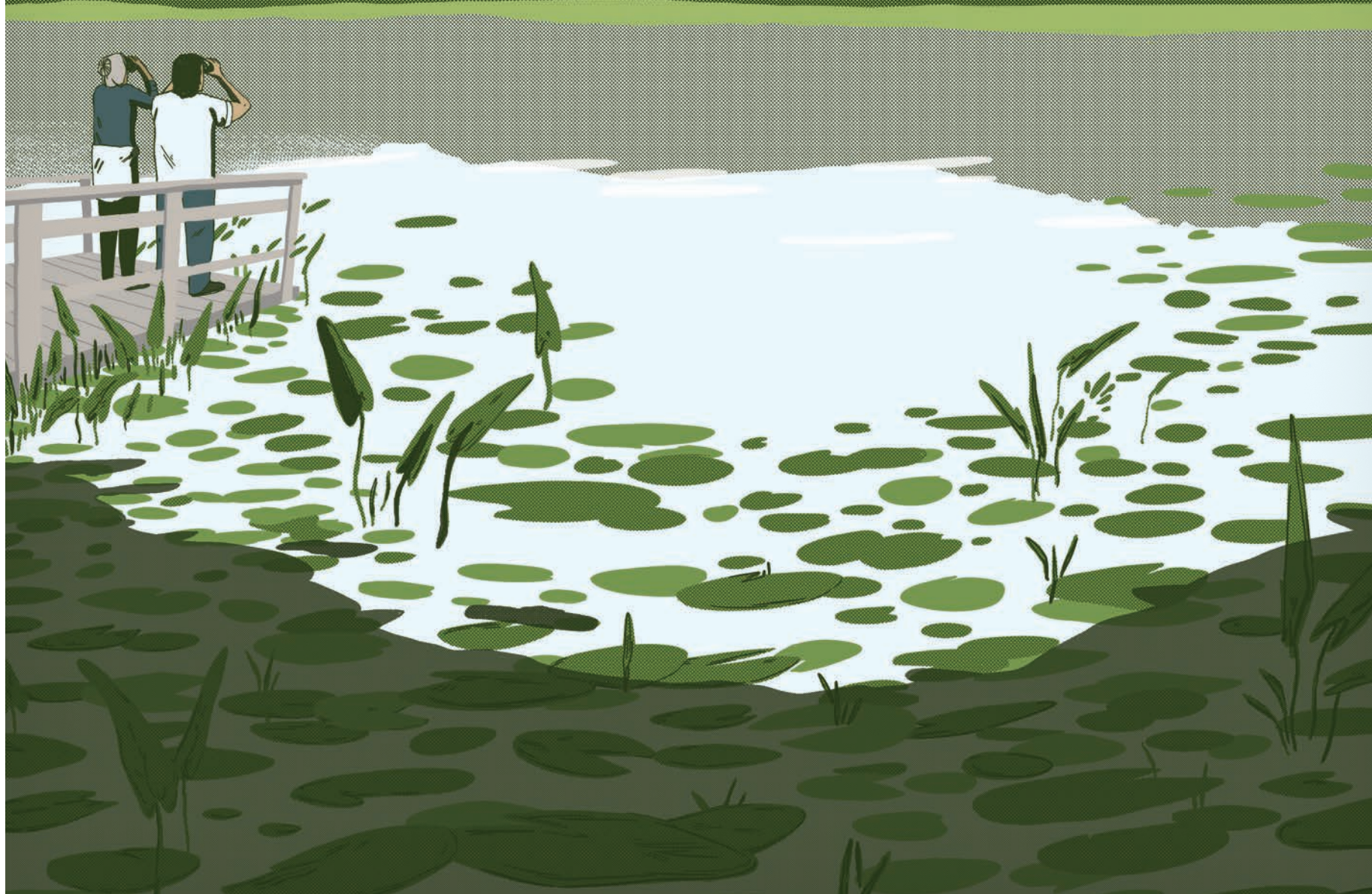


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PART TWO:

Piedmont



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This is the second part of our three-part series on Virginia State Parks. This month we explore the Piedmont, that in-between area of our state, flanked by coastal plain to the east and mountains to the west. We visit three of the state parks in this region of Virginia, each of them about an hour's drive from Richmond, and also a municipal park in a nearby county.

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Covid-19 disease has fundamentally transformed daily life in countless ways such as how people work, shop, and socialize and have furthermore impacted a cornerstone of American education that millions every year have attended until now—college graduation ceremonies. Several recent graduates from the Richmond area spoke of their experiences.

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It's easy to get discouraged these days, what with the pandemic, the ongoing struggle for racial equality, and the political scene. So it was with reluctance that I started "Nature's Best Hope," because reading about the decline of wildlife populations on top of everything else makes me want to hide and eat chocolate.

18 HIDDEN HISTORIES **Loyalty Day vs. Labor Day**

You may know that May 1st is traditionally celebrated as Labor Day in practically every country of the world except the United States, Canada and South Africa, but did you know that America specifically declared May 1st, a 'loyalty day' in an effort to offset Labor day celebrations elsewhere?

COVER IMAGE:

Illustration by Catherine McGuigan

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Decision 2020

NORTH OF THE James reached out to candidates for several upcoming local elections—for Mayor, 3rd District Council and School Board representatives. We asked each of them to give a brief platform statement. Here's what they had to say:

Mayoral Race

LEVAR STONEY

Mayor Levar Stoney is committed to making Richmond a city that works for everyone. For Levar, facing Richmond's challenges as mayor is personal. A product of Virginia public schools, Levar was raised by his grandmother and father, a janitor. Levar grew up on free and reduced lunch before becoming the first in his family to graduate high school and college. As mayor, Levar has fought to give all Richmonders a better shot at success, whether by investing the most money in RPS in over a generation, expanding afterschool programs to every elementary and middle school, advocating for police reform and gun safety legislation, or fixing our city's ailing infrastructure by paving 500 miles of road lanes and filling 70,000 potholes. During his second term, Mayor Stoney will continue this work by offering universal Pre-K for every child in the city, giving every child the opportunity to succeed. He will transform and redevelop public housing while ensuring every family in a unit today will have a unit tomorrow. Levar will address inequities in the city further highlighted by the coronavirus pandemic and racial unrest by building generational wealth in Black communities. Using programs like progressive tax abatements and expanding tax deferral programs, he will ensure continued city growth without displacing families that have been there for generations. These next four years will decide Richmond's future and we need steady, experienced leadership to lead us through these unprecedented times. Levar Stoney will be ready on day one to get the job done.

KIMBERLY GRAY

Kim Gray is a committed mother, civic leader, and public servant who for over 25 years has worked tirelessly to



LEVAR STONEY

improve the lives of all Richmonders through her involvement in government, non-profits, and civic organizations. She served in the administrations of Governors Mark Warner and Tim Kaine in the areas of social services and transportation. She was the 2nd District representative on the Richmond School Board for two terms and is currently finishing her fourth year on the Richmond City Council.

Kim understands that Richmonders want and need a leader who will be transparent and accountable while working to improve Richmond's communities and neighborhoods. Kim will focus on improving the lives of all citizens by working hard to secure more affordable housing and housing equity, safer neighborhoods, fully funded schools, and a government that actively encourages citizen input.

Kim is a bridge-builder, and her many years of public service prepare her to hit the ground running when she is elected. She is a voice of conscience and common sense for the City, and her strong sense of justice compels her to advocate always for what is right, no matter how difficult the task.

Richmond needs a Mayor who can build coalitions in the community and on Council to accomplish what the city needs to do in an uncertain



KIMBERLY GRAY

post-COVID-19 era. Kim Gray is that person and looks forward to serving the City of Richmond and all Richmonders in that capacity.

JUSTIN GRIFFIN

Richmond has long been the capital of mismanagement and misplaced priorities. The administration of the City has always been a mess. Each new leader brings high hopes and then with each new leader eventually we are left disappointed. This is because instead of prioritizing fixing core services, the mayors of Richmond focus on huge projects to make themselves a legacy.

I am running for mayor because I believe we deserve better: better schools, better roads, and better city services. However, due to the events of the last 4 months Richmond is now at a major crossroads. Due to the unrest, vandalism, and spike in violent crime Richmond is on the brink of losing much of the progress it has made over the last 20 years. People and businesses are making plans to leave, and the city's economy is drying up.

Before we can begin to address the countless ways in which our city government fails us, despite us paying higher taxes than the surrounding counties, we must restore confidence



JUSTIN GRIFFIN

in the safety of being in the city.

Once that is accomplished, I will use my background as a small business owner, attorney, and accountant to root out all of the waste, mismanagement, and corruption in City Hall. Instead of seeing your tax dollars wasted, I will make sure those dollars get invested in our schools and neighborhoods.

In this election we must decide, do we accept more of the same or do we demand better.

ALEXSIS RODGERS

I grew up in Hanover County, and have lived and worked in Richmond since graduating from VCU. I've spent my career fighting for underrepresented groups of people. For Richmond to become a world-class city, we have more work to do to improve the quality of life for residents.

Decades of divestment has led to decline, crime, underperforming schools, inadequate infrastructure and lower health outcomes. My platform is centered on a just, equitable and sustainable city that works for every Richmonder.

As mayor, I am committed to:

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ELECTION



ALEXIS RODGERS

ronment, teachers and personnel are supported, and our education system doesn't leave anyone behind.

Inclusive and affordable housing that removes redline-era restrictions so every Richmond resident—renters, homeowners and the unhoused—has a clean, safe, and affordable home.

Police reform that reduces the scale and scope of policing and creates safe neighborhoods through resources for social services, after-school programs and mental health services.

Environmental justice, greenlining initiatives and sustainable projects that improve health outcomes for residents, increase food security and achieve climate resilience.

An accessible and robust transit system through a new Department of Transportation that connects people and centers reliable, safe and affordable transportation.

I am running a progressive campaign driven by community voices and policies that uplift those who historically have been left behind. Richmond needs a leader who will show up for our communities, fight for everyone in the city and be a champion at the state level.

3rd District Council
ANN-FRANCES LAMBERT

Greetings, My name is Ann-Frances Lambert, and I ask for your vote on Nov. 3rd. As the daughter of the late Sen. Benjamin J. Lambert, III who represented the City of Richmond as a Delegate and Senator, my background, experience, and knowledge of the district separates me from my opponents.

My experience includes being the 1st City Council Liaison for the 7th council district represented by Del. Delores McQuinn (D-70). I also gained experience as the Sr. Policy Analyst in the City's Intergovernmental Relations office. Our responsibility was to present the City's Legislative Agenda to the Richmond Delegation before each General Assembly Session. That experience, as well as, my experience working on Capitol Hill for Rep. Robert C. Scott, and for the Committee on Education and Labor has prepared me to begin the job on Day 1!

My vision for the 3rd district is to have a safe, united community where you can live, work and play. 1. I will vote to NOT raise property taxes especially for our seniors on a fixed income. 2. I will amend or abolish any ordinances dated before 1970 that promoted disenfranchisement of lower income residents. 3. I plan to eliminate the food desert by incorporating vertical farming in my development plan for North Jackson Ward. 4. I support full-fund-

ing for our schools and programs that are addressing the social and mental health services needs we have within RPS. 5. I support a statewide Police Bill of Rights, eliminate qualified immunity and debtor's prisons to address social justice inequality.

ELAINE SUMMERFIELD

Richmond has been my chosen home for the past eighteen years, during which I have dedicated my time to creating connections, empowering communities, and making a positive difference. As a volunteer, I co-created HandsOn Greater Richmond (HandsOnRVA.org) to engage people in service across Richmond. Everyone should have the opportunity to share their talents and time with our community. These are values that I have instilled in my son, a fifth grader at Holton Elementary. Professionally, I worked at the Community Foundation for twelve years partnering with community change makers on a variety of issues facing Richmond including education, housing affordability, economic development, and health care. My breadth of policy knowledge and experiences within our community position me to approach City leadership in a people-centered, strategic way that will benefit all areas of the 3rd District.

Creating equity in opportunities in Richmond is the primary driver for my run for City Council. We are at a pivotal moment: COVID-19 has mag-



ANN-FRANCES LAMBERT



ELAINE SUMMERFIELD

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ELECTION

nified the racial inequities in our city. People are demanding change and it's going to take thoughtful, collaborative leadership to translate this momentum into long-lasting and equitable policy solutions. My priorities reflect what I've been hearing from constituents: fund our public schools, make city services efficient, expand safe and affordable housing options, and promote environmental sustainability. We need city leadership that is accountable and accessible to the people. I will be that leader for the 3rd District and include the voices and vision of constituents while serving on City Council.

3rd District School Board

KENYA GIBSON

My name is Kenya Gibson. I'm a proud parent, a longtime public education advocate, and currently serve on the school board representing the 3rd District. This reelection campaign is a grassroots project of parents, students, and educators dedicated to the fight for public schools that put our children and community first.

In 2017 our campaign team fought to put an independent community voice on our public school board. We won with the belief that schools are community cornerstones. We were demanding more transparent, democratic governance in a time of rapidly

diminishing resources. That message resonated across the northside and citywide.

In the three years since my election we've seen some incredible wins:

We passed a resolution to enhance teacher free speech and successfully advocated for teacher retention as a measurement in our strategic plan.

We won the construction of three new schools.

We won enhanced transparency in governance with live-streamed board meetings and policy changes to make board documents available to the public sooner.

And as our mayor pushed for the redirection of 80 blocks of valuable downtown real estate tax revenue to fund the Dominion Coliseum redevelopment plan, we successfully lobbied for a resolution opting RPS out of any funding loss as a result of the "Navy Hill" proposal, and successfully lobbied against the deal in its entirety.

These wins level the playing field for parents and teachers who were fighting for a meaningful say in school governance. They've expanded the horizon of what is possible and laid the foundation for our path forward.

Three years ago I couldn't have imagined the challenges we face today: a reliance on distance learning, an unprecedented public health crisis, and the unthinkable ensuing pressure of our schools to meet the disparate needs of children across the city without direct, daily contact. Now more than ever, we see what schools mean to their communities.

The past three years have been a game changer. The next four bring both tremendous need and opportunity. I hope you will join us.

SABRINA GROSS

Sabrina is a single mom, the PTA President at Barack Obama Elementary School, and has over 10 years experience working in children's services. She currently works at the Virginia Department of Education and is an expert in special education law.

Originally from Buffalo, New York, she is the daughter of a professor and the product of public schools. She graduated from the College of Holy Cross in Massachusetts with a degree in psychology and a teaching certificate. She spent a year teaching Special Education and then moved into Behavioral Health. The majority of her career has been in the public service sector, with much of that focused on education.



KENYA GIBSON



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SABRINA GROSS


Sabrina also has a law degree.

Sabrina believes that the biggest challenges facing RPS are equity (school to prison pipeline), a lack of supportive services for students, and a lack of trust between the community and the schools.

The school to prison pipeline must be dismantled. Sabrina will create policies that will strengthen instruction, and she will commit to achieving a culture of equity within our schools by creating an equity committee.

Providing more supportive services happens by developing a community-based approach to education. Sabrina will prioritize policies that will ensure smarter & more efficient uses of city resources, and she will advocate for a fully funded strategic plan.

Finally, it is imperative that a culture of transparency, support, and trust at every level within Richmond Public Schools be created and maintained. Sabrina will lead by example through building coalitions within the third district community, ensuring every voice is heard.

Sabrina has been a parent, a teacher, and an administrator and believes that when we work together, we can create a system where every child's needs are met and every child receives an education that will set them up for success in life. 

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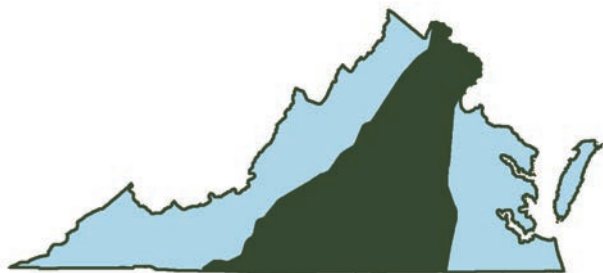


PART TWO:

Piedmont

FALL LINE TO BLUE RIDGE

COVID-19 CHANGED OUR VACATION PLANS this summer, which turned out to be a blessing in disguise. Rather than travelling great distances, we contented ourselves with rediscovering our own state and her public lands, which are quite expansive. Some 3.7 million acres, more than ten percent of Virginia, is public land. That includes everything from city parks like Bryan Park to National Park holdings like the vast wilderness encompassed by the George Washington and Thomas Jefferson National Forests, and, of course, public land trusts and the land preserved in perpetuity by The Nature Conservancy.



***Editor's Note:** This is the second part of our three-part series on Virginia State Parks. This month we explore the Piedmont, that in-between area of our state, flanked by coastal plain to the east and mountains to the west. We visit three of the state parks in this region of Virginia, each of them about an hour's drive from Richmond, and then a municipal park in nearby Hanover County.*

HIGH BRIDGE TRAIL STATE PARK

149 miles roundtrip

A couple years ago my son Charles and I first visited High Bridge Trail State Park. One of several linear parks in Virginia's system, High Bridge Trail runs along a vacated railroad bed from Pamplin to Burkville for a one-way distance of thirty-one miles. This off-road trail is paved with finely crushed limestone and has the slightest of grades, so it's an easy ride.

We decide to pick up the trail in the heart of Farmville, a pleasant Piedmont town that is rich in history with a Main Street that is absolutely Kapraesque. Not far from where we enter the trail near the old train depot is the Robert Russa Moton Museum (formerly Moton High School), which is well worth a visit; it inspires and it informs. This is the spot where a seminal battle in the war for American freedom was fought in 1951 when Black high school students (children really) staged a strike. This gave birth to the student protests of the Civil Rights Movement, and laid the groundwork for one of the cases that would lead to *Brown v. Board of Education* which put an end to segregated schools, in theory at least.

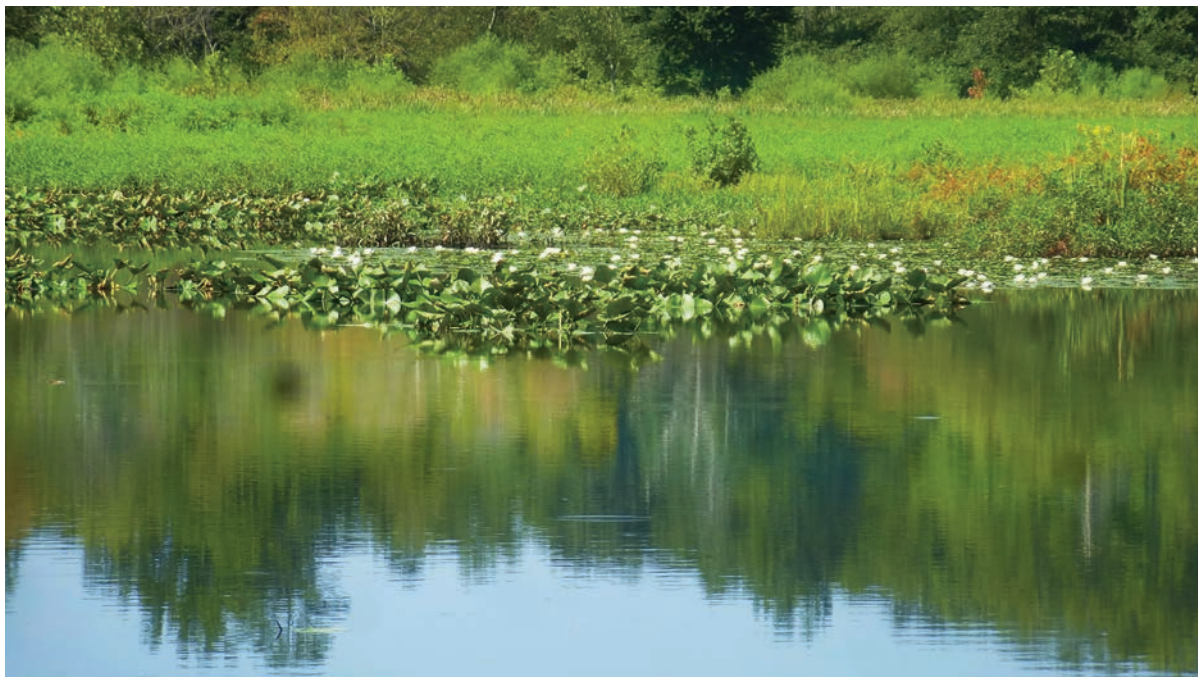
Leaving the train depot, we quickly put the town behind us, and skirt rich farmland and cut through the heart of thick forests. Six miles later, we enter the centerpiece of the trail—a half-mile long bridge that spans the Appomattox River. It is the longest recreational bridge in Virginia, and one the longest in the entire country.

Historic footnote: Half a mile east of the bridge there are earthen fortifications built by Confederates to protect the South Side Railroad, incorporated in the 1850s, from Union attacks. One of the last battles of



High Bridge Trail Spanning the Appomattox River.

BY CHARLES MCGUIGAN



Thousands of blooming lily pads ring the shoreline of Pocahontas State Park's Beaver Lake.

the Civil War was fought here, and the last Union general to fall in that conflict died here. Two days after that battle near High Bridge, Lee surrendered to Grant at McLean House in nearby Appomattox Courthouse.

Halfway across the bridge we are suddenly forty feet above the tree tops. Charles and I pull off to the side and look at the mud-brown water of the Appomattox which snakes west through thick hardwood forests, and on the edge of it all we can see, almost like a mirage, a blue haze of mountains suspended above the intense greenery.

"That's where we head next month," Charles says. "The Blue Ridge Mountains."

POCAHONTAS STATE PARK

47 miles roundtrip

A week later, we were hurtling down 195 to 76, then over to Iron Bridge Road, and finally along Beach Road in Chesterfield County. Here, on this two-lane country road, the speed limit dropped considerably, and we proceeded to our destination at a much slower pace. Moments later, suburbia gave way to Virginia countryside.

Less than half an hour from Bellevue, Pocahontas State Park is a world apart. For one thing, at more than 8,000 acres, it is an enormous park. And it embraces three separate lakes from the relatively large Swift Creek Lake at about 225 acres to the tiny Camp 7 Lake at seven acres, and the middling Beaver Lake at 24 acres.

Not far from the Visitor's Center, stands a rustic clapboard structure painted in a dark olive green and sporting a single central chimney. This is the CCC (Civilian Conservation Corps) Museum, and near the entrance is a quote by an American leader who led the country out of economic collapse, reformed the banking industry, created safety nets for the poor and elderly, and then saved the entire world from tyranny.

"I propose to create [the CCC] to be used in complex work, not interfering with normal employment

and confining itself to forestry, the prevention of soil erosion, flood control, and similar projects," wrote President Franklin Delano Roosevelt. "I call your attention to the fact that this type of work is of definite, practical value, not only through the prevention of great present financial loss but also as a means of creating future national wealth. This enterprise is an established part of our national policy. It will pay dividends to present and future generations." Considering the mayhem that assaults our Republic on multiple fronts, we desperately need such a leader today, and come November, perhaps we will have one again.

There are a number of water features at this park including a fountain wet deck, three-foot and five-foot-deep leisure pools, an activity pool and two tubular water slides. These were all closed due to COVID-19, as was the CCC Museum.

But that was fine with us. Charles and I were here to take advantage of the more than 90 miles of trails

that thread their way throughout the park. We rode a couple of the easier trails near the northern perimeter of the park, notably Ground Pine Path, but a number of the trails that we attempted were too challenging, and so instead we hiked.

My daughter Catherine Rose worked as a ranger here for two summers during college. What's more, her mom lives not far from the park in nearby Brandermill, so Catherine knew just about everything there was to know about the park. She had given us some recommendations.

We ended up hiking along Beaver Lake, and walked out on the floating pier that leads to a floating observation deck, and there we watched ducks and geese and a lone great blue heron. Ringing the shoreline were lily pads in full bloom, hundreds, maybe thousands of them, each blossom yellowish white and translucent, and they laced the air with a citrus-like scent. We then spent a good half-hour on the stone spillway at the mouth of Beaver Lake. Here the air temperature drops by ten degrees and the steady sound of cascading water lulls like a lullaby.

Through the woods we saw countless fence lizards and five-lined skinks, and three different varieties of toads, one the size of a deflated tennis ball, another smaller than a thumbnail. We biked one final trail—a three-mile section of Fendley Station Trail which inscribes the entire perimeter of the north section of the park.

We drove back to Richmond on the Old River Road, which pretty much hugs the south bank of the James River before connecting with Huguenot Trail. As we wended our way along this two-lane country byway, Charles said, "I've never seen so many frogs and toads and lizards. More than any place we've ever been."

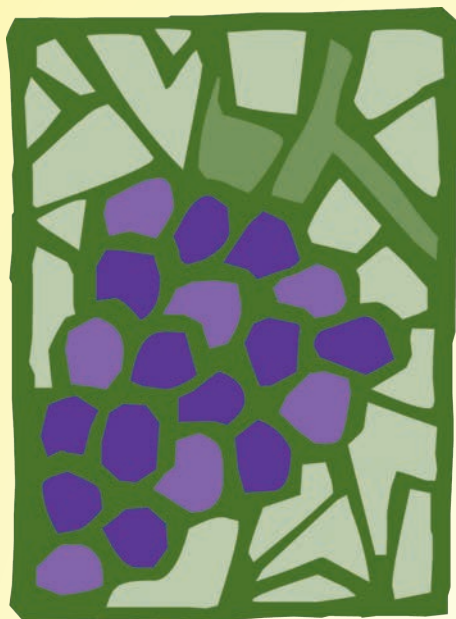
POWHATAN STATE PARK

73 miles roundtrip

Our final Piedmont destination was Powhatan State Park. Although only about 1,500 acres, this park supports an abundance of ecosystems, and rests on what







A lazy bend in the mighty James delineates the northern border of Powhatan State Park.



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looks like a knee cap the James River, not far from the now-vacant Beaumont Juvenile Correctional Center.

We began our explorations of this park along the Gold Dust Trail leading us to River Trail, which runs parallel to the James River along a steep bank. In these woods, which are predominantly gum, sycamore, oak and holly, there are massive vines which literally seem to strangle certain trees in the helix of their grasp. Some of them are Asiatic bittersweet, but many of them appear to be wild grapes.

Charles dismounted his bike and wrapped his fingers around one of the vines; his fingertips barely touching the heel of his palm. "They're thick," he said, then looked up. "And tall."


We picked up Turkey Trail and made our way back to the car. While I secured the bikes on the rack, Charles broke out lunch. After eating we began a hike through the woods, enjoying the shade, but the trail soon opened up on broad fields that are planted in hog corn and sunflowers. Other portions of these fields are covered with wildflowers galore—unending clumps of passion flowers, sky-blue clouds of pussy foot, thick tangles of snow-white clematis that smells just like fresh coconut, and dense stands of Jerusalem artichoke that mimic the gold of the sun, which beat down on us like red-hot hammer.

These meadows vibrated with bees and hornets and wasps and butterflies. Charles discovered a tiny crater molded from the red clay beneath our feet. When we hunkered down over it we could see movement inside the small hole that was no more than the thickness of a pencil. We could see a silvery pulsing, and then a bumblebee erupted and was gone in an instant.

We couldn't get enough of these fields, and though we had little water with us, we proceeded and the sun hammered us. Turns out we walked in a sort of figure eight several times over. When we got back to the car it was nearly five o'clock; we had started that hike at about one in the afternoon.

When we got in the car, Charles drank deep from his water bottle, wiped his lips with the back of his hand.

"I love going on the road, staying away from society, and admiring nature," my son said.

Thirty minutes later we were back home in "society". 

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College Graduation in a Pandemic

by ANDREW CHURCHER

THE CORONAVIRUS pandemic began as a distant threat for Virginians at the start this year. Within a few months, however, that distant threat became an ever-present and dangerous reality here in Virginia and across the United States. Covid-19 disease has fundamentally transformed daily life in countless ways such as how people work, shop, and socialize and have furthermore impacted a cornerstone of American education that millions every year have attended until now - college graduation ceremonies. Several recent graduates from the Richmond area spoke of their experiences.

As the pandemic worsened, University of Virginia (UVA) and other Virginia-based colleges cancelled or postponed in-person graduations for the class of 2020 for safer online alternatives. Sirish Desai, a UVA graduate who majored in psychology, realized this inevitability early on as his institution shifted completely towards online teaching at the beginning of March. "We lost privileges and access to facilities," he says. "I was realistic about how the trend was going. It was just more and more scary when something else happened." And when more stuff happened, namely cancellations and postponements, colleges followed suit in making tough decisions - one of which was to hold virtual graduation ceremonies.

A virtual graduation ceremony was held on May 16 for UVA's class of 2020, but Sirish found the alternative lacking in some capacity. "It was bittersweet," he says. Friendships he had formed and maintained over his four years at UVA were and still are important to Sirish. The coronavirus pandemic and the institution's move to an online graduation ceremony denied some closure to those friendships. "We didn't get to say goodbye," says Sirish. "I wanted people to know what they meant to me, but I'll never see these people again. They have moved on." While students at UVA like Sirish have been disappointed over postponing in-person celebrations to next May, he feels at peace with the decision. "We don't need graduation," he says. "I've been done since March. I was ready to

OMPRAKAS LANKALAPALLI



get out." The contradiction between wanting to leave and wanting good-byes weighed on him, though.

Omprakash Lankalapalli, a graduate from the College of Engineering at Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU), holds similar thoughts on graduating during the pandemic. Omprakash wanted to focus on his future career and prospects and decided not to attend VCU's online graduation ceremony. "I moved on," he says. "The next day I was already wondering, what's my next move?" Omprakash considered his graduation from high school. "High school was more special," he says. "You knew a lot of the people graduating with you. [In college] nobody else really cares. Thousands are graduating with you."

College graduations are rarely just presenting graduating students with their diplomas. Through a combination of institutional legacy and student body work and expectation, they are much more than that. "I missed out on traditions - senior walk-out day," says Christian Crabbs, a theatre major who graduated from the College of William & Mary. Along with other traditions that go all the way back to the college's founding.

"Before the semester starts freshman year, you enter through the Wren Building into campus," Christian



CHRISTIAN CRABBS

says. "At graduation, you leave campus through the Wren Building." It's special tradition, symbolizing one's departure from college and becoming a more independent person. Sirish mentions a similar graduation tradition at UVA where freshman undergraduates sit on "The Lawn" facing the Rotunda, and at graduation face away from the Rotunda.

Along with institutional traditions, familial traditions have been interrupted by the pandemic. Graduation ceremonies, college and otherwise, are a chance for families to congregate and celebrate the accomplishments of their loved ones. The current reality surrounding the novel coronavirus leaves relatives, especially older ones, more at risk of complications with the disease. "I wanted to see my relatives," Christian says. "My grandmothers, godparents were all coming for graduation." While he currently lives in Virginia, Christian's extended family stretches all along the East Coast, from New York to Florida. Instead, he found a compromise with his parents. "[We] took a picture outside campus with the cap and gown," he recalls. "There were a lot of other students there with masks doing the same thing."

Of course, students and their families weren't the only ones impacted. Busi-


SIRISH DESAI



nesses directly relying on graduation ceremonies - hotels, restaurants, and companies producing cap and gown attire - all suffered from the sudden and dramatic change. Customer returns, empty seats, and quiet lobbies speak strongly to this.

With the future increasingly uncertain as the coronavirus pandemic rages on, graduates are forced to adapt to the times. Sirish Desai and Omprakash Lankalapalli are both currently enrolled in the Premedical Graduate Certificate Program (CERT) at VCU, a college like many others that has made many courses online, and limited student activities on campus. "It makes it harder for appointments," says Sirish. "I can't shadow doctors for medical school."

Christian has been looking for jobs or internships since graduation at places such as Kings Dominion and Busch Gardens with little success. "[My] diploma is in a rough spot right now," he says.

Despite these setbacks, he and the other graduates remain hopeful about moving on to the next chapter of their lives. Graduations are in the past, and their futures ahead of them. 



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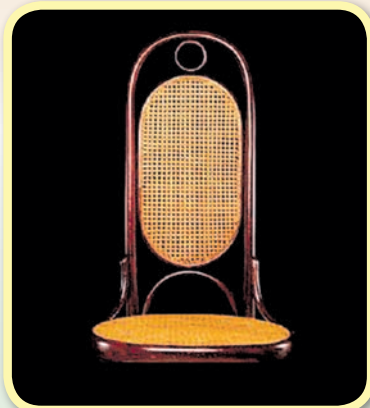
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BOOK REVIEW

Conservation Starts In Your Own Backyard

by FRAN WITHROW

IT'S EASY TO GET discouraged these days, what with the pandemic, the ongoing struggle for racial equality, and the political scene. So it was with reluctance that I started "Nature's Best Hope," because reading about the decline of wildlife populations on top of everything else makes me want to hide and eat chocolate.

But author Douglas Tallamy has a suggestion for us, and it encourages me because it is eminently doable. All you have to do is focus on your own backyard.

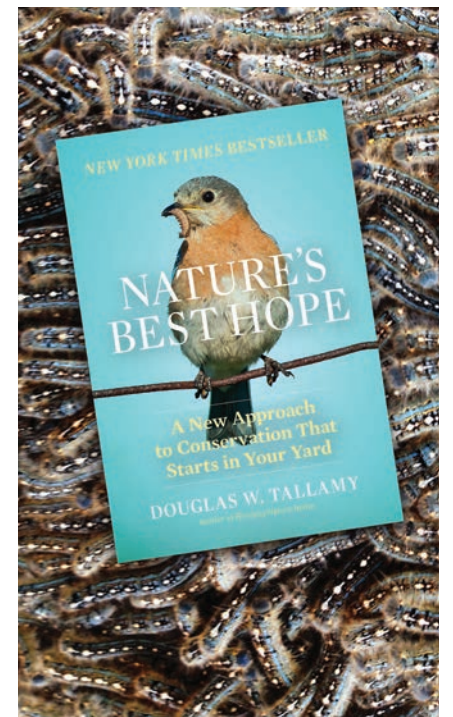
Tallamy lays out just how important wildlife is to our future as a human race. Since humans have broken up wildlife habitat into little sections, we have made it much harder for wildlife to feed, reproduce, and ultimately nourish us. Tallamy focuses on insects as they are absolutely vital for our survival. There's been a lot of talk recently about pollinators and how they enable us to grow food. But all insects have their place in the chain. Insects are "the little things that run the world."

Caterpillars are especially valuable, as they are protein packed soft food for nestlings. One researcher found a chickadee pair that delivered at least 350 caterpillars to their offspring in one day!

But if you want to have caterpillars, you need plants.

Plants vary in their value to wildlife. Tallamy calls some plants and trees "keystone plants" because they host the most wildlife. Oaks, cherries, and willow trees are keystone plants, hosting hundreds of caterpillar species. He cautions us to avoid the introduced plants that we tend to love because they look so exotic, as their ability to host wildlife is greatly limited compared to natives.


So where to begin? Tallamy says the first thing to do is to reduce the size of our lawns. If every household reduced the grass portion of their lawns by half, we could begin to create the greatest park ever: "The Homegrown National Park." Working together, our Homegrown Park will allow



wildlife and plants to connect more easily with each other rather than being stuck in small spaces not large enough to accommodate them. Get rid of those invasives and plant natives instead. Don't spray or fertilize. (I was surprised to learn that spraying for adult mosquitos is the most expensive and least effective way to control them anyway.)

The book is filled with color pictures of gorgeous flowers, appealing birds, and even the home of a couple who have taken the ideas in this book to heart. Tallamy's writing is uplifting, full of information in an easily read format.

I now issue you a challenge: read this book. Then go outside and look at your yard. Can you add more native plants, reduce the amount of grass, and welcome back the wildlife we all depend on?

Together we can change the world, right now, one backyard at a time. Go for it. 

Nature's Best Hope: A New Approach to Conservation that Starts in Your Yard

By Douglas W. Tallamy

\$29.95

Timber Press

256 pages



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HIDDEN HISTORIES

Loyalty Day vs. Labor Day

by JACK R JOHNSON



YOU MAY KNOW THAT May 1st is traditionally celebrated as Labor Day in practically every country of the world except the United States, Canada and South Africa, but did you know that America specifically declared May 1st, a 'loyalty day' in an effort to offset Labor day celebrations elsewhere? According to the Veterans of Foreign Wars website, Loyalty Day was first observed in 1921 as "Americanization Day," and was intended to counterbalance the international celebration of May 1st, which was perceived as being socialist because of its marking of labor rights and, in particular, the Haymarket Riot for an eight-hour work day in Chicago.

The push for a Loyalty Day began as a committee to organize a so called 'Americanization Day' way back on June 10, 1915. According to The New York Times, "Members of a 'National Americanization Day Committee' were formed, with headquarters at

95 Madison Avenue, in the home of a certain Mrs. Cornelius Vanderbilt, wife of Cornelius Vanderbilt, one of the wealthiest plutocrats of all time.

Americanization day was designed to "promote general education in citizenship and civic affairs throughout the country". The commemoration of the day evolved into Loyalty Day which was made an official holiday by the U.S. Congress on July 18, 1958—during the height of the Red Scare—and read into the Congressional Record as Public Law 85-529. Following the passage of this law, President Dwight D. Eisenhower proclaimed May 1, 1959 the first official observance of Loyalty Day. No mention of whether the proponents of Americanization Day and Loyalty Day favored an eight-hour work day or not.

But we suspect the Cornelius Vanderbilt—whose fortune rested squarely on the shoulders of workers of almost any age and nationality toiling along his railroad lines 24/7—may not have found the idea especially compelling. **NJ**



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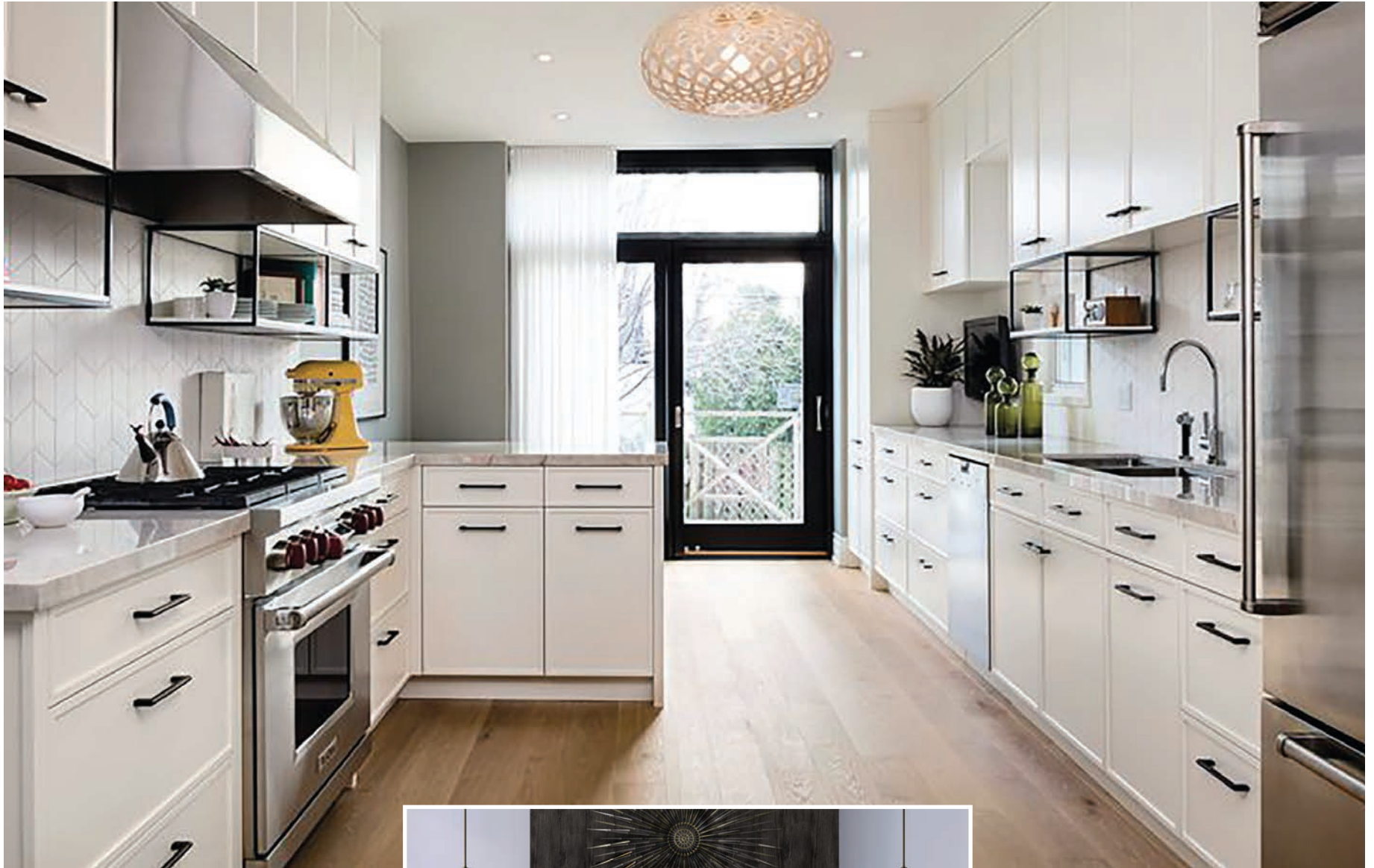
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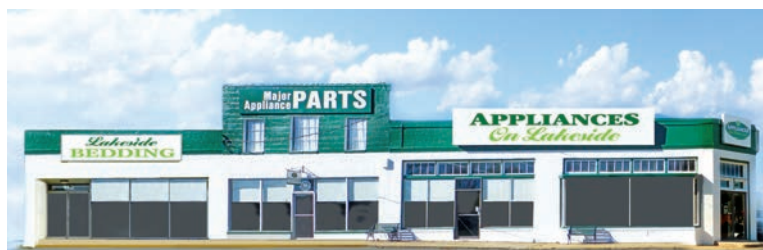


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