**Virginia Master Naturalist Program**

**Project Proposal Form**

*Project proposals should be completed by partner organizations or chapter members and submitted to the chapter’s Board of Directors for review. Projects will be evaluated for relevance to program mission and objectives. Projects and activities implemented without approval are not considered Master Naturalist activities, do not count towards required service hours, and do not carry the liability shield.*

**Project Name** *(For approval and recording purposes)*: **The Nightjar Survey Network**

**Submitted By: Laura Duval Phone or Email Contact: nightjars@nightjars.org**

**Project Purpose and Value** *(How will this project contribute to natural resource management, conservation, or education?)*:

Nightjars (Family Caprimulgidae) are primarily nocturnal aerial insectivores. These birds are known to be in decline, but traditional survey methods such as the Breeding Bird Survey primarily target diurnal species. The Center for Conservation Biology initiated the Nightjar Survey Network in 2007 to fill these information gaps. By developing a long-term, broad-scale nocturnal monitoring effort we will begin to understand distribution, population trends, and factors influencing these declines. This network is comprised entirely of citizen scientists collecting data on nightjar populations throughout the country by using volunteer observers, and submitting the data to their portal. Data from this long-term study can help aid in developing applied research tactics on a regional level to better manage these species locally. 2020 will be the 13th year of the national survey effort.

**Project type** *(Is this project education/outreach, citizen science/monitoring, stewardship, or administrative?)*:

This is a citizen science/monitoring project

**Project Description** *(Describe what the project involves. What will participants actually do?)*:

Participants must first create an account and sign up for or create a survey route by going to <http://www.nightjars.org/>. Surveyors will select a night within the provided survey window for their region with favorable environmental conditions. Nights with high moon-face illumination, low cloud cover and wind, and no precipitation are ideal for detecting nightjars. Surveyors will drive to the starting point of their route and conduct a 6-minute point count, not using audio playback, actively listening for and recording individual nightjars within each 6-minute block. They will conduct the same procedure at nine more stops that are spaced as close to one-mile from each other as safely possible. Written and video instructions as well as data sheets for conducting the survey can be found in our Participate and Learn sections of the website.

**Project Location** *(Where will this project take place?)*:

There are pre-established routes throughout Virginia that can be viewed here: <http://www.nightjars.org/routes/select>

You can also create your own route in an area of interest by following instructions here: <http://www.nightjars.org/participate/survey-instructions/>

**Time Frame** *(What, if any, is the time frame for this project? Be as specific as possible –What time does the volunteer need to be there and how late are they expected to stay? If it is seasonal, what are the approximate dates or appropriate weather conditions? Is this an on-going project or does it have a fixed end date? About how many hours can a volunteer expect to put into this project?)*:

Nightjar survey routes only require one night of your time, once per year during the survey windows that will be updated on the website annually. Dates for the survey windows are chosen based on high moon illumination periods and are scheduled in conjunction with arrival of nightjars and peak breeding periods. The survey windows typically fall between April-July depending on your location within the country. Virginia survey windows encompass ~10 days, one near the end of April and the other at the end of May through early June.

**Partner Contact** *(If a partner is involved, who at that organization is the contact for this project?)*:

**Name: Laura Duval Organization: The Center for Conservation Biology**

**Phone number: 757-221-1708 Email:nightjars@nightjars.org**

**Project Chair** *(Who from the chapter is the contact person and organizer for this project?)*:

**What, if any, prior experience or expertise is required or preferred?**

A passion for scientific contribution, a willingness to survey on a gorgeous moonlit night and a vehicle. Volunteers should review nightjar birdcalls/song prior to the survey (<http://www.nightjars.org/learn/>). Various birding websites and apps provide recordings of birdcalls/song as well.

**What training will be provided and by whom?**

A webinar from the network’s project coordinator will be provided prior to the 2021 survey season. Instructional videos for how to move through the process of signing up and selecting a survey route can be found at <http://www.nightjars.org/learn/>

**Resources provided** *(What equipment or other resources will be provided for the volunteer(s)?)*:

Written instructions and data forms can be found at <http://www.nightjars.org/participate/>

**Resources needed** *(What will the volunteer(s) or chapter need to provide and how will these resources be acquired?)*:

A computer to manage your survey account and data. A personal vehicle. A flashlight or headlamp for viewing datasheets. A reflective vest or simply leaving your dim lights on your vehicle for safety purposes is recommended. A stopwatch to time the 6-minute blocks. Most surveyors use their cell phones or wrist watches with those capabilities.

**Safety hazards and protocols** *(What hazards might the volunteers encounter and what safety protocols should be followed?)*:

Nighttime safety hazards will be encountered along country roads. Volunteers should wear a headlamp or carry a flashlight; wear a reflective vest or light colored clothing; wear long pants to protect from poison ivy along the roadside; have bug spray for mosquitos. It is recommended that you take time during daylight hours to locate safe locations for your route’s pull offs.

**Are minors involved?** *(If yes, then all volunteers must be trained in working with youth and the Above Suspicion policy.)*No. Not unless they are accompanying an adult surveyor.

**How will the project be evaluated during implementation and after completion?**

Data sheets for the survey are provided at the survey’s website. Hard copies are filled out during the survey. Survey data can be entered online through your account or mailed to CCB at:

**The Center for Conservation Biology**

**College of William and Mary**

**Williamsburg, VA 23184-8795**

Because this is a long-term monitoring project, you are encouraged to conduct your routes for multiple years to enhance the application of the dataset to research and management tactics.

**How will the Virginia Master Naturalist program be recognized?**

VMN will be listed as a partner on the Nightjar Network website, throughout articles on the CCB website and/or our quarterly newsletter, and possibly articles in local papers.

**How will volunteers benefit from participation in the project?**

The Nightjar Survey Network offers participants the opportunity to learn about declining species and the threats and/or issues related to these declines. They will gain experience in identifying nightjars by sound, a critical skill for studying birds. They will develop and apply skills in biological species monitoring, data collection and management, and contribute to a biological inventory.

*For Chapter Board of Directors Only: Project approved? YES NO Date of approval:*