having a picnic at the chapter park!

SAT 5/16 at 11:30am to 2pm - Member's Only Picnic (Hamburgers, Hotdogs, Italian Sausage).

SAT 5/30 at 10am - Prospective Member Orientation.

MON 6/8 at 7pm - Board Meeting.

SAT 6/13 at 8am - *Chapter Park Cleanup Workday.

SAT 6/13 at 8am - Suffolk Florence Bowser Recycle Event.

WED 6/17 at 6:30pm - Dinner Meeting w/ Nominations for Chapter Officers and Board Members.

SAT 6/20 - IWLA VA Division Meeting at Clater Lake Chapter.

SUN 6/21 at 1pm to 4pm - *Chapter Youth Scavenger Hunt (Open-To-The-Public).

*Note: Events marked with an asterisk count towards work hour credits for meeting the chapter's annual membership volunteer [participation requirement](#). **IMPORTANT:** Chapter members will **NOT** be credited for work hours at the 6/13 Suffolk Florence Bowser Recycle event towards accumulating the required annual minimum volunteer participation hours. Reason is because a Chapter park member work day is already scheduled for this same day.

HOLIDAYS/COMMUNITY EVENTS:

TUE 5/5 - Cinco de Mayo.

SUN 5/10 - Mother's Day.

MON 5/25 - Memorial Day.

SAT 6/14 - Flag Day.

FRI 6/19 - Juneteenth.

SUN 6/21 - Father's Day.

Recipe of the Month - Strawberry Spinach Salad: Pecans, Feta, Blueberries, Balsamic Glaze

Source Credit: <https://juliasalbum.com/strawberry-spinach-salad-recipe/> by [Julia](#) ; Serves 6

Ingredients:

Balsamic Dressing:

- 1 cup balsamic vinegar
- ¼ cup honey or brown sugar

Spinach Strawberry Salad:

- 10 oz baby spinach fresh
- 3 cups strawberries cleaned and hulled, sliced
- 1 cup blueberries
- ½ cup feta cheese crumbled
- 1 cup pecans toasted, some of them chopped

Cooking Instructions:

1. In a small saucepan, heat balsamic vinegar and honey over medium heat.
2. Bring to a gentle boil, reduce heat to simmer and cook, stirring, until the mixture thickens and reduces by about half (about 10 or so minutes).
3. Remove from heat and pour the balsamic glaze into a heat-proof bowl to cool off. The glaze will get thicker as it cools off.
4. Consistency should be thick enough to coat the back of the spoon but should not be overly thick.
5. In a large bowl, combine all of the salad ingredients, except the pecans. Toss to combine.
6. Divide the salad into individual serving bowls.
7. Top each serving bowl with whole and chopped toasted pecans.
8. Drizzle with balsamic glaze.

Recap of Chapter Teddy Bear Hunt held on April 18th

For the annual Teddy Bear Hunt, the weather was warm and clear, perfect for searching for Teddy Bears in our chapter park. Once again, our chapter volunteers made the event a success.

Approximately 60 people attended the event. Sixteen (16) children (pictured below with Youth Program Coordinator, Chris Trimpey) successfully hunted and tagged Teddy Bears. After a lunch of hot dogs, chips, cookies and drinks the children and their parents/guardians were able to experience fishing in the pond, archery at the range and observing how to tie flies used for fly fishing.

Our thanks and appreciation go out to our volunteers and to those donating items for the event. We also continue to appreciate the continued support from Perry Minnow Farm for supplying the red wigglers for the event. Fire and Rescue Station #6 once again supported the event by having a fire truck on site. It looked like the children enjoyed checking out the fire truck as much as they did the search for Teddy Bears. Several of the unclaimed Teddy Bears were donated to the fire department to be carried on their ambulances as "care bears" for children involved in accidents.

To see the full article with more photos posted on our chapter website under the News menu, go to [April 2026 Teddy Bear Hunt](#). Also, for a slide show of even more photos see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NLsx5VDQioo>.



Recap of the April Chapter Dinner Meeting held on April 15th

For the monthly Members' dinner meeting at Oakland Christian Church Life Center, the meal consisted of ham, sweet potatoes, green beans, rolls and a variety of deserts. As usual, the cooking committee did a great job.

The guest speaker was wildlife biologist Dana Spontak (pictured below in the photo on the left), known to his friends and colleagues as the "Bat Man". He reviewed the many projects that he has supported and led as a certified biologist and provided an informative talk on bats, their history, habitat and things we can do to help them.

There are about 1500 species of bats and next to rodents they are the second most populous warm-blooded species on Earth. They are very adaptable which has led to their proliferation, but that is changing. Habitat degradation and loss have negatively impacted bats as well as other species. Bats are also being eliminated by a contact-contagious fungal disease, White Nose Syndrome. It typically affects cave-dwelling bats. At this time there is no known cure.

For the full summary of Dana's presentation, see the article posted on our chapter website under the News menu entitled [April 2026 Member Meeting](#).

President Chris Ferguson swore in two new members, Maurice Stallings and Terry West are pictured below in the photo from left to right. Welcome to the chapter gentlemen.



Recap of 2026 Nansemond River High School Earth Day

Our chapter was invited to participate in the annual Nansemond River High School Earth Day event. Chapter Ikes Tim (shown in the photo below) and Elaine Doxey represented the chapter at the April 22nd event. This is the third year the chapter has been invited. In addition to our chapter, the Nansemond River Preservation Alliance, the Suffolk Clean City Commission and Evelyn's Wildlife Refuge were represented at the event.

Students design and build displays for presentation booths dealing with various environmental issues. The displays are used to explain various issues such as AI's effect on the environment, wildlife preservation, the importance of recycling, use of single use plastics and excess food waste. Many of the displays incorporated games for students to play to both attract their interest and to stress points in the issue being highlighted. Students dropping by our booth seemed to be most interested in our youth program and our annual scholarship program.

This article is posted on our website under the News menu and is entitled [2026 Nansemond River High School Earth Day](#).



2025 State of the River Report - Nansemond River Preservation Alliance (NRPA)

Message from Sam Chambers, S-N IWLA Chapter Save-Our-Streams (SOS) Chair

On April 28th I attended a meeting covering the 2025 State of the River Report by the Nansemond River Preservation Alliance (NRPA). I've summarized my notes from the meeting below:

A Milestone for Our Waters: Highlights from the NRPA 2025 State of the River Report

For members of the Suffolk Nansemond Chapter of the Izaak Walton League of America (S-N IWLA), our local waterways are more than just scenery—they are vital ecosystems that support our health, recreation, and local economy. The Nansemond River Preservation Alliance (NRPA) recently hosted a presentation on the State of the River Report 2025, and the findings offer both a reason to celebrate and a clear call to action.

Historic Progress for the Nansemond

The headline for 2025 is a major environmental victory: **600 acres of the Nansemond River were released from condemned status** in October 2025. This reopening of shellfish-growing waters for harvesting is the largest reclassification in our region in the last 15 years. This milestone was made possible by lower levels of fecal coliform bacteria, showcasing the river's incredible resilience.

The 2025 Report Card: A Mixed Review

Using the "EcoCheck" methodology from the University of Maryland, the NRPA evaluates the river based on five key indicators: bacteria, oxygen, nitrates, phosphates, and suspended solids. Here is how our river segments fared:

- **Lower Nansemond:** Continues to lead the way with **"A" grades** for oxygen and swimming safety.
- **Middle Nansemond:** Showed significant improvement, jumping to a **"C" for oyster habitat** and a **"B" for swimming safety**, though caution is still advised after heavy rains.
- **Upper Nansemond:** This remains the most challenged area, receiving **"F" grades** for bacteria and swimming safety, with oxygen depletion common during summer months.

While Total Nitrogen levels earned an "A" across the entire river, Phosphorus remains a failing grade ("F") due to residential and agricultural runoff, which can trigger harmful algae blooms.

Challenges and Successes

The report highlights that our progress is fragile. Much of the current pollution stems from non-point sources, which are difficult to track. Furthermore, the recent improvements were aided by the "cycling out" of data from heavy rain events between 2020 and 2022; a single major storm could potentially return areas to condemned status. However, community successes are paving the way forward. The NRPA highlighted the implementation of a "Living Shoreline" at The Reserve at Cedar Point, which uses native plants and oyster reefs to reduce erosion and filter pollutants. Additionally, the launch of an Environmental Crimes Task Force in March 2025 provides a new protocol for reporting illegal dumping and safeguarding our natural resources.

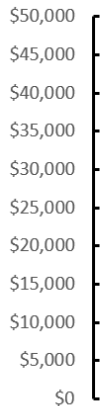
The River Needs YOU: How to Get Involved

The NRPA is a lean, effective organization driven by over 200 dedicated volunteers. These citizen scientists maintain a database of over 1 million records, merging local testing results with state and national data to help restore the river. As defenders of soil, air, woods, waters, and wildlife, S-N IWLA members are perfectly positioned to help. The NRPA is looking for volunteers to:

- **Participate in Water Sampling:** Help collect the data that drives remediation plans.

- **Join the Suffolk Nature Project:** Engage in oyster gardening, native plant restoration, or monthly workdays at the Sleepy Hole Arboretum.
- **Serve on Committees:** Lends your expertise to committees focused on Water Quality, Shoreline Preservation, or Environmental Education.

"A restored Nansemond River is possible," says NRPA President Beth Cross. "In fact, we are closer now more than ever!". To read the full report, find upcoming local events, or sign up to volunteer, visit www.CleanMyRivers.com or check out the [NRPA YouTube channel](#) for more insights into our watershed. Together, we can ensure our river reflects the strength and care of the community that calls it home.



CAPITAL CAMPAIGN TRACKER

The graph to the left shows that we've accumulated \$7,040 in donations thus far towards our goal of raising money for expenses related to repairs and/or alterations of our chapter park dam.

We are asking members to consider making a contribution to the Capital Campaign. This tracker will be included in future newsletters and updated at members' monthly meetings. Please contact our Treasurer if you are willing to make a donation. Any help is very much appreciated.

Contributions may be tax deductible; see your tax professional.

CAUTION: BE SURE TO MONITOR YOUR EMAILS CAREFULLY FOR POTENTIAL SPAM/PHISHING ATTEMPTS. The chapter will not send emails to members asking for any type of payment or donations.

S-N IWLA Chapter Members and Guests Picnic Saturday, May 16th at 11:30am

Reminder to all Chapter Members: There is NO evening dinner meeting scheduled for the month of May; we are instead having a Members and Guests picnic lunch at the chapter park at the aforementioned date/time shown above. THERE IS NO COST FOR THIS EVENT. **NOTE: The flyer has been revised to add Italian sausages, peppers and onions to the menu.** See the flyer below. Hope to see you all there!



Suffolk-Nansemond IWLA Members & Guests Picnic at the Park Saturday, May 16th, 2026 (11:30am–2pm)



Come out, enjoy your park, eat, play games, fish, practice archery, or just relax. Family, friends, and prospective members are welcome to attend.

There is no cost for this picnic.

Menu



Hot dogs & hamburgers, Italian Sausage, peppers & onions, buns, three-bean salad, chips, bottled water, beverages, and assorted desserts.

Activities



Horseshoes



Fishing



Canoeing



Cornhole



Archery

Chapter Youth Scavenger Hunt Sunday, June 21st (Open-to-the-Public)

The Chapter's annual Scavenger Hunt is scheduled for Sunday, June 21st, 2026. To sign up for this open-to-the-public event, please contact Mr. Chris Trimpey, our chapter Youth Program Committee Chair, at chris_trimpey@hotmail.com or (757) 449-4910. See the flyer below for more information. To download a [Printable PDF](#) (Adobe Portable Document format) of it, click directly on the flyer image.



THE IZAAK WALTON LEAGUE OF AMERICA

Suffolk-Nansemond Chapter





Upcoming Event

Scavenger Hunt AND Build Your Own Bird House

Open to the Public

- Date: 21 June 2026
- Time: 1-4 p.m.
- Max. # of participants: 15
- Age: 3-15
- Cost: free
- Address:
480 Kings Fork Road, Suffolk, VA

Children will look for artifacts found in nature like snake skin, arrows, plants, trees etc. We will also have a build a birdhouse activity during the event.

To Register:
Chris Trimpey
chris_trimpey@hotmail.com
757-449-4910

About Us

Chartered in June of 1954
501(c)(3) non-profit organization

Our Mission

Conservation, maintenance and protection of the soil, forest, water, and other natural resources of the city of Suffolk, VA and surrounding areas

Contact Us



Visit Us:
480 Kings Fork Road, Suffolk, VA



Email:
info@sniwla.org

Chapter Website
<https://sniwla.org>



COMMUNITY OUTREACH PROGRAM 2026

- **14 March:** Build your own Bird House
- **18 April:** Teddy Bear Hunt
- **21 June:** Scavenger Hunt
- **12 September:** Fishing Rodeo

For More Info or Registration:
info@sniwla.org OR <https://sniwla.org>

What We Offer

- 45 acre park
- Fishing Pond
- Archery Range
- Walking trails
- Picnic area
- Bird Observation

Local Conservation News - VA DCR (Department of Conservation and Recreation) Acquires 870 acres in Suffolk as part of \$5.6M-backed Conservation Project

As reported in the Suffolk News Herald in the April 28th issue, Virginia officials have acquired 870 acres of forest and wetlands in Suffolk as part of a larger, federally supported conservation project aimed at restoring longleaf pine ecosystems and expanding protected land in a key coastal watershed.

The purchase by the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation from The Nature Conservancy marks the first phase of a multi-step effort to conserve nearly 1,900 acres in the Albemarle-Pamlico watershed, one of the East Coast's most ecologically significant regions. The project is backed in part by a \$5.6 million federal habitat protection and restoration grant awarded in 2023 through the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, funded by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and the Inflation Reduction Act, according to state officials. Additional funding came from the Virginia Land Conservation Foundation.

The acquisition, completed April 23, is expected to be followed by a second phase later this year that would add another 1,046 acres adjacent to the initial tract. When combined, the nearly 1,900-acre corridor is considered to have "very high" ecological value and is intended to link protected lands between the Great Dismal Swamp National Wildlife Refuge and the South Quay Sandhills Natural Area Preserve in Suffolk. While the project is not a traditional economic development initiative, state officials said it carries regional economic implications tied to environmental resilience, water quality and long-term land management. Restoration work, including prescribed burns and reforestation, is expected to support ongoing conservation jobs and contract work tied to land stewardship. "We're excited to announce this significant step toward protecting these forests, freshwater wetlands and streams near South Quay Sandhills Natural Area Preserve," said DCR Director Nikki Rovner, noting the project's role in protecting water quality in the Chowan River basin.

Local Conservation News - Mitchell Byrd Obituary

Regarding Dr. Mitchell Byrd's recent passing, Chapter Board Member Mike Lane remarked that "Mitchell Byrd was a conservation giant, nationally, but especially in Eastern Virginia. He collaborated with the Izaak Walton League on land protection projects." Below is a summary of his many accomplishments.

The Center for Conservation Biology at William & Mary mourns the passing of friend, teacher, scholar, conservation biologist, inspiration and role model Dr. Mitchell Agee Byrd at the age of 97 years. Known by many as "The Byrd Man", Dr. Byrd was equally at home in the field working with birds, in the classroom lecturing to undergraduates or in the board room advocating for land protection. He became one of the most trusted voices for conservation of his generation and for decades maintained a relentless schedule to move conservation forward. He believed that an informed public was one of the keys to conservation success. For decades he averaged 15 public presentations and 25 media stories per year. Over time he came to recognize that land was the foundation of species protection and in the second half of his life he worked to establish wildlife refuges, state parks, state natural areas, wildlife management areas and private conservation lands. His passion and drive on behalf of wildlife and wild places inspired generations of biologists who have gone on to make a difference for species throughout the world.

Dr. Byrd enjoyed a long academic career and was affiliated with the College of William & Mary for 70 years. He was chair of the biology department for 13 years and both diversified the opportunities for students and doubled the faculty. He believed that the best measure of a department's performance was the success of its students. The biology department has consistently been ranked in the top ten in the nation. His ornithology class was one of the most popular with students throughout the university. Beyond the classroom, Byrd published widely on conservation issues, served in many capacities within professional organizations, served

on several federal teams to recover species, was one of the founders of the Waterbird Society (now a global professional society), and along with former student Bryan Watts co-founded The Center for Conservation Biology, a research unit focused on imperiled bird species throughout the Western Hemisphere. Dr. Byrd considered the success of his students to be his greatest academic achievement. He advised nearly 40 graduate students and thousands of undergraduates. Regardless of their chosen career path, he worked to provide students with opportunities and encouraged them to pursue their dreams. He was a cherished mentor.

Dr. Byrd was involved in most major land protection projects for more than 50 years. His efforts led to the establishment of the James River National Wildlife Refuge to protect bald eagle habitat. He was involved in supporting the establishment of Mason Neck National Wildlife Refuge, Rappahannock River National Wildlife Refuge and Eastern Shore of Virginia National Wildlife Refuge. He supported the establishment of many state parks and natural areas including Caledon and Kiptopeke State Park, a very significant area for migrant birds. He served on The Nature Conservancy board for 12 years advocating for the protection of critical wildlife lands. He served on the board of the James River Association and worked with the Izaak Walton League (IWLA) and the Virginia Outdoors Foundation to protect natural areas.

He had an incredible wit and was always ready with a joke. He was a true southern gentleman who cared deeply about people. He was a modest, soft-spoken man with a brand of chivalry that is sorely missing in today's world. Dr. Byrd would regularly end interviews with the same sentiment. What separates humans from other organisms is our ability to observe, analyze and decide. This capacity imposes on us a corresponding duty to protect other species..." if you have the ability, you have the responsibility."

For the full obituary, see <https://vacremationsociety.com/obituary/mitchell-a-byrd/>.



2026 IWLA National Convention

IWLA National is bringing together chapters from across the country to share projects, engage youth, and build connections.

Highlights of the convention include:

- Innovation Fair
- Art Show
- Youth Convention & Green Crew Summit

The first 75 registrations will be entered to win one of 10 free hotel nights, and some chapters may qualify for free registration. Learn more at <https://iwla-getitdone.org/registration/>.



Suffolk-Nansemond Chapter of the Izaak Walton League of America

w: <https://sniwla.org>

e: info@sniwla.org

Our USPS mailing address is: S-N IWLA, P.O. Box 351, Suffolk, VA 23439

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