

## Virginia Master Naturalist Program

The Virginia Master Naturalist program is a volunteer training and service program providing education, outreach, and service to benefit natural resources and natural areas in Virginia. Volunteer training includes a minimum of 40 hours of classroom and field time in natural history and natural resource management. To become a Certified Virginia Master Naturalist, each volunteer must complete 40 hours of service in education, citizen science, or land stewardship. The program is sponsored jointly by Virginia Cooperative Extension, Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, Virginia Department of Environmental Quality, Virginia Department of Forestry, Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, and the Virginia Museum of Natural History, with additional support from the Virginia Tech College of Natural Resources and Environment and the Department of Forest Resources and Environmental Conservation. In addition the 29 program chapters across the state work with more than 300 local partners, including schools, nature centers, nonprofits, and local governments. Currently the program has 1,221 active volunteers. Since the program's inception in 2006, these volunteers have contributed 293,139 hours of service—with a value of \$6.4 million—to the Commonwealth of Virginia.



In 2012, Virginia Master Naturalist volunteers completed more than 20,000 hours of service on projects to educate the public about natural resources. They made more than 89,000 youth and adult contacts through these educational efforts. For example several Master Naturalist chapters organized and led "Junior Naturalist" 4-H clubs that exposed youth to natural resources and local natural areas. Similarly, several other chapters organize or assist with afterschool nature programs for youth in their communities. Some of these programs specifically target underserved audiences such as inner-city youth and Spanish-speaking populations.

Virginia Master Naturalists completed more than 20,000 hours of service on stewardship projects, such as habitat restoration and trail maintenance, in 2012. Their efforts positively impacted more than 1,200 acres of land and more than 1,000 miles of trails and streams in Virginia. For example, Master Naturalists of the Arlington Regional chapter have supported efforts to protect Barcroft Park from the spread of non-native, invasive species. The Park has been identified by Arlington County in its Natural Resources Management Plan as one of the most valuable ecological sites owned by the county with globally rare and state rare wetlands and locally rare native plants, as well as State Champion, County Champion and significant trees. In 2012, chapter members reported some 250 hours in volunteer service at the Park, helping conserve this valuable natural area.

Also in 2012 Virginia Master Naturalists completed more than 22,000 hours of citizen science, collecting data on wildlife populations, urban forests, and aquatic habitats in their communities. This data will help natural resource agencies and scientists better understand the current status of and changes in plant and animal populations and their habitat quality in the Commonwealth.



Dr. Alysia W. Crall

For additional information, contact:  
(434) 872-4580  
[www.virginiamasternaturalist.org](http://www.virginiamasternaturalist.org)

[masternaturalist@vt.edu](mailto:masternaturalist@vt.edu)