

# Virginia Master Naturalist



Photo by John Stanley



## 2010 Annual Report



Photo by Beagle Ridge Chapter



Photo by Carol Hammer



# Dear Virginia Master Naturalist supporters,

Happy 5th Anniversary, Virginia Master Naturalist program! In the beginning of 2006, we were holding meetings across the state to try to start our first ten chapters, and now we have 30. At the end of that first year, we had just 100 active volunteers, and now we have ten times that number. The volunteer service hours have grown at an even faster rate, with 2010 showing more than twenty-five times the number of hours as 2006. The number of people reached by the program is thirty-five times what it was in 2006.

The numbers are impressive, but more impressive, to me, is how so many of our chapters and volunteers have come to "own" the program. The leadership at the local level constantly amazes me, even as we totally rely upon these leaders to keep the program going and growing. As they gain more experience, chapters are ever more creative and ambitious in developing their own projects based on both members' interests and community needs. From starting their own Junior Naturalist youth programs to restoring habitat in local parks to establishing a program to educate their neighbors about invasive plants, Virginia Master Naturalists are becoming Virginia's natural resource leaders.

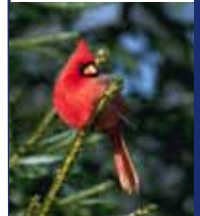
Recently, I was speaking with some of the representatives from our state sponsoring agencies who helped to get the program started and funded. They talked about how one of their founding principles was to let the volunteers choose their own directions in terms of service. There is not a requirement that every Virginia Master Naturalist must do a certain number of hours of service with any specific agency or project. It takes a lot of vision and trust to launch a program that's so open-ended and driven by grassroots interests and needs. Clearly that vision was a sound one, though, because the program has taken on a life of its own. It is wonderful to see volunteers empowered to dream up their own projects, and even more wonderful to see those projects carried out every day. Thank you, Virginia Master Naturalists, for all you have given to help Virginia's woods, wildlife, and water!

Sincerely,

Michelle Prysby  
Virginia Master Naturalist Program Coordinator  
Extension Associate, Department of Forest Resources and Environmental Conservation, Virginia Tech

*I have had the opportunity to work in the field learning new skills and deriving a sense of personal satisfaction from observing how a few dedicated volunteers really can make a difference.*

Temple Moore, VMN volunteer  
Photo by Historic Rivers Chapter



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## The Virginia Master Naturalist Program: An Overview

The Virginia Master Naturalist program is a corps of well-informed volunteers dedicated to the beneficial management and conservation of natural resources within their communities for the Commonwealth of Virginia. The program consists of a network of 30 chapters across the state. Each chapter is responsible for training volunteers and working with partners to coordinate volunteer service opportunities. Local partnerships are a cornerstone of the program and include more than 300 public and private organizations involved in conservation and education.

To become Certified Virginia Master Naturalists, volunteers complete 40 hours of basic training in natural history and natural resource management with a local chapter, 8 hours of advanced training that provides more specialized skills and knowledge, and 40 hours of volunteer service. The volunteer service falls into the broad categories of education, citizen science, and stewardship. Education includes interpretive hikes, classroom presentations, and development of educational materials. Citizen science focuses on collecting data about natural resources and includes stream monitoring and wildlife surveys. Stewardship projects improve natural resources and include habitat restoration, invasive species management, and trail maintenance. Volunteers also organize and run the local chapters. Their volunteer service makes an enormous positive difference for Virginia's natural resources.



VMN volunteers learn in the field as well as the classroom.



VMN volunteers have improved hundreds of acres of land with their stewardship projects, such as this invasive plant removal effort on national park land.

Photo by Historic Rivers Chapter



VMN volunteers share their enthusiasm for Virginia's natural resources with thousands of other people!

Photo by Rivanna Chapter

## Milestone Achievements in 2010

The program recognizes Virginia Master Naturalists who have achieved the special milestones of 250, 500, 1000, 2500, and 5000 service hours. Our list of 250 hour milestone achievers is now well over 100 individuals, and too long to print here! It is equally exciting to note that we had our first 2500 milestone achiever in 2010. Congratulations to all, and thank you for your service and dedication to the Virginia's natural resources. *These names were compiled from the 2010 annual reports submitted by chapters. If any volunteers believe they should be added to this 2010 list, please contact your chapter's record keeper.*

### 500 lifetime hours of service

Mary Arginteanu (Riverine)  
Richard Ayers (Eastern Shore)  
Felice Bond (Historic Rivers)  
Paula Boundy (Northern Neck)  
Paul Davis (Central Blue Ridge)  
Edward Dorsey (Old Rag)  
Ruth Douglas (Rivanna)  
Gary Driscoll (Historic Rivers)  
Mary Lee Epps (Rivanna)  
William Feeney (Rivanna)  
Donna Finnegan (Central Rappahannock)  
Ann Garvey (Banshee Reeks)  
Nicole Hamilton (Banshee Reeks)  
Jackie Heath (Rivanna)  
Tana Herndon (Rivanna)  
Bruce Hill (Historic Rivers)  
Kathryn Kirkpatrick (Central Virginia)  
Alice Kopinitz (Historic Rivers)  
Seig Kopinitz (Historic Rivers)  
Cathy Mayes (Old Rag)  
John Miller (Eastern Shore)  
Kathleen Ogilvy (Riverine)  
Robert Payne, Jr. (Banshee Reeks)  
Lisa Quigley (Pocahontas)  
Patricia Riddick (Historic Rivers)  
Tony Russell (Rivanna)  
Oya Simpson (Banshee Reeks)  
Dede Smith (Rivanna)  
Sally Snidow (Banshee Reeks)  
Dana Squire (Old Rag)  
Dorothy Tompkins (Rivanna)  
Laure Wallace (Shenandoah)  
Robin Williams (Old Rag)

### 1000 lifetime hours of service

Susan Abraham (Banshee Reeks)  
Thomas Adkins (Shenandoah)  
Belinda Burwell (Shenandoah)  
Keith Carson (Alleghany Highlands)  
Marian Childress (Tidewater)  
Shirley Devan (Historic Rivers)  
Emily Gianfortoni (Riverine)  
Caroline Haynes (Arlington Regional)  
Tammy Lowry (Beagle Ridge)  
Frank McLaughlin (Banshee Reeks)  
Clyde Morris (Eastern Shore)  
Jack Price (Old Rag)  
Charlotte Rea (Central Blue Ridge)  
Ellen Reynolds (Beagle Ridge)  
Dori Rhodes (Banshee Reeks)  
Deirdre Marriner Roden (Alleghany Highlands)  
Jim Scibek (Central Rappahannock)  
Ida Swenson (Rivanna)

### 2500 hours of lifetime service

Susan Powell (Historic Rivers)

More than 300 VMN volunteers re-certified for 2011, meaning they completed another 40 hours of service and 8 hours of advanced



training in 2010. All volunteers eligible for 2011 re-certification received a limited edition pin of Virginia's state bat, the Virginia big-eared bat, based on an illustration by Spike Knuth. Each year, we will offer a new re-certification pin showing a Virginia native species.

*The  
program  
has exceeded my  
expectations and is a  
great success story.*  
Joe Elton, Virginia State  
Parks Director, VDCR

*2 chapters assisted DOF staff with cone  
collection in the 3rd cycle loblolly pine seed  
orchard at the New Kent Forestry Center. In  
all, over 260 bushels of valuable advanced-  
generation seedlings were collected, which  
will produce over 5 million seedlings for  
Virginia forest landowners to plant in 2012.  
With the Master Naturalists' help, DOF  
saved over \$5,000 compared to the cost of  
contracted cone harvesting."*

Jerre Creighton, Research Program Manager,  
VDOF

**I want you to know how  
delighted I have been by this  
opportunity to become a VMN.  
This program is amazing!**  
Sally Chamberlin  
VMN volunteer (Riverine Chapter)

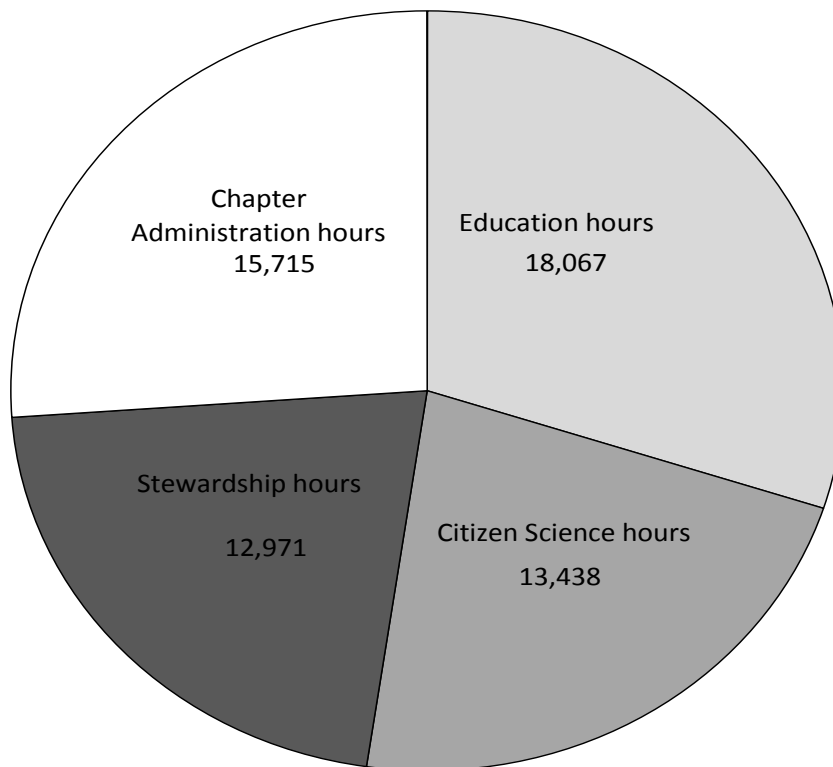
*I want to say a big "THANK YOU" to you and  
all of the Old Rag, Rivanna and Shenandoah  
Master Naturalists who came out to  
Montpelier and labored over two days to pull  
so much garlic mustard out. Your group was  
certainly a breath of fresh air . . . I love it that  
all of you actually enjoy doing this!*

Sandy Mudrinich, Horticulturist  
The Montpelier Foundation

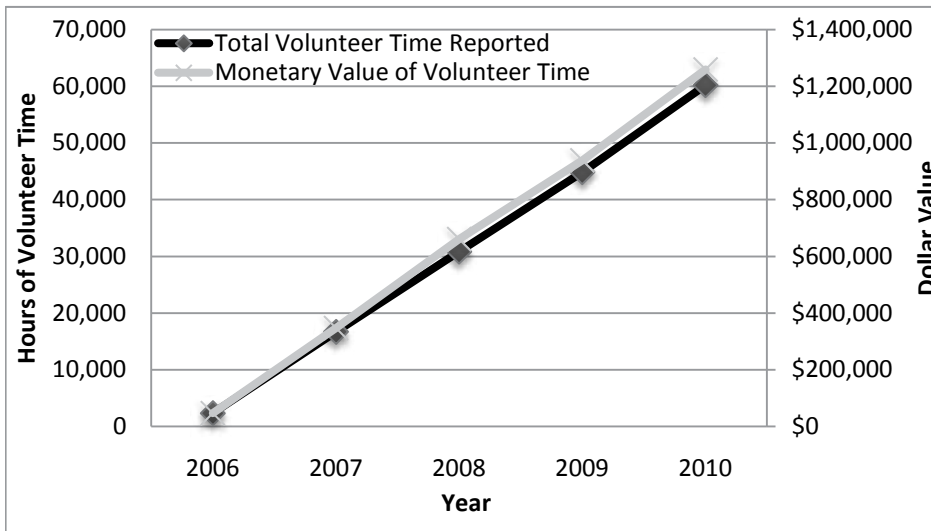
## Program Statistics

These data, provided by the chapters, show how our volunteers are making a difference. These figures represent a minimum; volunteer hours and impacts tend to be underreported. We greatly appreciate our volunteers taking the time to report on their activities so that we can see how the program is growing each year. Even more, we appreciate all of the chapter record keepers and membership chairs who track and report all of these data for the local chapters!

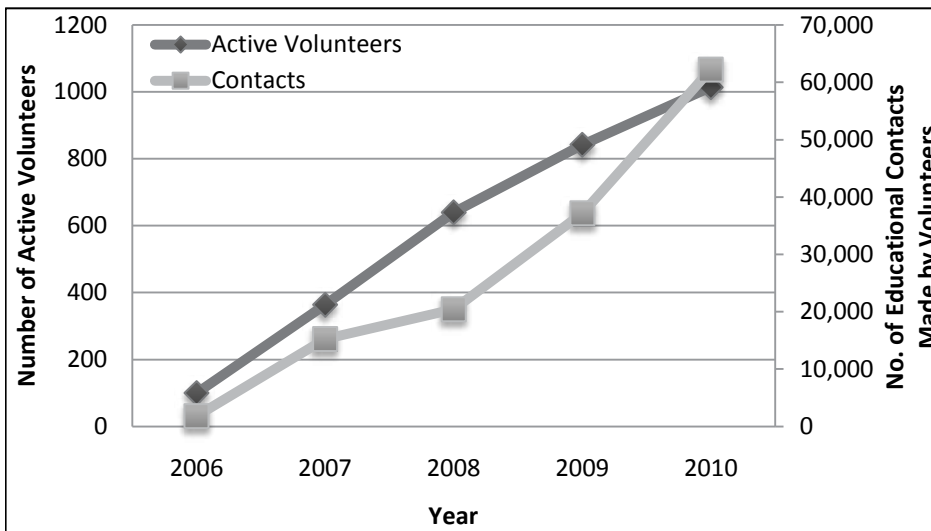
<b>Virginia Master Naturalist Program Statistics for 2010</b>	
Number of Basic Training Courses Held	22
Number of Volunteers Trained	412
Number of Active Volunteers	1014
Number of Currently Certified VMNs	600+
Number of Advanced Training hours completed	11,905
Number of Educational Contacts Made by VMN volunteers	62,246
Number of presentations given by VMN volunteers	2537
Number of acres positively impacted	2126
Number of miles of trails built/maintained	1074
Total number of volunteer hours	60,191
Monetary Value of total volunteer hours	\$1,259,798



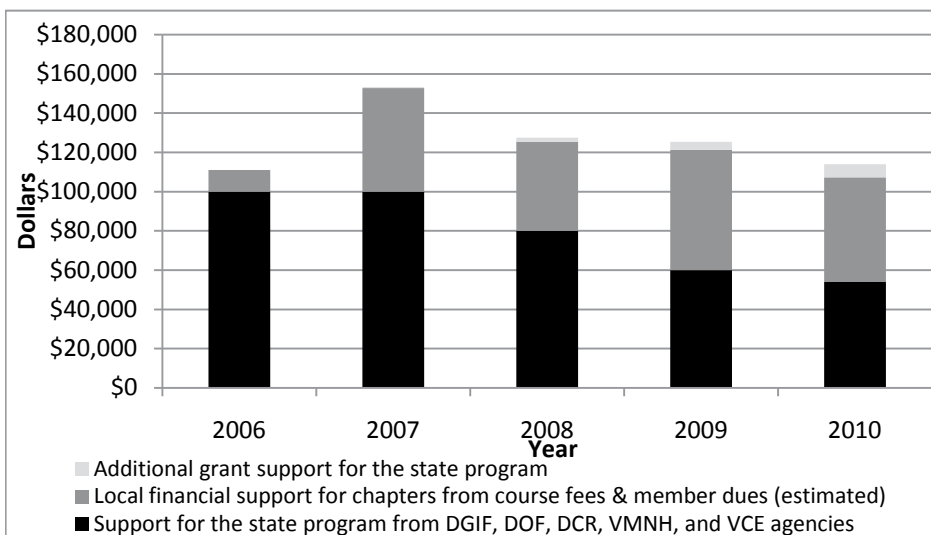
**Figure 1. Volunteer hours by category for 2010.** In 2010, Virginia Master Naturalists contributed 60,191 hours of volunteer service towards education, citizen science, and stewardship projects, as well as towards running their local chapters.



**Figure 2. VMN program volunteer hours and monetary value, 2006-2010.** Over the lifetime of the program, Virginia Master Naturalist volunteers have contributed a total of 154,932 hours of service, valued at more than \$3.2 million.



**Figure 3. VMN program active volunteers and contacts, 2006-2010.** Through their educational programs in parks, schools, and beyond, VMN volunteers have made more than 136,000 contacts.



**Figure 4. Financial support.** Centrally, the program has been funded by a partnership of 5 state agencies that supports statewide initiatives and a program coordinator. Some additional grants have funded special projects. At the local level, the program is self-sufficient through course fees and member dues.

## 2010 Project Highlights

Unfortunately, there isn't room in this report to highlight every one of the wonderful projects our volunteers accomplished in 2010. Reading through the chapters' annual reports, however, one can see that there are several project themes that cross chapters, geographical areas, and partners. Described here are many of these major areas of focus for VMN volunteers in 2010.



The Historic Rivers Chapter helped teach local youth about forest life. Photo by Lisa Deaton.

### Junior Naturalist Programs

Many chapters (Rivanna Chapter, Northern Neck Chapter, Shenandoah Chapter, Banshee Reeks Chapter to name a few) organize or assist with Junior Naturalist programs or Ecology clubs for students, some through 4-H and some with other local partner organizations. In one example, the New River Valley Chapter started a 4-H Junior Naturalist Club in Montgomery County in fall 2010. The club meets weekly, doing activities to teach youth about natural resources, develop their observation skills, and provide opportunities to spend time outdoors.

### Virginia Frog and Toad Calling Survey

The Virginia Frog and Toad Calling Survey, run by the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries as part of a larger North American Amphibian Monitoring Program (NAAMP), is a favorite project of many VMN volunteers. The VMN volunteers are a huge asset for the survey, as well! According to J.D. Kleopfer, the VDGIF biologist directing the survey, "Most certainly the VMN program has had a significant impact on the Frog Call program. It has doubled the number of volunteers. 2011 will be in the highest number of filled routes in the 10 years NAAMP has been around." More than two-thirds of those volunteers are associated with the VMN program!

### Meaningful Watershed Educational Experiences

We are collaborating with the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality on an effort to involve VMN volunteers in leading Meaningful Watershed Educational Experiences (MWEE) for youth in the Chesapeake Bay watershed and beyond. VMN chapters have jumped in to share their expertise during MWEE field activities. Oftentimes this means leading a learning station where students look for benthic macroinvertebrates, test water chemistry, or explore a watershed model. VMN volunteers have helped lead MWEEs in Albemarle, Bedford, Caroline, Culpeper, and other counties. At the statewide level, we partnered with the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality on a NOAA grant that engages Virginia Master Naturalists and other non-formal educators as MWEE leaders and teacher trainers. For more information on MWEEs, visit <http://www.deq.state.va.us/vanaturally/mwee/>.

### Habitat Educators

Virginia Master Naturalists like reaching out to other community members to help spread the word about environmentally-friendly landscaping. In 2010, eleven Fairfax Master Naturalists served as trained Audubon at Home Ambassadors who provide information and advice to homeowners about creating healthier, more wildlife-friendly habitat on their own properties. Likewise, some members of the Blue Ridge Foothills and Lakes Chapter started a Buffer Landscaping project designed to increase the number of property owners who have buffer landscaping on

## 2010 Project Highlights, continued

their lakefront properties at Smith Mountain Lake. They developed educational materials and are visiting property owners to advise them on how to get started with or improve their buffer landscaping in order to reduce runoff and pollution in the lake. Historic Rivers Master Naturalists planned and presented a seminar for Master Gardeners on native plant landscaping. Many VMN volunteers continued to serve as VDGIF Habitat Educators, giving presentations on creating backyard wildlife habitat for community groups.

### **P**rojects on State Lands

VMN volunteers are active with projects on local and federal lands, but their contributions to state-managed lands are particularly noteworthy. Chapters listed 2000 hours of volunteer activities at 18 DCR State Parks and 11 Natural Area Preserves on their 2010 annual reports. Their activities included education (interpretive programs, special events, designing and installing interpretive signs), citizen science (bird and butterfly counts), and stewardship (trail maintenance, habitat restoration, waterway clean-ups.) Volunteers also conducted projects at several VDGIF Wildlife Management Areas, five VDOF State Forests, the VDOF headquarters property, the VDOF New Kent Forestry Center, and the Virginia Museum of Natural History.

*Volunteers with the Alleghany Highlands Master Naturalist chapter completed 435 hours at the Nature's Outpost at Douthat State Park. Nature's Outpost receives many visitors wanting to learn about park flora and fauna. Because of cutbacks to park staffing, on many occasions this resource would not be open were it not for Master Naturalist volunteers.*

From the Alleghany Highlands Chapter 2010 Report

### **I**nvasive Species

Invasive species issues have been a focus of the VMN program for several years. Many chapters have adopted sites where they regularly monitor for and remove invasive plants. The New River Valley Chapter has been tackling *Ailanthus* at a Nature Conservancy property, the Rivanna and Old Rag Chapters have adopted sites in Shenandoah National Park, the

Northern Neck Chapter has worked on invasive plant management at Chilton Woods State Forest, and the Banshee Reeks Chapter has an army of volunteers fighting invasives at Banshee Reeks Nature Preserve. Some chapters also have conducted educational programs to teach others about invasive species issues. In addition, 2010 marked the second annual Virginia Invasive Plant Removal Day, co-sponsored by the Virginia Master Naturalist program. More than 300 volunteers contributed more than 750 hours of service at work sites covering more than 50 acres. In addition, Virginia Master Naturalists participated in the *Good Green, Bad Green* conference on invasive species organized by Virginia Cooperative Extension and other partners.

### **E**astern Bluebirds

Building and monitoring nest boxes for Eastern bluebirds has quickly become one of the most popular VMN projects, involving dozens of volunteers and hundreds of hours of service in 2010. The Central Blue Ridge, Shenandoah, and Old Rag chapters all highlighted bluebird box projects as one of their most significant projects of the year, and the Fairfax, Rivanna, Banshee Reeks, and Pocahontas chapters were also highly engaged in bluebird projects. The projects often help more than just the bluebirds, since some of the trail locations are at schools, state parks, and other places where the public can see and learn about this species and how to provide habitat for it.

## 2010 Project Highlights, continued

### American Chestnuts

The American chestnut captures the fascination of many Virginia Master Naturalists. This year, volunteers from multiple chapters assisted the American Chestnut Foundation with a survey of living American chestnuts along the Appalachian Trail. They also helped with chestnut orchard projects at the Lesesne State Forest, Fortune's Cove Preserve, Blandy Experimental Farm, and the Smithsonian Conservation Research Center. Restoring the majestic American chestnut is a lofty goal, but these volunteers understand the less glamorous planting, weeding, pollinating, and mowing that will eventually make this goal a reality.



Master Naturalists helped restore oyster populations in the Bay. Photo by Tidewater Chapter.

### Chesapeake Bay

Much of what Virginia Master Naturalists do helps the Chesapeake Bay, whether it is teaching people how to build a rain barrel, teaching youth

about watersheds, or planting trees. This year, Historic Rivers and Tidewater Master Naturalists contributed more than 200 hours volunteering on oyster restoration projects, from working with schoolchildren to raise the oysters, to building "reef balls" that make artificial habitats for the oysters, to heading out on boats to deposit the new oysters in the Bay. Virginia Master Naturalists also grew and planted underwater Bay grasses that provide habitat and improve water quality. Other Virginia Master Naturalists in the Bay watershed planted riparian buffers and built rain gardens, both of which help keep pollutants out of streams that drain to the Bay.

### Water Quality Monitoring

Nearly every chapter has volunteers who spend time tromping in streams to collect water quality data. Biological monitoring of benthic macroinvertebrates is the most common, but VMN volunteers are also involved in chemical testing and physical assessments of streams as well. For example, the Blue Ridge Foothills and Lakes Chapter conducted monthly monitoring of five streams in Booker T. Washington National Monument, measuring pH, dissolved oxygen, and temperature. The Rivanna Chapter contributed more than 500 hours of volunteer time monitoring macroinvertebrates and other water quality measurements in the Rivanna watershed with the StreamWatch organization. Virginia Save Our Streams partners with many chapters across the state.

### Reaching Out to Underserved Audiences

Many of our chapters are making specific efforts to share their educational programming with underserved audiences, such as racial and ethnic minorities, low-income populations, and urban youth. For example, the Beagle Ridge Chapter held a field day for a Salvation Army camp for underserved urban youth, and the Pocahontas Chapter planned and built a nature trail at A.M. Davis, a Title I school. The Riverine Chapter continued to be active with the Richmond Audubon Society's RAS Kids program, which provides outdoor learning experiences to urban youth. A Holston Rivers Chapter volunteer developed and led a naturalist program for adults with mental illnesses (see the Spotlight on a Volunteer section for details.)

## Volunteer Spotlight: Rick Sutherland

**R**ick Sutherland, a Virginia Master Naturalist volunteer in the Holston Rivers Chapter, came to the program with a strong love of the outdoors developed through his years of camping, hiking, and fishing. Since joining the program, Rick has done a little of everything as a Virginia Master Naturalist volunteer. One of the most interesting projects for him was a wildlife survey along the Appalachian Trail, in conjunction with the Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute and the Appalachian Trail Conservancy. Rick and other volunteers deployed camera "traps" at designated locations along the trail, and then retrieved the cameras in order to download the images. Bitten by the citizen science bug, Rick hopes to participate in the Virginia Frog and Toad Calling Survey next year and also water quality monitoring with Save Our Streams. And, he plans to round that out by becoming a volunteer steward at one of the local natural areas.

**R**ick also has woven his career as a Psychiatric Recovery Specialist for Highlands Community Services into his Master Naturalist activities. He was able to convince his agency to start a naturalist program for disadvantaged adults diagnosed with mental illnesses. The program, now two years old, has weekly classroom sessions focusing on natural history topics, followed by field trips for hands-on learning at places like Hungry Mother State Park. The participants also keep field journals and complete research papers on famous naturalists. Rick is finding that the program is helping the participants to have fewer symptoms and a better quality of life. "Since most of our people have at least a high school education, some with college degrees, they have found that the mental stimulation and the physical exercise help them to lead a more normal life," says Rick. "Most of the members of our group have stated that they have always been interested in conservation, but due to their illness and the fact that they have not had access to anyone willing to teach them, they have not pursued their interest until now."

### Save the Date!

**We will hold another Virginia Master Naturalist Statewide Volunteer Conference and Training this year!**

When: September 23-25

Where: Palmyra, Virginia (Fluvanna County), hosted by the Rivanna Chapter

What: A full weekend of advanced training opportunities, networking with other Master Naturalists, and, of course, having fun!

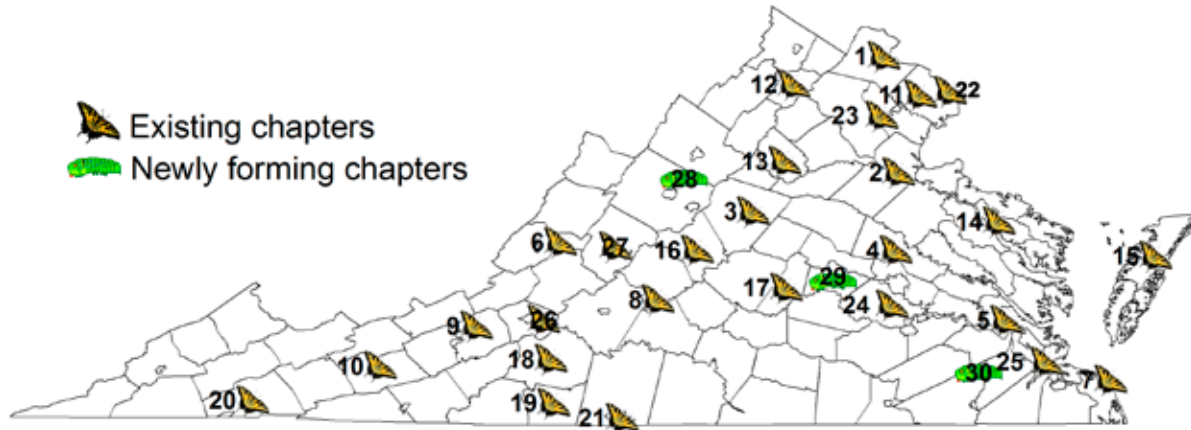
More details and registration information will be posted on the program Web site in June.



**R**ick Sutherland's advice to other volunteers on how to get the most out of the program is to use it as an opportunity to find and explore new natural places that are off the beaten path. *"I recently saw an immature golden eagle at Hidden Valley Lake Wildlife Management Area on a spur of the moment trip, snow on the ground, and I was the only person at that WMA that afternoon! You never know what unexpected and astounding thing you may see if you get out there."*



Master Naturalists enjoyed a float trip to learn about watersheds at the 2009 conference.



- |                         |                                  |                        |
|-------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Banshee Reeks        | 12. Shenandoah                   | 22. Arlington Regional |
| 2. Central Rappahannock | 13. Old Rag                      | 23. Merrimac Farm      |
| 3. Rivanna              | 14. Northern Neck                | 24. Pocahontas         |
| 4. Riverine             | 15. Eastern Shore                | 25. Peninsula          |
| 5. Historic Rivers      | 16. Central Blue Ridge           | 26. Roanoke Valley     |
| 6. Alleghany Highlands  | 17. Central Piedmont             | 27. Rockbridge         |
| 7. Tidewater            | 18. Blue Ridge Foothills & Lakes | 28. Headwaters         |
| 8. Central Virginia     | 19. Southwestern Piedmont        | 29. James River        |
| 9. New River Valley     | 20. Holston Rivers               | 30. Historic Southside |
| 10. Beagle Ridge        | 21. Dan River                    |                        |
| 11. Fairfax             |                                  |                        |

**Steering Committee**

Michelle Dickerson, VCE Denise Hayes, Volunteer Beth Hawse, VDCR Michael Hayslett, Volunteer	Carol Heiser, VDGIF John Munsell, VCE Michael Lachance, VCE Ann Mallek, VMNH Toni Noreika, VDOF	Ellen Powell, VDOF Ellen Reynolds, Volunteer Lou Verner, VDGIF Carol Zokaites, VDCR
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**Executive Committee**

Dennis Casey, VMNH Dean Cumbia, VDOF Bob Duncan, VDGIF Denise Hayes, Volunteer	Joe Keiper, VMNH Chris Ludwig, VDCR Keith Morgan, VDCR John Munsell, VCE	Bob Smith, VCE Dave Slack, VDOF David Whitehurst, VDGIF
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Extension Associate

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**[www.virginiamasternaturalist.org](http://www.virginiamasternaturalist.org)**

**2010 Virginia Master Naturalist Sponsoring Agencies**



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Virginia Department of Environmental Quality