



**Virginia Master
Naturalists**

The Pollinator

**News from the Virginia Master Naturalist Program
Fall 2023**





It was hard to choose just one photo from our Virginia Master Naturalist Statewide Conference in Abingdon for this spot in the newsletter! I picked this one because I think a spirit of adventure was evident in so many conference attendees. Participants climbed several mountains, including both the big and little Pinnacles at Grayson Highlands State Park (shown here), the Channels, and Mollys Knob. They scrambled off-trail in search of salamanders, found their way to one of the furthest corners of Virginia at The Cedars Natural Area Preserve, and challenged themselves to learn more about bats, millipedes, forest microhabitats, and more. Photo by M. Prysby.

From the VMN State Program Office

Dear Virginia Master Naturalist community,

Service. That's what the VMN program is all about.

In this issue of The Pollinator, you'll learn how VMN volunteers led an impactful day of service for a group of corporate volunteers who are still talking about the experience weeks later. You'll read how one volunteer's life has inspired an annual volunteer service event in his chapter. And, how yet another volunteer led a community team in battle against invasive plants at a local trail. I hope you will be as inspired as I am by these volunteers' desire and drive to make a difference.

So far in 2023, VMN volunteers have documented 167,781 hours of service. (Note: If you are a VMN volunteer who has not done or documented service yet this year, there's still time--but please get it in soon!)

Along with inputting their hours for their different activities, some volunteers also log perceived impacts of their work that day. Reading through those entries is always a good pick-me-up! Here is a sampling of some of my favorites from the last 10 months:

"We worked with neighbors on our weekly winter invasive removal workdays. preserve is looking much better, plus building an ethic of stewardship and collaboration in our neighborhood."

"Trails are safer and will be more enjoyable for visitors. "

"The pawpaw tree will be able to grow more branches and be healthy and beautiful because of our work today."

"Students learned about the importance of trees and how they grow."

"Several attendees commented that they had not been made aware of the reasons for promoting natives and now they will begin asking for them in their garden centers. This would help drive the demand for natives so there would be more availability. "

"Less plastics in environment. 25 cigarette butts = 12.5 gallons of water not polluted."

"Increased interest of the children in spending more time in nature."

"Data gathered helps inform the Potomac RiverKeeper Network weekly Swim Guide on how to stay safe while recreating on the Potomac and to inform policymakers of river quality/contamination."

Thank you, VMN volunteers, for your **service** that is making our trails safer, our waterways cleaner, our children more connected to nature, and our forests healthier!

Volunteer News

Seeking Award Nominations

The VMN State Office is now accepting nominations for statewide awards in six categories: Chapter Leader of the Year, VMN Volunteer of the Year, New VMN Volunteer, Most Impactful Project, Chapter Advisor of the Year, and Diversity & Inclusion.

[Full information and submission information>>](#)

Forging Connections - A VMN Volunteer Boosts His Interpretive Skills

VMN volunteer Jeff DeHoff (Pocahontas Chapter) attended the 2023 Virginia State Parks Spring Interpretive Training Workshop, and we interviewed him about his experience.

[Full article>>](#)



Rebecca Whalen, Chief Ranger of Visitor Experience at Pocahontas State Park, and Jeff DeHoff, VMN Pocahontas Chapter, discuss interpretation of raptors found at the park. Photo by Jeff DeHoff.

It Takes a Village When Combatting Invasives

--Contributed By Linda Hughes, VMN volunteer, Central Blue Ridge Chapter

VMN volunteers teamed up with other community members to do battle with invasive plants at Rockfish Valley Foundation's Camille Trailhead. They removed or reduced eight different invasive plant species and revealed native plants and wildlife in the process.

[Full article>>](#)



VMNs gave volunteers a briefing on area risks (poison ivy, ticks,

snakes, bears) as well as identified targeted invasives versus look-alike natives. Photo by Linda Hughes.

Our Very Viny 2024 VMN Recertification Pin

We received a tremendous number of excellent submissions for our 2024 Recertification Pin artwork contest, and here we share all the artwork we received, including the winning Virginia-creeper image that will be featured on the pin.

[Full article>>](#)



Virginia-creeper (Parthenocissus quinquefolia), drawn by VMN volunteer Rosalind "Ros" Reilly from the James River Chapter. This image was chosen to be the artwork for the 2024 VMN Recertification pin.

Laurels - Fall 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:

- Two amazing naturalists who have passed on
- A highly successful corporate volunteering event led by VMN volunteers
- How volunteers picking up litter ended up assisting with a scientific discovery
- Black bear education at the State Fair

...and more!

[Full article>>](#)



Governor Glenn Youngkin stopped by to the Riverine Master Naturalist booth at the Virginia State Fair to learn about black bears. Photo contributed by Sheila Barnett.

From Our Sponsors and Partners

Turkeys, Pollution Reports, and Caves!

This quarter, we share the results of the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources wild turkey summer brood survey, information on the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality's enhanced online reporting tool, and the new Explore Virginia Caves speciality license plate that will support the Virginia Cave Board.

[Full article>>](#)



Explore Virginia Caves Specialty License Plate.

Support

As we approach the end of the calendar year, please consider the Virginia Master Naturalist program as part of your philanthropy. Your gifts are critical to the continuation of the statewide program!

[Donate](#)

We are excited to report that we have completed sponsorship renewals, and all seven sponsoring agencies will continue to support the Virginia Master Naturalist program for another three years! We thank them all for their financial support, staff time, and other resources.



Contributors

This edition of *The Pollinator* was compiled by Michelle Prysby (VMN Program Director). Contributors of text and images included Sue Bailey, Sheila Barnett, Sharon Baxter (DEQ), Rich Brager, Bill Bynum, Jeff DeHoff, Emi Endo (DCR), Linda Hughes, Becky Kyle, Katie Martin (DWR), Jeanette Navia, Jerry Nissley, Rebecca Paulson, Ros Reilly, Connie Reitz, Carolyn Smith, Charlene Uhl, Mary Vorhees, and Tiffany Brown (VMN Program Assistant).

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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