



Virginia Master Naturalists

The Pollinator

News from the Virginia Master Naturalist Program
Winter 2023



Sometimes a costume and some fake scat helps! Through a collaborative project with the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources, volunteers in several VMN chapters have been sharing information at local festivals and giving presentations to help community members learn about bears and what we all can do to live in harmony with them. Photo by VMN-Roanoke Valley Chapter.

From the VMN State Program Office

Dear Virginia Master Naturalist community,

Over the past year or two, we've had quite a few Virginia Master Naturalist volunteers pass away. I think this is mostly a natural outcome given the age of our program and the demographics of our participants. People who joined the program near its beginnings in their 50s or 60s are now in their 70s or 80s. It is a really sad thing to lose these individuals. On the positive side, I find it heartening to see how many of their families include something about their loved ones' participation in our program as part of their obituaries. They show that being a Virginia Master Naturalist is an accomplishment that our volunteers take pride in and that is an important part of their lives and legacies. I also like to think (although I do not have data on this) that VMN program participation might help extend people's lives through the positive benefits of social interactions, time in nature, and physical activity. And, I appreciate all the ways our chapters honor the memories of their fellow volunteers, from memorial benches and tree plantings to scholarship funds and special awards. Do take a moment to pause and remember the volunteers who are no longer with us and the lasting impacts they made.

I also want to share the exciting news that we have a new program logo! This new logo is the result of a multi-program process in Virginia Cooperative Extension aimed at developing new, more modern logos for all of our Master Volunteer programs that help tie our programs together and tie them back to VCE as our lead sponsor. We will be working to update the logo across all our communication tools in the coming weeks.

Lastly, Giving Day is coming up soon (Feb 15-16), and, thanks to some generous donors, we have several exciting opportunities to increase the impact of gifts to support the Virginia Master Naturalist program. See the Support section at the bottom of this email for details and links!

Michelle D. Prysby
VMN Program Director & Extension Associate
Virginia Tech Department of Forest Resources & Environmental Conservation



**Virginia Master
Naturalists**

Volunteer News

Virginia Master Naturalist Program 2022 Year in Review

Each year, VMN chapter leaders work hard on annual reports that compile their membership and volunteering statistics and describe some of their most impactful projects from the year. It's exciting for us to hear about their accomplishments, and it is clear that VMN volunteers are continuing to make important impacts in their communities and to benefit Virginia's waters, woods, and wildlife. Read our summary of their work!

[Full article>>](#)



Virginia Master Naturalist volunteers in the Alleghany Highlands Chapter monitor the health of local streams to assist with assessing watershed health in the region and to contribute to databases used by the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality, the James River Association, and other partners. Photo by VMN-Alleghany Highlands Chapter.

Celebrating Our 2022 Virginia Master Naturalist Statewide Award Winners

We are thrilled to spread the word about the winners of the Virginia Master Naturalist 2022 awards for New Volunteer, Chapter Advisor, Chapter Leader, Most Impactful Projects, Volunteer of the Year, and Diversity and Inclusion!

[Full article>>](#)



Historic Southside Chapter's stormwater retention project at Windsor Castle Park. Photo by Henry McBurney.

The Cleopatra Project: Poisonous and Venomous Animals in Virginia

The Cleopatra Project is a multi-chapter Virginia Master Naturalist educational project conducted in partnership with the University of Virginia School of Medicine and the Blue Ridge Poison Center. The group recently published a free guide to poisonous and venomous animals in Virginia.

[Full article>>](#)



*The Cleopatra Project cover art
by Trish Crowe.*

Laurels - Winter 2023

Each quarter, we invite VMN chapters to share stories of volunteers' awards and accomplishments. Our Laurels posts are not only a way to provide recognition to those volunteers, but also an opportunity to inspire other volunteers.

This quarter, learn about:

- Planting thousands of longleaf pines
- Awards earned for bluebird monitoring and trail cleanups
- An outreach project to help community members learn about birds

...and more!

[Full article>>](#)



Jill Henderson with her Backyard Birds outreach table. Photo by VMN-Holston Rivers Chapter.

New Milestone Achievements by VMN Volunteers

The VMN State Program office recognizes volunteers who complete 250, 500, 1,000, 2,500, 5,000, and 10,000 hours of service. These are cumulative volunteer hours starting when a volunteer joins the program. These volunteers have done extraordinary levels of service and made important impacts that extend well beyond just the number of hours.

[Full article>>](#)



VMN 250-hour milestone pin.

From Our Sponsors

Virginia Master Naturalist Volunteers Digitize

Watchlist Data

*By Olivia Latham, Natural Heritage Zoology Lab Manager
Virginia Natural Heritage Program*

Virginia Master Naturalists recently completed a special project with the Virginia Department of Conservation's Natural Heritage division.

From Fall 2020 to Summer 2022, volunteers from the Master Naturalist Program transcribed over 800 pages and 20 years of paper records from Virginia Natural Heritage's Watchlist species log into a digital format.

[Full article>>](#)



New Resources from the Virginia Institute of Marine Science's Center for Coastal Resources Management

CCRM has Coastal Living Guides, a new Coastal Resources Tool, and information on the new season for the CrabTrap app!

[Full article>>](#)



Support

[Giving Day](#) is right around the corner, and we need your help! This is a 24-hour celebration of philanthropy at Virginia Tech (including the Virginia Master Naturalist program) that runs from noon on February 15 to noon on February 16. This year, we have several special opportunities. If 100 people make a gift to our program as part of Giving Day, a gift of \$2500 will be unlocked! And, another generous donor has offered to match your gifts to have double the impact! Gifts can be made any time during Giving Day, and there are additional special challenges throughout the day. Gifts also can be made early, at [this link](#). Your gifts help us continue to grow the Virginia Master Naturalist program and sustain our statewide efforts!

[Donate](#)

The Virginia Master Naturalist program is co-sponsored by the following state agencies:



Contributors

This edition of *The Pollinator* was compiled by Michelle Prysby (VMN Program Director). Contributors of text and images included Janet James, Judy Jones, Terri Mewborn, Julian Pecquet, Meg Clute, Olivia Latham, Tom Crockett, Daina Henry, Henry McBurney, Barbara Creel, Mary Beth Yarbrough, Marilyn Smith, Roger Gosden, Charlene Talcott, Doug Rogers, Jill Henderson, Beverley Ruegsegger, Connie Reitz, Rick Brown, Bonnie Beers, Tiffany Brown (VMN Program Assistant), and all thirty of our VMN chapters through their annual reports.

We welcome submissions from chapters, volunteers, sponsors, and partners about initiatives that would be of interest to our audience. Please [contact Michelle Prysby](#) if you have something to share.

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Virginia Master Naturalist Program

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