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Congratulation to the Fall class of 2008

The fall class of 2008 became the third class that the Fairfax chapter has graduated. Participants come from a variety of backgrounds and experiences, with many reasons for participating. Let us share a couple!

*Newsletter of the Fairfax chapter of the Virginia
Master Naturalists*



Fall class of 2008 poses for a picture while on a class trip to Ellanor C. Lawrence Park. While at the park the class participated in an invasive plant management program.

Welcome to the first issue of *Swallow Tales*. It is our hope that everyone who reads the information inside will be informed and inspired.

Chapter Statistics

19 Certified Members
43 with Volunteer Service
41 with Advanced
Training

2,052.75 Volunteer Service Hours
for 2008

435.5 Advanced Training Hours
for 2008

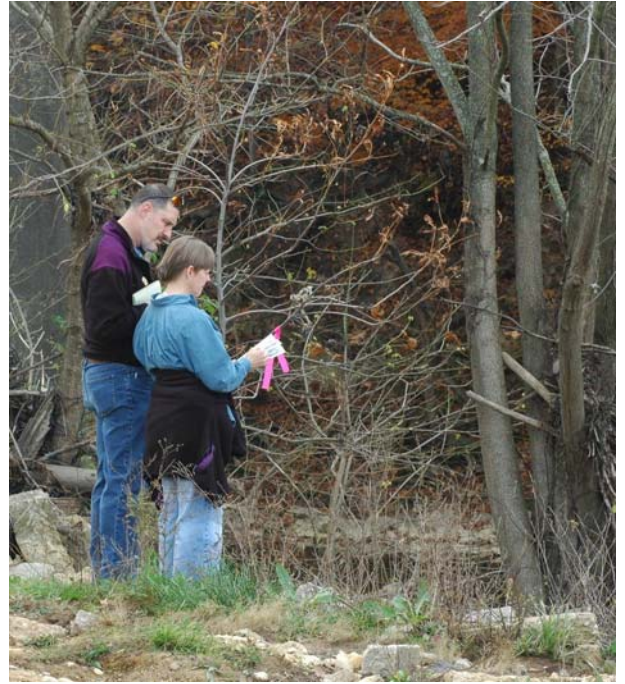
I discovered the Virginia Master Naturalist Program at a very opportune time. I had retired from one full career and in seeking to retire from my second, was looking for ways to move away from a mostly indoor life to something primarily outdoors. I had been taking evening classes in topics such as ornithology and ethnobotany which whetted my appetite for more but at the same time I was looking for more of a structure and a way to learn more about the conservation network in Virginia and opportunities for volunteer work. Needless to say, I was very pleased when I was pointed in the direction of the Fairfax Chapter where I found a stimulating and well-rounded course of instruction and a group of fellow students who were equally stimulating and diverse in their interests. As a result of this I am already engaged in several conservation preserve committees with the Nature Conservancy and will shortly be branching out into other areas where I certainly hope and expect to bump into many of the class of Fall 2008 as we get out there to hit the trails and spread the word on conservation and ecological issues important to all of us. Bruce Johnson

I feel more connected to nature. I have learned tremendously in areas I did not have much knowledge about. From now on when conducting my work, I am an international environmental engineer, I am more empowered to explain about and to request the implementation of sound environmental practices. I have also found my niche to conduct my environmental stewardship here in VA. The program is excellent. I hope to contribute so that it goes on and on. Josefina

Tree ID Hike at Lake Accotink

Our November 8 chapter meeting featured a Tree Identification hike at Springfield's Lake Accotink Park. The event was open to the public and counted as Advanced Training for Master Naturalists. Twenty-one members and seven guests participated.

Chapter Advisor Jim McGlone, VDOF, presented a brief introduction to dendrology. The group then divided into two groups, one following Jim, and the other with Bryant Bays. The groups used field guides with keys to identify flagged trees. After the tree identification portion of the meeting, the groups rejoined and Kim Scudera and Karen Monroe gave a presentation on the emerald ash borer and its effect on ash trees. The meeting concluded with refreshments served by Alison Keck.



Gala Annual Meeting

Members, honorary members, and guests celebrated the Fairfax Master Naturalists' first year accomplishments at the chapter's Annual Meeting on December 4. The evening included food, entertainment, games, graduation, elections and more. We gathered at Frying Pan Park's lovely Visitor Center, provided courtesy of the Fairfax County Park Authority.

Members mingled with fellow Master Naturalists with a "What Plant/Animal Am I?" ice-breaker while feasting on a delicious selection of pot luck appetizers and desserts. President Diana Handy, Mistress of Ceremonies, opened with welcoming remarks. Chapter Advisor Jim McGlone described the chapter's establishment, noting with pride our achievements to date. Training Chairs Alan Rush and Suzanne Hough presented graduation certificates to the Fall 08 Class members, our third graduating class. The Election Committee introduced the following slate of officer candidates who were then elected by unanimous vote:

President - Tony Forstall; Vice President/Program Chair - Dawn Dhavale;
Secretary - Barb Brown; and Treasurer - Judith Cronauer

The new officers will assume their duties in January. The January 12 Board meeting will be the official transition to the new officers and 2009 Committee Chairs to be appointed by the incoming president. Candidates have volunteered for most of the committee chair positions. Emily Whitaker passed out flyers to recruit a candidate for IT Chair.

Singer Kim Scudera entertained us with two humorous self-written selections, "My Favorite Trees" and "Dichotomous Key," set to tunes by Rogers & Hammerstein, and "Botany," from the poem by Berton Braley, set to "Habañera" from the opera "Carmen." Kim was accompanied by Tony Forstall on guitar. By popular request, Tony sang "The Galaxy Song" composed by Eric Idle for the movie Monty Python's "The Meaning of Life".

Incoming president Tony Forstall expressed pleasure in his new position and described his goals for the coming year: active volunteer service, recruitment of new members, and strengthened relationships with partner organizations. Then Diana announced the door prize winners and concluded the formal program. The meeting continued with informal socializing and a native seed swap.

Good Times at VMN Conference

By Marilyn Schroeder

Members Diana Handy, Karen Monroe, Pam McMillie, and Marilyn Schroeder represented the Fairfax Master Naturalists (FMNs) at the first statewide Virginia Master Naturalist Conference on October 17-19. We traveled to Wytheville in the southwest corner of VA. While there, we had the opportunity to network with seventy-nine Master Naturalists, representing 18 of the 25 chapters across the state.

On a damp, chilly Friday, intrepid hikers Diana, Karen, and Pam enjoyed a pre-conference field trip to Grayson Highlands State Park. That evening we all attended the Share Fair, getting new ideas from chapter displays set up around the room. Banshee Reeks Chapter demonstrated their web-based record-keeping system. Other chapters displayed great photos, a scrap book of chapter history and accomplishments, and fact sheets for outreach.

Karen, Doreen, Diana, and Pam created a wonderful tri-fold display for the Fairfax Chapter, with photos of our stewardship, citizen science and education service projects, as well as service and training statistics. Other chapters were impressed by our Volunteer Service and Advanced Training Catalogs, unique to FMN. In the future, the FMN display will also be used at outreach events and chapter meetings.

Attendees chose from a wide selection of sessions on Saturday and Sunday morning. Lou Verner's presentation *Becoming a Powerful and Effective Messenger* provided great suggestions that I'll use in giving nature programs. The conference host chapter, Beagle Ridge, invited us to their Environmental Education Center/Big Survey Wildlife Management Area for a *No Child Left Inside* field trip. At the site, Beagle Ridge chapter members presented several sample nature programs for kids.

Ellen Reynolds, President, Beagle Ridge Chapter, welcomes Master Naturalists to Environmental Education Center

Photo by Marilyn Schroeder



Carol Zokaites, DCR, gave a fascinating presentation on Project Underground. Karst topography, caves and bats captured my attention. Plotting entrances and exits to underground streams on topo maps, we learned that the streams don't necessarily run "downhill" as viewed by surface topography! I was amazed to hear that Route 81 is situated directly above a karst region. On the drive home, I observed lots of sink holes, recognized by clumps of trees and bushes standing in the middle of grassy fields.

We all had lots of fun, exploring a different natural area of Virginia, getting to know members of other chapters, and even getting Advanced Training credit for the instructional sessions. The consensus of participants is this is something we'd like to do again next year.

For more information about the conference, see *Virginia Master Naturalist Volunteer Training and Conference, October 17-19, 2008 in Wytheville, VA* on the Events page of the Virginia Master Naturalist web site.

IT Chair

President Tony Forstall (wtonstall@cox.net) is seeking interested candidates for IT Chair.

This person will lead the team responsible for chapter IT capabilities. The IT Committee provides the FMN Google Groups, chapter web site, and other needed IT functions. It also assists FMN members who seek help in using these capabilities.

The IT Chair has a lot of flexibility in determining the Committee's priorities and projects, in conjunction with the incoming President and Board.

The IT Chair may, at his/her discretion, select any additional Committee members that would be helpful in fulfilling IT responsibilities.

The IT Chair will be appointed by President Tony Forstall with confirmation by the new Executive Board in January 2009. The IT Chair will be a member of the Board of Directors, meeting approximately once a month.

Time spent on IT Chair duties counts as volunteer service toward Master Naturalist certification.

Functions (defined in Operating Handbook)

- Develop and maintain chapter website.
- Establish and maintain softcopy repositories, as needed, such as member database, and database of volunteer and training hours.
- Develop and maintain group email IDs, as needed
- Assist chapter members in using basic computer and Internet capabilities.
- Help chapter members use state Virginia Master Naturalist web and IT capabilities.
- May include official chapter volunteers who are not Master Naturalist members.
- Control committee expenses and communicate with Treasurer regularly. Use expense reimbursement vouchers.

Qualifications

- Leadership and team-building skills
- IT experience
 - ◊ Use of Internet groups, web site development and maintenance, and/or database expertise would be particularly helpful
- Comfortable with assisting others in use of IT capabilities

Time Commitment

- Intensive initial effort to recruit web designer and oversee creation of new website
- Ongoing support, approximately 1-2 hours per week
- Potential future short-burst intensive efforts, e.g.
 - ◊ Install, try out, and load data into record-keeping software, either state VMN provided, modeled on another chapter's software (e.g. Banshee Reeks), or IT Team developed
 - ◊ Develop and initialize records archive capabilities for chapter
- Work can be done anytime, day or night, at IT Chair's convenience

Equipment

- No equipment is provided; it is expected that applicant will use own home computer

Upcoming Training: Spring 2009 Basic Training Course

WHAT: This 60-hour course offers fun and interactive instruction in natural history and forest and aquatic ecology. The course is the first step in becoming a certified member of the Fairfax Chapter of the Virginia Master Naturalist Program and will prepare volunteers to provide valuable community service in local parks and natural areas in the areas of stewardship, citizen science and education.

WHO: Applicants must be at least 18 years of age. About 20 applicants will be selected for the spring training.

HOW: Visit our chapter website (www.virginiamasternaturalist.org/fairfax.html) starting in early January 2009 for more details and to download the application. Submit your application with \$200 class fee* by January 28, 2009. If you are not selected, your check will be returned. You will be notified of selection by February 18, 2009.

WHEN: Class will meet on Wednesdays, March 4 - May 27 (no class April 8) from 7 - 10 pm. There will also be four Saturday field trips from 9 am to 3 pm.

WHERE: Marshall High School, 7731 Leesburg Pike, Falls Church. Field trips will be to local parks and natural areas.

CLASS MAKEUP POLICY: A total of three classes may be missed if they are made up within a year of the class graduation date, but only one missed/made up class may be a field trip. Any missed class must be made up either in a subsequent Basic Training course or with equivalent training. Equivalent training is subject to the approval of the training committee chairs.

* A limited number of need-based scholarships are available.

Virginia Master Naturalist programs and employment are open to all, regardless of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, or marital or family status. VMN is an equal opportunity/affirmative action employer.

Individuals with disabilities desiring accommodations in the application process should notify the Chapter Advisor, Jim McGlone at (703) 324-1480 (TDD number 1-800-828-1120) by the application deadline.