



**Virginia
Master
Naturalist**

**Virginia Master Naturalist
Statewide Conference &
Volunteer Training
October 17-19, 2008
Wytheville, Virginia**

Agenda

Friday, October 17

8:30-9:00 am Check-in for pre-conference field trip, pick up lunches

In front of the Wytheville Meeting Center

9:00 am-4:00 pm High Country Ecology Field Trip

Grayson Highlands State Park

5:00 pm-6:00 pm Registrations for main conference

Wytheville Meeting Center Lobby

6:00 pm-7:00 pm Supper

Evansham Ballroom B&C

7:00 pm-7:30 pm Welcome and kick-off, program highlights from 2007

Michelle Prysby, Virginia Master Naturalist Program Coordinator

Evansham Ballroom B&C

7:30 pm-9:00 pm Chapter “share fair” and networking session with dessert social

Evansham Ballroom B&C

Saturday, October 18

(Breakfast on your own)

8:00 am-8:30 am Registrations for main conference

8:30 am-9:30 am Concurrent classroom sessions

Please choose one 2-hour session or two 1-hour sessions to attend. You do not need to pre-register for these sessions.

***Program Evaluation Naturally: Tips and Tools for Determining
and Sharing Program Impact***, Nancy Franz, VCE (1 hour)

Meeting Room 1

Public Speaking Skills for Master Naturalists, Lou Verner, VDGIF (2 hours)

Evansham B

Remarkable Trees, Jeff Kirwan, VCE (1 hour)

Evansham A

Team Wildlife: The 4H Wildlife Habitat Evaluation Program,
Michelle Adcock, VCE (2 hours)

Meeting Room 2

Where are those insects when you need them?, Peter Warren, VCE (2 hours)

Meeting Room 3

9:30-9:45 am Coffee break

Wytheville Meeting Center Lobby

9:45-10:45 am Concurrent classroom sessions, continued

The Chestnut Story, Cathy Mayes, American Chestnut Foundation (1 hour)

Evansham C

Measuring Virginia’s Big Trees, Jeff Kirwan, VCE (1 hour)

Evansham A

***Program Evaluation Naturally: Tips and Tools for Determining
and Sharing Program Impact***, Nancy Franz, VCE (1 hour)

Meeting Room 1

*Sessions continued from first hour: **Public Speaking Skills for Master Naturalists, 4H Wildlife Habitat Evaluation Program, and Where are those insects when you need them?***

11:00 am-5:00 pm Field sessions

Please pick up your lunch before boarding the vehicles.

Underdog Wetlands: Vernal Pools and Related Habitats with Mike Hayslett, Sweet Briar College

**Meet in Evansham Ballroom A*

A Walk in the Woods: Fall botany and forestry with David Richert, DOF; Ruth Douglas, VA Native Plant Society, and Carrie Sparks, Hungry Mother State Park volunteer

On the Wing: Bird identification, ecology, and citizen science techniques with Scott Jackson Ricketts

No Child Left Inside: Environmental education with Ellen Reynolds, Beagle Ridge Herb Farm and Environmental Education Center

6:00 pm-7:00 pm Banquet and awards

7:00 pm-8:00 pm ***The Unnatural Night*** with John Goss, Astronomical League

Sunday, October 19

(Breakfast on your own.)

Please pick up your lunch for the day before going to your session.

7:00 am-3:00 pm Concurrent sessions

You can attend one session or more than one, depending on the timings. Please sign up for the sessions you plan to attend using the sign up sheets posted in the Evansham Ballroom.

7:00-10:00 am ***Bird Walk on the New River Trail*** with Debbie Davis, Beagle Ridge Chapter.

Front of Wytheville Meeting Center

9:00 am-12:00 pm ***Project Underground*** with Carol Zokaites, DCR

Meeting Room 3

12:30 pm-3:00 pm ***Rain Gardens at Rural Retreat Elementary*** with David Richert, DOF and Ellen Reynolds, Beagle Ridge Chapter

Meeting Room 1

9:00 am-11:30 am ***Creating a Community Nature Area*** with Larry Wilhite, Beagle Ridge Chapter and Elaine HOLETON, Wythe Conservation Network

Meeting Room 2

9:00 am-12:00 pm ***Freshwater Mussels of Virginia*** with Jonathan Orr, DGIF

Front of Wytheville Meeting Center

9:00 am-12:00 pm ***Designing a Wildlife Habitat*** with Carol Heiser, DGIF

Meeting Room 1

Session Descriptions and Instructor Affiliations

Friday Pre-Conference Field Trip

High Country Ecology

Experience Virginia's high country on this optional pre-conference field trip. Using Grayson Highlands State Park as our home base, we will explore the high elevation ecosystems of the Mount Rogers area. This area includes many beautiful ecological communities, including northern hardwood forests, sphagnum bogs, and Virginia's only red spruce-Fraser fir forests, a community limited to elevations over 5400 feet. We will spend the day exploring the trails in search of some of the plants and animals native to these communities, learning a little about geology, forests, invasives, salamanders, birds, and more along the way. Depending on group interest, we can have both shorter (1-2 miles) and longer hikes (4+ miles). Your trip fee includes transportation, lunch, and expert guides.

Instructors:

Steve Lindeman, Land Protection Program Manager, The Nature Conservancy Clinch Valley Program
Leigh King, Virginia Master Naturalist, Holston Rivers Chapter
Lou Verner, Watchable Wildlife Biologist, Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries
Michelle Prysby, Virginia Master Naturalist Program Coordinator, Virginia Tech Forestry/VCE
Kevin Kelley, Chief Ranger, Grayson Highlands State Park

Saturday Morning Classroom Sessions

Team Wildlife: The 4H Wildlife Habitat Evaluation Program

WHEP (Wildlife Habitat Evaluation Program) is a 4-H environmental education program that is designed to teach junior and senior level youth (ages 8-19) about wildlife and fisheries habitat management. It is a hands-on program that allows youth to test their knowledge of wildlife facts and management principles in a friendly competition format. In this workshop, participants will learn about the 5 components of the WHEP contest through hands-on activities and will learn about the state and national competition guidelines.

Instructor: Michelle Adcock, Virginia Cooperative Extension 4H Agent, Montgomery County

Public Speaking Skills for Master Naturalists

The number one fear in the United States isn't snakes or spiders, it's public speaking! This workshop is designed to ally that fear by providing you with easy to follow guidelines for "before", "during" and "after" message delivery. By using forethought and the appropriate tools, you, too, can become an engaging and effective speaker.

Instructor: Lou Verner, Watchable Wildlife Biologist, Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries

Program Evaluation Naturally: Tips and Tools for Determining and Sharing Program Impact

Virginia Cooperative Extension specialist Nancy Franz will share four steps and many tools to evaluate programs you conduct as a Master Naturalist volunteer. Good evaluation helps improve programs and helps tell the story of your impacts in your community. This active, workshop-style session will be useful whether you are coordinating your chapter's next training course, leading interpretive programs, or conducting educational programs. The steps and tips you will learn will help you better report on your volunteer projects!

Instructor: Nancy Franz, Professor/Extension Specialist, Virginia Tech Department of Agricultural & Extension Education

Remarkable Trees

The Remarkable Trees of Virginia Project was a four-year effort to document the state's largest, oldest, most historic, beautiful and significant trees. Over 1,000 trees were nominated by citizens of all ages and walks of life, and approximately 100 were selected to be featured in the book, Remarkable Trees of Virginia. Come learn the "behind-the-scenes" action behind the book, and see examples of the beautiful illustrations by Charlottesville photographer, Robert Llewellyn. Learn how this project will engage a new generation of Virginians in the appreciation of trees.

Instructor: Jeff Kirwan, Professor/Extension Specialist, Virginia Tech Department of Forestry

The Chestnut Story

Scientists have been trying to restore the American chestnut to the Eastern forest throughout the century since the tree was nearly wiped out by an invasive fungus called the chestnut blight. The most promising work today involves cross-breeding surviving American chestnut with its blight-resistant Chinese cousin. Learn how the blight impacts the forest ecology to this day, how to identify the different chestnut species in the woods and how you can help with the massive restoration effort.

Instructor: Cathy Mayes, President, VA Chapter of the American Chestnut Foundation and Old Rag Master Naturalist volunteer

Measuring Virginia's Big Trees

The Virginia Big Tree Program documents the largest trees of each species found growing in Virginia. Champion trees, as they are also known, are determined by a formula that includes trunk circumference at 4.5 feet above the ground, height, and crown spread. Volunteers check on champion trees periodically, re-measure them every ten years, and verify measurements as new trees are nominated. Virginia currently has 56 national champion trees, ranking fifth in the US. Learn how trees are measured, how to nominate a tree, use a GPS to determine location, and search for trees in your area.

Instructor: Jeff Kirwan, Professor/Extension Specialist, Virginia Tech Department of Forestry

Where are those insects when you need them?

Join Peter Warren in a discussion about insects and their habitats. If weather permits we will go outside and look for them as well. Please bring questionable specimens if you have them.

Instructor: Peter Warren, Virginia Cooperative Extension Horticulture Agent, Charlottesville/Albemarle County

Saturday Afternoon Field Trips

Underdog Wetlands: Vernal Pools and Related Habitats

Participants will learn about special wetlands that are often overlooked for their function and value, beginning with a classroom presentation and followed by field exploration at two different locations. Vernal pools, swamps, seasonal and isolated wetlands provide invaluable wildlife habitat essential to life cycles, but these "underdog" environments are often overlooked for their importance and are not well protected in Virginia. Participants should be prepared for a short hike (less than 1 mile) and rubber boots, if you have them, are recommended!

Instructor: Mike Hayslett, Naturalist-in-Residence, Sweet Briar College

Location: Local Wytheville wetlands and Beagle Ridge EE Center

A Walk in the Woods: Fall Botany and Forestry

Hungry Mother is a CCC park and one of the original 6 parks in VA. See first hand how an ecosystem is being affected by invasive pests, the Hemlock Woolly Adelgid and the Gypsy Moth. Join park staff for a dendrology hike, check out fall wildflowers, and see evidence of these devastating insects on the native

trees. Learn what options property owners have when faced with this situation. Participants should be prepared to hike 2-4 miles on an uneven, hilly trail.

Instructors:

Ruth Douglas, Virginia Native Plant Society and Rivanna Master Naturalist volunteer

David Richert, Western Virginia Resource Conservation and Development Forester, Virginia Department of Forestry

Carrie Sparks, Hungry Mother State Park volunteer

Location: Hungry Mother State Park, Marion, VA

On the Wing: Bird identification, ecology, and citizen science techniques

Join other birders, both beginner and expert, at the Austinville entrance to this 57 mile long rail to trails state park, for bird walk along the New River. The oldest river in America flows north through several states on its way to the gulf and provides a perfect habitat for local and migratory birds. This site contains a wide variety of song birds and will provide a great venue to learn both observation and auditory skills. Beginners and expert birders will be able to add to their life list on this trip and learn protocols for doing bird counts and monitoring studies. Participants should be prepared to walk 2-4 miles on a flat, easy trail. Bring binoculars if you have them.

Instructor(s): Scott Jackson Ricketts, local bird club volunteer and naturalist

Location: New River Trail State Park, Austinville entrance

No Child Left Inside: Environmental Education

The Beagle Ridge site abuts the Big Survey Wildlife Management Area, and affords a variety of field trip opportunities for area schools. Examples include pond dipping and chemical water testing at Hemlock Cove, a hike through a variety of ecosystems for tree and plant identification, becoming part of a watershed, identifying tracks and scat of forest mammals, and learning decomposition with Herman the worm. Beagle Ridge Chapter members will provide a variety of these programs and illustrate how environmental education and hands on learning is FUN! For the adventurous in the group, hike onto the Big Survey in search of Table Mountain Pine and see how the management of this 8,200 acre property provides hiking, bird watching, eco-tourism, and hunting opportunities to the public. This trip includes just some very short walks around the property, except for the optional hiking onto the Big Survey.

Instructor: Ellen Reynolds, Beagle Ridge Herb Farm and Environmental Education Center and Beagle Ridge Master Naturalist volunteer

Location: Beagle Ridge EE Center/Big Survey Wildlife Management Area

Saturday Evening Session

The Unnatural Night

Across the country, light pollution is a problem, growing subtly and pervasively. Quite simply, we are losing our night. We will explore how this affects our quality of life and what we can do about it.

Mr. Goss' interest in the sky began at age 6 when he first saw the moon in the daytime. He has since become an avid observer, eventually earning Master Observer status from the Astronomical League in 2005.

Like most amateurs, he soon encountered the unfortunate effects of light pollution. He became a member of the International Dark-Sky Association in 1996. Mr. Goss has spoken before various county and city planning commissions and county supervisor boards in Virginia, and has participated in the drafting of several outdoor lighting ordinances. In June, he delivered his talk, "Confront Light Pollution," to the 20th Annual General Meeting of the International Dark-Sky Association in Tucson, AZ.

Mr. Goss has written about fighting light pollution for the Astronomical League's Reflectors magazine and is the National Secretary for the Astronomical League. He resides in Fincastle, Virginia.

Sunday Classroom/Field Sessions

Bird Walk on the New River Trail

Birdwatching is best in the mornings when birds are more active. Join a Beagle Ridge Master Naturalist for a bird walk along the New River Trail and practice your bird identification skills.

Instructors:

Debbie Davis, Beagle Ridge Master Naturalist volunteer

Creating a Community Nature Area: Habitat restoration, trails, and wetlands

The Beagle Ridge Chapter has been working with many partners to develop a natural area to be used by the community. This large-scale restoration project includes invasive species control, interpretive trail development, and riparian protection. In the future, a forestry demonstration area may be added. Visit the area and learn how to launch similar projects in your own community.

Instructors:

Elaine Holeton, Wythe Conservation Network

Larry Wilhite, Beagle Ridge Master Naturalist volunteer

Designing a Wildlife Habitat

This session provides an opportunity to practice drawing a landscape design to scale that features native plants for a "generic" wildlife habitat. Learn some techniques for designing a habitat that will come in handy when you're assisting homeowners or others with basic habitat projects.

Instructor: Carol Heiser, Wildlife Habitat Education Coordinator, Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries

Freshwater Mussels of Virginia

There are over 45 species of freshwater mussels found in southwest Virginia. Some are found nowhere else on the planet! Learn about these fascinating creatures and the critical role they play in stream ecosystems. See how the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries is propagating and releasing mussels to help reverse the steep decline in numbers and biodiversity these organisms have faced.

Instructor: Jonathan Orr, Department of Game and Inland Fisheries

Project Underground

Learn about the fascinating geology and ecology of karst and caves and their relationship to groundwater. Get ideas for how to teach others about these topics through participation in Project Underground activities, a hands-on curriculum.

Instructor: Carol Zokaites, Karst Education Coordinator, Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation

Rain Gardens at Rural Retreat Elementary

Rain gardens are increasingly popular tools for reducing and filtering stormwater runoff. In this session, you will learn how the Beagle Ridge Chapter planned and built a rain garden at a local elementary school. You'll visit the garden and learn about how it functions, and leave with ideas of how to do similar chapter projects back in your community.

Instructors:

Ellen Reynolds, Beagle Ridge Herb Farm and Environmental Education Center and Beagle Ridge Master Naturalist volunteer

David Richert, Western Virginia Resource Conservation and Development Forester, Virginia Department of Forestry

Thank You

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Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries
Virginia Museum of Natural History

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